ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS: A METAPHOR STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Metaphor studies are accepted as research tools by general education and language pedagogy scholars in related fields. It is considered that metaphors are useful tools to investigate and construct teacher's professional life. Metaphor studies generally focus on teacher-produced or student-produced metaphor images and qualitative data are used to analyze these images. The current research utilized pre-service English language teacher's metaphor perceptions about English language teachers. Therefore, the participants of the study will be prospective teachers in the future, their perceptions about English language teachers are quite important to investigate their identity building process. The participants of the present research are 128 English language teacher candidates who are first graders of English language teaching department at Gazi University. The data were collected in 2014- 2015 academic year. The data were collected through a scale which had been developed by researchers of the study. The scale consists of two part that investigate participants' perceptions through metaphors. The data were analyzed through content analysis. The results show that English language teacher candidates' perceptions vary and mostly positive metaphors were used to describe English language teachers. The current research is significant in terms of understanding English language teacher candidates' perceptions about their future career.

Key Words: Metaphor, English Language Teachers, Identity.

1. Introduction

Metaphor studies have been carried out with the rise of cognitive views towards language pedagogy during the last decades (Bernat, 2006; Buyukyazi, 2010; Yazici and Tan, 2010; Ghabanchi and Meidani, 2012). As metaphors are essential tools to investigate and understand language learners' thinking and ideologies, it has been used to understand language learners' conceptual framework towards teachers, students, foreign language and culture. According to Lin et al (2012) metaphors are quite effective tools that systematize language learners' action and meaning. Jensen (2006) states that with the rise of researchers' interest focus on everyday realities of classroom than educational practice, metaphor began to gain validity as a research tool. In this respect, it is possible to see metaphor studies about related areas of language pedagogy such as metaphor studies about teachers' role, culture and language. Metaphor studies about language teachers' role show teacher candidates' "construct representations of themselves and their experience" (Kramsch, 2003, p.125) and "to promote awareness of professional practice" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p.155). Besides, students' mental images about language teachers may reflect their expectations and role models that are indispensable part of language pedagogy (Akbari, 2013).

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According to Farjami (2012) metaphors have significance far beyond its literary use as figures of speech and poetic imagination that it has a role to constitute mechanism of the mind. Metaphor as word originated from the word 'meta' which means 'excessive' and 'pherein' means 'carry' in Latin and old Greek languages (Taştan, 2013). There are various definitions of metaphor in related literature. Cambridge dictionary defines metaphor as a way of describing something by comparing it with something else which has some of the same qualities. Therefore, in the English language the word "metaphor" could signify "a transfer of meaning from one thing to another" (Gibbs, 1994, p. 210). Aristotle in his "Poetics" gave the following definition of metaphor: "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on the ground of analogy" (Poetics, 1457b, as cited in Gibbs, 1994, 210). Henderson (1994, p.343) mentioned that "Metaphor can be viewed simply as text decoration; as a useful teaching device; as a central organizing principle of all language; as a way of viewing and constructing new problems; as a fundamental basis for argument and storytelling." According to Moghaddam and Gholamzadeh (2011) metaphors can be useful for linguistic, cognitive, affective and socio-cultural domains. In terms of linguistic domain metaphors provide contextual as well as literal meaning. In cognitive aspects metaphors are like windows to explore one's map of mind. It also includes attitudes and feelings of individual that present point of view towards a particular topic. In socio-cultural domain, mutual conventions have a certain role to form metaphors (Moghaddam & Gholamzadeh, 2011). In this respect, the current research aims to find out student teachers' metaphorical perceptions about foreign language teacher.

2. Review of Literature

In related literature it is possible to see metaphor studies about foreign language teacher that have been carried out both western and eastern countries. Block (1992) used two macro-metaphors for language teachers and learners. These metaphors are "teacher as contracted professional/learner as respected client", and "teacher as supportive parent/learner as respected child" (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). De Guerrero and Villamil (2001) collected metaphors for language teachers and they categorized these metaphors in nine different sub-category. These categories are cooperative leader ("a coach", "a symphony conductor", etc.), provider of knowledge ("a television set", "the Sun", etc.), challenger or agent of change ("a window to the world", "a lion tamer", etc.), nurturer ("a bee","a gardener", etc.), innovator ("an explorer", "a convertible car"), provider of tools ("a tool carrier"), artist ("a potter"), repairer ("a mechanic of the mind"), gym instructor ("a person starting an aerobics class") (Cited in Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008, p.165).

