

## EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT 'TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS' THROUGH METAPHORS

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to reveal pre-service English language teachers' perceptions concerning 'teaching English to young learners' through metaphors. It has been carried out with the participation of 83 4<sup>th</sup> grade undergraduate students attending the English Language Teaching Programme at Ondokuz Mayıs University. The data have been collected via a metaphor form with an open-ended statement as "Teaching English to young learners is ..... because .....". The gathered data have been analysed through content analysis in stages coding and elimination, category development, validity and reliability, interpretation of the data. During the preliminary analysis of the gathered metaphors 11 of them were omitted due to the missing parts on the form. The remaining 72 metaphors were put into a similarity analysis revealing that 31 different metaphors in total were produced by the participants. The metaphors *fun* and *turning-point* have appeared to be the ones with the highest frequency. Among the other metaphors with high frequency are *joy*, *challenge*, *difficulty*, and *hard-work*. As for the categories yielded by the study, the frequency list is led by 'an enjoyable process', which is followed by 'a demanding process', 'an important process', 'a creative process', and 'an easy process' consecutively. Related discussions and recommendations are presented in the light of these findings.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, pre-service teachers, metaphor, young learners

## INTRODUCTION

The long-standing 'lingua franca' status of English across the world has rendered it the number-one second or foreign language in terms of popularity. As part of this trend, Turkey regards English as the most important foreign language for its citizens and attaches great importance to its teaching and learning. Considering the status of English in Turkey, the model proposed by Kachru (1985) turns out to be a reference framework. The model introduces three concentric circles composed of the Inner Circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The Inner Circle includes countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue (L1) (e.g. England, the United States of America, Australia). The Outer Circle covers countries where English is spoken as a second language (ESL) (e.g. India, Kenya, the Republic of South Africa). The Expanding Circle includes countries where English is used as a foreign language (EFL) (e.g. Turkey, Iran, Japan). While English is acquired in the Inner Circle and Outer Circle countries, it is learned in the Expanding Circle countries. That is, people do not possess the opportunity to get access to the authentic uses of English in a natural way in the circle to which Turkey belongs. This, in turn, brings certain challenges to the English language teaching and learning processes in such countries especially in terms of productive aspects like speaking and writing.

English language teaching (ELT) has long been implemented in Turkey as part of the national education system. Over the years, system-related changes have naturally affected the ELT policies in the country. For instance, as a result of the Education Reform that was put into effect in 1997, an 8-year compulsory primary education system was launched and the system began to offer English as of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at the primary level instead of secondary level. Then, the whole system was changed as of the 2012-2013 academic year and a completely new 4+4+4 (primary+elementary+secondary) system was adopted. This system lowered the schooling age from 7 years to 66 months (5,5 years) and also English lessons began to be offered as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at primary level. A minor revision was made about the schooling age in July 2019 and it was decided by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) as 69 months. Considering the ELT dimension, English lessons have been offered at state schools as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade since the 2012-2013 academic year. The rationale behind this 'early age' implementation in ELT can be linked to the Critical Period Hypothesis proposed first by Lenneberg (1967) and then Krashen (1982) emphasizing the key importance of an early start during an additional language acquisition or learning process.

The system-related changes by the MoNE automatically brought curricular changes. For instance, with the advent of the 4+4+4 system a comprehensive curriculum reform was introduced as of the 2012-2013 academic year and new curricula for all courses offered at primary, elementary, and secondary levels were released by the Board of Education under the MoNE. These curricula were revised in 2017-2018 academic year by the Board of Education with some minor changes. The revision brought some thematic modifications and the integration of values education into the classroom practices at all levels. To this end, ten key values were specified in the curricula for all courses at primary, elementary, and secondary levels: friendship, justice,

honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and altruism (MoNE, 2017). These values are expected to be integrated into the content of the textbooks and classroom teaching processes at all levels.

Within the specific context of ELT in Turkey, there are two different curricula for general English courses in the national education system; one for the primary-elementary level (2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) and the other for the secondary level (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades). The philosophy adopted in both of the curricula is almost the same since their contents were developed in accordance with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). Keywords like action-orientedness, communicative competence, skills integration, collaboration, learner autonomy, authentic materials, tasks, and projects reflect the characteristics of the curricula. As the age groups addressed by these two curricula differ from one another, the covered themes, focused skills, and the offered main activities and strategies may vary. While the target group of the curriculum for 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades is composed of young learners and young adolescents (from around 6,5 to 12,5 years of age), the target group of the curriculum for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades consists of adolescents (from around 13,5 to 16,5 years of age). The framework of the model English language curriculum for 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Model English Language Curriculum (2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades) (MoNE, 2017, p. 9).

