

## Metaphorical Perceptions of Primary School Teachers towards Cursive Writing<sup>a</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims at analyzing primary school teachers' opinions on cursive writing and their metaphorical perceptions. The study is a qualitative research. Semi-structured interview method was employed to identify opinions of the teachers more clearly. The study group of the research study consisted of primary school teachers who worked at public and private schools in Bayrampasa, Kucukcekmece, Basaksehir, Kartal, Maltepe, Pendik districts of İstanbul province in the 2017-2018 academic year and participated to the study on a voluntary basis. Each teacher was interviewed for 15 minutes on average. In the scope of the interview, the question of "Cursive writing is like.... Because..." was addressed, and teachers were asked to fill the given form. The content analysis method was applied in the data analysis. The teachers' confirmations were received by reading out their expressions. The interviews were conducted by a single researcher in each institution that teachers work. Due to the fact that a single researcher was responsible in the data collection process, a comparison between the data was not required. The valid metaphors were coded appropriately, and afterwards, themes were created according to the related codes. The codes were associated with an inductive method and a code-theme matrixing was provided. As a result of the study, the metaphors concerning the cursive writing were categorized as codes and themes.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, cursive writing, primary school teacher, primary school, primary education.

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## Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin Bitişik Eğik Yazıya İlişkin Metaforik Algıları<sup>a</sup>

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### ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, sınıf öğretmenlerinin bitişik eğik yazıya ilişkin görüşlerini ve metaforik algılarını incelemektir. Araştırma nitel bir çalışmadır. Araştırma verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu 2017-2018 eğitim öğretim yılında, İstanbul ili Bayrampaşa, Küçükçekmece, Başakşehir, Kartal, Maltepe, Pendik ilçeleri resmi veya özel okullarda görev yapan sınıf öğretmenleri arasından gönüllülük esasına uygun olarak oluşturulmuştur. Her öğretmen ile ortalama 15 dakika görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşme kapsamında öğretmenlere “Bitişik eğik yazı ..... gibidir. Çünkü.....” sorusu yönlendirilmiş ve önlerindeki forma yazmaları istenmiştir. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Görüşmelerde öğretmenlerin ifade ettikleri düşünceleri kendilerine okunarak teyitleri alınmıştır. Görüşmeler tek araştırmacı tarafından tüm öğretmenlerin görev yaptığı kurumda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri toplama sürecinde tek bir araştırmacının görev alması nedeniyle verilerde karşılaştırma yapma gereği duyulmamıştır. Geçerli metaforlar uygun şekilde kodlanmış ve daha sonra birbiriyle ilişkili olan kodlara uygun şekilde temalar oluşturulmuştur. Tümevarımsal yöntemle kodlar temalarla birleştirilmiş kod-tema ikilemesine gidilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda bitişik eğik yazıya ilişkin metaforlar kod ve temalar şeklinde kategorize edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Metafor, bitişik eğik yazı, sınıf öğretmenleri, ilköğretim, temel eğitim.

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## **Introduction**

Today, it is accepted that becoming a modern and contemporary country is a concept which is in line with the level and prevalence of the education provided in the country. Education systems do not only aim at increasing the number of literate; but also educating individuals who are capable of reading with good comprehension, expressing themselves clearly, recognizing and using technology yet not become addicted to it, who have the reading habit, and who are creative, productive and content (Ozturk, 2005). Rapid developments and scientific advancements occur in our world in the information and give rise to knowledge accumulation in every field. Particularly, production and dissemination of knowledge occur very rapidly. The modern individual should adapt to developments and constantly update oneself (Gunes, 2015).

Reading is an active and interactive process that readers whose main purpose is comprehending, integrate the meanings of the text and create new connotations. In this process, the reader restructures the text while reading. The reading activity is the key to learning for an individual. Learning through reading is a commonly used and important skill particularly for students. Therefore, reading activity should be addressed in a multi-dimensional manner (Susar Kirmizi, 2017).

Learning how to read and write is an essential skill in a child's school and later life. The skills of readiness to read and write is a process that children participate naturally before school. Supporting readiness for reading and writing skills that develop in a lifetime has an importance (Bay and Simsek, 2013). It systematizes school, language and language teaching based on language skills such as listening, speaking, visual literacy and visual presentation. The teaching of other reading and writing skills start through program and teacher ability. The reading, writing and language skills that are initiated by listening, speaking and visual presentation and visual literacy skills which are acquired in an uncoordinated and unintended way constitute the learning domains of Turkish language course curriculum (Sagirli, 2015).

