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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the mental images of preschool teachers' perceptions about nature through metaphors. Participating in the study on a voluntary basis it consists of a total of 106 preschool teachers. The phenomenology design from the qualitative research designs was administrated in this study aiming to specify the perceptions of preschool teachers on nature by means of metaphors. Preschool teachers' views on the concept of "nature" were obtained through metaphors. In this context, preschool teachers "nature..... similar / like; because," statements were asked to fill in written. The obtained data were analyzed by content analysis technique. The general findings of the study concluded that 106 preschool teachers, who participated in the study, developed 45 different metaphors on the concept of nature. The metaphors developed by preschool teachers on nature were classified under 9 different categories. It can be urged upon the conclusions of this study that preschool teachers considered the nature as a harbor in which they felt secure, where they got happy while spending time and to where they sought shelter and a place to where they could go when they needed.

Introduction

Although nature appears to be a complex structure in language, this complex structure of nature is hidden in its ease and order. Since the word nature is an easy to use and popular word, it is easily and frequently used by people in different meanings and combinations. However, this complex usage and the richness of interpretation make it impossible to make a precise definition of the concept of nature (Soper, 1995). The nature is a universal value and common heritage of all human being. We provide all things that we eat, drink, wear and in which we live from the nature, and the nature and human being are in a life cycle in which both of them depend on each other. In this regard, the damage given by human being to nature is considered as a damage given to him/her, and the effort it exerts to revive nature is deemed as an investment it makes for its future. Retrospective studies have shown that frequent direct experiences with and in nature during childhood have positive effects on children's environmental career choices and environmental concerns (Chawla, 2007; Wells & Lekies, 2006), as well as their attitude towards activities with nature (Lohr & Pearson-mims, 2005) when they become adults. As the consequences of having nature experiences mostly through indirect ways, children have a lack of knowledge about nature, have misconceptions towards nature, and conveyed negative feelings towards nature (Aaron & Witt, 2011; McAllister et al., 2012). In addition, children who grow up independently and far from nature are faced with various problems today. A major part of world children have detached from nature with the modern

life, and they have begun to create a new and unhealthy living space with obesity, technology and an anti-social life by leaving the habits of natural diet and playing with other children in nature. In the recent 30 years, obesity has increased twofold between the ages of 2-5 and 12-19, and threefold between the ages of 6–11, and continues to rise rapidly in all age groups (Bell, Wilson, & Liu, 2008; de Onis & Lobstein, 2010). 20 % of European children are fat and 1/3 of these children are obese (Branco, Nikogosian & Lobstein, 2007; Olds, Maher, Zumin, Péneau, Lioret & Castetbon, 2011). It is stated that children only move their hand and eyes and mostly sit when using any technological device, and these devices give serious damages to the physical development of children (Kiziltas & Ertor, 2018). In addition, the time that children spend with technological devices and resulting mostly unilateral interaction naturally affect the language development of children negatively as well as many other social skills (Deniz-Ozkiliç-Kabul, 2019).

In order to prevent significant problems related to nature and environment, the individuals who are conscious, responsible and sensitive to nature should be developed. This may be achieved by educating individuals related to nature and environment when they are at young ages (Sarigoz, 2013). Sauv e's (2005) argued that the following trends should take place in environmental education. Naturalist Current, Conservationist/Resourcist Current, Problem-Solving Current, Systemic Current, Scientific Current, Humanist/Mesological Current, Value-centered, Holistic Current, Bioregionalist Current, Praxic Current, Socially Critical Current, Feminist Current, Ethnographic Current, Eco-Education Current, Sustainable Development/ Sustainability Current. Children can realize a much faster and active learning in an environment where they can see, touch, hear, use their senses, wonder, observe and test, starting from their early ages (Erentay & Erdogan, 2009; Kosker, 2019). The basis of the nature awareness will be established in children by raising their consciousness by nature-related activities, and thus physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of the children will also be supported (Kosker, 2019). Studies by Flogaitis and Agelidou (2003) and Lee (2001) highlight that teachers' knowledge about the environment is often limited. Some teachers cannot differentiate the environment from nature. Their understanding of nature is simplistic and romantic, and they do not include moral, economic or sociopolitical content in their teaching. According to Flogaitis and Agelidou (2003) and Lee (2001), some teachers do not encourage children to act for social improvement while others do (Sandberg and  rlemalm-Hags er 2011). The scientist underlines that children play more creative games while they are in touch with nature (Linn, 2010), their being in touch with nature develops the language development of young kids (Miller, 2007).