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] (4)	5	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading Very Limited Writing	Drama/Role-play
	6	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading Very Limited Writing	
3 [A2] (4)	7	<b>Primary:</b> Listening and Speaking <b>Secondary:</b> Reading and Writing	Theme-based
	8	<b>Primary:</b> Listening and Speaking <b>Secondary:</b> Reading and Writing	

The model English language curriculum for the 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades in Table 1 makes it clear that learners are expected to exceed A1 level (the beginner level according to CEFR) and attain A2 in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The common point seen at all grades is the primary emphasis on listening and speaking skills. While at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade only listening and speaking skills are covered, reading and writing are gradually incorporated as of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

grade. As for the main activities and strategies offered by the curriculum, Total Physical Response (TPR), arts and crafts, and drama practices are specified for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades; and drama and role-play for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.. As Cameron (2001) underlines, songs, games, and hands-on activities are ideal for young learners while learning languages. Cameron (2001) also asserts that “for young learners, spoken language is the medium through which the new language is encountered, understood, practiced and learnt” (p. 18). On the other hand, the curriculum offers theme-based activities for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. This obvious difference clearly shows that developmentally appropriate activities and strategies are offered by the curriculum considering grade and age transitions. It is also evident that 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades are treated as young learners while 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are considered as adolescent learners by the curriculum. This point is clarified in the curriculum as follows: “Young learners are predominantly provided with a ‘play world’, in which they are expected to sing, dance, play games, do arts and craft activities (McKay, 2006), all of which embedded with English language” (MoNE, 2017, p. 3).

The above-covered information and discussions presenting a curricula-related framework about ELT in Turkey show that there are different factors involved in the process of teaching English to learners of different age groups. While discussing the details about the developing ELT systems in Turkey, the highly significant ‘teacher’ factor should not be neglected. Although there is a controversial ‘pedagogical formation certificate’ alternative, the major way to become an English language teacher in Turkey is to graduate from the ELT programmes at the faculties of education. The formal aim of these undergraduate programmes is to educate prospective English language teachers to be employed by the MoNE for state schools at primary, elementary or secondary levels. Although the undergraduate ELT programmes offer to-the-point courses like Teaching English to Young Learners 1-2, ELT Curricula, and Teaching Language Skills 1-2 that aim to prepare prospective English language teachers for their various future teaching experiences, teaching English at primary level, elementary level, and at secondary level are different types of experience that involve specific advantages and disadvantages. While an English language teacher employed at a primary or elementary school is expected to address young learners (or young adolescent learners as of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade), another teacher employed at a secondary school will address adolescent learners.

Gürsoy (2019) emphasizes that teaching English to young learners, adolescents and adults may bring different challenges and lists ten key principles that should be taken into account while teaching English to young learners:

1. Children and adults are different in terms of their developmental stages and characteristics.
2. Children learn indirectly.
3. Children focus on meaning and cannot understand structural information if provided.
4. Contextualization of the language lesson has prime importance in planning lessons.
5. Children are predominantly visual and kinaesthetic. Therefore, classroom activities and materials should be prepared by taking their learning styles.

6. We need to give a reason for learning. As children are still in the period of concrete operations future related reasons cannot be given.
7. Each activity should have purpose. The purpose can be given within the context.
8. Topics and contexts should be chosen from the “here and now”.
9. A variety of resources need to be used with young learners, such as songs, stories, games, drama activities, etc.
10. Teacher talk is the major source of input therefore, should be given carefully without creating a need for translation (p. 647).

It is clear that English language teachers who address young learners are expected to adjust themselves to the characteristics of children. As Moon (2000) stresses, young learners possess features such as being talkative, creative, imaginative, visual, kinaesthetic, and preferring fun and secure environments. Indeed, these are all invaluable advantages in terms of English language learning. Nevertheless, helping young learners to employ these features as effective advantages is a real responsibility on the part of English language teachers. They need to show adequate flexibility and sometimes patience while dealing with young learners in the classroom. Therefore, their perceptions of young learners are of key importance for their teaching performances in the classroom.

