DISTANCE EDUCATION AND CARTOON DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD

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Abstract

Covid-19, which is one of the families of coronaviruses, has taken the whole world under its influence in a short time and it has been declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. It has become a global problem which is not only affecting people's health, but also causing many social problems. The most important social changes in the ongoing pandemic process are; social distancing rule, quarantine, curfew, closing of borders of countries, travel restrictions, closure of institutions and workplaces, flexibility in working hours and distance education. In this study, it is aimed to focus on the subject of education, which is one of the social areas where covid-19 is most effective. Education was carried out remotely during the pandemic process. Therefore, one of the most important actors of the process is students. In this study, the semiotic analysis of seven cartoons of the students, who experienced the process in the cartoon competition² which was organized about distance education, has been carried out.

Keywords: Pandemic, Covid-19, Cartoon, Distance Education.

PANDEMİ DÖNEMİ UZAKTAN EĞİTİM VE KARİKATÜR

Özet

Dünya sağlık örgütü tarafından pandemi olarak ilan edilen koronavirüsler ailesinden covid-19 az bir zamanda tüm dünyayı etkisi altına almıştır. Sadece insanların sağlığını etkilemekle kalmayarak birçok sosyal soruna da sebep olarak küresel anlamda bir problem haline almıştır. Hala etkisi devam eden pandemi sürecindeki en önemli sosyal değişimler; sosyal mesafe kuralı, karantina, sokağa çıkma yasağı, Ülkelerin sınırlarını kapatmaları, seyahat kısıtlamaları, kurumların ve iş yerlerinin kapatılması, çalışma saatlerinde esneklik ve uzaktan eğitimidir. Bu çalışmada covid-19'un en etkili olduğu toplumsal alanlardan biri olan eğitim konusu üzerinde durmak amaçlanmaktadır. Pandemi sürecinde eğitim uzaktan

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² Distance Education Cartoon Competition

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gerçekleştirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla sürecin en önemli aktörlerinden biri de öğrenciler olmaktadır. Bu çalışmada süreci bire bir yaşayan öğrencilerin uzaktan eğitim ile ilgili düzenlenen karikatür yarışmasında³ yer alan yedi tane karikatürün göstergebilim analizi yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pandemi, Covid-19, Karikatür, Uzaktan Eğitim.

Introduction

The Coronavirus (CoV), which was identified firstly in the Wuhan region of China in December 2019, is a large family of viruses that cause diseases ranging from cold to more serious diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). The source of the disease was defined as a new coronavirus that has not been identified in humans before on January 7, 2020, and the name of the disease caused by this virus was accepted as COVID-19 (Altın, 2020: 49). In this process, by taking the rate of transmission of the virus into account, the recommendations that should be made to reduce the spread were considered. One of the main recommendations is the closure of educational institutions (Wheeler, Erhart, & Jehn, 2010; Kawano & Kakehashi, 2015; cited by Keskin & Ozer, 2020 from De Luca, 2018). Within the scope of these recommendations, it has been decided to temporarily close educational institutions in many countries in order to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the announcement of the first COVID-19 case, which is similarly seen in our country, by the Ministry of Health on March 11, 2020, it was decided to temporarily close schools and educational institutions (Keskin and Ozer, 2020). In the first stage, schools were closed from March 16, 2020 until April 30, 2020. Afterwards, it was decided to continue the education within the scope of open and distance education practices at primary and secondary education levels with 3 TV Channels and Education Information Network (EBA). Due to the continuing effects of the pandemic, it has been announced that the education will be carried out with distance education, the first semester grades of the students will be valid in relation to their passing, and they will pass to the upper class under all circumstances (Can, 2020; Duban & Şen, 2020). In this sense, the distance education process has entered our lives very closely.