Preschool education institutions, where children first meet formal education, and preschool teachers working at these institutions have undoubtedly great responsibilities in integrating the understanding of living in touch with nature into the educational systems of societies, and in realising permanent and long-termed learning on this topic. The metaphorical perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of nature, how they interpret the term of nature in their minds, will be a fundamental starting point in determining the direction, content and nature of the activities they will perform in the process of teaching and learning. The metaphorical perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of nature will be a significant determiner in raising a healthy generation, who are today children but will be adult in the future. Lakoff & Johnson (2005) argue that the metaphor is to understand an unknown or abstract phenomenon by comparing to a more known phenomenon or to attribute it new meanings. Martinez, Sauleda & Huber (2001) urge that the metaphor constitutes a major mechanism of the

mind rather than interpreting shapes. Thus, a synergy is created from the parts by describing a concept with another similar one, and perceptual selectivity is formed (Marshall, 2010). The metaphors lead individuals to think creatively, to imagine, to interpret in his/her own life, and enable them to make a journey to the depths of language while directing them to creativity by preventing their being restricted (Tompkins & Lawley, 2002).

The aim of this study is to examine preschool teachers' metaphorical perceptions of the concept of nature. It is considered that the findings, to be achieved after examining the metaphors of preschool teachers on the concept of nature, will lead other studies to be carried out on this subject in preschool education, will raise the awareness of the teachers, working at this level, on this issue. What is more, the researcher could not identify any study investigating the metaphorical perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of nature as a result of the literature review, and this makes the study significant by contributing the gap in the literature. As another significance of the study, it is considered that the abstract perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of nature will be concretized, and the study will help to uncover different valuable ideas on the topic. The aim of this study was to investigate the metaphorical perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of nature. In line with this purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

- Which metaphors do preschool teachers usually use when explaining their perceptions on the concept of nature?
- Under which categories are the metaphors of preschool teachers on the concept of nature collected according to their common characteristics?

Methodology

The phenomenology design from the qualitative research designs was utilized in this study aiming to specify the perceptions of preschool teachers on nature by means of metaphors. Patton (2014) defines the phenomenology as follows: “Phenomenology focuses on how people perceive and describe phenomena, how they feel about them, how they judge them, how they remember them, how they interpret them and how they talk about them with other people.” The phenomenology focuses on “the phenomena which we know but about which we do not have a deep and detailed understanding” (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018).

Study Group

The study group, a province in the 2019-2020 academic year, Turkey's formal training in acting and research institutions preschool teachers who want to support voluntarily. It is seen that 91.50% (97) of the teachers in the study group of the study are female teachers and the remaining 8.50% (8.50) are male teachers. Working group, chosen from non-random sampling methods, using the appropriate sampling method. This sampling method, also known as accidental or convenient sampling, is the reaching the appropriate group is the main goal (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz ve Demirel, 2010; Creswell, 2012). Data on the study group are presented in the table below. The data on the study group is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Group

Gender	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage %
Female	97	91.50
Male	9	8.50
Total	106	100

Data Collection Tool

Related literature (Acay- Sozbir & Camlibel- Cakmak; 2016; Akgun, 2016; Duran & Daglioglu, 2017; Giren & Durak, 2015; Gunes, 2018; Harman & Cokelez, 2017; Kocer, Unal & Eskidemir-Meral, 2015; Kuyucu., Sahin & Kapicioglu, 2013; Ucus, 2016; Unal, 2017; Zembat, Tunceli & Aksin, 2015) was searched while developing the data gathering tool. In this study, a semi-structured metaphor form, which was used in some related studies and written as “nature is similar to/like.....because.....”, they were asked to fill in their statements in writing. For teachers to produce metaphors about the concept of nature 15 minutes are given. In the metaphors of preschool teachers regarding the concept of nature, the difference between the subject of the metaphor and the source of the metaphor the relationship is with the word "like" and the meaning attributed to the metaphor is with the word "because" tried to be determined. The data obtained in this manner constituted the basic data source of the study.

