REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ÇUKUROVA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

IDENTIFYING METAPHORIC PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS ENGLISH LESSONS

Berna GÖK

MASTER OF ARTS

ADANA / 2024

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Member of Examining Committee: Prof. Dr. Ergün SERİNDAĞ
Member of Examining Committee: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duygu İŞPINAR AKÇAYOĞLU

MASTER OF ARTS

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To Çukurova University Institute of Social Sciences;

We certify that this thesis is satisfactory for the award of the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in the Department of English Language Teaching

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ebru ŞİRE KAYA

Member of Examining Committee: Prof. Dr. Ergün SERİNDAĞ

Member of Examining Committee: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duygu İŞPINAR AKÇAYOĞLU

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Berna GÖK

ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING METAPHORIC PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS ENGLISH LESSONS

Berna GÖK

Master Thesis, Department of English Language Teaching
Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ebru ŞİRE KAYA
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Students' perceptions and beliefs about foreign languages have positive or negative effects on their learning by shaping their goals and motivations. These perceptions can also influence students' learning strategies; students with negative perceptions tend to use less effective learning strategies, which can increase anxiety and adversely affect their learning. Positive perceptions of foreign languages facilitate language learning and contribute to a progressive and continuous improvement of the process. In addition, considering that foreign languages serve as an important bridge for communicating with the world and keeping up with technological and scientific developments, it is crucial to determine the perceptions of students learning foreign languages towards those languages. This study aims to determine students' perceptions of English lessons through metaphors. The concept of metaphor can generally be defined as a means of illustrating abstract concepts in more concrete ways to facilitate understanding and enhance retention. In the field of education, metaphors are frequently utilized to explain and uncover assumptions related to specific concepts. Defining English learned as a foreign language through metaphors forms the essence of this study.

This study aims to determine the metaphorical perceptions of 6th and 7th grade students towards their English lessons. The study employed a qualitative research method known as phenomenology design. The reason for choosing a phenomenological design in this study is the belief that mental images (metaphors), being neither observable phenomena nor things that can be examined under a microscope, can be understood through the descriptions provided by individuals who are the actual sources of the data. The research was carried out with a total of 325 students in the 6^{th} and 7^{th}

grades from three different middle schools in the Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep province. Data collection was conducted using a metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interview form. The metaphorical perceptions of students regarding English lessons were explored using the metaphor questionnaire form, and follow-up focus group interviews were held with those students who volunteered. The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the study were conducted using the chi-square test and content analysis. The findings from the research indicated that the students generally have positive metaphorical perceptions towards the English lesson. Besides, the study also showed that female students have a more positive metaphorical perception of the English lesson compared to male students. No statistically significant relationship was found between grade levels of the students and positivity/negativity of metaphors that were used to describe English lessons. This study would contribute teachers and researchers at stages such as determining students' perspectives on foreign languages before the learning-teaching process, preparing foreign language education programs in the country, determining language policy, and preparing and planning materials.

Keywords: Metaphor, Metaphorical perceptions of students, English lessons, Secondary school students

ÖZET

ORTAOKUL ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE DERSLERİNE YÖNELİK METAFORİK ALGILARININ BELİRLENMESİ

Berna GÖK

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı
Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ebru ŞİRE KAYA
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Öğrencilerin yabancı dile ilişkin algıları ve inanışları, onların amaçlarını ve güdülenmelerini şekillendirerek öğrenmeleri üzerinde olumlu ya da olumsuz etkilere sahiptir. Yabancı dil ile ilgili algıları öğrencilerin öğrenme stratejilerini de etkileyebilmekte ve olumsuz algıya sahip öğrenciler daha az etkili öğrenme stratejileri kullanabilmekte ve bu da kaygıyı arttırarak öğrenmelerini olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Yabancı dile yönelik algıların olumlu yönde olması, yabancı dil öğrenimini kolaylaştıracak ve dil öğrenme sürecini olumlu yönde etkileyerek sürekli ilerlemesini sağlayacaktır. Bunun yanı sıra yabancı dilin dünyayla iletişime geçmek ve teknolojik ve bilimsel gelişmeleri takip etmek için önemli bir köprü görevi görmesi de göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, yabancı dil öğrenimi gören öğrencilerinin yabancı dile yönelik algılarını belirlemek büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin İngilizce dersine ilişkin algılarını metaforlar aracılığıyla belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Metafor kavramı, genel olarak ilgili kavramın ya da ele alınan konunun öğrenilmesini kolaylaştırmak, daha kolay ve rahat anlaşılmasını sağlamak ve kalıcılığı artırmak amacıyla soyut kavramları somutlaştırmada, bir şeyi bilinen başka bir şeyle anlatma olarak tanımlanabilir. Eğitim alanında özellikle kimi kavramlara yönelik varsayımları açıklama ve ortaya çıkarmada metaforlardan sıklıkla yararlanılmaktadır. Yabancı dil olarak öğrenilen İngilizceyi metaforlarla tanımlamak bu çalışmanın temelini oluşturmaktadır.

Bu araştırmada ortaokul 6. ve 7. sınıf öğrencilerinin İngilizce dersine yönelik metaforik algılarının belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomonoloji deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada fenomonoloji deseninin tercih edilmesinin nedeni, zihinsel imgelerin (metaforların) gözlenebilen bir

durum veya mikroskop altında incelenebilen bir şey olmamasından ötürü zihinsel imgelerin bizzat veri kaynağı olan kişilerin betimlemeleriyle anlaşılabileceğinin düşünülmesidir. Araştırma Gaziantep ili Şehitkamil ilçesine bağlı 3 farklı ortaokulda 6. ve 7. sınıf öğrencisi olan toplam 325 öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri toplama aracı olarak metaforik anket formu ve odak grup görüşmesi kullanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyi ile İngilizce dersine yönelik metaforik algıları metaforik anket formu ile araştırılmış daha sonra bu öğrencilerden gönüllü olanlarla odak grup görüşmesi yapılmıştır. Çalışmadan elde edilen verilerin analizi ve yorumlanması için ki kare testi ve içerik analizi uygulanmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular öğrencilerin genel olarak İngilizce dersine yönelik olumlu metaforik algılarının olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu sonuca ek olarak kız öğrencilerin İngilizce dersine yönelik metaforik algılarının erkek öğrencilere göre daha olumlu olduğu saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin sınıf düzeyleri ile İngilizce dersini betimlemede kullanılan metaforların olumlu/olumsuz olması arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmamıştır. Bu çalışma, öğrenme-öğretme süreci öncesinde öğrencilerin yabancı dile ilişkin bakış açılarının belirlenmesi, ülkedeki yabancı dil eğitim programlarının hazırlanması, dil politikalarının belirlenmesi, materyallerin hazırlanması ve planlanması gibi aşamalarda öğretmenlere ve araştırmacılara katkı sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metafor, Öğrencilerin metaforik algıları, İngilizce dersleri, Ortaokul öğrencileri

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Berna GÖK

Adana / 2024

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband and our baby who is about to open their eyes to the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EF: Education First

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EPI: English Proficiency Index

ESL: English as a Second Language

MEB: Ministry of National Education

NEA: National Education Association

SAT: Scholastic Aptitude Test

TEPAV: Turkish Economic Policy Research Foundation

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

LIST OF APPENDICES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of seven parts, including the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, assumptions of the study, the limitations of the study, and definitions of related terms.

1.1. Background of the Study

In our age where global communication accelerates with the influence of technology, it is obvious how necessary and important to know a foreign language is. Learning a language is the most important key to opening to the outside world, both personally and professionally. Individuals can get to know different cultures and enrich their own knowledge through language, and they can also transfer this knowledge and experience to future generations through language. In addition to serving as a means of communication and thought between individuals, language is also a mirror of cultures (Aksan, 1998). Knowing a foreign language has become a great necessity for societies politically, economically, and sociologically. Wherever you are in the world, a high level of English is an integral part of a well-being, healthy, connected future (Education First, 2017). For this reason, foreign language education and learning has gained an important place in today's information age and has begun to take a concrete place in the education and training plans of states. Many developed or developing countries, which are aware of the necessity of knowing a foreign language, are making efforts to provide all kinds of material and moral support so that their citizens can learn at least one foreign language effectively by including foreign language courses in their education programs (Yaşar, 1993).

In Turkey, teaching English started from the 4th grade of primary school in 1997, and from the 2nd grade of primary school in 2012, and continues throughout secondary school, high school, and university education. In addition to English, education in different foreign languages, especially German and French, is also provided, depending on the characteristics and quality of the schools. In Turkey, the importance of knowing a foreign language has long been accepted by the public and the state, and extensive efforts have been made in teaching foreign languages (Sebüktekin, 1983). Although resources, books, documents, and equipment are quite diverse and

accessible in language learning thanks to today's computer technology, Turkey has unfortunately not reached a sufficient level in terms of knowing foreign languages in both national and international foreign language proficiency rankings. According to the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) data for 2023, Turkey ranks 66th among 113 countries in terms of English learning and usage. Today, Turkey is second to last in the European category, which consists of 34 countries, regarding English, which is recognized as a common language. (EF EPI, 2023). However, although the quality of the foreign language education provided, foreign language learning processes and the reasons for the resulting low foreign language proficiency have been questioned, clear answers have not been provided. Regarding this, many detailed studies, both quantitative and qualitative, have been conducted on what effective foreign language learning and teaching methods can be or what are the factors affecting foreign language learning and teaching. Demirel (1999) emphasizes the importance of the following principles regarding foreign language education:

1. Functional integrity of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills,
2. Using visual and auditory tools,
3. Using the mother tongue, when necessary,
4. Ensuring that information is applied to daily life,
5. Enabling students to participate more effectively in the lesson,
6. Taking individual differences into account,
7. Motivating students.

Yavuz (2001) explains the important factors related to foreign language education; students, teachers, in-class activities, what to learn in a foreign language, for what purpose it will be learned, in which environment the learning will take place, tools and equipment to be used and methods to be chosen. Hengirmen (1997) also states that success cannot be achieved unless four basic elements come together in foreign language teaching. “1-Method, 2-Educational Tools, 3-Educational Environment, 4-Teaching Technique.” He emphasizes that the deficiency of any one of these elements will significantly affect language teaching. Furthermore, Demirpolat (2015) explains the main problems in foreign language education; problems related to the pre-service training of foreign language teachers, problems related to the way they are employed, problems related to physical conditions, problems related to educational materials,

problems related to teaching methods, problems related to management and supervision and suggested various solutions to these problems. Studies on problems and solution suggestions in foreign language education (Acat & Demiral, 2002; Arslan & Akbarov, 2010; Bayraktaroğlu, 2012) generally emphasized concepts such as motivation, method, curriculum, language policy, planning, physical environment, and teacher training.

One of the most important issues emphasized in the above-mentioned studies is the learners' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes towards language learning in the process of learning/teaching a foreign language. Breen (2001) notes that the beliefs about language learning that students carry into the classroom significantly influence their learning process and overall success. Furthermore, Kaçar and Zengin (2009) state that learners' beliefs regarding the nature and processes of language learning impact their choice of specific language learning strategies. In other words, students' perceptions and beliefs about a foreign language have positive or negative effects on their learning by shaping their goals and motivation. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) also revealed in their studies that students' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes significantly affect their language learning. Research conducted by Cain and Dweck (1995) also shows that there is a relationship between students' perceptions, motivation, success, and abilities. Their perception of a foreign language may also affect students' learning strategies, and students with negative perceptions may use less effective learning strategies, which may increase anxiety and negatively affect their learning.

Based on all these mentioned above, this study aims to determine students' perceptions of English lessons through metaphors. The study also aims to examine students' perceptions of English as a foreign language as well as whether gender has an impact on their language learning perceptions and explore the differences between 6th and 7th grade students in terms of the metaphors that they use in EFL classes.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although English teaching starts at an early age in Turkey, it is seen that people do not have English proficiency. Low proficiency in a language, which is inevitable for following scientific and technological developments in a country, poses a big problem. Despite all the resources and effort spent in foreign language education in Turkey, it seems that the desired level of efficiency cannot be achieved (Işık, 2008). In recent years, many studies (Bayyurt, 2012; Çimen, 2017; Haznedar, 2010; Işık, 2008;

Kızıldağ, 2009) have been conducted to find out the reasons for this inadequacy in foreign language teaching and learning, and appropriate solutions have been tried to be produced. These studies have shown that one of the most common and important problems encountered in learning a foreign language is lack of motivation. The effect of perception on motivation is also considered an important problem. In this context, it is of great importance to examine students' perceptions of English lessons.

In foreign language teaching, how the student perceives the foreign language is very important. Students' perceptions of a course affect their interest and motivation in that course, and thus their success. Learners' perspective and perception, along with environmental factors and individual characteristics towards foreign language learning, can have a positive or negative impact on language learning. If the student's perception of a foreign language is positive, learning a foreign language will become easier and the language learning process will progress in a positive direction, or vice versa. For this reason, many schools are constantly making innovations and updates to create a positive perception among students regarding foreign language teaching. In addition, knowing the perceptions of foreign language learners towards foreign languages and the factors affecting this will make foreign language teachers and researchers better equipped.

In this context, this study aims to reveal secondary school students' perceptions of English lessons and the effects of these perceptions on their English learning processes. In the study, metaphors will be used to determine and concretize the students' perceptions. Metaphors help people learn the associations of certain concepts. The concept of metaphor can generally be defined as expressing one thing with something else that is known, to concretize abstract concepts to facilitate the learning of the relevant concept or the subject under consideration, to ensure easier and more comfortable understanding, and to increase permanence (Sözer & Özkan, 2014). Thus, it will be possible to reach students' perceptions of the concept of 'English lesson' through the metaphors they use.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This research was conducted to examine the perceptions of 6th and 7th grade students regarding English lessons. The main purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of 6th and 7th grade secondary school students for English lessons through

the metaphors they produce. This study also aimed to reveal whether students' metaphorical perceptions towards English lessons differ in terms of gender and grade levels. Another purpose of this research is to examine what factors may have affected the students' perceptions towards English lessons.

1.4. Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are the metaphors produced by 6th and 7th grade EFL students towards English lessons?
   - **1a.** Is there a difference among 6th and 7th grade EFL students' metaphors towards English lessons regarding their grade levels?
   - **1b.** Is there a difference among EFL students' metaphors towards English lessons regarding their gender?
2. What are the factors that affect 6^{th} and 7^{th} grade EFL students' positive or negative perceptions of English lessons based on the metaphors they use?

1.5. Significance of the Study

In parallel with the increasing need for information sharing brought about by the developing and changing world, English comes to the fore as a foreign language. To follow this change and development and to communicate with the world, teaching English, which is accepted as a universal language, has become a subject of great emphasis in Turkey. The Ministry of National Education updated the English teaching program in the 2013-2014 academic year and implemented the decision to offer English lessons starting from the 2nd grade (MEB, 2013). In this way, a student who graduates from primary and secondary school in Turkey receives 720 hours of compulsory English language lessons (MEB, 2017). Despite the high number of course hours, there are still challenges in language education in Turkey, and students learning English struggle to express themselves in English in everyday situations. The efficient progress in English teaching process is closely related to many necessary factors besides the learner. At this point, the learner's perception of English plays an important role because a positive perception of the learned language makes language learning easier, while a negative perception makes language learning difficult. Thus, understanding the

perceptions of English learners will help explain the reasons for the failure of English education in Turkey.

This study aims to determine students' perceptions of English and the factors affecting these perceptions by using the metaphor technique. Considering that a foreign language serves as a bridge in communication with the world, the data obtained in this study is considered very important. Since the 1970s, metaphor has entered our lives through academic studies around the world (Gibbs, 2008; Holme, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In our country, metaphor studies have been used in articles and academic theses written in recent years (Ahkemoğlu, 2011; Akar & Yıldırım, 2009; Gömleksiz, 2013; Saban, 2008; Saban, 2010; Tercan, 2015). However, there is a limited number of studies in the literature that explore secondary school students' perceptions of English using metaphors. Therefore, this research is deemed important for understanding the perceptions, motivations, attitudes, and beliefs of secondary school students towards English lessons. It also aims to evaluate the learning and teaching process in relation to the students' successes and failures in English at the end of the lesson, and to develop new plans and roadmaps accordingly. In addition, it will shed light on teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers at stages such as determining students' perspectives on foreign languages before the learning-teaching process, preparing foreign language education programs in the country, determining language policy, and preparing and planning materials.

