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Abstract

This research analyses and compares the practice of gender socialisation in ECE institutions in Portugal and Germany as a metaphorical discourse in pedagogical interactions. It's an attempt to decode the construction of gender stereotypes in these encounters. Researches recently analysed the pedagogical behaviour of male and female professionals in ECE (Brandes et al. 2016, Fuertes et al. 2018), but have mostly neglected the verbal content of adult-child interactions. Boys and girls have astonishing metaphorical concepts regarding gender that can hardly be derived from direct experiences in their socialisation as ethnographic research shows (Maccoby 2000, Sheldon & Rohleder 1996). The theoretical framework is provided here by the conceptual metaphor theory, which allows to analyse metaphorical constructions of gender (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). The qualitative methodology of this research follows the idea of studying social action by interpretative methods (Weber 1984). Means of Systematic Analysis of Metaphors are used (Schmitt 2017). All professionals and parents of the participating children have granted permission via consent form. The transcriptions have been anonymised. All tasks were age appropriate. The socialisation of boys and girls can be described as an ongoing discourse of metaphorical meanings. The metaphorical concepts based on the gender scheme represent a stereotypical order of male and female positions in the social world but show ambivalence as well. ECE professionals should be aware of the metaphorical concepts of gender which are part of the daily discourse in any ECE-institution and be capable to see the ambivalence and flexibility in these constructions.

Keywords

gender, stereotype, metaphor, interaction, identity

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Gender in Early Childhood Education

A metaphorical Discourse

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Contents

- Overview of the research
- Introduction to cognitive linguistics/ conceptual metaphor thesis
- Results of the analysis

Overview of the research

Questions:

- Which metaphors can be identified in interactions between educators and children?

- To which metaphorical concepts can these metaphors be summarised?

- Is it possible to identify metaphors that have their source in a gender scheme?

Data:

- Videotaped play-situations in Portuguese (N=4, age: 3-4) and German (N=4, age: 5-6) ECEC-institutions

Method:

- Systematic metaphor analysis

Theoretical Background – Cognitive linguistics/ conceptual metaphor thesis

Authors:

- George Lakoff (linguist)
- Mark Johnson (philosopher)

Basic assumptions:

- Comprehensive concept of metaphor
- Forming metaphorical concepts from single metaphors
- Metaphor-generating preverbal image schemes of perception and thinking
- Homology of thought and speech as well as a close link between cognition and action
- Embodiment: culturally transformed physical foundations of thought and speech

(Schmitt 2017: 38)

Comprehensive concept of metaphor

The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5, cited in Schmitt et al. 2018: 1)

- A word or phrase can be understood beyond the literal meaning in the context.
- The literal meaning stems from a concrete sensoric experience (*source area*).
- This meaning is transferred to a second, often abstract and more complex, area (*target area*).

(Schmitt et al. 2018: 4)

Other concepts of metaphor

- (since) Aristotle: Metaphor as substitute or shortened comparison

- Karl Bühler: Metaphor as a result of the negotiation of meanings

- Hans Blumenberg: Metaphors as a "Lifeworld [in German: Lebenswelt]-support" for thinking

(Schmitt et al. 2018: 8ff.)

Metaphorical concepts

Metaphorical expressions can be summarized into metaphorical concepts with the same target and source area.

Example: Life is a journey.

- "How is it *going*?" "It's *going* well."
- To *come* into the world
- To make head*way*, to make *progress*
- To *come* closer to someone
- To *go* with her
- Until we *go* our separate *ways* again
- At the end: *S*omeone has *gone* from us

(Schmitt et al. 2018: 85)

Behind the metaphors: Image schemata

...in order for us to have meaningful, connected experiences that we can comprehend and reason about, there must be pattern and order to our actions, perceptions, and conceptions. *A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of these ongoing ordering activities.* These patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions.

(Johnson 1987: 29, cited in Schmitt 2017: 410)

Behind the metaphors: Image schemata

- Basic bodily, Gestalt-like experiences from the early beginning of our life course

- Templates for perception and thinking (and for metaphors as well)

- Examples: Space (orientational metaphors), object (ontological metaphors), substance, container, person

(Schmitt 2017: 48ff.)

Gender schema

- Experience of physical differences (genitals, beard, body shape…) and cultural experience of a binary perspective (from everyday practices to the genus system of many languages) lead to another body-reflexive practice.

- Elements of the structure of the gender-schema: Women and men as prototypical, interdependent and opposite elements that do not change their gender over the life course

- Logic resulting from this structure: "A is not to be converted into B and B not in A.")

(Schmitt 2017: 405ff.)

Metaphors in childhood

- Schemata form the conceptual structures to comprehend the world and the language (metaphorically).

- Metaphors thus connect the sensorimotor and synaesthetic experiences of early childhood with social practice and are an important component of mimetic processes.

- Metaphors are therefore means of the individual appropriation of the world and also serve the social regulation and the co-construction of knowledge.

(Gansen 2014: 124ff.)