Children who start to school with reading-writing experiences gained from the pre-school environment have higher success levels

than inexperienced children. In addition to the printed tools that a child encounters in the pre-school environment such as book, magazines, newspapers, coloring and completing books and predictable reading books, activities that a child participates in family, kindergarten and pre-school such as listening, drawing and coloring are included in “reading and writing experiences” (Celenk, 2007).

Central or circular doodles made by two-year-olds and their repetitions are apparent. Children in this age group use their whole hand to hold and move their whole arm. They fill the whole page and affected by signs. Three-year-old children may write capital letters all over the paper. Children in this age like to doodle and draw. Four-year-old children particularly remember the letters of their names. They can write their names or the initials. They can draw circles and squares. Five-year-old children can write their names through letters with disproportional sizes. They may write capital or lower letters. They can integrate squares and circles. They like to copy a model (Buyuktaskapu, 2011).

The primary purpose of raising individuals who produce knowledge, reach knowledge and have the ability to use knowledge should be enabling them to use their language skills. The most prominent way for a nation to distinguishing itself and present it to other nations is learning the language. The language which is the representative of the national identity is also the core of civilization. Language is the main factor in organizing daily, academic, social, political and personal life of an individual. Language skills do not only shape communication, but also the world of thought. Language teaching is a medium to create a language awareness (Kadioglu, 2012a). Language embraces humanity since the beginning. Language is essential for humanity. From this perspective, it maintains its characteristic of being a systematic tool for creating societies, transmitting cultures and enabling communication between people (Basturk, 2013). Mother tongue education starts with listening. Afterwards, this process is enhanced by speaking, reading and eventually by writing by an intended, planned and organized institution. An individual with an insufficient mother tongue education is eliminated from the business life due to the competitive environment of our age. The main component for individuals- who are obliged to work to maintain their lives- to be successful is to

acquire mother tongue education at an optimal level. An individual filters the thoughts in mind and express them with writing in a most simple and effective way (Kadioglu Ates, 2016). Because writing takes precedence of the word. Because writing is the one which transmits the culture. Without writing, the humanity could not reach its current level (Bagci, 2015).

One of the main purposes of Turkish language teaching is to improve students' written expression skills. Writing implies expressing what we hear, think, plan and experience by writing them down. It is a way of reflecting ourselves and communicating with others, such as speaking (Sever, 2011). Writing, which is described as an expression of feelings, thoughts and knowledge in a written way, is an important life-long skill for an individual. Therefore, writing has always been in the spotlight of educators and researchers, and many theoretical and implementation-based research studies have been conducted on the teaching and improvement of the writing skill (Ates, 2017). Writing is a skill that is gained in school, therefore it should be considered with its «teaching and improving writing skill» aspects. In the early years of the Republic, the writing skill, which was taught in «alifba» course planned according to the Turkish language course curriculum for the 1st level of primary schools, was tried to be improved in «essay (composition), spelling and writing» courses (Ozbay, 2015). Today, the Turkish language course comprises activity fields such as primary reading and writing, written and verbal expression, grammar, spelling, and construction studies (Kavcar et al., 2016).

An accurate and qualified reading and writing teaching underlie the development of many cognitive skills such as reading comprehension, classification, questioning, making analysis-synthesis. When the roots of the individuals' incapability to express their thoughts in written and verbal forms, to enjoy reading, and to read effectively, it is seen that there is an unsuccessful primary reading and writing process (Izci and Kaya, 2018). Reading and writing education is one of the most important components of the basic education process. Undoubtedly, reading has a major importance in terms of acquiring knowledge of the world that frames an individual in the most rapid and productive manner. As a part of the same informing process, writing has an equal importance in terms of transmitting the acquired knowledge to the world by an

individual. The purpose of raising individuals who capable of reading texts, interpreting the given information, and transmitting the acquired knowledge to the other individuals who are involved in the informing process constitutes the core of the basic education.