As it is understood the sub-categories represent mostly positive images which were used to describe language teachers. In addition, it is clear that language teachers are perceived as innovator, nurturer and repairer. These metaphors show that language teachers are seen as solution producers to a problematic situation. As it was mentioned before, metaphor studies carried out in eastern countries too. A similar study was carried out by Saban, Koçbeker and Saban in 2006. They examined metaphors produced by 1222 education students in a Turkish university. The research yielded 111 metaphors about the concept of "teacher". The metaphors were categorized under ten different metaphors. These metaphors were (1) the Sun, (2) sculptor, (3) parent, (4) compass, (5) lighthouse, (6) gardener, (7) candle, (8) tree/fruit tree, (9) painter, and (10) tour guide(Cited in Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008, p.165).

Another study was carried out by Nkitina and Furuoka in 2008, Malasia. Totally 98 university students participated in study, who were learning Russian language at University Malaysia Sabah (UMS). In their research, both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used. In addition they used Oxford's et al. (1998) taxonomy. As it is stated "Firstly, the instrument must include metaphors (and their entailments) for each of the educational concepts described by Oxford et al. (1998). Secondly, the selected metaphors must reflect the essence of each of the four educational paradigms. Thirdly, the metaphors in the Social Reform perspective were lacking and had to be created and incorporated into the questionnaire" (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008, p. 170). At the end of factor analysis of scale, the researchers elicited six dimensions. These dimensions were language teacher as a "team member", as the "boss", as an "interactor", as a "provider", as an "advisor", and as a "precise mechanism". The researchers concluded that students' conceptualizations about language teachers depends on the power sharing in classrooms and interaction modes between students and teacher. Another research was carried out by Akbari in 2013, Iran. The researcher administered a metaphor elicitation questionnaire to 187 Iranian bilingual (Kurdish-Persian) university students majoring different disciplines at three public and private universities in Ilam. The results showed that the metaphorical images were comparatively for and against several proposed models of language learning and teaching about EFL teachers' roles. In Akbari's research, nine metaphors were used for language teachers' roles. These metaphors are guide, professional, devil, angel, parent natural element, machine, creator, and wet blanket.

In conclusion, all of the above-mentioned studies show usefulness of metaphor analysis as a reflective tool in which researchers attempt to elicit EFL learners' belief. Additionally, identifying, evaluating and critiquing language learners' conceptual metaphors shed lights to understand learners' attitude and their language learning strategies and styles (Farjami, 2012).
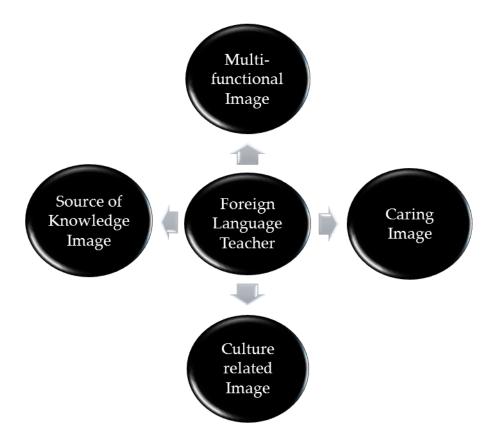
3. Method

Qualitative data were collected and phenomenologic method was used in current research. The convenient sample of the present study consists of 128 English language teacher candidates who are first graders of English language teaching department at Gazi University. The data were collected in 2014-2015 academic years through a self-designed metaphor elicitation sheet with an incomplete sentence written in Turkish as the academic language of the students reads in English "A language teacher is (like) …….. because ……. ." adopted from Lawley and Tompkin (2004). The participants were free to fill the questionnaire in Turkish or English. Participation was voluntary basis and nearly all of the students who were first graders participated in the research. The age of the participants varied between 18 and 20 years. It is presumed that all the participants have the same educational background.

In data organization phase, all the metaphors that were produced by participants translated into English and listed thematically. Then, sub-categories were formed. As the final step of the analysis, the metaphors were examined in terms of their similarity or discrepancy with current language learning and teaching approaches and methods. The reason behind selecting a framework for comparison was the nature of metaphor that exerts a kind of subjectivity on the researcher (Pishghadam et al., 2011).