1.6. Assumptions

In this study, it is assumed that the sampling, consisting of 325 secondary school EFL students, adequately represents the population, and all the participants who took part in the study voluntarily gave sincere and objective answers to the data collection tools used. Additionally, the study's sample comprised EFL students from different secondary schools. It was assumed that the students participating in the research formed certain concepts about the English lesson. Also, the reliability and validity of the data collection tools are determined to be suitable for the study.

1.7. Limitations

The present study is not without limitations, and it has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First of all, the study is limited to 325 EFL secondary school

students who voluntarily participated in the study. The participants who responded to the questionnaire were limited to the EFL students involved in the study. Since participation in the interviews was voluntary, the interview had a small number of participants as well. Moreover, the data includes only the opinions of 6th and 7th grade EFL students about English lessons, and the study findings are not generalizable to other students from different grades. In addition, the number of participants is limited to the context of a few schools located in the Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all EFL secondary school students across Turkey. It means that if this study were carried out in another city in Turkey, the results might have been different, and the perceptions of students may vary.

Another limitation of the study is that, upon examining the responses given in the metaphor questionnaire form, only 202 out of the total 325 students who participated in the study were able to produce metaphors correctly. The words used by the remaining 123 participants did not have metaphorical characteristics and these questionnaire forms were not included in the study based on the opinions of two Turkish language teachers. Students were excluded from the evaluation if they did not produce logical metaphors, left responses blank, wrote a metaphor without providing a justification starting with "because," or provided a justification that did not contain a relevant word fitting into the metaphor. Lastly, the findings are also limited to the two data collection tools used in the study, which are a metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interviews.

1.8. Definitions

The operational definitions and explanations for each in this study are listed below:

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): The teaching of English to people whose first language is not English (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013).

Metaphor: A powerful mental mapping mechanism that allows individuals to perceive concepts in diverse ways by shifting their perspective (Arslan & Bayrakçı, 2006).

Metaphorical Perception: From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, it means perceiving a concept with another concept (Kövecses, 2010).

Perception: a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013).

In this chapter, background information of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, and definitions were given. In the next chapter, fundamental concepts, a review of previous studies, and their findings will be summarized.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the theoretical foundations on which the research is based are presented under the headings of the importance of learning a foreign language, English as a foreign language, teaching English as a foreign language in Turkey, perception in language learning, metaphor in conceptual framework, use of metaphors in education, metaphorical perception, review of related research about metaphorical perception which are included in the education-related research conducted to date as a result of the literature review.

2.1. The Importance of Learning a Foreign Language

Our world is developing every year and the demand and need for education is increasing day by day. The importance of knowing a foreign language is felt more clearly every day. According to Demirpolat (2015), proficiency in a foreign language is crucial for the development of human capital, which is why foreign language education holds a significant position in the curricula of many countries around the world.

In the globalizing world, borders in education have disappeared and, students can access all kinds of information through the internet and media. In addition to their knowledge and work experience, people who speak multiple languages quickly climb the career ladder and attach importance to their personal development. Language requirement in post-university life, the opportunity to study at foreign universities, the opportunity to work in official positions, and the opportunity to work in international and foreign companies are among the career benefits of a foreign language (Ekmekçi, 1983; Ekmekyermezoğlu, 2010; Küçük, 2006). Oruç (2016) argues that foreign languages are learned to communicate with the people of foreign countries, to study in those countries, to travel, and to engage in economic, technological, commercial, and scientific exchanges. Özdemir (2006) states that individuals must learn internationally spoken languages to create and sustain diverse relationships across various aspects of life.

There are many reasons why learning a new language is a good idea. Meeting new people, communicating easily, understanding new cultures more deeply, seeing the world from a different perspective and being a better listener are just a few of these.

Through learning a foreign language, students come to understand the similarities and differences between their own culture and that of others. This experience fosters tolerance towards foreign cultures and encourages a mindset that is free from obsessions. Studies show that people who speak two or more languages have more active and creative minds (Altıok, 2006; Büyükkırlı, 2005; Ekmekyermezoğlu, 2010). When learning a foreign language, in addition to learning the language itself, the grammar of a sentence with all its elements is also mastered. Thanks to a foreign language, students have the opportunity to get to know their native language better by learning foreign language structures and grammar (Küçük 2006). Ekmekyermezoğlu (2010) asserts that by examining sentence structure, sound, phonetics, stress, and grammar, individuals can enhance their mother tongue through the creation of more complex and detailed sentences. This approach facilitates more effective speaking and fosters strong communication. Additionally, studying a foreign language enables students to cultivate alternative thoughts from a critical and multifaceted perspective. Altıok (2006) highlights that learning a foreign language can also enhance analytical thinking skills. Engaging different areas of the brain encourages flexible thinking and increases cognitive functionality. Moreover, language acquisition strengthens memory by exercising mental skills, facilitating the ability to make connections, synthesize information, and easily memorize words and phrases. It also improves the ability to solve and analyze mathematical problems and language analysis. In different studies, it has been determined that students who learned a foreign language in high school are also successful in other courses and that there is a positive relationship between Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) test results and learning a foreign language (Weatherford, 1986).

2.2. English as a Foreign Language

The importance of learning English as a foreign language is evident in almost every field, especially with technology. By the late twentieth century, English had already become an original “lingua franca,” a global language used by people whose native or second language was not English to communicate with each other (Ekmekyermezoğlu, 2010). In a study published by the British Council and the Turkish Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV) in 2013, the most widely spoken languages in the world are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Most Widely Spoken Languages in the World

Language	Number of Speakers (Millions)	Number of Native Speakers (Millions) [2]	Percentage of world population (approximate)
English	1000	365	16
Mandarin	1000	935	16
Hindu/Urdu*	900	361	15
Spanish	450	387	7
Russian / Belarusian	320	160	5

*Although Hindi and Urdu use different writing systems, these languages are branches of Hindustani and are orally mutually intelligible.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica Online Academic Edition

It is stated in the study of the British Council and the Turkish Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV) in 2013 that English has become a common language of communication rather than a native language today. Most of those who speak English well do not use English as their native language but as a foreign language. For this reason, English is often learned as a foreign language (EFL) rather than as a second language (ESL). Learning English, which is the language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy, tourism, and media, also means finding a good job in many fields in a multinational company. As most multinational companies seek a certain level of English proficiency, the emergence of English as the language of international trade has significantly expanded job opportunities. At the same time, English serves as the official language for many private organizations, including the United Nations. It is designated as the official language in 67 countries worldwide. In nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and Singapore, English functions as a second official language. Additionally, in countries like India, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, where English is a native language, it is recognized as one of the official languages in more than a quarter of the countries globally. If we consider that at least one in 5 people can speak or understand English, we can say that English is the second language of the rest of the world (British Council & TEPAV, 2013). Therefore, this makes English one of the most useful languages you

can learn. People need to learn common languages spoken internationally to establish and maintain all kinds of relationships in many areas of life.

2.3. Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Turkey

Learning English is an endeavor that has been given great importance for years in Turkey as well as all over the world. A clear indication of this trend is the gradual decrease in the starting age for English education over the years. In 1997, English classes became mandatory for 4th and 5th graders in primary school, and since 2013, it has been required from the 2nd grade onward (Demirel, 2016; Kırkıç & Boray, 2017). Starting from the 2013-2014 academic year, the English Language Course (Grades 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) curriculum in primary education institutions (primary schools and secondary schools) has been put into practice. According to this program, English lessons started with the 2nd grade (6-6.5 years old) (MEB, 2013). In the English language teaching program revised in 2018, the class, skills, language proficiency and activity table were mostly accepted in the same way, as shown in Table 2 below (MEB, 2017).

Table 2.

Model English Language Curriculum (For 2nd -8th Grades)

Levels [CEFR*] (Hours / Week)	Grades	Skill focus	Main activities/Strategies
1 [A1] (2)	2	Listening and Speaking	TPR/Arts and crafts/Drama
	3	Listening and Speaking Very Limited Reading and Writing°	
	4	Listening and Speaking Very Limited Reading and Writing°	
2 [A1] (3)	5	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading° Very Limited Writing°	Drama/Role-play
	6	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading° Limited Writing°	
3 [A2] (4)	7	**Primary:** Listening and Speaking **Secondary:** Reading and Writing	Theme-based ∞
	8	**Primary:** Listening and Speaking **Secondary:** Reading and Writing	

Source: https://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=327

MEB has updated and implemented the English Primary School (2nd, 3rd, 4th Grades), Secondary School (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Grades) and Secondary Education

curriculum since the 2017-2018 academic year. Accordingly, the weekly course hours of English lessons in the relevant institutions have also changed, as shown in Table 3 below (MEB, 2017).

Table 3.

2012-2013 and 2017-2018 Academic Year Primary and Secondary School English Weekly Lesson Hours

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
English Lesson (MEB, 2012)	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	4 hours	4 hours	4 hours	4 hours
English Lesson (MEB, 2017)	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	3 hours	3 hours	4 hours	4 hours

Source: https://tegm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_02/22163752_Yizelge.pdf

Unfortunately, it is not possible to say that foreign language teaching in Turkey provides the targeted success. Başat (2014) reports that a significant number of young people aged 15 to 29 lack proficiency in a foreign language. According to EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2023 data, Turkey ranks 66th among 113 countries in terms of learning and using the English language in Turkey. We rank second from last in the European category, which includes 34 countries (EF EPI, 2023). Akpınar and Aydın (2009) described the challenges in foreign language learning by stating that millions of students are attempting to learn a foreign language for various reasons. When considering the additional learners pursuing language acquisition for other purposes, this number becomes even larger. However, since this quantity does not coincide with quality in foreign language learning, it becomes even more difficult to overcome the problems encountered (Ekmekyermezoğlu, 2010).

Additionally, the British Council and the Turkish Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV) also conducted studies in Ankara, Antalya, Balıkesir, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Malatya, Samsun, Trabzon and within 100 km of these provinces in 2013. It was examined 80 English lessons between the 4th and 12th grades in 48 schools. The report found that despite many English teachers (80%) having the qualifications and language skills needed to deliver effective language lessons and an effective and positive classroom environment, a large proportion of

students in Turkey (90%) remain at a basic level in English, even after more than 1,000 hours of instruction. The report also draws attention to the factors that explain this failure. The first of these is that in all schools visited, English is taught as a lesson, that is, on a grammar basis, rather than as a language of communication. Second, in all classrooms observed, students fail to learn how to communicate in English and function independently. It has been observed that teacher-centered classroom practice and knowledge-based question-answer practice dominate in the classrooms. Thirdly, teachers fail to use group activities to communicate because the classroom layout is two-by-two seating arrangement. Fourth, official textbooks and curricula do not consider the varying levels and needs of students. Fifth, the teachers interviewed stated that they had little say in the process and practice of teaching English. Interviews with teachers have shown that the current Inspectorate is not an expert in teaching the English language, are often non-English speakers and are unable to provide advice or support to teachers during school visits. Finally, teachers stated that because they constantly repeat the same program, students' levels remain low even as the grades progress (British Council & TEPAV, 2013).

Researchers have categorized the factors affecting the foreign language to be successful in a foreign language as internal and external factors (Aküzel, 2006; Ellis, 1997; Gonzales, 2001; Öner & Gedikoğlu, 2007). In his study, Gonzales (2001) listed internal factors as biological, physical, psychological, cognitive, and social characteristics of students, while external factors were stated as social and economic characteristics such as school and family, mother and father's education level, profession, family structure and the language used at home. According to Şahin (2006), external factors include any external influence that influences and evaluates an individual's behavior. Internal factors include the individual being psychologically ready and willing to learn a foreign language and the individual not having a physical condition that prevents language learning.

2.4. Importance of Perception in Language Learning

Language learning is a complex process influenced by various cognitive, emotional, and social factors. Among these, perception plays a crucial role as it affects how students interpret, understand, and absorb linguistic input. Perception includes not only the sensory experience of hearing and seeing words and sentences but also the

cognitive processes involved in recognizing phonetic sounds, grasping meanings, and connecting new information to prior knowledge. Aydınlı (1992) stated that perceiving is a mental phenomenon that is related to sensing the stimulant effects of the environment by the help of our sense organs and giving them a concept in our minds.

One of the most noticeable aspects of perception in language learning is its influence on pronunciation. Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) highlighted the significant role of pronunciation in facilitating successful communication in multilingual contexts, noting that pronunciation issues can negatively impact effective communication and may lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Learners often find it challenging to produce sounds that are absent in their native languages, which can lead to difficulties in achieving native-like pronunciation. For example, English learners who lack certain phonetic distinctions in their native languages may perceive these sounds differently, resulting in mispronunciations that can obstruct effective communication. Richard and Lockhart (1996) identify several factors that affect students' attitudes toward the foreign language they are learning, including interactions with native English speakers and exposure to media sources. The more positive these influences are, the more favorable the students' attitudes and willingness to participate in interactive conversations will become.

Moreover, perception plays a crucial role in comprehension. Dwinata (2017) stated that perception influences language choice and also affects meaning. Enhanced perceptual awareness enables students to engage with the language on a deeper level, ultimately improving their listening and reading comprehension. Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight that language learners effectively acquire the language when they find their studies engaging, relevant, and organized in a way that aligns with their goals.

Social dynamics also significantly shape students' perceptions. The context in which learning activities take place can affect students' attitudes toward both the language and the process of learning it (Tumposky, 1991). Social interactions can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition, depending on the environment and the individuals involved. A supportive social atmosphere encourages students to engage actively, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear of criticism. These interactions create realistic learning experiences in which language understanding is continually developed and negotiated. In contrast, high-pressure situations may lead students to withdraw into silence, resulting in limited engagement and fewer opportunities for practice. Therefore, fostering a positive environment is crucial for promoting favorable

perceptions of language learning, ultimately enhancing students' confidence and abilities.

As a result, perception plays a crucial role in influencing pronunciation, comprehension, and social interactions during the language learning process. A student's beliefs about teaching and learning significantly shape their approach to acquiring a second language (Bialystok, 1978). For example, students studying English as a foreign language may struggle if they develop a negative attitude toward their classes, while those who maintain a positive perspective are more likely to succeed, as "perception about a course significantly impacts its success" (Şahin, 2013). Therefore, allowing students to develop their perceptual skills through practice and supportive interactions can lead to notable improvements in their language proficiency.

2.5. Metaphor in Conceptual Framework

The term "metaphor" is derived from the Greek word "metapherien," with "meta" meaning "beyond" and "pherien" meaning "to transfer" or "to take over." Several researchers have presented different perspectives on the nature of metaphor in the literature. Arnett (1999) considers metaphor as a tool for perception, while Silman and Şimşek (2006) view it as a means of understanding, describing, and comparing social realities. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that the word metaphor itself implies “to move something from one place to another.”

Hasırcı (2017) describes metaphors as effective cognitive tools for creating and directing ideas about a concept. Furthermore, Arslan and Bayrakçı (2006) view metaphors as a powerful mental mapping mechanism that allows individuals to perceive concepts in diverse ways by shifting their perspective, a notion that is also supported by Saban (2008). Additionally, Güler, Akgün, Öcal, and Doruk (2012) emphasize that metaphors can effectively describe concepts by connecting them with seemingly unrelated words in people's cognitive processes.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not merely figurative language devices; they also form the foundation of our understanding and thoughts. In conclusion, these various definitions collectively demonstrate that expressing an idea or situation through analogies is referred to as metaphor.

2.6. Use of Metaphors in Education

Education is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves individuals' journeys to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and undergo personal growth. Within this journey, the variety of teaching methods and strategies is essential for enhancing both learning and teaching experiences. Although many methods serve as conceptual tools in education, metaphors hold particular significance. They enable the expression of abstract ideas in tangible ways, fostering a deeper understanding. Gasset (1948) suggests that metaphor could be the most powerful ability an individual can possess.