The existing literature on the perceptions of pre-service or in-service English language teachers about young learners within Turkish EFL context is limited to a few indirectly related studies exploring the primary level related ELT policies or the challenges faced by in-service English language teachers about the ELT system at the primary level (e.g., Kırkgöz, 2006, 2008; Kızıldağ, 2009; Yıldırım & Doğan, 2010; İnceçay, 2012; Gürsoy, Korkmaz & Damar, 2013; Güngör, 2016). There has been no study exploring the perceptions of pre-service English language teachers about young learners in Turkey. This issue is quite important in that a considerable amount of ELT graduates will find themselves among young learners at primary or elementary schools during their first years of teaching under the current system. Since key applied courses like Teaching English to Young Learners 1-2 (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) and Teaching Practice 1-2 (in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade) in the ELT programmes aim to make prospective teachers ready for their future performances, the perceptions of especially the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (just before graduation) about teaching English to young learners is of vital importance.

Metaphors are widely employed tools to explore perceptions about something in an indirect but effective way (Shuell, 1990; Yob, 2003; Saban, 2008; Singh, 2010). Etymologically derived from the Greek word *metapherein* (meta/to change and pherein/to transfer), the term *metaphor* suggests an implicit way of revealing inner thoughts concerning something (Levine, 2005). It was first specified by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as a distinct tool to discover human beings' inner thoughts and perceptions. Shuell (1990) emphasizes the efficacy of using metaphors as follows: 'If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures. For a picture provides only a static image while a metaphor provides a conceptual framework for thinking about something' (p. 102). Likewise, Yob (2003) and Singh (2010) stress that metaphors are highly effective tools to perceive and explain especially abstract and complex phenomena.

Under the above framework, focusing on the highly significant ‘young learners’ issue in ELT and aiming to fill a considerable gap in the existing literature, the current study seeks answers for the following research questions:

1. What are the metaphors produced by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers concerning ‘teaching English to young learners’?
2. What are the categories yielded by the analysis of the produced metaphors?

**METHOD**

**Research design**

The current study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design. According to Creswell (2003), in phenomenological studies “the researcher identifies the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study” (p. 15). Under this framework, this study aims to discover the participants’ perceptions about ‘teaching English to young learners’ through metaphors, therefore, metaphorical analysis is employed to gather the targeted data.

**Participants**

The subject group of the study is composed of 83 pre-service English language teachers attending the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the English Language Teaching Programme at Ondokuz Mayıs University in Samsun, Turkey. Considering the gender factor, 58 of the participants are female while 25 of them are male. The study adopts convenience sampling strategy under which readily accessible groups are selected by the researcher as the subject group (Dörnyei, 2007). This subject group was intentionally selected by the researcher since the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in the ELT programmes complete the courses Teaching English to Young Learners 1 and 2 in the previous grade and take Teaching Practice 1 and 2 in the fall and spring semesters of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade consecutively. It was ensured that all of the participants contributed to the study on the basis of voluntariness. As anonymity is an important issue in especially qualitative studies (Ciambrone, 2004), each participant in the study was assigned a random number (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.).

**Data collection**

In order to explore the participants’ perceptions about ‘teaching English to young learners’, a simple written open-ended metaphor form was employed by the researcher as the main data collection tool:

Teaching English to young learners is.....  
because.....

Before being asked to fill in the form, the participants were informed about metaphors as well as the aim and scope of the study.

## **Data analysis**

A four-stage model adapted from the works of Ekiz (2009) and Şimşek and Yıldırım (2011) has been used for the data analysis of the current study: 1. coding and elimination; 2. category development; 3. validity and reliability; 4. interpretation of the data. In the coding and elimination stage, the forms submitted by all of the participants (n=83) were randomly coded from Participant 1 to Participant 83. Then, they were carefully checked by the researcher and 11 of them were eliminated as they skipped the second blank in the form (because...). Following the elimination, the remaining 72 metaphors were alphabetically listed. This listing enabled the researcher to identify the frequency of the produced metaphors and the conducted frequency analysis revealed that 31 different metaphors were generated by the participants.

In the category development stage, the researcher conducted content analysis on the 31 metaphors and the relevant explanations obtained in the previous stage and put them under 5 different categories (e.g., teaching English to young learners as ‘an important process’, ‘a demanding process’, etc.). The categories were formed by the researcher by analysing the coverage similarities of the gathered metaphors.