4. Findings

The findings are categorized according to their relevance to sub-themes which are determined by researchers. These sub-themes are created due to participants' responses. Totally, participants created 118 metaphors which symbolize foreign language teacher. However, 41 metaphors were used to create categories. Thus, some metaphors had similar meaning with other metaphors and some metaphors were used repeatedly by different participants. In addition to this, some metaphors were not categorized under sub-themes because of lacking explanation for these metaphors. According to participants' responses, four categories were created to interpret English language teacher candidates' understanding the role of foreign language teachers metaphorically. These categories are as follows;
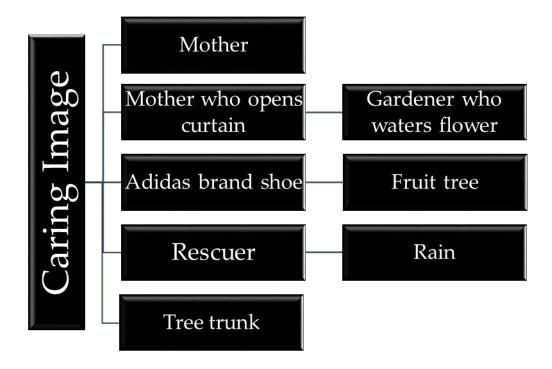
Figure1. Metaphorical sub-categories for foreign language teacher.

4.1. Foreign language teacher as caring image

English language teacher candidates used various metaphors to represent foreign language teachers metaphorically. Some of these metaphors shows similarities in their meanings and representations. Thus, these metaphors were put under the same categories. According to participants' perception foreign language teachers have the role of caring about others especially their students. The first category has %19.51 percent. The metaphors are presented below that leads

the researchers to create this category. Additionally, participants' explanations about some metaphors were presented in details.

Participants' some explanations about metaphors are as follow;

Explanation 1: 'When we think language as if a baby, his/her mother teaches everything to baby. Therefore, our language teachers should teach us everything about the language in best way as if our mother'.
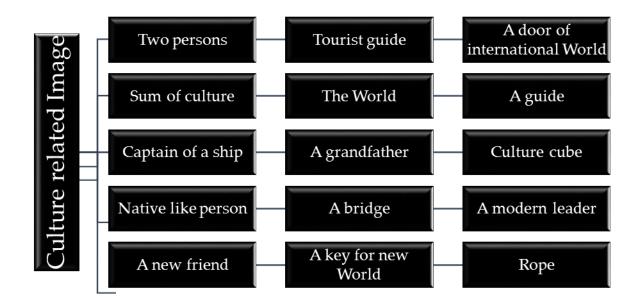
Explanation 2: 'Language teaching requires too much efforts. Teachers' effort is important in addition to students' interest. So, teachers should teach language without boredom as if students were his/her children'.

Explanation 3: 'Tree trunk carries branches. A foreign language teacher should have various skills and use in appropriate times'.

According to Koçak (2013) metaphors are essential tools for catching the main nature of an experience in an active process, which enables individuals to understand their own worlds along with others. First sub-category is foreign language teachers as caring image represents that teacher candidates perceive foreign language teachers have a caring role in language classrooms. Similar to this sub-category Block (1992, cited in De Guerrero & Villamil, 2001) used the same metaphor which shows that teacher candidates perceive foreign language teachers as parents and caring image. Block used two macro-metaphors for language teachers and learners: (1) "teacher as contracted professional/learner as respected client", and (2) "teacher as supportive parent/learner as respected child". In another study which was carried out by Turkish researchers in 2006, 'parent' metaphor was used by participants for foreign language teachers (Saban, Koçbeker & Saban, 2006) In this respect, the first sub-category has used in other research as metaphor.

4.2. Foreign language teacher as culture related image

A language and its culture are thought like two sides of a coin. In this respect, participants used metaphors which included cultural perspectives of a foreign language. The second category has %36.58 percent. These culture related metaphors are presented through a chart below. Additionally, participants' explanations are presented in details.

Culture related Image		
Two persons	Tourist guide	A door of international World
Sum of culture	The World	A guide
Captain of a ship	A grandfather	Culture cube
Native like person	A bridge	A modern leader
A new friend	A key for new World	Rope

Participants' some explanations about metaphors are as follow;

Explanation 1: 'Two different characters can be seen when language teacher speaks'.

Explanation 2: 'Language teachers are related with other countries' cultures. They can easily transfer their knowledge about other cultures'.