A metaphor is generally understood as representing one meaning through another concept or object. In the field of educational sciences, metaphors are often employed to convey individuals' attitudes and perceptions (Aydın & Pehlivan, 2010; Şahinkaya & Yıldırım, 2016). They enhance the learning process by allowing complex ideas and concepts to be articulated in a more accessible language. For example, employing the metaphor "learning is a journey" in teaching materials can help students better understand the challenges, discoveries, and stages they will face on their way to achieving goals. Additionally, phrases like ‘knowledge is a treasure’ or ‘education is like a tree’ symbolize the nature and significance of education, leaving a lasting impression on students.

Metaphors serve not only to foster better understanding but also to create emotional engagement and motivation. They reflect and influence our emotions, which in turn shapes our behaviors (Strenski, 1989). In educational settings, there are many advantages to using metaphors. When students interpret abstract concepts as more tangible entities, their interest in learning tends to increase. For instance, the phrase "thinking is like a mirror" helps students comprehend the intricacies of their thought processes while highlighting the importance of this reflection. Establishing an emotional connection renders the learning experience more captivating. However, for metaphors to be effectively utilized, teachers must exercise caution. Each metaphor acquires significance within a specific context, and the ability of different student groups to comprehend these metaphors can vary. Metaphors reflect incomplete or implied messages rather than communicating a message clearly (Tsai, Lo, & Tseng, 2017). Consequently, educators should take into account the age, experiences, and cultural backgrounds of their students when choosing metaphors. Moreover, it is crucial to periodically collect feedback to determine if the intended message communicated

through the metaphors is clearly understood. This approach allows the metaphors used in the educational process to more effectively resonate with students.

Another advantage of using metaphors in education is their ability to foster collaboration and discussions among students. Metaphors (similes, analogies, allegories, figures of speech) are one of the most powerful mental tools that structure, guide, and control our thoughts about the formation and operation of events (Saban, 2004). Metaphors invite students to articulate their thoughts and engage with one another. For instance, a conversation can be sparked by the phrase "Life is like a game of chess," which aids students in honing their abstract thinking skills. These dialogues, enriched by various viewpoints, also facilitate the development of critical thinking capabilities. As powerful cognitive tools, metaphors offer valuable insights into students' beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, allowing inferences about their perceptions and learning styles (Ocak & Gündüz, 2006; Lakoff, 2009).

In conclusion, the significance of employing metaphors in education is considerable. Metaphors aid in making learning processes more tangible, allowing students to grasp abstract concepts more effectively. In the field of education, metaphors are often used to explain and uncover assumptions related to certain concepts (Saban, 2004). Additionally, they boost emotional motivation and engagement, thereby enriching the overall learning experience. However, for these tools to be utilized effectively, educators must adopt a thoughtful and intentional approach. The increased role of metaphors in future educational practices will greatly contribute to enhancing the quality of education. In this regard, reinforcing the use of metaphors in education stands out as a vital strategy for making learning processes more effective and efficient.

2.7. Metaphorical Perception

Language not only serves as a means of communication but also plays a critical role in the transmission of cultures, ways of thinking, and social values. In the process of learning a foreign language, the role of conceptual metaphors stands out as a facilitating element in understanding language acquisition and its internal dynamics. In foreign language learning, metaphors are utilized to reveal students' thoughts and perceptions about the learning process (Kesen, 2010).

A metaphor is a term or expression used in the narration of a phenomenon, based on the similarity of one thing to another. Metaphoric perceptions are often created in the

classroom environment as part of the learning process (Şahin, 2013). In language learning, metaphoric perception functions as a tool that enables students to grasp and internalize meanings in the new language. Ocak and Gündüz (2006) state that metaphors are not only a teaching method used to explain complex concepts, but they also reveal perceptions and learning styles. Particularly in the expression of abstract concepts, the use of metaphors provides students with a more understandable and concrete context. The concept of metaphor can generally be defined as a means of facilitating the understanding of a related concept or subject, making it easier and more comfortable to comprehend, and enhancing retention. It involves the process of concretizing abstract concepts by explaining one thing through another known entity (Sözer & Özkan, 2014). For example, the English expression "time is money" conveys the idea that time is valuable, thereby enhancing learners' awareness of time management. Such linguistic metaphors are related not only to the structural elements of language but also to cultural and social dynamics. The brain relies on concrete experiences and familiar images to understand abstract concepts. In this context, encouraging teachers to use metaphorical language enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the target language. Indeed, reflective thinking and analogical learning strategies, which are part of teaching methods, provide significant opportunities for the effective use of metaphors.

As a result, metaphorical perception holds an important place in foreign language learning, offering students the opportunity to learn the language in a more meaningful and lasting way. For students to grasp the cultural and emotional dimensions of the language, the effective use of metaphors is essential. Metaphors are indeed regarded as a cognitive tool in the process of making sense of the real world (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008) and assist people in explaining what they observe through various similes (Cerit, 2008). Furthermore, it is crucial for teachers to carefully guide this process, as it will enrich individuals' foreign language learning experiences and reinforce the idea that language is not just a means of communication but also a cultural carrier. This metaphorical aspect of foreign language learning will strengthen individuals' connections to the world while also contributing to their cognitive and cultural development.

2.8. Review of Related Research about Metaphorical Perception

There are some studies in the literature on metaphorical perceptions regarding foreign languages. In one of his studies, Kesen (2010) determined students' metaphorical perceptions of English textbooks. The most common choices among students include guides and maps in the guidance and enlightenment category, roads in the travel category, and puzzles in the difficulty category. It was found that they create metaphors for foreign countries in the secret category and metaphors related to money in the power category. While more than half of the students in the research developed positive metaphors for English textbooks, one third developed negative metaphors.

In Ahkemoğlu's (2011) research on the metaphorical perceptions of English language teaching students and university students from other fields regarding foreign language teachers, it was found that students in both groups associated light, moon, and sun with the lighting category; rain with the development category; and utilized architect metaphors within the shaping category. It can be stated that students who have such metaphorical perceptions towards the foreign language teacher will develop positive attitudes towards the teacher of the course and learning the language they teach and will have positive affective characteristics in language learning. This will make it easier for students to learn the target language.

Moreover, Gömleksiz (2013) determined prospective teachers' perceptions of foreign languages through metaphors. The study was conducted on teacher candidates studying at Fırat University Faculty of Education in the 2012-2013 academic year. A total of 542 teacher candidates participated in the research, comprising 289 females and 253 males. The data was collected using forms featuring an incomplete sentence structured as "Foreign language is like...; because...". Eight distinct conceptual categories were identified, encompassing 54 metaphors related to the concept of a foreign language. These categories include future, necessity, power, joy, travel, despair, difficulty, and colonialism. The research found that teacher candidates created more positive metaphors concerning the concept of foreign language. In this context, while 432 teacher candidates developed positive metaphors, 110 teacher candidates developed negative metaphors. Accordingly, it can be said that teacher candidates have a positive perspective towards foreign languages.

In the Czech Republic, Kubiatko, Mzrakova, and Janko (2012) investigated the differences in geographic perception across gender and grade levels among lower

secondary school students. The study sampled 540 pupils from six lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic. The findings indicated that boys had a more positive perception of geography lessons, which correlated with higher scores in geography compared to girls. Additionally, the study showed that boys considered geography to be an easier subject than girls did, and they expressed a greater desire for more frequent geography lessons.

In another study, Sayar (2014) examined the images of teachers teaching English as a foreign language and their students regarding the concept of professional teacher identity using the metaphor analysis method. The data of the study were collected from a group of 10 teachers teaching English as a foreign language at Düzce University and 200 students of these teachers through semi-structured interviews. These data were analyzed with metaphor analysis, a qualitative research method based on content analysis, to reveal teachers' and students' perceptions of teachers' professional identities. As a result, while some of the teachers' metaphors completely overlapped with the students' metaphors, some metaphorical expressions were found to be incompatible between teachers and students. However, since teachers' behaviors and actions are shaped by the interaction with and between students, most teachers in the study stated that they believed that it would be useful to review their classroom practices in depth in the light of the feedback they received from students.

Pishghadam and Navari (2010) also investigated the metaphors used by language learners in both formal and informal educational settings in Iran, as well as in private language courses. The study involved 50 learners from formal schools and 50 from private courses, each group receiving two distinct checklists: one featuring 27 metaphors about teachers and the other containing 18 metaphors about learners. Participants were instructed to select the metaphor they believed best represented the English education system in Iran. The metaphors were sourced from various academic studies in the field. The findings indicated that the perceptions of learners in private language courses were more positive compared to those in public schools.

In another study, Öztürk (2012) investigated the impact of feedback delivered through metaphor in classroom discourse within English language education. This study focuses on how metaphor-based feedback influences the attitudes and behaviors of teacher candidates in the English Language Education Program. The research employed an attitude scale comprising thirteen items, categorized into three sub-factors. This scale assessed the candidates' levels of permanent learning, advanced thinking skills, and

motivation. The teacher candidates participated in a seven-week intervention within the Language Teaching Skills course as part of their program. The metaphor-based feedback scale was administered as both a pre-test and post-test to control and experimental groups. The findings indicated a significant change in the attitudes and behaviors of the English Language Education teacher candidates concerning permanent learning, advanced thinking skills, and motivation.

In their article titled "Metaphorical Perceptions about Learning and Teaching English as a Foreign Language," Guerrero and Villamil (2002) investigated the metaphorical perceptions of 22 English teachers who participated in a workshop on teaching English. The study employed qualitative research designs, using the conceptual metaphor analysis method. As a result, nine conceptual categories were established: teacher as a collaborative leader; teacher as a source of information; teacher as a challenger/agent of change; teacher as a trainer; teacher as an innovator; teacher as a tool provider; teacher as an artist; teacher as a repairman (brain repairman); and teacher as a trainer in the gym. The metaphors most frequently used within these categories include coach, director, conductor, moon, sun, a tree full of apples, lion tamer, a door opening to the future, bee, mother, gardener, explorer, tool carrier, and potter.

This chapter introduces the fundamental concepts and a review of the literature with a top-down approach. In the next chapter, the methodology of the study will be explained in detail.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains how this present study was designed and conducted. It includes research design, participants, data collection tools, data collection procedure, and methods and techniques employed in the data analysis.

3.1. Research Design

This study employs phenomenology that is one of the qualitative research designs to seek answers for the research question. Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, construct their realities, and assign meaning to these experiences. It is widely used in educational sciences and employs various data collection methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis (Merriam, 2013). This study investigated the perceptions of secondary school students towards English lessons through metaphors. Therefore, the reason why the phenomenology design was preferred in this study is that mental images (metaphors) are not an observable situation or something that can be examined under a microscope, and it is thought that mental images can be understood through the descriptions of the people who are the data source. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) mentioned that phenomenology, as a research design, is suitable for studies investigating somewhat unknown phenomena. In the research, qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis. The data was collected through the metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interview form. Students' gender and grades, as well as their metaphorical perceptions of the English lesson, were investigated with the metaphor questionnaire form, and then a focus group interview was held with volunteers among these students.

3.2. Participants

The sample of the research consists of 325 6th and 7th grade students studying in 3 different secondary schools in Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep. In the study, there are 170 6^{th} grade students and 155 7^{th} grade students. In addition, out of 325 students, 168 are female and 157 are male. The sample for the questionnaire in this study was

selected using the convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques. As Dörnyei (2007) explains, convenience sampling involves selecting participants from the target population based on practical criteria, such as being in the same location, being available at a specific time, being easily reachable, or being willing to participate voluntarily. This sampling method was chosen because it allows for quick and easy application to a large number of participants within a limited timeframe.

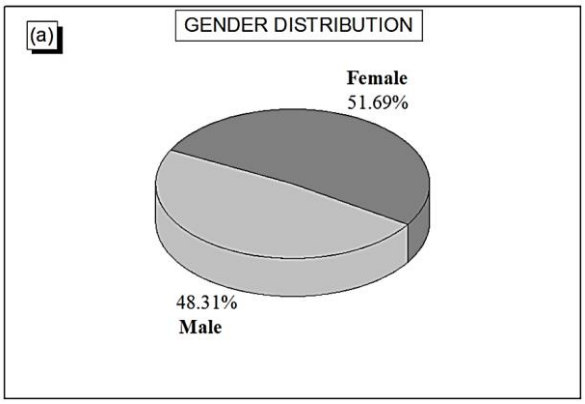
The reason for choosing the 6th and 7th grades is that students in these grade levels are in a period of abstract processing. At this stage, they are better equipped to express their understanding of the abstract concept of "English," whether positively or negatively, through the use of metaphors. Additionally, it is considered that individuals in this age group may already have some knowledge of metaphors; even if they do not, they should be able to grasp the concept once it is explained, thereby facilitating the conduct of the study. The reason why 8th grade students were not included in the study was that they were not considered to be able to make an objective contribution to the research due to the exam stress. 8th grade students take a national exam called ‘High School Transition Exam’ to be enrolled in certain high schools and spend all year with an intense program focusing on this exam. Therefore, students’ exam-focused language perception could affect the results of the study. The reason 5th grade students were excluded is that in a pilot study involving 10 students, it was found that they were unable to write a clear metaphor in the questionnaires, even though the researcher provided explanations and examples. It was thought that an effective contribution to the study could not be made since 5th grade students were cognitively closer to the concrete operations period.

Table 4 displays the distribution of the students included in the study according to gender and grade variables.

Table 4. *The Distribution of the Students Included in the Sample According to Gender and Grade Variables*

Properties		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	**Male**	157	48.31
	Female	168	51.69
Grade	**6 th**	170	52.31
	7 th	155	47.69
TOTAL		**325**	**100**

As shown in Table 4, the study group consisted of 325 volunteer students, comprising 170 6th graders and 155 7th graders, with 168 females and 157 males. These data and their percentages are shown separately in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



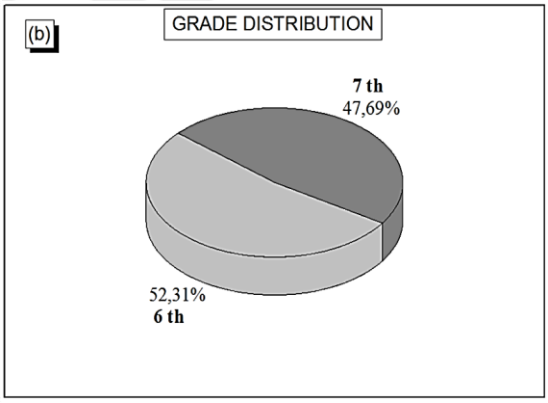


Figure 1. Gender distribution

Figure 2. Grade distribution

According to Figure 1, dangling at the gender distribution of the students in the study, 51,69 % are female and 48,31 % are male. In addition, Figure 2 shows that 52,31 % are in the 6th grade and 47,69 % are in the 7th grade in the study.

There are differing opinions on how many participants should be included in focus group interviews. According to Byers and Wilcox (1988), the appropriate number of participants for focus group discussions is 8–12; Macintosh (1981) suggests 6–10 participants, while Kitzinger (1995) proposes 4–9 participants. Although there are varying opinions regarding the number of participants, these studies generally indicate that focus groups should involve a small number of participants, typically ranging from

4 to 10. Edmunds (2000) notes that having more than 10 people in a group can reduce group dynamics, diminish the impact of interactions among participants, and make it increasingly challenging to manage the group. A total of 6 students from the 6th and 7th grades who completed the metaphor questionnaire form, which is the first stage of the research, voluntarily participated in the focus group interview. For the focus group interview, purposive sampling is carried out by considering the specific characteristics of individuals (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016; Patton, 1990). Given that all participants were students within the same age range and each of them had completed the metaphor questionnaire form, which was the initial phase of the study, a small and homogeneous groups were created in the focus group interview.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

3.3.1. Metaphor Questionnaire Form

Regarding the analysis conducted in the relevant literature (Aydın & Ünaldı, 2010; Ocak & Gündüz, 2006; Saban, 2010) it was examined that research in this field typically gathers data through semi-structured questions, such as sentence completion prompts like "English is like … because ...", as well as through observations and interviews. In this study, the data was collected via two data collection tools, which are the metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interview. The metaphor questionnaire form involves two parts (See Appendix 1). In the first part, the participants were asked questions to obtain demographic information such as gender and class. In the second part, the students were asked to produce metaphors for English lessons by asking the following question “English lessons are like …. because...”. The form was applied to the participants in their own classes with the necessary permission from the school administration.