Children start to learn Turkish in their homes and close environments under very natural conditions. They have almost no knowledge on the structures or types of words, their functions in a sentence and on other grammar rules. They start to primary school under this conditions. Children's language skills should be improved in a natural environment in primary school, particularly in first grades. The language of a child shows certain differences according to the age and the conditions of the social environment that the child grows in. In mother tongue teaching studies, the status of each child should be examined in detail in terms of the use of the Turkish language, and the skills and habits projected by the program should be provided in a slow and progressive way (Kavcar et al., 2016)

Writing had reached to the top in the historical development process with the transformation of drawing from visual value to a symbolic value, and writing was perceived as the aesthetical representation of the word (Karadag, 2016). Writing or written expression is the process of writing down cognitively structured emotions, thoughts and knowledge on a paper or another surface through symbols that comprise a meaningful structure. Writing is a language skill which is learned with the reading skills through a certain education after listening and speaking acquired within a natural process (Zorbaz, 2014). Writing is the process of transforming verbal or non-verbal speaking voices to reciprocal motor symbols. The qualities as competency in using hands, a fully developed visual competency, focusing the attention and comprehension regarding the language play a major role to write in a proficient way (Polat, 2011). In the writing process, individuals make an inner journey with the key concepts of a known-world and organize the data they collected to make them ready for a presentation which is appropriate to the functioning system of a brain (Karadag, 2016).

Writing is the process of expression knowledge and thoughts through special characters and letters. The actualization of this process through an easy, rapid and readable writing depends on a quality education. Therefore, the issue of teaching effective and fine

writing to students who start school has been emphasized. Because these skills which are gained in the childhood years continues for a lifetime (Gunes, 2017). Each writing is a way of expression. It requires coherency, connection and consistency between sentences. Despite the fact that paragraphs express different opinions, they are units that show consistency with the previous ones. On the action of writing, the points that letters start and end, directions and shapes are skills which should be taught previously. Writing is making meaningful and regular sentences (Keskinkilic and Keskinkilic, 2007). Writing has emerged as a result of facilitating communication in times and situations that verbal communication is not possible, providing knowledge transmission, and concerns and needs towards existing in the future (Duran, 2009). The mother tongue activities performed in primary school enables children to enrich their vocabulary by learning new words, using words accurately by knowing their meanings (Kadioglu, 2012b).

With an improvement in a child's writing skills, transfer of knowledge, and review and organization of thoughts are performed more effectively. This situation leads to the emergence of higher level writings. Students with underdeveloped writing skills produce more writings which are based on transmitting knowledge. The reason for this situation is their incapability to interpret the text and integrate it with their writing style. Another way of knowledge transmitting based-writing is copying. At this juncture, a child conveys the text in exactly the same way or integrates exact sections. The expectations towards children to express their knowledge of different subjects in a written way increase with their grade levels. Children will face difficulties to meet the expectations of the writing process in the case that they have not gained basic skills such as fluency and pace. As other learning difficulties, writing difficulties also have negative impacts on a child's self-confidence (Akyol, 2013).

Improving students' written expression skills is one of the main objectives of Turkish language teaching. Turkish language teachers have the greatest responsibility in terms of raising students as individuals who can express themselves properly at word, sentence and paragraph levels. A proper and precise expression is not an inborn ability, yet it is a skill which can be acquired through education; it is gained by putting an effort and improved by practice.



An extraordinary talent is not necessary for gaining a writing skill. Everyone who makes practices sufficiently can learn their language, and write down their emotions, thoughts and aspirations through a precise expression (Sever et al., 2008). The psychomotor and cognitive maturation of students might not be sufficient for written expression. The efficient use of this skill also depends on comprehension and expression skills such as observing the external world, constant reading, thinking and writing. The most effective way of improving writing skills is to make constant writing practices to gain experience (Karatay, 2015).

Societies convey their culture that includes experiences, traditions, customs etc. from generation to generation through education. Individuals who comprise a society are raised by means of education. The education policies are determined by a state. Education serves to the purpose of raising individuals that are shaped by a state. The characteristics of people alter and evolve according to the conditions of the time. Each period has a different structure and needs. As expected, the criteria for development show difference according to the period. The ideal citizen portrait is drawn with different characteristics in each era. A revision and restructuring are also required for curriculum with the aforementioned alteration. In our country, the philosophy of the education program has been renewed with the radical changes in 2004. The concerned program was implemented across the country in 2005. The most important change in the Turkish language program is replacing Sentence Method with Voice-Based Sentence Method in primary reading and writing teaching (Kadioglu Ates and Kadioglu, 2017).