In the validity and reliability stage, the researcher first tried to ensure validity by explaining each step taken during the data collection and analysis processes in detail. Moreover, three ELT experts were consulted at each stage of the methodological implementations of the study. As for the reliability aspect, the researcher asked three ELT experts to match the alphabetically listed metaphors (n=31) with the 5 categories determined by the researcher. Then, the categorizations of the broached experts and that of the researcher were compared. After that, the reliability formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was applied: “reliability = agreement / (agreement + disagreement) x 100”. The results show that the consulted three experts disagreed with the researcher about the categorization of 3 metaphors (i.e. cooking, rainbow, and passion). Under this framework, the reliability of the study was calculated as 91% (reliability=31 / (31+3) x 100), which suggests an adequate level in terms of reliability in qualitative studies (Dörnyei, 2007).

In the last stage, interpretation of the data, the researcher interpreted both the results of the frequency analyses about the covered metaphors and the explanations the participants provided about the metaphors they wrote down in the second blank on the data collection form.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study are presented and discussed below with reference to the research questions set at the very beginning of the study.

**Research Question 1.** What are the metaphors produced by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers concerning ‘teaching English to young learners’?

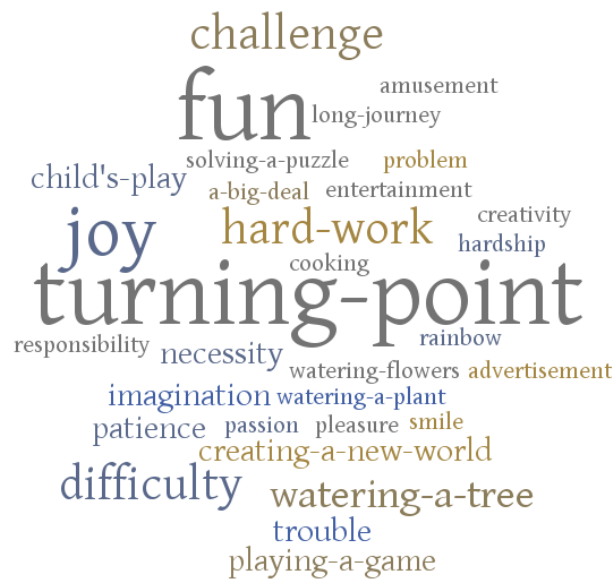
The preliminary analysis of the gathered data has yielded 72 metaphors and following a further similarity analysis it was revealed that 31 different metaphors in total were produced by the participants. The alphabetical list of these with frequency and percentage information is shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** An Alphabetical List of the Analysed Metaphors with Frequency and Percentage Values

No	Metaphor	F	%	No	Metaphor	F	%
1	a-big-deal	1	1,38	17	necessity	1	1,38
2	advertisement	1	1,38	18	passion	1	1,38
3	amusement	1	1,38	19	patience	2	2,77
4	challenge	4	5,55	20	playing-a-game	2	2,77
5	child's-play	2	2,77	21	pleasure	1	1,38
6	cooking	1	1,38	22	problem	1	1,38
7	creating-a-new-world	2	2,77	23	rainbow	1	1,38
8	creativity	1	1,38	24	responsibility	1	1,38
9	difficulty	4	5,55	25	smile	1	1,38
10	entertainment	1	1,38	26	solving-a-puzzle	1	1,38
11	fun	10	13,88	27	trouble	2	2,77
12	hardship	1	1,38	28	turning-point	10	13,88
13	hard-work	4	5,55	29	watering-a-plant	1	1,38
14	imagination	2	2,77	30	watering-a-tree	3	4,16
15	joy	7	9,72	31	watering-flowers	1	1,38
16	long-journey	1	1,38				

Table 2 makes it clear that while some of the metaphors were produced by one participant uniquely, some others were produced more than once. Considering the frequency values of the metaphors listed alphabetically, the metaphors *fun* and *turning-point* turn out to be the ones with the highest frequency. They are followed by *joy*, *challenge*, *difficulty*, and *hard-work*. It is also seen that metaphors such as *amusement*, *cooking*, and *rainbow* are the ones with the lowest frequency. Figure 1 below presents a word cloud highlighting the metaphors in line with their frequency levels.