Data Analysis

Content analysis technique was utilized in the analysis of data obtained. The basic operations carried out in the content analysis are to gather the data similar in various respects under certain concepts and themes, to regulate and interpret these data so that readers can understand easily (Patton, 1990; Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). What preschool teachers produced about the concept of nature the analysis of metaphors was carried out in three stages.

Stage 1

At this stage, the metaphors presented by each participant are transferred to the computer environment. It was transferred and examined in terms of finding and justifying every metaphor image. Do not contain any metaphor images or related to metaphor no justification provided (16 participants related to the concept of nature), metaphors were eliminated. Following the process of sorting, 45 different data were obtained from a total of 106 participants.

Stage 2

The valid metaphors at this stage are listed in alphabetical order. In order to create a reference resource during the development of categories, each a "sample metaphor list" that is supposed to represent the metaphor best was created. More than metaphor images are based on the list, associated with a certain category and conceptual

categories have been created. For example, the metaphor of "mother", which is the metaphor most produced by preschool teachers, was evaluated under the metaphor of "Nature as a role model" and the metaphor of "child" under the category of "nature in need of people's attention and interest ". In the category development stage, the metaphors uttered by preschool teachers were examined in terms of common characteristics and eight different categories were developed. At this stage, co-produced by teachers and dominant metaphor images featured by three or more participants were also determined.

Stage 3

At this stage where validity and reliability are provided, qualitative research lectures a faculty member, independently from the researcher, whose metaphors were previously determined. He/she has assigned it to one of the conceptual categories. Later, appointments made by the expert compared with the researchers' assignments and having "consensus" and "difference of opinion" substances have been determined.

The reliability of data analysis was calculated by using Miles & Huberman's (1994) formula: $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreements}}{\text{Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}} \times 100$ calculated using. Nature expert whose views are consulted they specified 7 metaphors under different conceptual categories regarding the concept. Therefore, the reliability for the nature metaphor was determined as $\frac{45}{45 + 7} \times 100 = 86.53\%$. Preschool teachers, field experts and researcher have 7 metaphors for the concept of nature they stated under conceptual categories. 70 percent of reliability accounts It is accepted that the analysis of the research is reliable (Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to this, the harmony between coders is sufficient in the study can be said.

Findings

In this section, the metaphors of preschool teachers on the concept of nature were presented under two main titles. These titles are as follows: "the metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of nature" and "the categories of metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of nature".

When examining Table 2, it is seen that the preschool teachers, participated in the study, developed a total of 45 metaphors on the concept of nature. It is observed that 13,59 % (f=14) of the participants likened the term of nature to "mother". They justified this by indicating that a mother feeds and cares you by sacrificing her interests. It is then seen that 11.65 % (f=12) of the participants associated with nature and "child". When the reason for this was asked to preschool teachers, they stated that nature needed also care and love like a child. What is more, other metaphors with which a similarity between nature was established are as follows: "human being" 6.79 % (f=7), "family" 6.79% (f=7), "home" 5.82 % (f=6), "life" 3.84% (f=4), "fellow" 3.84% (f=4), "breath" 2.91% (f=3), "table" 2.91% (f=3), "harbor" 2.91 % (f=3), "treasure" 1.94% (f=2), "sea" 1.94% (f=2), "health" 1.94% (f=2), "bank" 1.94% (f=2), "freedom" 1.94% (f=2), "school" 1.94% (f=2), "psychologist" 1.94% (f=2), "rainbow" 1.94% (f=2), "art" 1.94% (f=2).