In our country, Sentence Method was on the use since 1968. In accordance with the decision No. 2563 published on Journal of Communiques, the Turkish Language Curriculum has been changed. Accordingly, the Sentence Method has been replaced by Voice-Based Sentence Method for reading and writing teaching. It is required to develop skills that are appropriate to the necessities of the era and level of students and to consider certain educational approaches and models. These are models and approaches given as Multiple Intelligence, Brain-Based Learning, Student-Centered Learning, and Teaching Based on Individual Differences. The new Turkish Language Course Curriculum developed in the framework of these approaches and models, primary reading and writing have



been given particular importance and the Voice-Based Sentence Method was chosen as the method (MoNE, 2005).

Reading and writing practices based on Alifba teaching were existed in the 1924 and 1926 Primary School Curriculums that were applied until the Alphabet Reform took place on the date of 3 November 1928. In both of the programs, a Writing Course beginning from the second grade was included, in addition to the primary reading and writing practices provided within the Turkish language courses. A discussion took place over which method will be implemented in terms of primary reading and writing practices with the new Turkish Alphabet introduced in 1928 (Cemaloglu, 2000). The program dated 1926 presented the modern approaches in curriculums. The Primary School Curriculum is an important program which was prepared and implemented with a modern understanding in terms of the adoption of collective teaching method that is still valid today. In addition to the curriculums, the purpose of each course and the outlines of the methods to be implemented were identified (MoNE, 2010). An indecisiveness occurred after the adoption of the New Turkish Alphabet on 1928, on the method of primary reading and writing. Therefore, the sections related to the method were excluded while the curriculum was re-published in 1930. Later on, a regulation took place on the issue of 1936 (Binbasioglu, 2004). The basic writing and cursive writing were mentioned in the 1936 Primary School Curriculum, under the headline of “Directives”. It was explained that the writing that will be taught to each child is basic writing (Ministry of Culture, 1936). The provision on primary reading and writing teaching took place in 1936 Primary School Curriculum as; “The duty of teaching reading and writing will be associated with the Social Studies subjects, and on the other hand, the mechanism of reading-writing will be provided starting from the basic sentences and words through analysis and synthesis method in line with the natural requirements of children’s psychology towards reading”. At first glance, a contradiction is perceived in the regulation.

Despite the fact that sentence method is implied at the beginning of the sentence; later on, the words ‘analysis and synthesis’ were used. In the program, statements on the analysis method, in other words, sentence method, were provided. In the 1926 Curriculum, the advised method is the sentence methods, in other words, the analysis method (Binbasioglu, 2004). In the 1924 and 1926 Primary School

Curriculums, the voice and word method which was implemented in primary reading and writing were replaced by the sentence method provided in the 1936 Curriculum, and other methods were forbidden. The names and durations of the courses were remained unchanged (Uysal, 2008). The 1948 Curriculum was criticized due to the number, of course, redundancy of the subjects and units, and its aspect of providing information instead of providing skills; these skills and also the requirements of the multi-party system brought about a need for a new curriculum (MoNE, 2010). The section that gave rise to an indecisiveness in the 1936 Curriculum was omitted in the 1948 Curriculum, and the sentence was re-organized in a way to highlight the ‘Analysis Method’. Furthermore, both in 1936 and 1948 Curriculums, the contributions made by the educators to the primary reading and writing teaching in pre and post Republic Era were addressed: Learning reading and writing in simultaneously, teaching writing with the object or shape that it connotes, performing actions for better comprehension of the writing style, and most importantly employing tools such as big and small reading sheets, analysis plates, reading plates... These are valuable in terms of pedagogical aspect. The 1948 Curriculum was prepared more proficiently in comparison to the previous curriculums (Binbasioglu, 2004). The 1962 Primary School Draft that was created as a result of the curriculum preparations initiated in 1961, was accepted for a five-year duration to be tested and developed in schools. The 1962 Primary School Draft formed a basis for the 1968 Primary School Curriculum, and the last version was implemented in all primary schools after a six-seven year of preparation and trial process. In the 1968 Primary School Curriculum, Writing Course was included in the Turkish language course. Differently from the previous curriculums, a section that involves explanations on primary reading and writing teaching was included in the curriculum. The fifth article of the Primary Reading and Writing Teaching stated that “The capital and lower letters should be taught simultaneously at the beginning of primary reading and writing teaching”, and accordingly an alteration was made on the issue (Uysal, 2008). Furthermore, the following statement was given in the explanations section of the program: “In the primary school writing programs, two gradual objectives will be addressed. The first objective is to teach the properties, way of writing and direction, and the connection of the letters. The second objective is to provide writing flexibility that is