3.3.2. Focus Group Interview

The second data collection tool for the study is the focus group interview. The focus group interview was also conducted to reinforce the findings gathered through the questionnaire. An interview form has been prepared regarding the previous research and objective of the study (See Appendix 2). The interview covers nine open ended questions. The questions are designed to be open-ended and non-directive, prompting participants to consider reasons and motivations, and if necessary, to explore deeper by

asking for elaboration on the underlying causes (Krueger, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The interview questions were crafted purposefully, using clear and simple language that participants can easily understand, and are framed in everyday spoken terms, supported by expert insights for straightforward responses. Using the data collected from these questions, an effort was made to address the second research question: "What are the factors that affect 6th and 7th grade EFL students' positive or negative perceptions of English lessons based on the metaphors they use?"

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted in schools within the Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep during the 2023-2024 academic year. The metaphor questionnaire forms, which were used for data collection, were distributed in three different schools. The researcher facilitated the completion of these forms at each school, concentrating on classes deemed suitable by the school principal. The metaphor questionnaire was conducted in the regular class of the students when their teacher was also present in the class. The researcher gave the instructions in detail and provided some examples on the board to make the participants get familiar with the metaphor questionnaire. The participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason. They were also assured that the information they provided would remain confidential and that their anonymous responses would not be linked to any personal details. This was intended to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and could easily share their thoughts. Additionally, the necessary permission was obtained from the Gaziantep Provincial Directorate of National Education to carry out the research (See Appendix 4).

First, the metaphor questionnaire form was administered to the participants. After distributing the forms, 6th and 7th grade students were first asked to provide demographic information such as their gender and grade level. Following this, in the section titled “English lessons are like .....,” they were instructed to write just one mental image (metaphor) that held the most significance for them regarding “English lessons”. In the section for “because …,” the participants were asked to write several sentences explaining why they associated English lessons with the metaphor they provided, and they were given approximately 20 minutes to complete this task.

The focus group interview was employed as a secondary method for data collection to investigate the factors influencing 6th and 7th grade EFL students' positive or negative perceptions of English lessons, as reflected in the metaphors they use. After the metaphor questionnaire form part was completed, the focus group interview was conducted. 6 students, chosen from the volunteer students who responded to the questionnaire, were interviewed to obtain more in-depth data. The interview participants were chosen through purposive sampling. For the focus group interview, small, homogeneous groups were formed, with participants' characteristics directly related to the topic. Since all participants were students of similar ages and had previously completed the metaphor questionnaire form, which was the initial phase of the study, these small and homogeneous groups were established for the focus group interview. A round table setting was preferred for these meetings. The questions were directed to the group. During the interview, the participants were encouraged by the researcher to share their opinions. To ensure that important information wasn't missed, the researcher clarified the study's nature and purpose before starting to ask the interview questions. After obtaining the participants' consent, audio recordings were made, and the interview lasted approximately 1 hour in an interactive manner. Collecting all the data from the two instruments took roughly two months.

3.5. Data Analysis

3.5.1. Analysis of the Metaphor Questionnaire Form

The metaphor questionnaire form covers open ended items; therefore, content analysis method was used to analyze these items. Content analysis is a systematic and objective research method used to describe and measure a phenomenon. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that will explain the collected data. Using content analysis, data can be parsed into fewer categories consisting of relevant themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2007).

The metaphors were analyzed using the four stages suggested by Saban (2009). These are coding and extracting stage, category development stage, validity and reliability stage and quantitative data analysis stage.

3.5.1.1. Coding and Extracting Stage

During the coding phase, the metaphors produced by the students in the study group were temporarily listed by numbering them. Each form was given a separate sequence number according to grade level. Codes for serial numbers and gender were assigned, where "F" denotes female, and "M" denotes male. For instance, S1F7, S5M6, etc. Here, S1 and S5 represent the serial numbers, "F/M" indicates the gender, and the numbers 7 and 6 denote the student's grade level. Then, the metaphors were examined to determine whether metaphors were produced within the scope of the research. Content analysis lacks universal or predefined patterns. The messages under examination do not adhere to a specific standard for analytical approaches, as research objectives differ and various methods are utilized (Bilgin, 2000). Since the metaphor questionnaire form was applied in Turkish, it was translated into English without any changes to the expressions in the forms in the tabulation section and saved in the Microsoft Excel program. The forms that lacked metaphors, contained multiple metaphors, or featured inconsistent metaphors were identified and removed. Therefore, a total of 123 forms were removed from the analysis. A total of 202 valid metaphors were obtained. In the coding and extracting stage of the metaphors, opinions of two Turkish teachers were obtained to ensure reliability and truthfulness.

3.5.1.2. Category Development Stage

When the students' responses to the metaphor questionnaire forms were analyzed, both the metaphor itself and the reasoning behind their associations were examined, along with the logical connections between them. In cases where the analogies provided were not deemed acceptable as metaphors, those metaphors were excluded from the category development process for the relevant question. Following the elimination process, appropriate categories were established. Content analysis allows for the categorization of data into a smaller number of categories based on relevant themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). During the category development, the reasoning behind the metaphors was prioritized over the metaphors themselves, as the intended meaning is primarily conveyed in this part. Each metaphor has been assigned to its respective category in collaboration with two Turkish language teachers. Each category was assessed on its own merits. The metaphors were categorized into three main groups based on their common features, each with subcategories. The main categories are

“English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness”, “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” and “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness” category is divided into two subcategories: “Fun/Enjoyment” and “Curiosity/Discovery”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” category is divided into 3 subcategories: “Language/Vocabulary”, “Communication/Culture” and “Necessity”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity” category was examined in two subcategories as “Complexity/Difficulty” and “Unnecessity/Boredom”.

3.5.1.3. Validity and Reliability Stage

This research offers a comprehensive explanation of how categories were created during the data analysis phase and how the corresponding metaphors were classified into these categories. Furthermore, the findings section includes all metaphorical sentences from participants that relate to each of the categories identified in the study. The reliability of content analysis mainly hinges on the coding process (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1978). To ensure the research's reliability, the data collected after processing all forms on the computer were finalized by consulting two Turkish language experts. The metaphors and the statements made by participants in the "because" section of the forms were translated into English and categorized exactly as they were given, without any modifications.

3.5.1.4. Quantitative Data Analysis Stage

The data was analyzed in a computer environment to investigate whether there was a significant difference between students' perceptions towards English lessons and gender and grade variables. Variables in part I: gender (Female=1, Male=0), grade level (6th Grade=1, 7th Grade=2) were coded and analyzed. The metaphors produced by the students were examined for each question and grouped as positive and negative. Positive answers were coded as 1 and negative answers were coded as 0. Whether there was a significant difference between students' perceptions (positive-negative) towards English lessons and gender and class variables was examined with the chi-square test (Chi-Square Test $\chi 2$). The chi-square test evaluates whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables or between one classified variable and one ranked variable (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

3.5.2. Analysis of Focus Group Interview

The interview form consisting of 9 questions was prepared for the participants. A total of 6 participants, coded from S1 to S6, participated in the interview voluntarily. The focus group interview was recorded using an audio recorder. After the interview was completed, it was transcribed. Since the interview was conducted in Turkish, the statements of the participants were translated into English without any alterations on the transcripts by the researcher.

During the data analysis process, content analysis was employed for the focus group interview data to organize, interpret, and present the information gathered from the interview to the reader. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) also describe content analysis as an interpretation and summary of the data collected using various codes and themes. The data obtained from the interview was analyzed, codes were extracted, and then themes related with the codes were defined independently by two Turkish language teachers who did not participate in the study to ensure the validity and reliability of the focus group interview. Final agreement on the codes and categories was reached by comparing the independently conducted thematic analysis of the two Turkish language teachers with that of the researcher.

Before starting the study, permission was obtained from the ethics committee of the relevant schools affiliated to the National Education Directorate. The participants were assured that their names would not be disclosed, that the confidentiality of the data was guaranteed, and that pseudonyms would be given. These conditions were followed in the reporting of the findings.

3.6. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The reliability of the current study was established through triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). Two different data collection methods, namely the metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interviews, were employed to gather data. To enhance the transferability of the study, all steps and decisions made, including participant selection, context, and procedures applied throughout the study, were explained in detail to ensure that the findings could be applicable to other contexts. Additionally, the reliability of the study was supported by the voluntary participation of 6th and 7th grade students; the

qualitative data obtained from both scales were also cross-checked with the assistance of two Turkish teachers. Thus, the data acquired through one method was verified using an alternative method. In the study, the elimination and categorization of the metaphors obtained from the metaphor questionnaire form, along with the transcriptions of the focus group interviews and the relevant codes, were analyzed by two Turkish teachers and compared with those of the researcher. The reliability of the inferences was ensured through multiple coding, an audit trail, and member checking for validity. Ultimately, the integrity of the current study was ensured by carefully selecting the participants, which contributed to the reliability and credibility of the research findings. Furthermore, it was essential to maintain transparency in data collection, uphold consistency in research methods, and openly acknowledge potential biases or limitations in the research design.

Various measures were also taken and implemented to address ethical concerns. Mackey and Gass (2005) suggest that the two main ethical issues for research are 'informed consent' and 'institutional approval.' Before conducting the current study, the necessary permissions were obtained from Çukurova University for institutional approval (see Appendix 3) and from the Ministry of National Education for institutional permission (see Appendix 4). Additionally, prior to data collection, participants were informed about the study, including its aims and the data collection procedures. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary. Additionally, the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify their decision. Participants' personal responses to the metaphor questionnaire and focus group interviews were kept confidential, not shared with anyone other than the researchers, and used solely for scientific purposes. Furthermore, the necessary permissions for the metaphor questionnaire form scale (Gürel, 2018) and the focus group interview form scale (Opoku, 2019) were obtained from the researchers prior to conducting the questionnaire. The relevant permission was provided via email (see Appendix 5). In addition, during the focus group interviews, participants' names were kept confidential, and each participant was assigned a coded name for ethical reasons (e.g., S1, S2, etc.).

This chapter includes the research design, participants, data collection tools, data collection procedure, methods and techniques employed in the data analysis, and trustworthiness and ethical considerations explained. In the next chapter, the findings will be discussed in detail.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results obtained from the metaphor questionnaire form and focus group interviews, illustrating the findings through tables. Initially, the findings from the metaphor questionnaire are examined, taking into account the variables and sub-dimensions of the study. Subsequently, the results of the focus group interview are analyzed, concentrating on the codes and themes that emerged.

4.1. The Findings of the Questionnaire

When the answers to the statement 'English lessons are like ....., because.....' from the metaphor questionnaire form were examined, 202 out of 325 students who participated in the study were able to produce valid metaphors. A total of 202 metaphor frequencies and 125 different metaphors were obtained in the study. The words used by the remaining 123 participants did not possess metaphorical characteristics, and they were excluded from the study based on the evaluations of two Turkish language teachers.

After the elimination of the invalid metaphors, the metaphors were grouped into 3 main categories based on their common features in collaboration with two Turkish language teachers. Each category is then divided into subcategories according to their topics. Main categories and subcategories of metaphors identified by the participants for English lessons are displayed in detail in Figure 3.

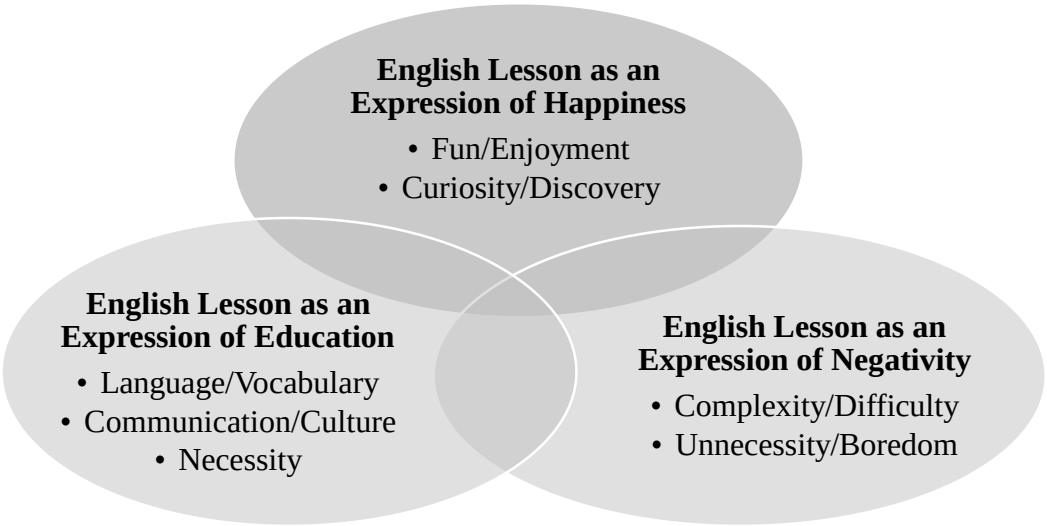


Figure 3. Main and subcategories of metaphors identified by the participants

As shown in Figure 3, the main categories of metaphors are “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness”, “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” and “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness” category is divided into two subcategories: “Fun/Enjoyment” and “Curiosity/Discovery”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” category is divided into 3 subcategories: “Language/Vocabulary”, “Communication/Culture” and “Necessity”. The “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity” category was examined in two subcategories as “Complexity/Difficulty” and “Unnecessity/Boredom”.

The distribution rates of the metaphor frequencies produced by the participants in 3 main categories are shown in Figure 4 below.

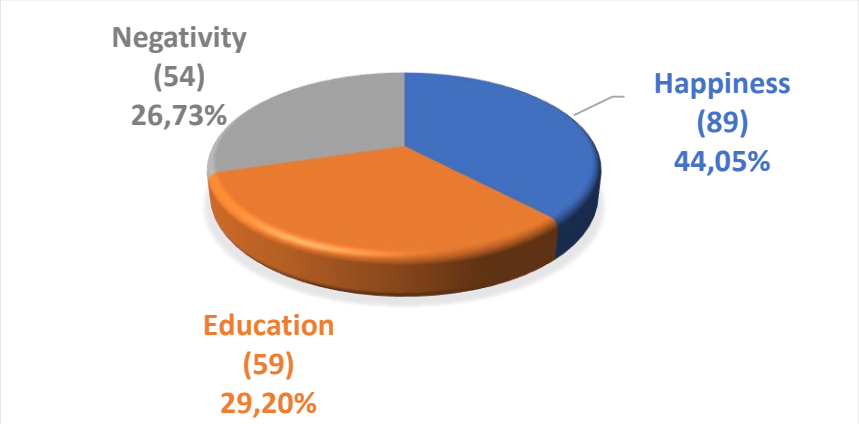


Figure 4. The distribution rates of the metaphor frequencies in the main categories

As Figure 4 displays, among the main categories, the participants produced the most metaphors in the “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness” category (f=89, 44.05%). A similar number of metaphors were produced in the category “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” (f=59, 29.20%) and the category “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity (f=54, 26.73%).

Figure 5 displays the distribution of the metaphor frequencies in the subcategories below.