Table 2. The Metaphors developed by Preschool Teachers on the Concept of Nature

Metaphors Generated	f	%	Metaphors Generated	f	%
1. Mother	14	13.59	24. Meditation	1	0.97
2. Child	12	11.65	25. Paradise	1	0.97
3. Family	7	6.79	26. Salt	1	0.97
4. Human being	7	6.79	27. Game	1	0.97
5. Home	6	5.82	28. Music	1	0.97
6. Life	4	3.84	29. Laboratory	1	0.97
7. Fellow	4	3.84	30. Smiling	1	0.97
8. Breath	3	2.91	31. World	1	0.97
9. Table	3	2.91	32. Theatre	1	0.97
10. Harbor	3	2.91	33. Happiness	1	0.97
11. Treasure	2	1.94	34. Food	1	0.97
12. Sea	2	1.94	35. Life source	1	0.97
13. Health	2	1.94	36. Water	1	0.97
14. Bank	2	1.94	37. Purity	1	0.97
15. Freedom	2	1.94	38. Oxygen	1	0.97
16. School	2	1.94	39. Playground	1	0.97
17. Psychologist	2	1.94	40. Father	1	0.97
18. Rainbow	2	1.94	41. Waterfall	1	0.97
19. Art	2	1.94	42. Teacher	1	0.97
20. Season	1	0.97	43. Bread	1	0.97
21. Hope	1	0.97	44. Life struggle	1	0.97
22. Mirror	1	0.97	45. Adaptation	1	0.97
23. Drug	1	0.97			

According to Table 3, the metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of nature were gathered under 9 different categories. These categories are as follows respectively: (1) “*nature as role model*”, (2) “*Nature in need of people's attention and interest*”, (3) “*nature as space and place*”, (4) “*Nature as an expression of beauty and purity*”, (5) “*Nature as an expression of life*”, (6) “*Nature for the emotional development of a child*”, (7) “*Nature as basic needs and goods*”, (8) “*Nature as a mysterious place*” (9), “*Nature as something hostile*”.

When going on to examine the table, it is seen that 30 teachers developed 7 different metaphors in the category of “*nature as role model*”, In addition, 19 teachers developed 2 different metaphors in the category of “*Nature in need of people's attention and interest*”. It was identified that 12 teachers developed 5 different metaphors in the category of “*nature as space and place*”. What is more, while 11 teachers developed 7 different metaphors in the category of “*Nature as an expression of beauty and purity*”, 10 teachers developed 4 different metaphors in the category of “*Nature as an expression of life*”, 8 teachers developed 7 different metaphors in the category of “*Nature for the emotional development of a child*”, 8 teachers developed 7 different metaphors in the

category of “Nature as basic needs and goods”, 6 teachers developed 4 different metaphors in the category of “Nature as a mysterious place”, finally, whereas 2 teachers developed 2 different metaphors in the category of “Nature as something hostile ”

Table 3. The Metaphor Categories Developed by Preschool Teachers on the Concept of Nature

Categories	Metaphors	n	f	%
Nature as role model	Mother (14), Family (7), Fellow (4), School (2), Teacher (1), Psychologist (1), Father (1).	7	30	28.30
Nature in need of people's attention and interest	Child (12), Human Being (7).	2	19	17.92
Nature as space and place	Home (6), Harbor (3), Laboratory (1), World (1), Theatre (1).	5	12	11.34
Nature as an expression of beauty and purity	Table (3), Art (2), Treasure (2), Mirror (1), Paradise (1), Purity (1), Music (1).	7	11	10.38
Nature as an expression of life	Life (4), Breath (3), Health (2), Oxygen (1).	4	10	9.44
Nature for the emotional development of a child	Freedom (2), Meditation (1), Smiling (1), Happiness (1), Game (1), Playground (1), Hope (1).	7	8	7.54
Nature for the emotional development of a child	Bank (2), Salt (1), Bread (1), Food (1), Drug (1), Water (1), Life source (1).	7	8	7.54
Nature as a mysterious place	Rainbow (2), Sea (2), Waterfall (1), Season (1)	4	6	5.66
Nature as something hostile	Life struggle (1), Adaptation (1).	2	2	1.88
Total	9	45	106	100

Category 1. Nature as Role Model

In this category, 30 participants developed 7 different metaphors on the concept of nature. These are as follows, respectively; *mother* (14), *Family* (7) *fellow* (4), *school* (2), *father* (1), *teacher* (1), *psychologist* (1). The sample metaphor expressions uttered by the teachers about this category are provided below:

“Nature is like a mother because it feeds and grows all creatures.” (T35).