“Distance education” is the education where the teacher and the learner are not in the same place. The earliest known distance education is the “learning by letter” model in the 1840s, in which course materials were sent by mail for the student to try to learn at home. Later, attempts for distance education were continued via radio in the 1930s, and then via television. Especially in pre-school education, distance

³ Uzaktan eğitim karikatür yarışması

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education played a role like in the example of Sesame Street⁴. However, distance education could not fully reach the targeted mass education in history. Because there is a belief in the society that distance education is less effective than face-to-face education. The distance education process, which had to be started unprepared especially during the pandemic period, reinforced this thought of the society (Erkut, 2020). For students, distance education was previously used for a limited number of courses or some courses. However, it has become a necessity for all courses with the start of the pandemic process (Karabay et al. 2020). Therefore, the students entered a process that they were not very accustomed to. The students showed the reflection of this process on themselves in various ways. One of them was to draw cartoons.

Cartoon is both the art of making humor with drawing and a communication tool that expresses the actions, mistakes, contradictions and hopes of people in daily life with an idea that goes beyond the drawing, and can appeal to today's and tomorrow's society (Selcuk, 1998). Similarly, Cantek and Levent interpret the cartoon and its function as follows:

"Cartoon is a communication tool. This feature of cartoon allows us to explain the elements, functions and effects of this art field with the help of communication theories. Communication can be described in the simplest way with the help of an analogy: The 'sender' (sender), like an archer shooting at a target, sends the 'message' he wants to give to the 'receiver' he chooses as the target; when the sender, that is, the cartoonist, sends his message and this message reaches the receiver (i.e. the reader), in other words, if it is understood, liked and appreciated by the reader, the archer hits his target from 'twelve', that is, the communication activity is successful. (Cantek & Levent, 2017)."

All types of humor, including cartoons, contain opposition, stimulant, and distinctive functions. One of the motives of humor is reactivity. However, it would be wrong to perceive it as such. Humor is also the art of interpreting life with a smile and tolerance. Of course, it is necessary to give a message while making humor with cartoons. However, no matter how much the message is given and thought, first of all, the work should be greeted with a smile. Creating this smile is not easy because humor is first of all a work of intelligence; it is the ability to show what is going on behind the surface. Although it is difficult to achieve this, a smile is essential for humor (Arik, 2003). In this sense, the French philosopher Henry Bergson underlines that man is the only creature that not only smiles, but also knows how to make him laugh. According to him, laughter is a mental process and

⁴Sesame Street is the Turkish adaptation of a children's program "Sesame Street". The Sesame Street program was broadcast on TRT for two seasons in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Turkey and attracted great attention from children at that time. It was broadcast twice a week, in the morning and in the evening. The program, which educators and psychologists found extremely useful for preschool and early school children, was only prepared for two seasons and TRT was content to repeat the old parts of the program in the following years (Wikipedia, 02.06.2021).

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can only be possible in a society of pure-minded people. Referring to the social function of laughter, Bergson emphasizes its importance in terms of order (Bergson, 1945). According to Bergson, laughter fulfills this function by punishing disharmony in society. Behaviors, actions and attitudes that are not compatible with the expectations of the society are tried to be corrected by punishing them by laughing. However, society punishes those who are incompatible with it, not with concrete pressure, but with laughter (Erkek, 2017). Therefore, in Bergson, laughter appears as a subject that should be taken seriously and respected, not through the state, joy or emotion of the individual, but with a sociological point of view, which undertakes to fulfill a function in society (Costu, 2020).

In this study, how children, who receive distance education, reflect their education with cartoons has been shown. As a sample, seven cartoons which were sent to the cartoon competition that was held by TED College with the theme of distance education have been examined in terms of semiotics. The cartoons were accessed on social media.

Method

Method of the study

In this study, semiotic analysis method, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Semiotics is a science that examines the signs whose basic concepts are sign, signifier and signified (Tekinalp and Uzun, 2013, p. 139). Sign refers to everything that represents or can be used instead of another concept (Rifat, 2013, p. 97). Signifier is a word or words used to express an idea or meaning. The concept which is used to understand or interpret a signifier is defined as the signified (Mutlu, 1995, p. 140-144). The main purpose in semiotics is to reveal the meanings constructed through signs (Arpa and Çakı, 2018: 78). In this process, it is tried to analyze the hidden meanings that cannot be directly perceived by people in the signs (Tanyeri Mazıcı & Çakı, 2018, p. 297). For this reason, in this study, a semiotic analysis of the cartoons, which are discussed in an effort to find the invisible under the visible, has been made.