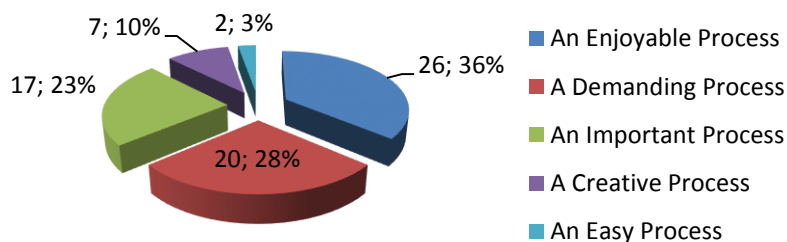


**Figure 1.** Word Cloud Showing the Analysed Metaphors Based on Their Frequency Values

The word cloud in Figure 1 presents a visual overview of the produced metaphors in this study based on the frequency values. The size of the given metaphors proportionally reflects their frequency values. Although the separate analysis of the produced metaphors may suggest some clues about the perceptions of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers about teaching English to young learners, a categorical analysis will be far more illuminating concerning the results of the study.

**Research Question 2.** What are the categories yielded by the analysis of the produced metaphors?

The content analysis conducted on the metaphors revealed 5 categories the frequency distribution of which is shown below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The Frequency Distribution of the Categories Yielded by the Content Analysis on the Metaphors

It is clear from Figure 2 that the category with the highest frequency is ‘an enjoyable process’, which means that 36% of the participants produced metaphors suggesting that they regard teaching English to young learners as an enjoyable process. The category with the second highest frequency appears to be ‘a demanding process’ (28%). It is followed by ‘an important process’ (23%), ‘a creative process’ (10%), and ‘an easy process’

(3%). The metaphors placed under these categories with frequency values and sample explanations are listed in the below tables.

**Table 3.** The Category ‘An Enjoyable Process’

No	Metaphor	F	Explanation
1	fun	10	“... because children are the wonders of life.” (Participant 33) “... because you can use lots of colourful materials.” (Participant 1) “... because they are really smart.” (Participant 72) “... because it is really funny to have time with kids.” (Participant 21)
2	joy	7	“... because practicing English with songs and games is much more enjoyable than teaching grammar.” (Participant 16) “... because we can teach, learn, and enjoy at the same time.” (Participant 11) “... because children like playful learning.” (Participant 63)
3	playing-a-game	2	“... because children create an enjoyable atmosphere.” (Participant 55)
4	solving-a-puzzle	1	“... because the brain of every kid works uniquely.” (Participant 10)
5	amusement	1	“... because a playful atmosphere can be created with them.” (Participant 16)
6	entertainment	1	“... because their characters are really colourful.” (Participant 6)
7	smile	1	“... because children mean sincerity.” (Participant 69)
8	pleasure	1	“... because they are open to new things.” (Participant 20)
9	rainbow	1	“... because children are so colourful.” (Participant 39)
10	passion	1	“... because you cannot give up children when you get used to them.” (Participant 2)

Under the category ‘an enjoyable process’, the participants produced 10 different metaphors including *fun*, *joy*, *playing-a-game*, *solving-a-puzzle*, *amusement*, *entertainment*, *smile*, *pleasure*, *rainbow*, and *passion* in frequency order. Considering the sample explanations, it can be said that the participants find children sympathetic and believe that working with them in the classroom will be an enjoyable process.

**Table 4.** The Category ‘A Demanding Process’

No	Metaphor	F	Explanation
1	challenge	4	“... because everything will start from the very beginning.” (Participant 70) “... because they are infinitely energetic and it is hard to control them within the walls.” (Participant 4)
2	hard-work	4	“... because they can sometime be really naughty.” (Participant 3) “... because it is really hard to control kids.” (Participant 29)
3	difficulty	4	“... because their attention span is too short.” (Participant 5) “... because children are noisy.” (Participant 8)
4	patience	2	“... because kids can sometimes be really annoying.” (Participant 34)
5	trouble	2	“... because you have to be a babysitter alongside your teacher role.” (Participant 7)
6	a-big-deal	1	“... because it is new language to them.” (Participant 10)
7	problem	1	“... because it is a language they don’t know.” (Participant 51)
8	hardship	1	“... because their attention span is a real problem in the classroom.” (Participant 17)
9	long-journey	1	“... because both students and their English language teachers have a long way to go in order to attain adequate English proficiency.” (Participant 22)

Under the category 'a demanding process', the participants produced 9 different metaphors *challenge, hard-work, difficulty, patience, trouble, a-big-deal, problem, hardship, and long-journey* in frequency order. The sample explanations reveal that the participants here mostly focus on the energetic nature and short attention span of the children and believe that teaching English to young learners will be demanding process.