“Nature is like a family because it makes you peaceful, you breathe and relax there.” (T100).

“Nature is similar to a friend because it requires care and attention.” (T90).

“Nature is like a school because it is the best educational and learning environment.” (T16).

“Nature is like a father because it protects and cares everyone (T22).

Category 2. Nature in Need of People's Attention and Interest

In this category, 19 participants developed 2 different metaphors on the concept of nature. These are as follows respectively; *child* (12), *human being* (7). The sample metaphor expressions developed by the teachers about this category are given below:

"Nature is like a child because what you get is what you have given." (T81).

"It is similar to a human being, it needs interest, effort, politeness and dies in due time." (T14).

Category 3. Nature as Space and Place

12 participants developed 5 different metaphors on the concept of nature under this category. These are as follows respectively; *home* (6), *harbor* (3), *laboratory* (1), *theatre* (1), *world* (1). It is significant that this is the category in which most metaphors were developed. The sample metaphor expressions indicated by the pre-service teachers are given below:

"Nature is like our home because it offers every opportunity necessary for human being to live." (T61).

"Nature is like a harbor because when you get bored you want to go there" (T92).

"A theater where all aspects of life are exhibited" (T75).

Category 4. Nature as an Expression of Beauty and Purity

In this category, 11 participants developed 7 different metaphors related to the concept of nature. These are as follows respectively; *table* (3), *treasure* (2), *art* (2), *paradise* (1), *purity* (1), *music* (1), *mirror* (1). The sample metaphor expressions indicated by the pre-service teachers are given below:

"Nature is like a table that keeps life itself on its feet" (T62).

"Nature is like a painting because you see new things when you look at." (T7).

"Nature is like pure flowing water" (T106).

"Nature is like heaven; because the more you pay attention to the details, the more beautiful things you see" (T104).

"Nature is like a treasure because wealth is hidden in itself." (T55).

"Nature is like a mirror because it reflects itself when you look at." (T46).

"Nature is like music because it nourishes and rests the soul." (T84).

Category 5. Nature as an Expression of Life

When examining Table 2, it is seen that the preschool teachers developed various metaphors under this category related to the concept of nature as follows: *life* (4), *breath* (3), *health* (2), *oxygen* (1). The sample metaphor expressions of life uttered by the related pre-service teachers are provided below:

"It is similar to life because it revives, lives and ends cyclically like in real life" (T.40)

"Nature is like the breath of human being because human being cannot do and live without nature, nature and human being are meaningful when they are together." (T71).

"Nature is like health because its value is understood after losing." (T6).

"It is like oxygen that gives human life; When you breathe you know your life continues" (T105).

Category 6. Nature for the Emotional Development of a Child

8 participants developed 7 different metaphors on the concept of nature under this category. These are as follows respectively; *freedom* (2), *meditation* (1), *smiling* (1), *happiness* (1), *game* (1), *playground* (1), *hope* (1). The sample metaphor expressions developed by the teachers about this category are provided below:

"Nature is a child's freedom area. Therefore, a child tries to reveal his/her own self there." (T51).

"I compare it to the game children play, because whenever we spend time in nature we are happy" (T93).

"Nature is like meditation because it is the most powerful antidepressant." (T63).

"Like an endless playing field" (T27).

Category 7. Nature as Basic Needs and Goods

8 participants developed 7 different metaphors on the concept of nature under this category. These are as follows respectively; *bank* (2), *salt* (1), *bread* (1), *food* (1), *drug* (1), *water* (1). The sample metaphor expressions created by the teachers about this category are provided below:

"Nature is like a bank because it always gives you credit." (T12).