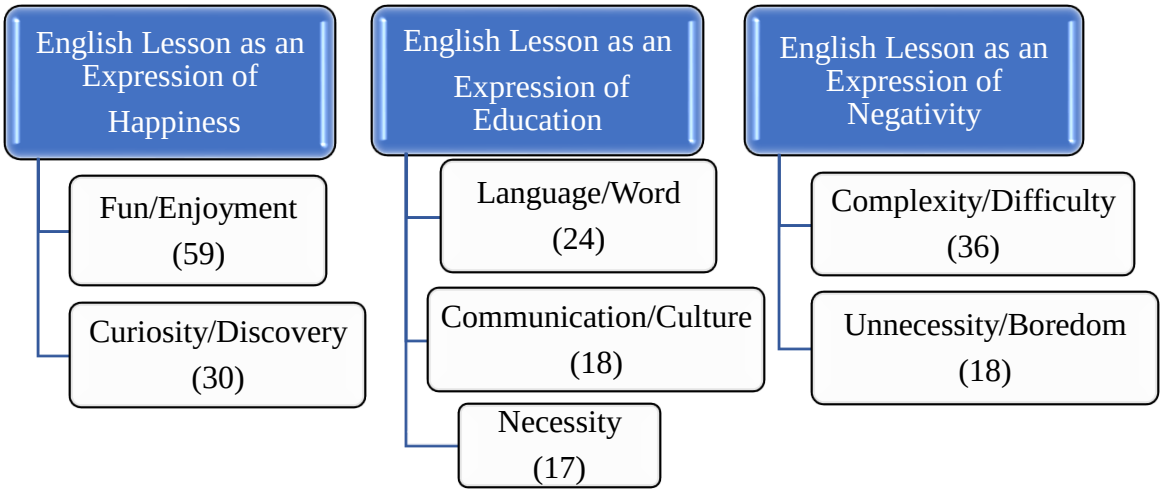


Figure 5. The distribution of the metaphor frequencies produced in the subcategories.

As shown in Figure 5, the participants produced the most metaphors in the 'Fun/Enjoyment' subcategory (f=59) followed by 'Complexity/Difficulty' (f=36), 'Curiosity/Discovery' (f=30) and 'Language/Word' (f=24) subcategories. The subcategory with the least metaphors was 'Necessity' subcategory (f=17). A similar number of metaphors were produced in the subcategories 'Communication/Culture' (f=18) and 'Unnecessity/Boredom' (f=18).

4.1.1. English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness

The reason why this category was named "Happiness" is because the participants who answered the questionnaire under this category compared the English lesson to concrete, abstract concepts or entities that make them happy. A total of 89 metaphor frequencies were produced in this category. According to the participant students' answers to the questionnaire, metaphors in this category were examined in two subcategories as "Fun/Enjoyment" and "Curiosity/Discovery".

4.1.1.1. Fun/Enjoyment

In this subcategory, participants have associated the English lesson with metaphors related to fun and enjoyment. A total of 59 metaphor frequencies were produced in this category. The metaphors produced in this category are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Fun/Enjoyment" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Animation	1	1	.	-	2
Balloon	-	-	1	-	1
Black Glasses	-	-	1	-	1
Book	-	-	-	1	1
Cartoon	-	-	1	-	1
Candy	-	1	-	-	1
Cinema	1	-	-	-	1
Clown Show	-	-	1	-	1
Competition	1	-	-	-	1
Daisy	-	-	1	-	1
Eyelash	-	-	1	-	1
Film	2	2	1	2	7
Flower	-	-	1	-	1
Funfair	-	-	-	2	2
Game	7	3	5	2	17
Lego	-	-	1	-	1
Princess	1	-	-	-	1
Puzzle	-	1	-	-	1
Rainbow	1	-	-	-	1
Rose	-	-	1	-	1
Soap Opera	-	-	1	-	1
Star	-	-	1	-	1
Stationary	-	-	1	-	1
Sugar	-	-	2	-	2
Sun	-	-	1	-	1
Telephone	-	-	-	1	1
Theatre	1	3	-	2	6
Toy	1	-	-	-	1
Track	1	-	-	-	1
Total Frequency	**17**	**11**	**20**	**11**	**59**

**Metaphors are listed in an alphabetical order.*

According to Table 5, the most frequently used metaphor in this category was ‘Game (17)’ metaphor. While 10 students, 7 females and 3 males, used the metaphor

'Game' in the 6th grades, this metaphor was used a total of 7 times by 2 male and 5 female students in the 7th grades. The participant students uttered the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a game because the lessons are fun and educational. (S3F7)

English lessons are like a game because I have fun in English class, and I love English. (S8F6)

English lessons are like games because we play word games before each unit in English lessons. (S4M7)

English lessons are like a game because it is fun, and we can make new sentences. (S18F6)

English lessons are like a fun game because it is a very enjoyable subject to learn. (S21M6)

English lessons are like a game because I feel like I'm playing a game while reinforcing what I've learned. (S12F7)

As shown in Table 5, ‘Film (7)’ and 'Theatre (6)' metaphors were also frequently used to describe English lessons by the students. While the 'Film (7)' metaphor was used by 2 female students and 2 male students in the 6th grade, it was used by 1 female and 2 male students in the 7th grade. ‘Theatre (6)’ metaphor was used by 1 female and 3 male students in 6th grade and 2 male students in the 7th grade. The participant students stated their reasons for these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a film because I don't realize how time flies during class. (S5M6)

English lessons are like a film because the lesson is very fun and exciting. (S1F7)

English lessons are like a film because there are characters like animation movies. (S10F6)

English lessons are like a theatre because we have fun by making dialogues. (S32M6)

English lessons are like a theatre because I feel like an actor when I am speaking in class. (S34M7)

English lessons are like an entertaining theater because my teacher speaks as if he were someone else. (S41M7)

Additionally, the participants likened English lessons to objects or phenomena they liked, as displayed in Table 5. These metaphors are black glasses, rose, sun, funfair, book, balloon, stationary, toy, princess, sugar, daisy, clown show, rainbow, cinema, soap opera, puzzle, animation etc. The participant students uttered the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a rose because they may have their thorns (grammar rules), but the beauty and fun of expressing yourself make it all worth it. (S7F7)

English lessons are like a rainbow because they are full of colors and surprises. (S22F6)

English lessons are like a clown show because there's always someone making funny faces with grammar and vocabulary. (S9F6)

English lessons are like a toy because they are fun to play with and help you explore new worlds. (S16F6)

English lessons are like a puzzle, because it's so much fun trying to find the meaning of each word in the sentences. It's like finding a puzzle piece. (S15M6)

English lessons are like balloons because they lift you up and make learning fun. (S2F7)

4.1.1.2. Curiosity/Discovery

The participants were found to produce 30 metaphor frequencies to refer to English lessons under this category. The metaphors produced in this category are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Curiosity/Discovery" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
A New Person	-	1	-	-	1
A New World	-	1	-	-	1
A Thick Book	1	-	-	-	1
Bottomless Pit	-	-	-	1	1
Competition	-	-	-	1	1
Door Key	-	1	-	-	1
Film	-	-	-	1	1
Heaven Hell	-	-	-	1	1
Loop	1	-	-	-	1
Nature	1	-	-	-	1
New Year	-	1	-	1	2
Path	-	-	1	-	1
Pomegranate	-	-	1	-	1
Puzzle	1	1	-	-	2
Rose	1	-	-	-	1
Seasons	-	-	1	-	1
Sky	-	-	1	-	1
Sour and Sweet Gum	-	-	1	-	1
Space	1	-	1	-	2
Stranger	-	-	1	-	1
Surprise Party	-	-	-	1	1
Surprise Box	1	1	-	-	2
Crossword	-	-	1	-	1
Tunnel	1	-	-	-	1
Universe	1	-	-	1	2
Total Frequency	**9**	**6**	**8**	**7**	**30**

As shown in Table 6, three different metaphors were produced by using the word ‘New’. These are ‘New Year (2)’ ‘A New World (1)’ and ‘A New Person (1)’. The participant students stated the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a new world because we discover a new world with new words. (S11M6)

English lessons are like a new person because it is as enjoyable as getting to know a new person. (S36M6)

English lessons are like a new year because we never know what surprises it will bring us. (S23M7)

According to Table 6, the second most frequently used metaphors are 'Puzzle (2)', ‘Space (2)’ and 'Universe (2)' metaphors. The participating students expressed their reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a puzzle because we try to form sentences using different words. (S17F6)

‘English lessons are like a puzzle because each word comes together to create a bigger picture, just like making a discovery. (S13M6)

English lessons are like a space because I am constantly discovering new things, and I am happy. (S19F6)

English lessons are like space because it is full of endless words. (S33F7)

English lessons are like a universe because I am constantly learning words and sentences that I don't know. (S42F6)

English lessons are like a universe because they are interesting like the planets in the universe. (S54M7)

Additionally, the participants likened English lessons to objects or curious facts. As shown in Table 6, the participants reflected both positive and negative aspects of English lessons in the metaphors they uttered throughout the study. These are pomegranate, sky, heaven and hell, bottomless pit, tangle, a stranger, path, a thick book,

door key etc. The participant students uttered the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a pomegranate because it is bitter like the outer skin, but delicious like the inside. (S37F7)

English lessons are like a thick book because it is boring at the beginning but becomes more immersive and interesting as you progress through the book. (S24F6)

English lessons are like seasons because the units are like seasons, some are very beautiful, and some are very tiring. (S51F7)

English lessons are like a path because paths are both difficult and fun to explore. (S60F7)

English lessons are like a sour and sweet gum because when you first chew the gum, it becomes sour and then it gradually becomes sweet. (S6F7)

4.1.2. English Lessons as an Expression of Education

The reason this category is called education is that participants relate the English lesson to concepts from their own educational experiences. In this category, a total of 59 metaphor frequencies were produced. According to the students' answers to the questionnaire, the metaphors emerged in this category were examined in three subcategories as "Language/Vocabulary", “Communication/Culture” and "Necessity".

4.1.2.1. Language/Vocabulary

The reason why this subcategory is called “Language/Vocabulary” is that the participants connect English lessons with the various languages spoken around the world and the different functions of the language. Additionally, the participants mostly related the English lesson to concepts related to vocabulary learning. In this category, 24 metaphor frequencies were produced. Table 7 demonstrates the metaphors produced in this subcategory.

Table 7.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants Regarding the "Language/Vocabulary" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
A Different Language	-	-	1	-	1
A Thick Book	-	-	1	-	1
Antonyms	1	-	-	-	1
Arabic	-	-	1	-	1
Dictionary	1	-	2	1	4
Grammar	-	1	-	-	1
Language Tree	-	-	-	1	1
Mother Tongue	-	1	-	-	1
New Year	1	-	-	-	1
Translation	-	1	-	-	1
Turkish	-	2	-	2	4
Turkish Lesson	2	2	2	1	7
Total Frequency	**5**	**7**	**7**	**5**	**24**

As Table 7 displays, the participants produced the metaphor ‘Turkish Lesson (7)’ which was the most frequently metaphor in this category. While 4 students, 2 females and 2 males, used the metaphor 'Turkish Lesson' in the 6th grades, this metaphor was used a total of 3 times by 1 male and 2 female students in the 7th grades. The participants expressed the reasons for using these metaphors in their questionnaire forms as follows:

English lessons are like Turkish because I understand it easily like Turkish. (S14M6)

English lessons are like Turkish because I can make and speak sentences in Turkish. (S20M6)

English lessons are like Turkish lessons because both lessons help us learn the language. (S25F7)

English lessons are like Turkish lessons because there are reading, listening, speaking, and writing exams in both lessons. (S52M7)

English lessons are like Turkish lessons because the same topics we cover in Turkish lessons are also available in English lessons. (S67F6)

According to Table 7, the second most frequently used metaphor is 'Dictionary (4)' metaphor. It was used by 1 female student in 6th grade and 2 female and 1 male student in 7th grade. In the questionnaire, participants expressed the reasons for using these metaphors as follows:

English lessons are like a dictionary because we constantly learn words in class. This can be very tiring sometimes. (S35F7)

English lessons are like a dictionary because we constantly translate using a dictionary in class. (S26M7)

4.1.2.2. Communication/Culture

In this subcategory, the participants have evaluated the English lesson as a means of communication and have produced metaphors related to cultural elements. In this category, 18 metaphor frequencies were produced. In Table 8, the metaphors produced in this subcategory are shown.

Table 8.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Communication/Culture" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
A New Person	-	-	-	1	1
A New World	1	1	-	1	3
Bond	-	-	1	-	1
Cultural Transfer	1	1	-	-	2
Cultural Trip	-	1	-	-	1
Life	1	2	1	2	6
Mother Tongue	-	1	-	-	1
Ticket	1	-	-	-	1
Trip	-	-	2	-	2
Total Frequency	**4**	**6**	**4**	**4**	**18**

Table 8 displays that a total of 18 metaphor frequencies were used, and the most frequently used metaphor was the ‘Life (6)’ metaphor. While 3 students, 1 female and 2 males, used the metaphor 'Life' in the 6th grade, this metaphor was used by 3 students, 1 female and 2 males, in the 7th grade. In the questionnaire, participants uttered the reasons for using these metaphors as follows:

English lessons are like a life because I learn words that I can use in my life. (S61F7)

English lessons are like a life because the topics and words in them are similar to those we can use in our lives. (S38F6)

As shown in Table 8, the second most frequently used metaphor is and ‘A New World (3)’ metaphor. Additionally, ‘Cultural Transfer (2)’ metaphor was associated with English lessons by the participants. Some of the metaphors in the Table 8 and the reasons for their use are expressed as follows:

English lessons are like a new world because there are subjects that will allow us to meet new people. (S69M6)

English lessons are like another world because when I learn another language, I feel like in another world. (S57F6)

English lessons are like a cultural transfer because during the classes, I feel like I've gone to a different country. (S77M6)

English lessons are like a cultural trip because I love learning a different culture. (S82M6)

English lessons are like a ticket because they open up a world of opportunities. (S29F6)

English lessons are like a bond because they connect us through language and spark awesome conversations. (S80F7)

English lessons are like a mother tongue because they help us express yourself and connect with others. (S30M6)

4.1.2.3. Necessity

In this subcategory, the participant students consider English lessons as a need, and a necessity in the metaphors they produced in the study. In this category 17 metaphor frequencies were produced. The metaphors produced in this category are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Necessity" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Bag	1	-	-	-	1
Blood	1	1	-	-	2
Heart	2	-	-	1	3
Key	1	-	-	1	2
Life	-	-	1	-	1
My Life	-	1	-	-	1
Pencil Case	-	-	1	-	1
Rank	-	-	-	1	1
Solution	-	-	1	-	1
Teacher	-	1	-	-	1
Uniform	-	-	-	1	1
Vein	-	1	-	-	1
Weather	-	1	-	-	1
Total Frequency	**5**	**5**	**3**	**4**	**17**

According to Table 9, a total of 17 metaphor frequencies were used and the most frequently used metaphor was the 'Heart (3)' metaphor. The metaphor of 'Heart' was used by 2 female students in the 6th grade and 1 male student in the 7th grade. In the questionnaire, participants expressed the reasons for using these metaphors as follows:

English lessons are like a heart because it is as important as our heart for our lives. (S87F6)

English lessons are like a heart because they keep communication alive. (S66M7)

As seen in Table 9, the second most frequently used metaphors are, ‘Key (2) and Blood (2)’ metaphors. Some metaphors and their reasons for use have been expressed by the participants as follows:

English lessons are like a key because it opens every door to find a job. (S93F6)

English lessons are like a key because I think it will open many doors in my life. (S53M7)

English lessons are like blood because we cannot live without our blood, that is why English is so necessary. (S102F6)

English lessons are like blood because listening and speaking lessons penetrate every part of our body. (S174M6)

4.1.3. English Lessons as an Expression of Negativity

The reason this category is described as negativity is that the participants who create these metaphors associate the English lesson with concepts that convey difficulty, boredom, and unhappiness. In this category, 54 metaphor frequencies were produced. The metaphors emerged in this category were examined in two subcategories as "Complexity/Difficulty" and "Unnecessity/Boredom".

4.1.3.1. Complexity/Difficulty

In this subcategory, the participants perceived the English lesson as challenging and complex, and they created metaphors to describe it. In this subcategory 36 metaphor frequencies were produced**.** The metaphors produced in this subcategory are shown in Table 10.

Table 10.

Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Complexity/Difficulty" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
A Complicated Movie	-	1	-	-	1
Arabic	1	-	-	-	1
Branches of a Tree	-	-	1	-	1
Building a Mansion	-	1	-	-	1
Bumpy Road	-	1	-	-	1
Chaos	2	1	3	1	7
Chess	-	-	1	-	1
Coconut Shell	-	-	1	-	1
Ghost	-	-	1	-	1
Hair	1	-	-	-	1
Hell	-	-	2	2	4
Home Cleaning	-	-	-	1	1
Horror Movie	-	-	1	-	1
Human Body	-	-	-	1	1
Ivy	-	-	2	-	2
Jigsaw	-	-	1	-	1
Labyrinth	2	-	-	2	4
Level Game	-	-	-	1	1
Pup -G Game	-	-	-	1	1
Puzzle	-	1	1	-	2
Sapling	1	-	-	-	1
The Great Wall of China	-	-	-	1	1
Total Frequency	**7**	**5**	**14**	**10**	**36**

As indicated in Table 10, a total of 36 metaphor frequencies were used and the most frequently used metaphor was the 'Chaos' (7)' metaphor used by the participants. The metaphor of 'Chaos' was used by 7 people, 2 females and 1 male in the 6th grade and 3

females and 1 male student in the 7th grade. In the questionnaire, the statements of the participants for their metaphors are as follows:

English lessons are like a chaos because there are so many complicated words. (S223F6)

English lessons are like a chaos because it is a very difficult language to read and understand. (S68M6)

English lessons are like a chaos because when I listen to English texts, I feel like I am in a complete mess. (S103F7)

English lessons are like a chaos because you're juggling grammar rules, vocabulary, and weird pronunciations all at once. (S70M7)

In Table 10, the second most frequently used metaphors are 'Hell (4). The metaphor of 'Hell (4)' was used by 2 females and 2 males in the 7th grade. Some participants' responses for the metaphors they produced in the questionnaire are as follows:

English lessons are like hell because understanding the lesson is very tiring and difficult. (S88F7)

English lessons are like hell because the words are so confusing that I can't figure it out. (S210M7)

English lessons are like hell because for me, sometimes the lessons are easy and sometimes they are very difficult. (S34M7)

English lessons are like hell because our teacher makes us write too many words and gives us too much homework. (S71F7)

The participants also used the metaphors ‘Ivy (2)’ and ‘Puzzle (2)’ metaphors as shown in Table 10. The participants' expressions for the metaphors they produced in the questionnaire are as follows:

English lessons are like an ivy because the units in the lesson are all similar to each other. I couldn’t understand it. (S97F7)

English lessons are like an ivy because once you get used to it and learn it, it repeats itself over and over again. (S162F7)

English lessons are like puzzles because we are trying to put together words that are confusing. (S201M6)

4.1.3.2. Unnecessity/Boredom

In this subcategory, it was observed that the participants did not consider English lessons as a necessity or requirement for their future or lives and produced metaphors to express this situation. Regarding this, they produced metaphors about the stagnation and boredom of the English lesson. A total of 18 metaphor frequencies were produced. The metaphors emerged in this category are demonstrated in Table 11.

Table 11.
Distribution of Metaphors Produced by the Participants regarding the "Unnecessity/Boredom" Subcategory

Metaphor	6th		7th		Total Frequency
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
A blank page	-	-	1	-	1
A blank slate	1	-	-	-	1
A pile of useless words	1	-	1	-	2
Bench	1	-	-	-	1
Door Ornament	-	1	-	-	1
Duster	-	-	-	1	1
Empty Glass	-	1	-	2	3
Hot Weather	-	1	-	-	1
Immigrant People	-	-	-	1	1
Outer Space	-	-	1	-	1
Robot	-	-	-	1	1
Sleeping Pill	-	1	-	-	1
Snail	-	1	-	-	1
Torture	-	-	1	-	1
Virus	-	-	-	1	1
Total Frequency	**3**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**18**

As Table 11 displays, the most frequently used metaphor was the ‘Empty Glass (3)' metaphor. The metaphor of 'Empty Glass (3)' was used by 2 male students in the 7th grade and 1 male student in the 6th grade. In a similar sense, ‘A blank page (1)’and ‘A blank slate (1)’ metaphors were used by the participants. The participant students uttered the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English classes feel like an empty glass because no matter what I do, the words just don't stick in my mind. (S77M7)

English lessons are like an empty glass because they can never fill me with real excitement. (S113M6)

English classes are like a blank slate because teachers are always waiting for us to fill them with knowledge. (S221F6)

English lessons are like a blank page, because no matter how many words we learn, nothing stays in my mind, and it often feels empty. (S58F7)

According to Table 11, the second most frequently used metaphor is ‘A pile of useless words (2)'. The metaphor of 'A pile of useless words was used by 1 female student in 6th grade and 1 female student in the 7th grade. The participant students uttered the reasons for using these metaphors in the questionnaire as follows:

English lessons are like a pile of useless words because I don't know why I need to know all this stuff. (S164F6)

English lessons are like a pile of useless words because I find the words in the lesson very difficult and unnecessary. I get bored a lot. (S83F7)

4.1.4. Findings Regarding the Grade Levels and Gender of the Participants

In this part of the research, an attempt was made to find an answer to the research question of whether metaphors differ according to gender and grade variables. Of the metaphors produced by 325 students, a total of 202 metaphor frequencies and 125 different metaphors were obtained in the study. The evaluated valid metaphors were determined as positive or negative according to their categories with two Turkish language teachers. These metaphors were evaluated according to gender and grade level variables. Metaphors included in ‘English Lessons as an Expression of Happiness’ and

'English Lessons as an Expression of Education' categories were evaluated as positive, while metaphors in 'English Lessons as an Expression of Negativity' category were evaluated as negative. While coding the data, responses that were ambiguous in meaning were not considered, such as "I don't like English lessons at all" and "English lessons are nice."

Among the 202 participants evaluated; 110 of them are female and 92 are male. Same way, 105 of them are 6th grade students and 107 of them are 7th grade students. The Chi-Square test was utilized to investigate whether there was a significant difference in the metaphorical perceptions of 6th and 7th grade students based on their grade levels and gender, as illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12.

Chi-Square Values of the Participants' Metaphorical Perceptions According to Gender Variable

Contingency Tables

	Metaphor		
Gender	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Total**
Male	66	26	92
Female	82	28	110
Total	148	54	202

χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	P
χ^2	0.201	1	0.654
N	202		

According to the results of the chi-square test in Table 12, there is no statistically significant relationship between gender of the participants and positivity/negativity (p=0.654). However, when the number of female and male students using positive metaphors in Table 12 is analyzed, it can be seen that the female students exhibit more positive thoughts than the male students.

Table 13 displays chi-square values of participants' metaphorical perceptions according to grade level variable.

Table 13.

Chi-Square Values of the Participants' Metaphorical Perceptions According to Grade Level Variable

Contingency Tables

	Metaphor		
Grade	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Total**
6th	75	20	95
7th	73	34	107
Total	148	54	202

χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	P
X^2	2.95	1	0.086
N	202		

As shown in Table 13, according to the results of the chi-square test, no statistically significant relationship was found between the grade levels of the students and positivity/negativity (p=0.086).

4.2. The Findings of the Focus Group Interview

To support the data from the metaphor questionnaire form, the focus group interview was conducted with the participation of 6 EFL students. 6 EFL students were asked 9 questions about English lessons. Their responses were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. What is important in reporting the focus group interview is not the numbers but what the participants say (Creswell, 1998). With content analysis, the transcripts were coded, and the responses to each interview question were categorized and explained in detail below. Content analysis is most commonly used in the qualitative studies which aim to divide the content of the discussion into an appropriate number of categories that express the same meaning (Moretti et al., 2011). The interviews were categorized under seven themes specified as "Skills in English",

“English for Higher Education”, “Challenges in EFL Classes”, “Opinions about English lessons”, “Comparison of English with Other Disciplines” and “Solutions for Challenges in EFL classes” “Importance of English’. A total of 122 codes were reached in the seven themes regarding the participants' thoughts about the English lessons. These themes and the interrelated codes are discussed in the following figures, and the participant EFL students’ responses are supported by the excerpts they stated during the interviews. Frequencies in the figures show how many times these codes are uttered by the participants. Seven themes and the interrelated codes with frequencies in the focus group interview are demonstrated in Figure 6.

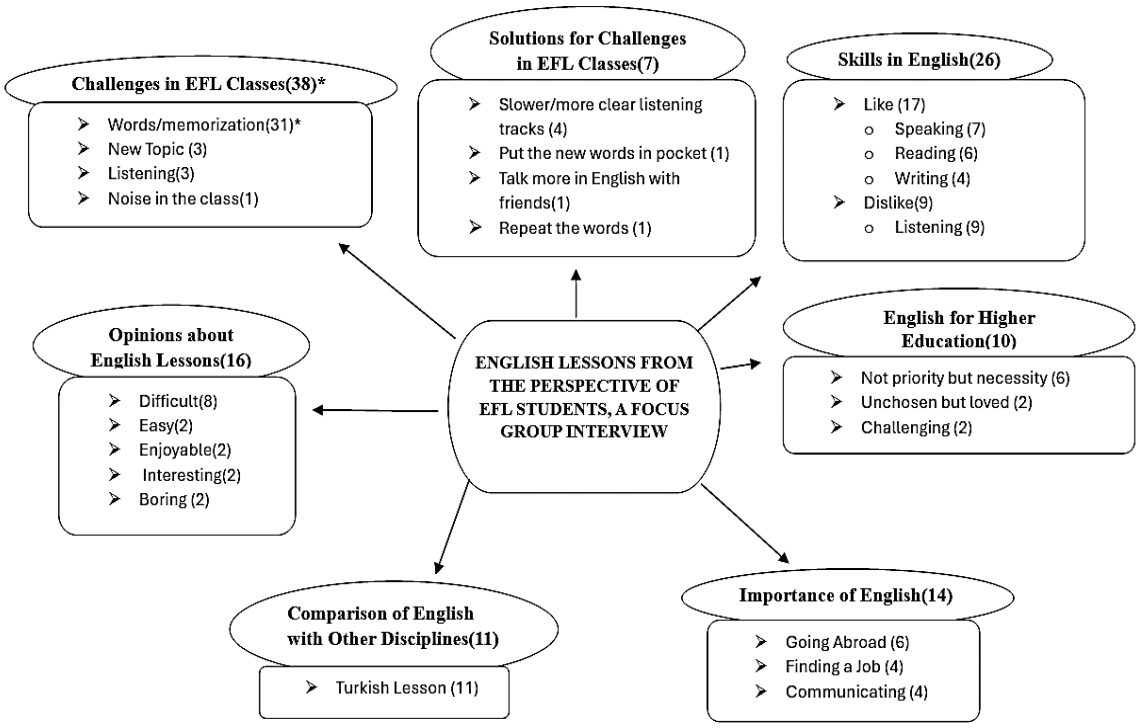


Figure 6. English lessons from the perspective of EFL students

**Frequencies of the themes and codes are given in parentheses.*

As demonstrated in Figure 6, the "Challenges in EFL Classes" theme has the highest frequency (f=38) among the seven themes. Following "Challenges in EFL Classes" is "Skills in English" (f=24), "Importance of English" (f=14), "Opinions about English Lesson" (f=16), "Comparison of English with Other Disciplines" (f=11), "English for Higher Education" (f=10), and "Solutions for Challenges in EFL Classes" (f=7). The codes and frequencies in the “Challenges in EFL Classes” theme which has the highest frequency density, are given in Figure 7.

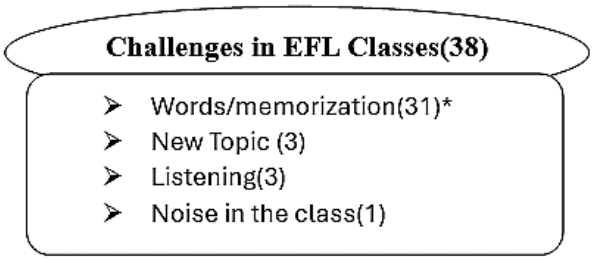


Figure 7. Codes of the "Challenges in EFL Classes" theme

**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As shown in Figure 7, when the responses given by the participants in the 'Challenges in EFL Classes' theme were analyzed, the codes "Words/memorization" (f=31), "New topic" (f=3), "Listening" (f=3), "Noise in the class" (f=1) were reached. Some of the expressions provided by the interviewees regarding the theme 'Challenges in EFL Classes' are as follows:

The difficulties I encounter are that when we move on to a new topic, new words come, and the number of words increases. While we have many English words in our minds, memorizing new words is quite difficult. (S1)

I have difficulty understanding words while listening. When combined with the noise in the classroom, it becomes very difficult to understand. (S1)

It is easier to memorize the present or future tense because it has suffixes. I have a hard time memorizing the past tense (S3).

I also have difficulty in listening because some words can be skipped without saying them completely. (S4)

I have difficulty memorizing English words. I find it difficult to memorize English words. (S6)

Another question from the interview was about how participants were able to find solutions to the challenges they faced in EFL classrooms. Based on their responses, the interrelated codes in the "Solutions for Challenges in EFL Classes" theme and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 8.

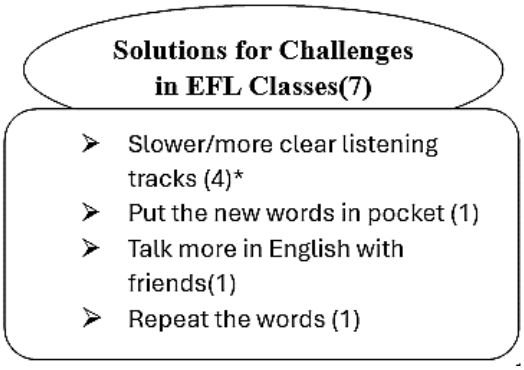


Figure 8. Codes of the "Solutions for Challenges in EFL Classes" theme

**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

The responses in Figure 8 indicate that the participants addressed solutions for listening problem and word memorization problem during the interview. The code that has the highest frequency as a solution uttered by the participants is 'Slower/more clear listening tracks' (f=4) for listening problem. Some of the expressions given by the interviewees to the question asked for the theme 'Solutions for Challenges in EFL Classes' are as follows:

If the listening texts are slower, they will be understood better. I don't understand when people talk fast. Although slowing down conversations is not a complete solution, it will be a small benefit. (S1)

When listening to a text, it is easier if the speaker speaks slower and more clearly. (S4)

Let me tell you the method I use when memorizing. I write down the new words and put them in my trouser pocket etc. and look at them from time to time. This way I can memorize it. (S1)

To solve this, it is necessary to repeat those words after the teacher explains the subject. (S2)

It would be better if we could talk more and communicate more in the activities we do with our friends. (S6)

When asked 'Which aspect of English lesson do you like studying and why?' question in the interview, the participants mentioned the skills they liked as well as the skills they did not like. The interrelated codes in the "Skills in English" theme were created, and their frequencies are presented in Figure 9.

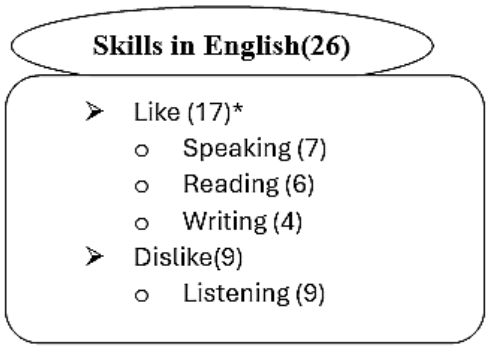


Figure 9. Codes of the 'Skills in English' theme

**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As Figure 9 displays, it was observed that the most frequent code among the skills that the participants liked was 'Speaking' skill (f=7), followed by 'Reading' skill (f=6) and 'Writing' skill (f=4), respectively. The most frequent code for the skill that the participants did not like in their responses was 'Listening' skill (f=9). Expressions of some participants associated with this theme are as follows:

What I like about English is making sentences. I feel very happy while making sentences. What I don't like about English is listening. I can't catch the words at all. (S1)

Talking English with each other makes me happy. For example, when I watch someone on the internet and there is a word that I know the meaning of, I feel very happy. Talking to someone gives me great fun. (S3)

I think speaking comes first because we feel happy when we speak, for example, we enjoy when our teacher speaks English. I am good at listening when the speaker speaks slowly, but I have difficulty when he speaks fast. For me, speaking is a more enjoyable activity. (S6)

In my opinion, reading is an enjoyable activity, and listening is a difficult activity because the listening is fast, even though the given words are read slowly, the breaks pass quickly. Listening seems boring to me, but reading seems enjoyable and entertaining. (S4)

Talking feels good to me. The more I talk, the more I feel like I'm improving myself. I don't like listening because I don't understand those words. That's why I don't like

English listening exams very much. For me, speaking and reading are more enjoyable, speaking comes first. (S5)

In the interview, the participants were asked the question 'How do you evaluate the English course as a discipline?'. Figure 10 shows the codes and frequencies in the "Opinions about English Lesson" theme based on the participants' responses.