**Table 5.** The Category 'An Important Process'

No	Metaphor	F	Explanation
1	turning-point	10	"... because these first steps will determine their future performances in English classes." (Participant 12) "... because knowledge learned at early ages become permanent." (Participant 24) "... because a correct beginning is crucial for their future language proficiency." (Participant 9) "... because these are critical periods for them to learn English effectively." (Participant 31)
2	watering-a-tree	3	"... because their English capacity is shaped in the class with the help of the teacher". (Participant 14)
3	responsibility	1	"... because you lay the whole infrastructure for their future language learning experiences." (Participant 56)
4	necessity	1	"... because this process gives them the first chance develop foreign language skills." (Participant 45)
5	watering-a-plant	1	"... because they can speak English thank to the efforts of the English language teacher." (Participant 37)
6	watering-flowers	1	"... because they will develop English language skills thanks to us." (Participant 23)

Under the category 'an important process', the participants produced 6 different metaphors *turning-point, watering-a-tree, responsibility, necessity, watering-a-plant, and watering-flowers* in frequency order. It is clear from the sample explanations that the participants here think that the early stages of the English learning process is of key significance for the young learners and teachers undertake an important responsibility in that context; therefore, they regard teaching English to young learners as an important process.

**Table 6.** The Category 'A Creative Process'

No	Metaphor	F	Explanation
1	imagination	2	"... because you must find a way to attract their attention." (Participant 61)
2	creating-a-new-world	2	"... because you are going to teach them a new language and culture so that they will develop new insights." (Participant 12)
3	creativity	1	"... because a completely new language and culture will be introduced to them." (Participant 8)
4	advertisement	1	"... because you must always draw their attention." (Participant 52)
5	cooking	1	"... because you can add whatever you want." (Participant 67)

Under the category 'a creative process', the participants produced 6 different metaphors *imagination, creating-a-new-world, creativity, advertisement, and cooking* in frequency order. It can be concluded from the sample explanations that the participants here think that language learning will be a new experience for young learners and their attention should be directed to language practices through the efforts of the teacher. Thus, they see teaching English to young learners as a creative process.

**Table 7.** The Category ‘An Easy Process’

No	Metaphor	F	Explanation
1	child’s-play	2	“... because their minds are tabula rasa.” (Participant 41)

Under the category ‘an easy process’, two participants produced 1 common metaphor *child’s-play*. It is clear from the sample explanation that the participants here think that young learners are blank slates and therefore believe that teaching English to them will be an easy process.

Considering the frequency distribution of the five categories yielded by the study (‘an enjoyable process’, 36%; ‘a demanding process’, 28%; ‘an important process’, 23%, ‘a creative process’, 10%; and ‘an easy process’, 3%), it can be drawn that the majority of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers attending this study regard teaching English to young learners as an enjoyable process. Furthermore, from a holistic perspective, the categories ‘a creative process’ and ‘an easy process’ can be linked to the joyfulness of the process; therefore, it is possible to say that around 49% of the participants share similar perceptions about the issue. That this significant finding is in line with the principles of the current curriculum (MoNE, 2017) which aims to create a ‘play world’ atmosphere for the young learners in English classes suggests that this aim can be embraced by a considerable number of prospective English language teachers. The explanations provided by the Participant 33, “... because children are the wonders of life”, and Participant 16, “... because practicing English with songs and games is much more enjoyable than teaching grammar” clearly summarize such ‘joyfulness’ perceptions of the participants.