Purpose of the Study

The period of Covid 19 has been effective in many areas since the beginning of it. Undoubtedly, one of these areas is education. For this reason, the aim of this study is to show how children who started distance education with the onset of the covid-19 pandemic perceive this situation and how they reflect this process on cartoons.

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The Universe and Sample of the Study

The universe of this study is all the cartoons drawn with Covid-19. The first limitation was education. Therefore, the universe of the study is the cartoons which were drawn about Covid-19 and education. Since the universe of the study includes all the cartoons in the national press, it is not easy to reach all of them. For this reason, seven cartoons which were sent to the cartoon competition that was held by TED College with the theme of distance education were selected as a sample. The study was created by using publicly available secondary data. On the other hand, conducting the study only on 7 cartoons and making generalizations within the scope of the findings are the main limitations of the study.

Findings

All kinds of social problems experienced in the historical process in Turkey were sometimes expressed with satire, sometimes verbally, sometimes with artistic linear humor and communication types such as cartoon, and attention was drawn for social sensitivity and awareness. Humor mediates the reduction of individual and social tensions, especially in times of distress (Kucuksen, 2020). In this study, cartoons, a type of humor, are discussed. A total of 7 cartoons were analyzed by paying attention to the sign, the signifier and the signified elements.

Cartoon 1: Şevval Deniz Taş TED Bursa College 7/C, “Distance Education”⁵

⁵Distance education cartoon competition album (page12)

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Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ *Signifier:* A student and an animal, indoor places of the house, rooms, names of rooms / *Signified:* new way of life

Analysis: With Covid-19, houses have turned into social places of people. Especially for students who continue distance education, one of the rooms of the house is seen as a school. For this reason, Cartoon 1 is about the rooms of this house that have become social places. Cartoon 1 deals with this situation as the new life style of the society. Indoor places and figurative works draw attention in the cartoon. In the indoor places, the most striking part is technical perspective. As design elements (raw materials and principles), elements such as color, line, tone, light and shadow, balance, ratio-proportion, emphasis were used. In the study, vivid colors were mainly used. Also, light and shadow studies were carried out. Abstraction is seen in figurative elements. The human and animal in the cartoon are depicted in isolation. A balance has been established in terms of direction in the objects in the indoor places. In the cartoon, teachers and students continue to participate in online education from the places that they have determined since the day they started distance education. These places in their homes are thought to be the places where they feel most comfortable and are extremely important for them to increase their learning efficiency in the education process. In this cartoon, the situation of the general houses of the students during the distance education process is deducted, and this situation is reflected in a humorous way. The most striking parts of the cartoon were the names which were in the indoor places and given to the rooms. A humorous perspective is given to work by calling the kitchen as a “home restaurant”, the living room as a “home theater”, and the room where she attended distance education as an “online school”. The fact that she reflects the places where the most time is spent at home when there are curfews, with an entertaining point of view, has added an additional quality to the study.

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Cartoon 2: Nehir Ersoy TED Karabuk College 10/B, "Distance Education"⁶

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** A teacher, a student, child and baby, whiteboard, computers and television / **Signified:** online lesson time

Analysis: With the distance education that started with the spread of Covid-19, teachers and students have passed into a process that they are not used to. This is a sign of being different from normal for teachers and students. While the students exhibit movements that are so comfortable that they cannot be in the classroom with the confidence of being invisible, the teachers experience the difficulty of lecturing with their responsibilities at home. In the cartoon, we see the types of more than one picture. These are indoor places, abstract painting and figurative. As it is seen in the study, dry colored pencils were used technically. The aesthetic subject has successfully used light and shadow. As a result, the illustrator, who is the aesthetic subject, conveyed human actions with her own thoughts in online education. There are two separate visuals in the cartoon. In these visuals, the events that are frequently encountered and thought about in distance education are reflected in a humorous language. The actions of a distance education student and an instructor during the online lesson were tried to be explained as cartoon work. In the study, it is noteworthy that the upper part of the teacher is meticulously dressed in the costume, but the lower part is pajamas in the online lesson. At the same time, we see the family life of the teacher in the cartoon. The teacher's child is crawling around during the lesson and we see his wife trying to prevent him at the door. On the other hand, the eyes of the teacher, who watches the student on the television in the room and around him, observe whether the student is in the lesson. The cartoonist

⁶Distance education cartoon competition album (page13)

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of this cartoon work may have thought that teachers participated in the lessons in the way as she portrayed the teachers in her imagination and she caricatured the teacher in this way. In addition, it is seen that there is a thought that describes the general situation of the students whom she portrayed in her imagination.