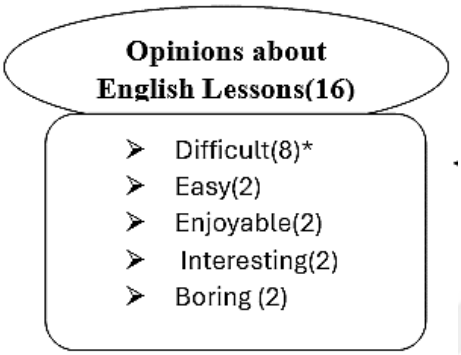


Figure 10. Codes of the 'Opinions about English Lesson' theme
**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As indicated in Figure 10, when the participants' responses to the relevant question in the interview were analyzed, five different codes ('difficult'(f=8), 'easy'(f=2), 'enjoyable'(f=2), 'interesting'(f=2) and 'boring'(f=2)) were reached in the "Opinions about English Lesson" category. The code with the highest frequency in the statements of the participants was 'difficult (f=8)'. Related to this code, some EFL students make explanations as follows:

I think English is a very enjoyable lesson. Of course, it will be difficult because we are trying to learn a language we do not know. (S3)

For me, English lessons are difficult and boring. I don't want to attend English lessons. (S5)

I think English is both an easy and good course, but of course it also has challenging aspects. We cannot learn English all at once, we can learn it gradually. (S4)

Another theme emerged at the interview is 'English for Higher Education' which covers students' plans on the use of English in the future. The codes and frequencies in the 'English for Higher Education' theme are displayed in Figure 11.

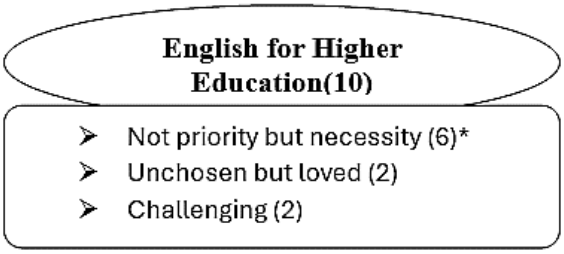


Figure 11. Codes of the 'English for Higher Education' theme

**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As Figure 11 displays, the participants provided varying responses regarding their consideration of English for their future higher education. Upon analyzing the participants' answers, the code 'Unchosen but loved' (f=2) was assigned to those who expressed a liking for English but would not choose it, the code 'Challenging' (f=2) was assigned to those who found English to be challenging, and the code 'Not priority but necessity' (f=6) was assigned to those who indicated that while English was not a priority, it was necessary. The participants also expressed their preferences for higher education subjects, such as mathematics, medicine, and elementary education. Some interviewees' expressions associated with this theme as follows:

If my English level is as good as it is now, I will prefer English for my higher education, but since I think English will become more difficult in the future, I may not prefer it for my higher education. (S1)

I think I would choose English, but for me the priority is mathematics because I think I will be in better conditions if I choose mathematics. However, I would like to have English in my life, If I were living in a foreign country, I would want to be able to speak English comfortably with foreigners. (S2)

I want to study medicine in English because I have wanted to be a surgeon since my childhood. So, English will be in my life. (S3)

I would not choose English as a field in higher education. English language subjects in higher education become more challenging. I wouldn't choose it. (S4)

I would not choose English again because I want to be primary school teacher in the future. I want to learn it on my own by going abroad and being exposed to that language, so I do not plan to choose English at university. (S5)

The participants were asked in the interview whether they found English lessons to be harder than other disciplines. The codes and frequencies based on their statements are presented in the "Comparison of English with Other Disciplines" theme in Figure 12.

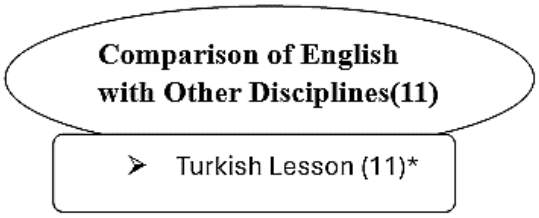


Figure 12. Codes of the 'Comparison of English with Other Disciplines' theme
**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As shown in Figure 12, participants in the 'Comparison of English with Other Disciplines' theme compared English lessons solely with Turkish lessons. Consequently, a single code 'Turkish lesson' (f=11) was derived in the analysis of the participants' responses. Some participants commented on this code as follows:

If we were to make a comparison, Turkish lessons seem easier because it is our own language, but there are also some subjects in English that seem very simple. (S1)

For us, Turkish is easier because the language we speak varies from person to person. For some of our friends, English is easier. (S2)

I think English is easier than verbal subjects. As you know, Turkish is easier to learn because it is the language we speak. I find it easier to learn Turkish. (S3)

Turkish lesson seems more complicated to me than English lesson. English subjects are more open. (S4)

In the interview, participants were asked about the significance of English to them and their reasons for this. The resulting codes and frequencies from their responses are shown in the 'Importance of English' theme in Figure 13.

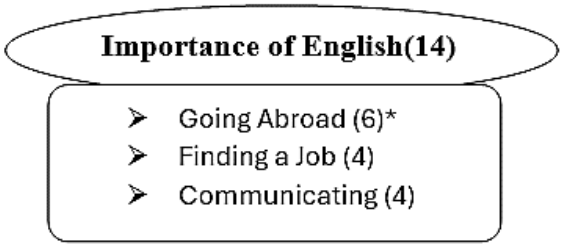


Figure 13. Codes of the 'Importance of English theme

**Frequencies are given in parentheses.*

As shown in Figure 13, the participants indicated that English is important for 'Going abroad' (f=6), 'Finding a job' (f=4), and 'Communicating' (f=4) with foreigners in their responses. Some participants commented on this issue as follows:

I think it is important because when we grow up, we will have a job. When we go abroad, we need to communicate with the people there. When we learn their language, we communicate more easily. (S1)

I think English is very important. Currently, English is spoken in many places, even in our country. When you want to get a job in our country, we are asked whether we know English. When we must go abroad, we still need English. (S2)

I think it is important to learn English. When we go abroad, we should learn English to communicate with people who do not speak Turkish. When you want to go to the market abroad, we need to know English to shop. (S3)

English is important for me. When looking for a job in our country, English is asked in many places. English is also important if we must go abroad. English should be learned. (S4)

I think it is important to learn English because more tourists will come here in the coming days, so it is important for us to learn English. (S6)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and previous studies on metaphors. The discussion is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the data collected from the metaphorical questionnaire, which includes responses from 325 EFL students. The second part emphasizes the data obtained through focus group interviews with 6 EFL students who completed the metaphor questionnaire, which was the first part of the study.

5.1. Discussion of the Metaphor Questionnaire Findings

In the scope of the study, a metaphor questionnaire was used to reveal the metaphors that a total of 325 EFL students in 6th and 7th grades associate with their English lessons. The common points of these metaphors were categorized into specific conceptual categories to understand how the students perceive English lessons. Furthermore, to support the data obtained from the questionnaire, a focus group interview was conducted with 6 EFL students who completed the questionnaire form.

According to the data obtained from the metaphor questionnaire, out of 325 students who participated in the questionnaire, 123 of their metaphors were deemed invalid, resulting in the evaluation of 202 students' data. In the study, 202 metaphor frequencies and 125 different metaphors were produced. As can be seen, although most of the students in the study were able to produce metaphors, some of the words written by the students were considered invalid because they had adjective characteristics instead of metaphors. A similar study was conducted by Öztürk and Alkış (2009) in the field of Social Studies. In this study, research was conducted regarding what teacher candidates know about the concept of Geography. A total of 316 students participated, and when words that did not align with the concept of metaphor, they were excluded from the study. 106 valid metaphors remained. Similarly, a study by Duyar and Özkan (2020) was conducted to identify middle school students' metaphorical perceptions of the English concept. In this study, which involved a total of 443 participants, the number of participants decreased to 281 when forms that did not comply with the definition of metaphor were excluded from the study.

When perceptions of English lessons were examined, three main categories emerged in this study. Similar to the findings reported by Gürel (2018), English Lessons as an Expression of Happiness (Fun/Enjoyment and Curiosity/Discovery), English Lessons as an Expression of Education (Language/Vocabulary, Communication/Culture, and Necessity) and English Lessons as an Expression of Negativity (Complexity/Difficulty and Unnecessity/Boredom) emerged as main and subcategories in the present study. However, apart from the findings reported in the present study, Duyar and Özkan (2020), Gömleksiz (2013) and Ünyılmaz (2024) found different subcategories such as power, journey, future, colonialism in their studies. Swales (1994) also conducted a study on students' perceptions of foreign language learning. The study involved 12 female participants enrolled in a British Council language course in Dubai. The participants were asked to create drawings related to foreign language learning. This study differs from the current research in terms of the categories established. That is to say, in the study of Swales (1994) students associated foreign language learning with nature, village life, family life, and the personal development that education offers them.

This study yielded that the participants used the same metaphor to refer to different aspects of English lessons such as ‘puzzle’ and ‘a new world’. Similarly, Duyar and Özkan (2020) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of 7th and 8th grade students regarding the concept of English. They identified the participants' perceptions of the 'English' concept through a metaphor analysis, expressing the concept of English from three different perspectives using the metaphor of 'life. The metaphors revealed through the study are universality, necessity, and modernization.

It is noteworthy to highlight that in this study, a total of 89 valid metaphors were produced in the Happiness category, 59 valid metaphors in the Education category, and 54 valid metaphors in the Negativity category. Based on these results, we can conclude that students' perceptions of the English lesson are predominantly positive and that they enjoy learning English. These results align with the findings of Alkaff (2013), Farjami (2012) and Özcan (2010), who found that students' perceptions of English are predominantly positive, and these favorable perceptions also allowed students to cultivate positive views towards language courses. Likewise, Gömleksiz (2013) examined metaphorical perceptions of learning a foreign language among 565 prospective teachers. Gömleksiz (2013) reported that students generated more positive metaphors in relation to the concept of learning a foreign language. The study also

concluded that prospective teachers believed that knowing and learning a foreign language offered good living conditions, facilitated career advancement, fostered a hopeful outlook for the future, opened every door for professional growth, and served as a guiding tool. In contrast to these findings, Çetinkaya (2009) examined the perceptions and attitudes of 15 students regarding English in his study. The study concluded that students perceive English as an international language and that their attitudes towards English are complex and multi-layered. Additionally, it was found that students viewed English as a symbol of power and aspired to gain this power through learning the language. However, they also questioned the dominance of English and held negative attitudes towards it. In another study, Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) found that the category fun did not yield a high percentage. In the study, students have produced negative metaphors such as hell, obligation, and stress regarding foreign language learning.

In the sub-problem of the first research question of the study, metaphorical perceptions of English lessons were examined based on gender and grade variables. As for the gender, based on the chi square values, female students were found to have more positive metaphorical perceptions of English lessons than male students. This finding aligns with the results reported by Simpeh, Soku and Adu (2011) who investigated students' attitudes towards studying English and French. They found that female students' attitudes towards learning English and French were higher than those of male students. Similarly, Aktekin (2013) examined the attitudes and beliefs of students learning a foreign language through metaphors. The study revealed that female students developed a more positive attitude towards learning English compared to male students. Students’ grade was the other variable investigated in this study. According to chi square values, no significant difference was observed in the metaphorical perceptions of the students towards the English course based on their grade levels. This result aligns with the findings of Duyar and Özkan (2020), who reported no significant difference in the class variable among their study of 7th and 8th grade students.

5.2. Discussion of Focus Group Interview

In this section, the qualitative findings obtained from the focus group interviews, conducted with 6 EFL students, were discussed in relation to the previous studies. In the analysis of the interview, a total of 159 codes were reached in the 7 themes regarding the participants' thoughts about English lessons. These themes are "Challenges in EFL Classes", "Skills in English", "Importance of English", "Comparison of English with Other Disciplines", "Opinions about English Lesson", "English for Higher Education", and "Solutions for Challenges in EFL Classes".

Among the seven themes, the "Challenges in EFL Classes" theme has the highest frequency. The findings showed that 'Words' Memorization' received the highest frequency in this category. The participants stated that there were too many words in English class and that they especially had difficulty in memorizing words. These findings are compatible with the results of the study conducted by Aydoğan and Gönen (2020). Their study focused on difficulties that students face while mastering English. They found out that students reported that their biggest (most common) problem in learning, using, and improving their English is a lack of vocabulary.

In this study, students reported having difficulty with listening exercises and found listening and speaking activities inadequate. For this reason, they preferred slower and clearer texts for listening activities. In line with this, Özmat and Senemoğlu (2021) found that, based on students' perceptions of the learning-teaching process, both 7th and 11th grade students struggle to understand what they hear in English lessons because they do not participate in listening exercises. Likewise, Yolcu and Dimici (2020) conducted a broad analysis of the 5th-grade English language curriculum and noted that the deficiencies concerning students' speaking and listening skills unfortunately persisted. Cihan and Gürlen (2013) also discovered that English teachers overlooked the evaluation of speaking and listening skills when assessing the secondary school English curriculum.

In the present study, as for the 'Importance of English' theme, the participants all claimed that English is important to find a profession, go abroad and communicate in international contexts. Ekmekçi (2019) found similar drawbacks in his study that more than half of the students participating in the study stated that they learn a foreign language in order to find a job. From this, he inferred that the majority of the students have external motivation, and their perspective on learning a foreign language is shaped by concerns about finding employment in the future.

As for the comparison of English with other disciplines theme, the participants mostly compared English only to Turkish in terms of ease or difficulty. In parallel with this result, Ekmekçi (2019) found that female students tend to rely more on Turkish while learning a foreign language and that they largely learn the foreign language in a classroom setting. Furthermore, female students are also inclined to utilize Turkish as much as possible during the foreign language learning process.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the study, conclusions drawn from the data, implications of the study, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

6.1. Overview

The main purpose of the study is to determine the metaphorical perceptions of 6th and 7th grade secondary school students for English lessons and to reveal whether students' metaphorical perceptions towards English lessons differ in terms of gender and grade levels. Moreover, it aimed to examine what factors may have affected these perceptions. This study utilized phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, to seek answers to the research question. In the research, qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis. In the first step, the data was collected through the metaphor questionnaire form (See Appendix 2). Then, focus group interview form (See Appendix 3) was conducted to reinforce the data obtained the questionnaire form.

6.2. Conclusions

This study mainly focused on collecting detailed information regarding the students' metaphorical perceptions of English lessons. Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of participants' metaphors and justifications regarding English lessons, certain conclusions have been drawn. In the present study, metaphors towards English lessons have been evaluated in three main categories: ‘English Lessons as an Expression of Happiness’, ‘English Lessons as an Expression of Education’, and ‘English Lessons as an Expression of Negativity’. The category with the highest number of metaphors was the “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness”, which also implies that the students generally have a positive perception of English lessons. This was followed by the “English Lesson as an Expression of Education” category and the “English Lesson as an Expression of Negativity” category.