Another important finding of the study is that a considerable percentage (28%) of the participants see teaching English to young learners as a demanding process. Participant 7, for instance, says it is trouble “... because you have to be a babysitter alongside your teacher role.” Likewise, Participant 4 states that it is a challenge “... because they are infinitely energetic and it is hard to control them within the walls.” This finding is quite important in that it shows that there are a considerable number of prospective English language teachers who possess a negative perception towards teaching English to young learners, if not the majority of the participants in this context. Actually, this is quite normal as everyone may have different tendencies. Nevertheless, the problem is the possible situation in which those with this negative perception get appointed to a primary school after graduation. If this perception affects their willingness and performance negatively, their young learner students will directly suffer this handicap. This is not something negligible considering what the MoNE (2017) indicates in the curriculum:

As the CEFR considers language learning to be a lifelong undertaking, developing a positive attitude toward English from the earliest stages is essential; therefore, the new curriculum strives to foster an enjoyable and motivating learning environment where young learners/users of English feel comfortable and supported throughout the learning process (p. 2).

It is evident that the MoNE aims to help young learners develop a 'positive attitude' within the ELT context and this can be achieved with English language teachers who possess positive perceptions about young learners. It may be suggested for those with negative perceptions not to prefer to get employed at primary and elementary levels. Instead, they may choose secondary level schools.

The last finding of the study is about the group who regard teaching English to young learners as an important process (23%). This group do not suggest any positive or negative perception concerning teaching English to young learners; however, their perspective is quite significant in that they are aware of the critical importance of the infrastructure they are expected to lay in the English language proficiency of their prospective young learner students. For instance, Participant 24 and Participant 31 produced the metaphor 'turning-point' with the following explanations consecutively: "... because knowledge learned at early ages become permanent"; and "... because these are critical periods for them to learn English effectively."

Since there is no available study exploring the perceptions of pre-service English language teachers about young learners in Turkey, comparing the metaphor-based findings of the current study with those of any study in the relevant literature has not been an accessible option for the researcher. Nevertheless, the general finding of the study that there are different perceptions concerning *teaching English to young learners* suggests that, as underlined by Kirkgöz (2006) and Gürsoy (2019), the preparation process of the pre-service English language teachers for their prospective in-service teaching experiences at various levels including primary, elementary, and secondary ones is of vital importance for them to gain positive and constructive attitudes towards the learners they are expected to address after graduation.

## CONCLUSION

This study has concentrated on the important 'young learners' issue within the EFL context of Turkey and aimed to explore the perceptions of 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service English language teachers concerning 'teaching English to young learners' through metaphors. Following the qualitative analyses conducted on the gathered metaphors, 31 different metaphors were revealed out of the analysed 72 metaphors. When these metaphors were analysed in terms of frequency, it was found that *fun* and *turning-point* were the metaphors that were produced by the highest number of participants. As for the categorical findings, the first three categories turn out to be 'an enjoyable process', 'a demanding process', and 'an important process'. That the majority of the participants regard teaching English to young learners as an enjoyable process is a promising finding in terms of the future ELT practices at primary schools in Turkey; however, that a notable number of the participants see it as a demanding process is a bit worrying since young learners need positive, energetic, and dedicated English language teachers during their first English language learning experiences considering the significance of the early age principle.

In the light of the findings obtained in this study, it can be suggested that the key courses in ELT programmes like *Teaching English to Young Learners 1-2* and *Teaching Practice 1-2* be attached higher importance by the

academic staff and candidate English language teachers. Moreover, the pre-service English language teachers attending the ELT programmes should be informed about the significance of teaching English to young learners in accordance with the current curricula and language teaching system in Turkey and be made aware of the possibility that they may get appointed to a primary or elementary school following graduation.

While trying to fill in an important gap in the related literature, this study holds some limitations including the limited population of the subject group and the use of a single data collection tool (metaphor form). A prospective further study may cover a broader sampling (possibly ELT 4<sup>th</sup> graders from at least three universities) and may investigate the teaching preferences (primary level, elementary level, secondary level, tertiary level, or even a non-ELT career) of the participants comparatively.

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## ADAY İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ‘ÇOCUKLARA İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİMİ’NE İLİŞKİN ALGILARININ METAFORLAR ARACILIĞIYLA İNCELENMESİ

### GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Bu nitel çalışma Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Programı bünyesinde 4. sınıfta okuyan aday İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ‘çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi’ne ilişkin algılarını metaforlar aracılığıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından belirlenen mevcut İngilizce eğitim sistemi ve ilgili müfredatlar çerçevesinde İngilizce dersinin ilkökul 2. sınıftan itibaren okutulmaya başlanmasıyla birlikte daha da önem kazanan çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi boyutu bu çalışmanın çıkış noktasını teşkil etmektedir. İlgili literatür tarandığında çocuklara İngilizce öğretime ilişkin algıyı inceleyen herhangi bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu çerçevede alana katkı sağlamayı amaçlayan mevcut çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına yanıt aramıştır:

1. Dördüncü sınıf İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının “çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi” ile ilgili ürettikleri metaforlar nelerdir?
2. Üretilen metaforların analizinde ortaya çıkan kategoriler nelerdir?