Explanation 3: 'Language teachers make you travel to unknown places, who guides you. You can't go beyond of your World'.
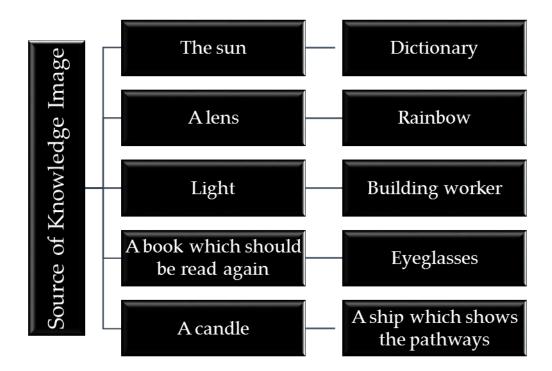
Explanation 4: 'A new friend who introduces a new culture'.

Explanation 5: 'A grandfather who lived for years'.

As a general paradigm, culture is inseperably bound to language that understanding one without considering the other is impossible (Moghaddam and Gholamzadeh, 2011). It is possible to come across various definitions of culture in related literature. According to Matsumoto 'culture as dynamic; system of rules; group and units; survival; attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors; relatively stable; harbored differently by each specific unit; shared by a group; and potential to change across time (2000, pp.24-26). Thus, foreign language teachers are perceived as culture transmitters in language classrooms, creating a sub-category which is 'foreign language teachers as culture related image' necessary for the current research. According to Moghaddam and Gholamzadeh (2011) metaphor analysis is a useful way to figure out cultural expectations of learners. Since, it is possible to modify, change, or reinforce cultural stereotypes through findings.

4.3. Foreign language teacher as source of knowledge image:

Participants used metaphors which represented foreign language teachers as source of knowledge. These metaphors have common features which are directly or indirectly related with knowledge. It is understood that student teachers perceive language teachers as the source of knowledge who guide and enlighten his/her students. The third category has %24.39 percent. The above mentioned metaphors are presented through a chart below. Additionally, some of participants' explanations are provided below.

Participants' some explanations about metaphors are as follow;

Explanation 1: 'Language teacher provides information and enlightens his/her students'.
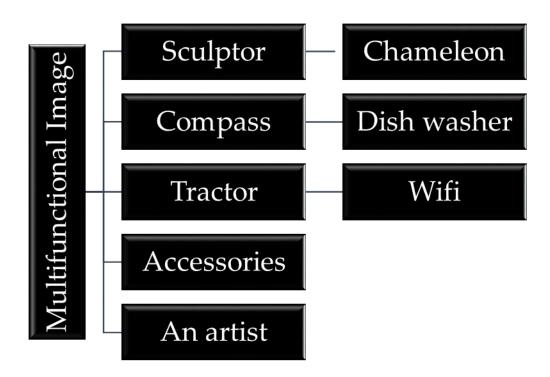
Explanation 2: 'Language teacher enlightens us through sharing his/her experiences and knowledge'.

Explanation 3: 'Language teacher know nearly all of the vocabularies'.

Explanation 3: 'He/she knows every foreign word'.

4.4. Foreign language teacher as multifunctional image:

According to participants' responses language teachers have multiple roles both in language classrooms and outside of the classrooms. In this respect, a category was created by researchers that include directly or indirectly related metaphors with multifunctional images. The last category has %19.51 percent. These metaphors are presented below. Additionally, explanations are provided.

Explanation 1: 'A language teacher should have various features. Teacher should teach the language effectively. Additionally, he/she should be like a mother and supervisor'.

Explanation 2: 'Learning a language is difficult and complex process. It requires to combine cognitive and psychomotor skills'.

Explanation 3: 'Language teacher should know what to do in every condition'.

The results show that participants used various metaphors for foreign language teachers' role in language classrooms. According to their responses four category were created subjectively because of metaphor studies' nature which is explained by Pishghadam et al., as "…was the very nature of metaphor that exerts a kind of subjectivity on the researcher" (2011) and their percentages were calculated. The results indicate that student teachers perceive language teachers as culture related images who introduce and represent other cultures. Additionally, student teachers think that language teachers are similar to cultural bridges which link different cultures. Foreign language teachers as cultural image category has the highest percentage among categories. Thus, it can be interpreted as student teachers relate language with the culture of that language. Secondly, foreign language teachers as source of knowledge category has the second highest category in current research. As, foreign language teachers teach various domains of language such as syntax, phonology, morphology, discourse etc., they should be the source of knowledge. Other two categories have the same percentage with %19.51. These categories are foreign language teachers as caring and multifunctional images. The current research provides significant reflections of student teachers' beliefs about foreign language teachers.