Cartoon 3: Gökalp Kılınç TED Ankara College 10/P, “Distance Education”⁷

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** Two images (expected and actual), one student / **Signified:** hardworking, lazy

Analysis: Students who are not used to taking lessons from home sometimes reflect the comfort of this situation. In Cartoon 3, this comfort is emphasized. In the cartoon, the illustrator used figurative and indoor place types while conveying this idea. Technically, vivid colors have been used and line, tone, light and shadow, perspective have been applied successfully. In both images, the direction, balance and proportion between objects are reflected. In the cartoon, there are two different themed visuals, “expected” and “actually happening”, that describe the distance education process. In the first image, the student’s desk and objects are drawn in detail. In addition, in the first image, a student who listens to online lessons from the computer and takes notes is described with the theme “expected to be in distance education”. In the other image, it is explained that the student who should be at the study desk is listening to the lesson in his bed this time. As can be understood from its theme, a student profile, who is lazy and unwilling to listen to the lesson, is drawn here. Thus, the expected state of the student in the online

⁷Distance education cartoon competition album (page14)

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education process and the predicted action state of the student during the online education in the second image are depicted with a humorous thought. What is really meant to be explained here is how the hardworking student and lazy student act during online education.

Cartoon 4: Deniz Mecnunoğlu TED Karabuk College 10/B, “Distance Education”⁸

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** City, coronavirus, a student studying with a mask/ **Signified:** warning

Analysis: With the Covid-19, especially the education system has undergone a great transformation. Of course, this turn has affected the teachers and students, who are the actors of the subject. Distance education has been started to be protected from the virus. This issue is also emphasized in Cartoon 4. In the cartoon, figurative, landscape and abstract painting were used as the type of painting. Technically, dry pencil and other types of paint are seen. It is a fine detail that the barbed wires are depicted as a fine detail in the work. In addition, abstraction has been an element that is used extensively in objects. The cartoon is a coronavirus-themed work. In the study, there are coronavirus, city, studying environment, desk and mathematical analysis. What the subject wants to convey in the cartoon is that the coronavirus is

⁸Distance education cartoon competition album (page 15)

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always watching us, that there is a danger in our lives and that it reminds us of the possibility of contagion at any moment. While describing this idea, he used many themes in the painting such as fences, barbed wire on fences, urbanization, masked students studying online and the contents of the course they are studying. It is thought that the student wearing a mask is depicted to create awareness. Another element that is wanted to be explained here is that if you do not stay at home, the fact that the coronavirus can always follow and catch you is explained in a humorous way.

Şevval Deniz Taş
TED Bursa Koleji 7/C

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Cartoon 5: Şevval Deniz Taş TED Bursa College 7/C, "Distance Education"⁹

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** Online course tool computer, study notes and cap/ **Signified:** online graduates

Analysis: With the Covid-19 epidemic, students have been deprived of many issues. One of them is graduation ceremonies. This issue is discussed in Cartoon 5. An abstract style is used in the cartoon. Technically, it is seen that watercolor is used.

⁹Distance education cartoon competition album (page32)

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The tonal transitions are successfully reflected in the watercolor used. As design elements; color, line, tone, light and shadow were effective in the study. In the cartoon, the artist wanted to explain clearly that in these days when students continue their education processes online, they actually want to be in their schools again, they want to take face-to-face education and they want to graduate. In this cartoon, as episteme (knowledge), a humorous expression was given to the students who graduated from online education during the distance education process, with the image of “cap”. In addition, most of the students want to graduate face to face. For this reason, it is thought that this thought comes to mind because students have bitterness. Because it is known that students are upset as they cannot wear caps. The main message that the person who made the work wants to give is the thought of “we have graduated or will graduate as students who take online education”.