"Nature is like salt in a meal because the taste of life is fulfilled by nature." (T77).

"Nature is like water because it is always unique, always needed" (T3).

Category 8. Nature as a Mysterious Place

In this category, 6 participants developed 4 different metaphors on the concept of nature. These are as follows respectively; *rainbow* (2), *sea* (2), *season* (1), *waterfall* (1). The sample metaphor expressions developed by the teachers are provided below:

"Nature is like a rainbow because it sometimes shows its colors while they sometimes disappear." (T10).

"Nature is like a sea because it is endless." (T25).

"Nature is like a waterfall because it is always enthusiastic" (T33).

Category 9. Nature as Something Hostile

In this category, 2 participants developed 2 different metaphors on the concept of nature. These are as follows respectively; *life struggle* (1), *adaptation* (1). The sample metaphor expressions developed by the teachers are provided below:

"Nature is like the struggle for survival, you have to fight to survive." (T10).

"Nature is like living together in harmony, it won't hurt you if you don't break the rules." (T33).

Discussion

Nature is a sheltering and nutrition space regarding the continuity and sustainability of human life. The attitude, perspective of human being to nature is directly related to the importance and value s/he gives to his/her life. Providing individuals with nature consciousness in early childhood by all societies is actually an important investment they make for their future. For this reason, the way teachers, who will let children gain nature consciousness in the preschool period, perceive nature in their minds and how they interpret this subject in their minds is a very important factor shaping the future of the education on nature tried to allow children to gain in this period. It is a fact that a great number of metaphors are needed in order to describe the concept of nature completely. For example, nature may be perceived as "forest or green space" as well as "home", "oxygen source", "heaven", "art", "life", "living" and "peace" etc. (Kahyaoglu and Kiriktas, 2016).

When examining the distribution of the metaphors, developed by preschool teachers on the term of nature, in accordance with the gathered data, the first three metaphors are as follows: the nature as role model (28,30%), nature in need of people's attention and interest (17,92%) and the nature as space and place (11,34%). The category of nature as role model is represented by the following metaphors: "*mother, family, fellow, father, teacher, psychologist, school*". What is more, the metaphor of "*mother*" draws attention as being the most developed metaphor by participants. Nature was emphasized by preschool teachers as something feeding, raising, loving and hugging, and it was labeled as faithful. Thus, preschool teachers considered nature like a mother as role model since it provides human being with real learning experiences and listening to them while doing all these.

The category titled nature in need of people's attention and interest figure is represented by the metaphors of "*child, human being*". It is seen that teachers indicated in this category that nature has an aspect needing the attention and care of people and requires effort and struggle to survive. The category of nature as space and place is represented by the following metaphors: "*home, harbor, laboratory, world, theatre*". It can be argued upon the conclusions of this study that the preschool teachers consider the nature as a harbor in which they feel secure, where they get happy while spending time and to where they seek shelter and a place to where they can go when they need. In the study carried out by Denis-Celiker & Akar (2015) on the perceptions of secondary school students on the concept of "nature", it was reported that 238 secondary school students perceived 75 metaphors in 9 different categories (place of residence, life source, self-sacrificing, excitement and relaxing, guiding, indispensable value, giving lesson, colour and diversity). Walls (1994) revealed that secondary school students understand nature as a clean and untouched environment composed of plants and animals. Similar to this study, Payne (1998) determined that primary school students perceive nature as a clean environment composed of living and non-living elements. Rickson (2001) found that children perceive nature as a natural and unmanned being. The categories of nature as role model, nature in need of people's attention and interest, nature as space and place in which most of the metaphors were developed, were followed by the categories below, respectively: nature as an expression of beauty and purity (10.38%), nature as an expression of life (9.44%), nature for the emotional development of a child, (7.54%), nature as basic needs and goods (7.54%), natural as a mysterious place (5.66%) and nature as something hostile (1.88%). The category titled nature as an expression

of beauty and purity is represented by the metaphors of *“table, art, treasure, mirror, paradise, purity, music”*. It can be suggested that preschool teachers have defined nature in this category as a fun place full of purity and beauty giving meaning to the life of an individual. Similar to the category titled “nature as an expression of beauty” obtained in the study, Kosker (2013) indicates that children consider nature relaxing and pleasing.