Bu çalışma olgubilim araştırma deseni üzerine kurulu olup gönüllülük esasına dayalı olarak 83 kişilik 4. sınıf aday İngilizce öğretmeni grubunun katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Cinsiyet faktörü göz önüne alındığında katılımcıların 58’i kadın, 25’i ise erkektir. Çalışma grubunun İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programı 4. Sınıf öğrencilerinden seçilmesinin nedeni ilgili öğrencilerin 3. sınıfta ‘Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi 1-2’ derslerini almış olmaları ve bu konuya ilişkin bilgi ve farkındalıklarının bulunmasıdır. Nesnellik ve gizliliği koruyabilmek adına araştırmaya katkı sağlayan her bir katılımcıya rastgele bir sayı (örneğin, Katılımcı 1, Katılımcı 2, Katılımcı 3 vb.) atanmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında veriler üzerinde “Çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi ..... çünkü .....” yazan açık uçlu bir metafor formu üzerinden toplanmıştır. Katılımcılara formu doldurmadan önce çalışmanın kapsamı ve metaforlar üzerine bilgi verilmiştir. Veri analizi aşamasında kodlama ve ayıklama, kategori geliştirme, geçerlik ve güvenilirlik, ve verilerin yorumlanması olmak üzere dört aşamalı bir süreç işletilmiştir.

Veri analizi neticesinde elde edilen bulgular incelendiğinde 1. araştırma sorusu bağlamında katılımcılar tarafından incelenebilir durumda toplam 72 adet metafor üretildiği görülmektedir. Bu metaforlar arasında benzerlik durumlarının incelenmesi sonucunda toplam 31 adet farklı metaforun üretildiği görülmektedir. Bu metaforlar üzerinde yapılan içerik analizi ise en fazla ‘eğlence’ (fun) ve ‘dönüm noktası’ (turning-point) metaforlarının üretildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu iki metafor toplamda 10’ar katılımcı tarafından üretilmiştir. Bazı metaforların ise sadece 1’er katılımcı tarafından üretildiği görülmüştür. İncelenen metaforları kategorik olarak değerlendirdiğimizde ise toplamda 5 farklı kategorinin oluştuğunu görmekteyiz: ‘eğlenceli bir süreç’ (%36), ‘zorlu bir süreç’ (%28), ‘önemli bir süreç’ (%23), ‘yaratıcılık gerektiren bir süreç’ (%10) ve ‘kolay bir süreç’ (%3). Katılımcıların çoğunluğunun çocuklara İngilizce öğretmeyi eğlenceli bir süreç olarak kabul etmeleri Türkiye’deki ilkökul ve ortaokullarda gelecekteki İngilizce eğitimi uygulamaları açısından umut verici bir



bulgudur. Ancak, kayda değer sayıda katılımcının bunu zorlu bir süreç olarak görmesi biraz endişe vericidir, çünkü genç öğrencilerin erken yaş ilkesi çerçevesinde ilk İngilizce öğrenme deneyimleri sırasında pozitif, enerjik ve kendini bu işe adanmış İngilizce öğretmenlerine ihtiyaçları vardır.

Mevcut çalışma ile ilgili literatürdeki önemli bir boşluk doldurulmaya çalışılmıştır. Ancak çalışma grubunun sayı itibarıyla sınırlı oluşu ve verilerin tek bir veri toplama aracı (metafor formu) vasıtasıyla toplanmış olması gibi bazı sınırlılıklar mevcuttur. Farklı bir çalışmada daha geniş bir katılımcı grubuyla aday öğretmenlerin çocuklara İngilizce öğretimine ilişkin algıları incelenebilir ve elde edilen bulgular katılımcıların öğretim tercihleri (ilkokul düzeyi, ortaokul düzeyi, lise düzeyi, yükseköğretim düzeyi ve hatta öğretmenlik dışı bir kariyer) ile kıyaslamalı bir şekilde ele alınabilir.