4. Conclusion

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987), and Johnson (1987) were the leading figures who mentioned that the individuals' conceptual thinking is metaphorically structured. According to important scholars metaphors are used to think conceptually (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 cited in Moghaddam and Gholamzadeh, 2011). Metaphors represent individuals' perception and understanding of experiences and surrounding environments (Moghaddam and Gholamzadeh, 2011). In this respect, metaphor studies are essential part of research methodology to understand an individual's way of thinking about a concept or issue. In this respect, research on metaphors used by students and teachers has drawn the attention in recent years (Çelikten, 2006; Inbar, 1996; Yalçın; 2012). A literature review would result in studies on metaphors reflecting the perceptions on teacher (Berman et.al., 2002; Cerit, 2008; Çelikten, 2005; Oxford et.al., 1998; Saban, 2004; Yücel & Koçak, 2008). In this study, through investigating metaphors which were used to represent foreign language teachers, it was found that foreign language teachers have four different image due to student teachers. As future language teachers, the participants perceive foreign language teachers as multifunctional, source of knowledge, culture related and caring images. This study showed that student teachers have positive perceptions about foreign language teachers. Thus, all of the metaphors were positive. Similar results have been obtained in other studies. A study was carried out by Koçak (2013) which used lotus flower technique as data collection tool. The components of school as "Teacher, Student, Principal, Classroom, Teachers' Room, Parent, Ministry of National Education and Inspector" were categorized separately to determine metaphorical images of teacher candidates about school. The results of the study show that participants created 1730 metaphors for teacher. The results indicate that reactive and proactive personality traits found in teachers were concretized through the utilization of metaphors in data collection. In another study, Hyman (1973, as cited in Oxford et al.,1998) distinguished four types of metaphors for teaching and teacher, i.e., (1) the manufacturing metaphor; (2) the military metaphor; (3) the gardening metaphor; and (4) the sports metaphor. Another study was carried out in Malasia by Nikitina and Furuoka in 2008. They used forms with uncompleted sentence "A language teacher is like…". The students were asked to finish the sentence with their own metaphor and to provide an explanation or entailment for the given metaphor. Totally 27 metaphors were provided by the participants. The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative method to collect data about students' perception of teacher. The results show that participants' answers lead researcher to create six components which are team member, boss, interactor, provider, advisor and precise mechanism. A similar study was carried out in Iran. Torghabeh, Elahi, and Khanalipour (2009) elicited metaphorical concepts from Iranian participants and categorized them in nine conceptual metaphors including provider of knowledge, friend, organizer, nurturer, spiritual leader, parent, entertainer, counselor, and innovator. Similar to these results, the current research includes caring image and source of knowledge sub-categories. As it is seen, the above mentioned research has provider of knowledge and parent metaphors for language teachers. In this respect the current research has similar results with the research. Ahkemoglu (2011) utilized metaphor analysis to explore the conceptual metaphors of both English-major and non-English-major learners in regard to their perception of an English

language teacher. The researcher collected data through metaphor elicitation sheet, semi-structured interviews, and personal essays. The results of the study showed that while some metaphors are peculiar to English language teacher such as oracle, schizophrenic, and gum, some metaphors seem to be common with the ones developed for the concept of a teacher such as light, guide and bridge. The current study is useful for researchers and teacher trainers. Researchers may carry out more comprehensive studies to understand student teachers' perceptions about foreign language teachers metaphorically. Because the current study was carried out at only one state university of Turkey. Additionally, the study may be useful for teacher trainers who raise language teachers. The participants will be language teachers in the future. Their perceptions and understanding of their language teachers give clues about their role models. In this respect, teacher trainers may strengthen their teaching skills, who are the role models of student teachers. As Farjami (2012) states that exploring, evaluating and critiquing student teachers' conceptual metaphors, can go a long way in affecting language learners' learning styles and strategies. Furthermore, learners may aware of the feelings which are existing implicitly in their minds by exploring these ideas (Pishghadam & Navari, 2011).

The current study has several limitations. First of all, the research is carried out at a state university of Turkey. A more comprehensible study may be carried out with a larger sample at other universities. Gender, age, language proficiency of participants may be considered as variables in another study. Thus, these variables were not considered in current research. A more comprehensible study may be carried out through different data collection tools such as interview. Additionally, larger participant may provide more generalizable results in terms of understanding student teachers' perceptions.

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