Cartoon 6: Süleyman Can Polat TED Sakarya College 8/A, “Distance Education”¹⁰

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** A student, online course tool computer, studying environment, course content images / **Signified:** education is a must even if it is from distance!

¹⁰Distance education cartoon competition album (page11)

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Analysis: One of the measures that have been taken during the pandemic period is distance education. After the decision that there would be no face-to-face education, distance education was started by using the available technological opportunities in order not to interrupt the education. Therefore, it is emphasized in cartoon 6 that education should be done even in times of crisis. As a type, figurative and indoor place is used. Technically, it is seen that mixed technique is used. Design elements are used successfully in the visual and vivid colors are preferred. In the cartoon, a distance education student is seen. In the work, a desk and computer in the studying environment are seen. In the distance education period, every lesson is done on the computer. The theme of each lesson is reflected in the cartoon. Visuals describing lessons such as mathematics, physical education, painting, and social sciences are used in these lessons, and these lessons are viewed online on the computer. The cartoon is depicted simply and plainly. The main message to be conveyed here is that education is necessary even if it is from distance.

Cartoon 7: Ayşe Dal TED Eskişehir College 12/ A, "Distance Education"¹¹

Sign: Distance Education Cartoon/ **Signifier:** students, online lesson tool computer, break bell/ **Signified:** education from eba tv

¹¹Distance education cartoon competition album (page 19)

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Analysis: One of the applications that were decided to conduct distance education was the EBA application supported by the Ministry of National Education. This application is mentioned in cartoon 7. Figurative and abstraction are used as type. Technically, it is seen that dry paint is used. While using the technique, intonation is also reflected. As design elements; color, line, tone, light and shadow were effective in the study. In the cartoon, it is shown that the 12/A class take the lessons as distance education. It is humorously reflected that students go to online education. In addition, the uniforms and school bags of the students are also considered in detail. Here, Eba TV, which is a distance education channel, is mentioned and it is explained that the break bell rings even if it is online education. At the same time, the cartoon shows the computer as the school building and it is humorously reflected that the students are entering the computer as if they are entering the school building. The place that is shown as school is the computer here.

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Conclusion

Due to the Covid-19 virus which is an earthshaking pandemic, measures were taken in the context of precautionary measures in all parts of the state and society as of March 15, 2020 when the first death occurred in Turkey. One of these measures has been the distance education. In this study, it is aimed to investigate how distance education is reflected in cartoons. Ceviker (1997, p. 24) drew attention that cartoon is the art of making people laugh and it is a tool that reflects social problems most effectively. The cartoons that focused on distance education during the social isolation process caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which is a health problem, made people think while smiling, contributed to raising awareness of the society, and effectively reflected the problems experienced in distance education (Kucuksen, 2020).

In the study, at the foremost of the issues related to distance education, which the cartoons studied draw attention to, there are the issues such as that the education is provided on EBA TV, education is a must even if it is from distance, online graduates, warning against the virus, online lesson time, hardworking and lazy students in distance education, new life style. In the first cartoon, the reflection of the places where the most time is spent at home when there are curfews, with a fun

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point of view, gives the work a special quality. In the second cartoon, the actions of a student and an instructor during the online lesson are tried to be explained as a cartoon work. In the third cartoon, the expected situation of the student during the online education process and the predicted action situation of the student during the online education in the second image are depicted with a humorous thought. In the other cartoon, there is the thought that the coronavirus is always watching us, that there is a danger in our lives and that it reminds us of the possibility of contagion at any time. In another cartoon, it is understood from her cartoon work that she had the idea that “we have graduated or will be as students who take online education”. The main message to be conveyed in the sixth cartoon is that education is necessary even if it is from a distance. In the last cartoon, the student shows the computer as the school building as if they were entering the school building, and humorously reflects that the students are entering the computer. Therefore, the common theme of these cartoons is distance education and the cartoons are with humor and message content with thought, creation and expression.

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