Systematic metaphor analysis as a method of qualitative research

- Identifying the target area
- Broad-based collection of metaphors from the cultural background and from own documents
- Data collection
- Identifying metaphors and reconstruction of metaphorical concepts
- Interpretation based on heuristics (e.g. What is metaphorically highlighted or hidden? Which "metaphorical orchestrations" emerge?)
- Quality criteria
- Presentation

(Schmitt et al. 2018: 58ff.)

Metaphors and (preliminary) reconstruction of metaphorical concepts (Portuguese Data)

Metaphors (Boy, Female Educator)	Metaphorical concepts
E: Let help this peach [fruit]!	Objects are persons
C: We almost kill the snowman.	
C: We have little time. E: Time is running out.	Time is a substance.
E: Let's run to catch the time.	Time is a journey.
E: What ideas do you have?	Thoughts are objects.
E: Use your idea.	

Metaphors and (preliminary) reconstruction of metaphorical concepts (German Data)

Metaphors (C: Child, E: Educator)	Metaphorical concepts
E: Do you know what, this idea didn't *fall into me* [in German: einfallen].	Thinking is a container. Thoughts are objects.
E: Now, we can think about, what we want to do with these things. Do you have an idea?	Thoughts are objects.
C: Ah no, I'v got a better idea!	
E: If it functions like that… I've got a trick [gimmick]…	
C: We've got only a small hour left.	Time is an object.
E: Only a little bit of time left. C: Therefore, we better put everything back. E: You want to put everything back? C: Yes, otherwise the time is lost.	Time is a substance.

Metaphors and (preliminary) reconstruction of metaphorical concepts (German Data)

Metaphors (C: Child, E: Educator)	Metaphorical concepts
C: *Zack*, it's glued on.	Problem solving is an impact of power.
E: […] Well, does it look good? C: *Clear*. E: *Clear*. Do we want to put the second half of the roof on it?	Knowledge is seeing.
C: I can do it. So… E: I believe as well, that you *get* it *there*. So what? C: No, I can't do it. E: You don't *get* it *there*? Should I press it in a little bit?	A task is a journey.

Evidence of "metaphorical orchestrations" (Portuguese Data)

Sequences (Girl, Female Educator)
E: I am glad that you pay so much attention to my explanations.
E: I like your plane.
E: Good job on painting the draw.
E: This little box ["boxie" - in Portuguese: caixinha] is very good to organise our materials. C: [Puts the materials inside the box.] E: Very well D. [name of the child]. Well done. Everything is tidy up [in Portuguese: arrumadinho]: the little wood, the little pens, ... They [the materials] are all happy inside the box.

Evidence of "metaphorical orchestrations" (German Data)

Sequences (C: Child, E: Educator)
C: I wonder …   E: Yes? Which one do you like the most? The first, well? How many were them, did you just count them?   C: Nine. Ten.   E: And this one is the most beautiful? Do you like this one the most?   C: Because this one is with glitter. And how about you?   E: I also like mostly the pink because of the glitter and I like the one in the middle too, the orange one.   C: Me too.   E: So, and now, who is allowed to wear it? But, you can wear it as well. Shall I put it on you? Come here. Attention.
C: Is that fixed?   E: Is fixed. So…   C: Do we take the other nail, because, otherwise this *goes* off.   E: Okay, and because otherwise that can move.   C: Yes.

Metaphors and gestures

Metaphors based on a gender schema

Metaphors (C: Child, E: Educator)	(Metaphorical) concepts
E: [referring to a female figure in the hand of the child] The *main thing* is, that the hair is nice. C: [laughing]	Women consider their hair as an important ornamental detail.
E: Well, that's the woman, who eats the ice cream.	Women eat ice cream.
C: I always do this with a hammer, because my father is strong, too.	Fathers (men) are physically strong .
C: [spontaneously surprised and rejecting] Ey, that's a woman [referring to a small Native American figure with long hair made by the educator]!	Women are not Native Americans. Women have long hair.
E: What is daddy doing at the moment? Where is he? C: I don't know. Somewhere in the *Hoppahopp*. He is in the whole world. E: Yes, yes, because... Don't you have any idea, where he is at the moment *on the road?* C: Hmhm. E: No?	Fathers (men) are absent and travelling.

(Preliminary) hypotheses

- No major differences have been found so far in between the Portuguese and German data.
- Basically, the interactions are very concrete and metaphors are mostly used by the adults.
- Even though, there seems to be a "passive comprehension", insofar the children seem to understand metaphors without actively using them.
- The metaphorical ideas of consciousness as a container and thoughts as objects are already known at preschool-age.

(Preliminary) hypotheses

- Being able to metaphorical expressions seems to be linked to social competencies, since discourse markers in the data are expressed metaphorically.

- Since communication must be connectable, "metaphorical orchestrations" emerge from the use of metaphors, which can be interpreted as gender connotated.

- Stereotypical characteristics have been applied on a binary gender schema.

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