The metaphors in the ‘English Lessons of as an Expression of Happiness’ category were examined in two subcategories as "Fun/Enjoyment" and "Curiosity/Discovery"**.** In these subcategories, the most commonly used metaphors have

been ‘Game’, ‘Theater’, ‘Film’, ‘Sugar’, ‘Puzzle’, ‘Space’, ‘Universe’, ‘Surprise Box’, and ‘New World’. The metaphor with the highest frequency in the “English Lesson as an Expression of Happiness” category was ‘Game’ metaphor. The study revealed that the students particularly find it enjoyable to play with words and create new sentences using these words. Likewise, Aisyah (2018) discovered that game-based activities encouraged the students to support one another in their learning. In the study, the metaphors in the “English Lessons of as an Expression of Education” category were examined in three subcategories as "Language/Vocabulary", “Communication/Culture” and "Necessity"**.** It was yielded that English lessons are commonly associated with the metaphors 'Dictionary', 'Turkish', 'Turkish Lesson', 'Life', 'Trip', 'Cultural Transfer', 'A New World', 'Blood', 'Heart', and 'Key' in these subcategories. The last category “English Lessons of as an Expression of Negativity” was divided into two subcategories as ‘"Complexity/Difficulty" and "Unnecessity/Boredom". In these subcategories, ‘Chaos’ ‘Hell’ ‘Ivy’ ‘Puzzle’, ‘Empty Glass’ ‘A Blank Slate’ metaphors commonly created by the students.

One of the notable findings of the research is that the students perceive English lessons as a language concept, often comparing English lessons to Turkish lessons. The study also showed that the students struggle to see English as a distinct language from Turkish and benefit from the similarities in subject matter and vocabulary learning between the two languages. However, Gass and Selinker’s (2001) study indicated that the native language influences the second language and is a source of errors in both production and reception, especially in the classroom environments. Furthermore, the present study concluded that the students feel anxious in EFL classes since they experience confusion and difficulty in spelling words, listening components of texts and pronunciation during English lessons. Similarly, Macintyre, Noels, and Clement (1997) identified a relationship between learning anxiety and the process of acquiring a new language. They further argued that as anxiety levels increased, the quality of students' writing skills and their belief in their own self-efficacy decreased.

As for the gender of the students, no statistically significant relationship was found between the students’ gender and positivity/negativity of metaphors that are used to describe English lessons. However, on the surface, female students seemed to have a more positive perception towards English lessons compared to male students in the present study. Similarly, no statistically significant relationship was found between the students’ grade levels and positivity/negativity of the metaphors. Another conclusion

drawn from the study is that a great number of 6th and 7th grade students were able to produce meaningful metaphors to describe their English lessons. The study also showed that the same metaphors in the study were used by different students, and the justifications given for the metaphors showed how the students' perspectives differ even on the same concept**.** Likewise, Gibson (1996) emphasized that people direct the concepts in the direction of their perception.

This study also focused on the factors that affect the students' perceptions of English lessons, based on the metaphors the students produced. The findings of the study highlighted that the most common difficulties the students face in EFL classes are the large number of words and memorization, listening skills, transitions between units, and noise in the classroom. Remarkably, the study indicated that the most frequently stated difficulty by the EFL students was 'memorizing words', which shows that the students struggle to remember words in sentences and have issues with how to learn words because they attempt to memorize them through rote learning. Such factors were reported to reinforce the students' negative perceptions of English lessons throughout the study.

6.3. Implications

This study has provided some implications for EFL students, teachers, curriculum designers, and textbook authors. Identifying students' metaphors regarding English lessons can help EFL teachers understand how their students feel about these lessons. In this way, EFL teachers can assist their students in overcoming their negative feelings towards English and transforming these negative emotions into positive ones. Furthermore, reflecting students' perspectives in this way into language teaching policies will help teachers to identify the factors that cause negative perceptions among students, making this long-term educational process more efficient. Additionally, revealing perceptions towards English classes through metaphors will particularly provide new perspectives in English language teaching and help teachers generate some ideas for shaping further teaching and instructional behaviors.

In line with previous studies (Akalın & Zengin, 2007; Baştürk, 2012; Karahan, 2007), the EFL students were observed to have positive attitudes towards English language and English lessons, which should be reflected in the curricula and supported by appropriate language policies. Therefore, it is necessary to review English language

teaching programs to identify the key topics that are significantly emphasized and to avoid trivial topics that may diminish the enjoyment of learning English. The study has also revealed that some students were not capable of producing effective metaphors since they used adjectives instead of metaphors to refer to their English lessons throughout the study. For this reason, a kind of metaphor training program should be integrated into the EFL curriculum to make students learn more about metaphors, produce and understand them effectively. Therefore, metaphors should be included in the EFL curriculum, textbooks and classroom activities. Additionally, the results of the study indicated that the most frequently used metaphor by students is "Game." In this context, EFL teachers and textbook authors should integrate more game themed, funny, engaging, and enjoyable language learning activities into the teaching process to make learning enjoyable and attractive, and thus EFL students can associate these activities with positive metaphors.

Furthermore, EFL teachers can be equipped with technological and digital tools such as laptops, smartboards, projectors, and videos on relevant topics to engage their students in English classes. Besides, EFL teachers can be encouraged to adopt more innovative methods to facilitate the understanding of specific subjects such as metaphors. In-service teacher training programs can also be enhanced to diversify EFL teachers' classroom activities, enable them to reflect on their teaching practices, and learn about contemporary language teaching approaches globally. Moreover, to eliminate students' negative perceptions towards speaking and listening in English, EFL teachers can focus more on skill teaching rather than grammar-based instruction in their English classes. EFL teachers can also speak English as much as possible during lessons to ensure that students are in authentic language learning environments. In addition, EFL teachers can choose speaking and listening activities from original texts, and conduct vocabulary activities that can capture students' interests appropriate to their age levels. As Weinstein and Mayer (1986) claims, effective teaching includes instructing students on how to learn, remember, and think. Finally, to eliminate and reduce the factors that affect the use of metaphors among EFL students, it could be suggested that democratic classroom management workshops for EFL teachers be organized in collaboration with academia within the programs/facilities of schools, and that services such as academic mentoring be provided to more frequently consult expert opinions on classroom management.

6.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

As in all studies, this study also has several drawbacks. The current research is limited to 6th and 7th grade students studying in three different middle schools, so the results of the study cannot be generalized to all EFL students. In addition, the scope of this study is limited to the 2023-2024 academic year. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the other academic semesters. In this context, further studies that include more students from different grade levels could also contribute to the field**.**

The findings are also limited to the two data collection tools used in the study, which are a questionnaire and focus group interview. As an extra tool, lesson observations might be conducted to obtain more in-depth data from different perspectives. Moreover, the participants were given the questionnaire by their regular teacher in their regular classrooms, which may have produced some anxiety on the part of the students since they may have perceived the questionnaire as one of their exams. Another limitation is that the metaphor questionnaire is given to the students in Turkish, their mother tongue, because of their limited knowledge in English. Different findings may have been obtained in the case the data collection tools were conducted in English. Additionally, some students who responded to the questionnaire provided adjectives instead of metaphors during the study due to their unfamiliarity with the concept of metaphor. In such studies the participants could be given a kind of briefing session about how to produce effective metaphors as one part of the study.

This study focused on the EFL students' perceptions of English based on the metaphors they produced. However, the perspectives of the students provide only half of the picture in ordinary EFL classes. In another study, EFL teachers' perceptions of metaphors, their concerns and suggestions can be studied in isolation or in a comparative manner with EFL students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Metaphor Questionnaire Form

Değerli öğrenciler,

Bu anket sizlerin İngilizce dersine yönelik metaforik algılarınızı belirlemek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Anket iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. I. Bölümde kişisel bilgileriniz, II. Bölümde İngilizce dersine ait görüşleriniz sorulmaktadır. Ankette yanıtladığınız soruların cevapları kimse ile paylaşılmayacaktır. Lütfen samimiyet ile cevap vererek, eksiksiz bir şekilde anketi doldurunuz. Anketi doldururken isim yazmanız istenmemektedir. Verdiğiniz değerli bilgiler için teşekkür ederim.

Araştırmacı
Berna GÖK
Çukurova Üniversitesi
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü
Yüksek Lisans Programı Öğrencisi

I.BÖLÜM

Bu bölümde size ait kişisel bilgilerinizi içeren sorulara cevap vermeniz beklenmektedir. Cevaplarken lütfen bütün boşlukları atlamadan doldurunuz. Boşluklara "X" işareti koymanız yeterlidir.

1) Cinsiyetiniz:

K ( ) E ( )

2) Sınıfınız:

6.Sınıf ( ) 7.Sınıf ( )

II. BÖLÜM

Bu bölümde İngilizce dersi ile ilgili benzetmeler yapmanız istenmektedir. Boşluklara aklınıza ilk gelen cevabı açıklaması ile yazınız.

1) Ben İngilizce derslerini _____ benzetiyorum. Çünkü_____
_____

Appendix 2. Focus Group Interview Form

1. Is the study of English important? Please provide reasons to your answer.
2. How do you rate English lesson as a discipline? Is it interesting, difficult, easy or boring subject? Please provide reasons to your answer.
3. English lessons are more difficult than other subjects? Do you agree?
4. Which aspect of English lesson do you like studying and why?
5. Would you choose English for your higher education at the university? Provide reasons for your answer.
6. If no, which subject would you prefer to study at the university and why?
7. Which rank would you give English when considering a subject for higher education?
8. What challenges do you face in the study of English?
9. What do you think should be done to address those challenges?

Appendix 3. Institution Approval from Cukurova University

ÇUKUROVA ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ALANINDA BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU

Toplantı Tarihi: 02.02.2024
Toplantı Yeri: Çevrimiçi-Microsoft Teams Sohbet

KARAR NO: 6

Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğünün 22/12/2023-E. 883471 tarih-sayılı yazısı ekinde Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Alanında Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kuruluna Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ebru ŞİRE KAYA ve yüksek lisans öğrencisi Berna GÖK tarafından gönderilen "Identifying Metaphoric Perceptions of Secondary School Students Towards English Lesson (Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin İngilizce Dersine Yönelik Metaforik Algılarının Belirlenmesi)" başlıklı çalışma kurulumuzca incelenmiş ve araştırmanın etik ilkelere uygun olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Appendix 4. Permission from the Directorate of National Education

T.C.
GAZİANTEP VALİLİĞİ
İl Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-34659092-605.01-99683145 27/03/2024
Konu : Araştırma İzin Talebi
(Berna GÖK)

VALİLİK MAKAMINA

İlgi: Çukurova Üniversitesi Rektörlüğünün 14.03.2024 tarihli ve 959130 sayılı yazısı.

Çukurova Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalı 2022931114 numaralı Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Berna GÖK'ün, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ebru Şire KAYA danışmanlığında yürüttüğü "Identifiying Metaphoric Perceptions of Secondary School Students Towards English Lesson (Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin İngilizce Derslerine Yönelik Metaforik Algılarının Belirlenmesi)" konulu anket uygulama isteği kapsamında, İlimiz Şehitkamil İlçesine bağlı bulunan ortaokul 5. ve 7. Sınıf öğrencilerine yönelik Anket Uygulama İsteği, ilgi yazıda belirtilmektedir.

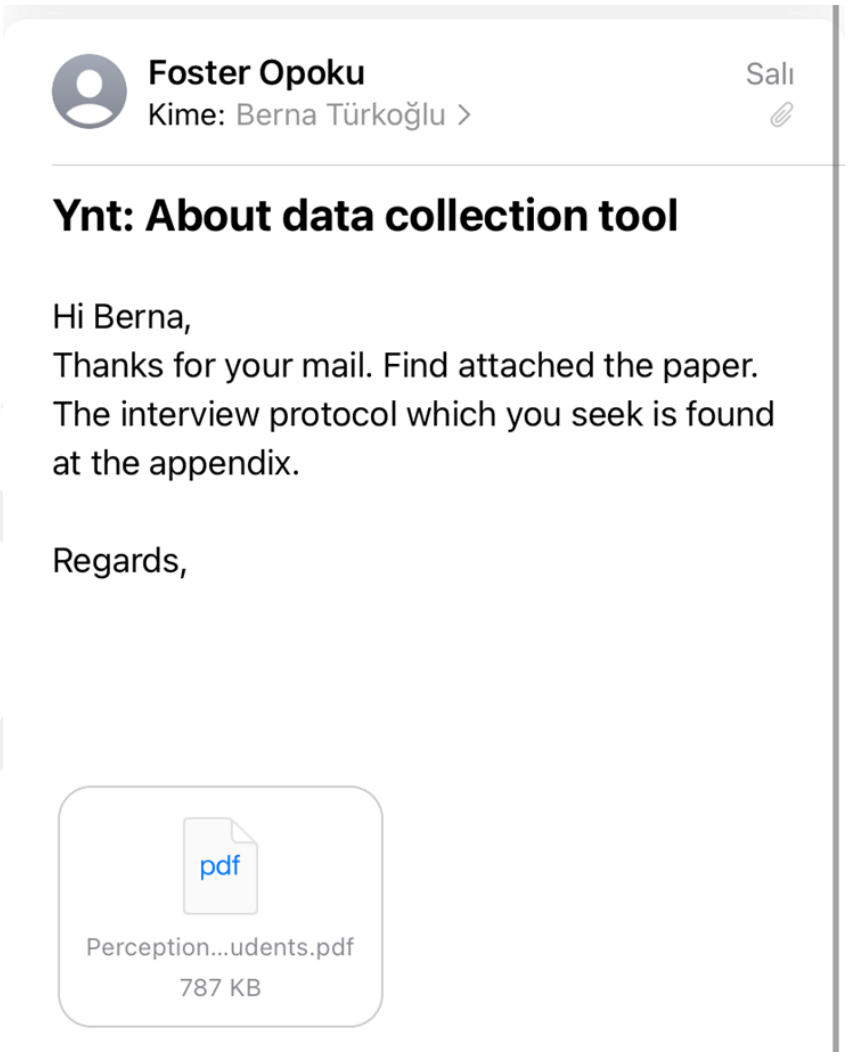
Bu kapsamda bahsi geçen Anket Uygulama İsteği, Bakanlığımız Yenilik ve Eğitim Teknolojileri Genel Müdürlüğünün 21.01.2020 tarihli ve 2020/2 sayılı genelgesi kapsamında değerlendirilmiş olup; araştırmacının, araştırmasının bitiminden itibaren 15 gün içerisinde araştırma sonuçlarını 2 kopya halinde CD içerisinde Müdürlüğümüze bildirmesi şartıyla, İlimiz Şehitkamil İlçesine bağlı bulunan ortaokul 5. ve 7. Sınıf öğrencilerine yönelik anket uygulama isteğinin, eğitim öğretimi aksatmayacak şekilde gönüllülük esasına göre uygulanması Müdürlüğümüz Ar-Ge bürosu bünyesinde oluşturulan komisyonun uygunluk raporu doğrultusunda uygun mütalaa edilmektedir.

Makamınızca da uygun görüldüğü takdirde; Olurlarınıza arz ederim.

Yasin TEPE
İl Milli Eğitim Müdürü

OLUR
Murat AKYÜZ
Vali a.
Vali Yardımcısı

Appendix 5. Permission for Metaphorical Questionnaire Form (Opoku, 2019)



Appendix 6. Permission for Focus Group Interview Form (Gürel, 2018)

Ezgi GUREL Pazartesi
Kime: Berna Türkoğlu >

Ynt: Anket hakkında

Merhaba Berna Hocam,

Öncelikle çalışmanızda başarılar diliyorum. Tabi ki tezimdeki anketten yararlanabilirsiniz. Ekte ilk hazırladığım ham halini bulabildim. Üzerinde değişiklik yapabilirsiniz.

Kolaylıklar dilerim.

Öğr. Gör. Ezgi Gürel

Lecturer Ezgi Gürel
Erasmus+ Exchange Program
International Relations Office
Afyon Kocatepe University

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name & Surname **:** Berna GÖK

Date / Place of Birth **:**

E-mail **:**

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

2020 – 2024: Çukurova University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of English Language Teaching

2011 – 2016: Hacettepe University, Department of English Language Teaching

WORK EXPERIENCE

2017 – Present: English Teacher, Necibe Nalkıran Secondary School, Gaziantep.