The category titled nature as an expression of life is represented by the metaphors of *“life, breath, health, oxygen”*. It can be urged that teachers have evaluated nature as a factor making the life of human beings healthy and breathing. In the investigation conducted by Kahyaoglu (2015) on the perceptions of 273 primary school students related to the concept of “nature”, he reported a metaphor category labelled “nature as the vital function of nature”. The category of nature for the emotional development of a child is represented by the metaphors of *“freedom, meditation, smiling, happiness, game, playground, hope”*. When examining the metaphors developed by teachers in this category, it can be argued that the teachers shared metaphors implying that nature will have a positive effect on the emotional development of children, it will make children will feel freer and happier. In addition, it was determined that they consider the game to be a very important element for the emotional development of the child. Some research on nature-related activities discussed that spending time in nature and performing nature-related activities would contribute to observation ability and cognitive development of children (Ouvry, 2003). The category of nature as basic needs is represented by the metaphors of *“Bank, salt, bread, food, drug, water, life source”*. It is likely to argue that preschool teachers have used expressions indicating that nature has a vital place in the life of individuals as much as basic needs. Preschool teachers stated that nature is as indispensable for humans as food and drink. In addition, it is seen that preschool teachers emphasized that as people invest in nature itself, it can be a place that can offer them opportunities that may be necessary for their lives. The category of nature as a mysterious place is represented by the metaphors of “rainbow, sea, waterfall and season”. It can be suggested that preschool teachers consider nature in this category a natural and geographical element giving a different color and meaning to the life of the individual and having a surrounding and inclusive aspect. In addition, preschool teachers stated that in this category, nature has a mysterious side that sometimes appears like a rainbow, sometimes disappears, and contains eternity like the sea. The category of nature as a nature as something hostile is represented by the metaphors of “life struggle, adaptation”. Preschool teachers emphasized that nature has a harsh face in this category, so in order to find life in nature, people must act in harmony with it without disturbing its balance.

Conclusion

In general, preschool teachers defined nature as the address of beauty and purity that exists with the interest and love of people, and that loves and embraces us. Also, teachers demand respect for the nature of people in obeying their own rules; It has been determined that they define it as an indispensable place that contains mystery, eternity and continuity of life. As a result; It was determined that preschool teachers compared nature to a mother who nurtures, nurtures, loves and surrounds people. However, they also stated that there is an aspect of nature that constantly needs attention and care. Moreover, it has been determined that they see nature as a safe place with an educational and instructive aspect. What is more, it can be urged that the preschool teachers have perceived the concept of nature as a funny place making the life of an individual healthy and peaceful with

beauties. Moreover, they have also stated that nature has affected the emotional development of children positively, has a surrounding and inclusive dimension giving different colors and meanings to the life of individuals, and has an indispensable meaning and value as much as basic needs for the life of individuals. On the other hand, it has been determined that nature contains mystery and eternity within itself. In addition, it has been concluded that living in harmony without disturbing the balance of nature is important in terms of sustaining the struggle for human life.

Upon these conclusions, followings may be suggested. Teachers should be provided with pre-service courses and in-service training upon the fact that the metaphorical perceptions of teachers on nature are important in allowing children to gain nature consciousness in preschool education period. Social awareness on this topic can be raised by carrying out more scientific studies based on the vital importance of nature in a child's life. It is known that nature education and environmental education are different from each other. For this reason, preschool teachers may be enabled to gain a different perspective by increasing environmental-related and nature-related activities. It is seen that nature affects the development stages of children positively in all respects. Therefore, if preschool teachers offer students different learning options and opportunities in the activities to be made in and outside classroom, the learning experiences of children may be richer and more qualified.

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