appropriate to grade level, and rapid. In this way, children who comprehended the writing technique, in the beginning, should be enabled to write more rapidly and fluently through the warning that will be made in the right time and place (MoNE, 1968)”. The 1997 Curriculum was separated into two according to the purposes of writing; daily handwriting and decorative artistic writing. Under the headline of ‘order to be followed in writing teaching’ the statement of “At this grade level writing teaching is delivered with primary reading and writing teaching, the idea of reading teaching and emphasizing writing afterwards is not included”. In the curriculum, it was implied that cursive writing will be initiated at the second-grade level. It was emphasized that the writing should be 70 degrees and curved to the right side. It was stated that cursive writing is not primary reading and writing teaching, yet it is a process of teaching cursive writing skill to students who comprehended reading and writing (MoNE, 1997).

In the New Turkish Language Teaching Program which is a part of the 2004 Primary School Curriculum, it was clearly stated that the constructive approach forms the basis, and various educational approaches such as multiple intelligence and student-centered learning were included. In the context of these approaches, it was indicated that the focus should be on improving student’s cognitive skills and restructuring their knowledge instead of changing a student’s behavior with a teacher-centered approach (Analysis and Assessment Report on the New Curriculums, 2005).

Primary reading and writing teaching is an important educational activity. It is an influential educational activity that is necessary for students both in primary school and also in following education life, and which will have an impact on the success, not only in the Turkish language course but also in other courses (Keskinilic, 2002). The main objectives of primary reading and writing teaching described as improving cognitive skills like thinking, ordering, questioning, associating, making analysis-synthesis and evaluation, and not only as teaching skills as reading and writing. In addition, in the reading and writing process, skills such as using Turkish effectively, accurately and well, problem-solving, decision making, and maintaining a life-long learning are expected to be developed. Starting from this point, the main objective has been raising individuals who think, comprehend, question, learn how to learn, use

information and solve questions through an effective reading and writing teaching beginning from the first grade of the primary school (MoNE, 2005). Primary reading and writing activity is the most important educational activity performed in the scope of basic education. The basic knowledge, skills and habits that are acquired in primary reading and writing teaching have a central importance not only for the Turkish language course but for all courses (Gocer, 2014). Children who start the first grade as illiterates are anticipated and expected to reach the level of literacy through a quality primary reading and writing teaching (Sagirli, 2015).

Primary reading and writing teaching is the core of Turkish language teaching. Reading and teaching activity is essentially a thinking activity. Each reading and writing activity will enhance a student's thinking and problem-solving abilities by improving their understanding- comprehension skills. Being informed about the purpose of the primary reading and writing teaching helps a child for effective participation in learning. A possible failure that will be experienced in primary reading and writing teaching will have a negative impact on a child's academic self-representation. Academic self-representation is the belief and self-confidence of a child towards success or failure. Students' effective participation in primary reading and writing teaching should be ensured. Using games in primary reading and writing teaching is a requirement of children's age (Celenk, 2007). Primary school students are in the play-age. Children in this age-group learn many things by playing. If this period can be passed effectively, the main skill -reading and writing- that a child will need for a lifetime will be taught in an entertaining and easy way. The play-way teaching method is one of the teaching methods as well. Therefore the primary reading and writing teaching process should be supported by the play-way teaching method (Ozenc, 2011).

It is very difficult to correct deficient and false behaviors gained in primary reading and writing teaching years in the following years. Individuals who learn to write letters incorrectly or who could not learn fine-writing cannot correct these mistakes and deficiencies for long years without a particular effort. Teachers should not be impetuous while teaching writing to first-grade students, and they should be patient and encouraging. A sufficient time should be allocated for preparation for writing in accordance with students'

readiness levels. Giving very long homework to first-grade students whose muscles are not fully developed will cause students to be bored, get tired and develop a negative attitude towards writing (Kadioglu Ates, 2015).

According to Akyol (2008), cursive writing is the type of writing that letters are written in an italic, connected and continuous way slanted to the right direction. According to Gunes (2007), writing letter continuously by making connections help students to present their knowledge and thoughts in a connected and integrated manner. The properties of cursive writing as being continuous, fluent and rapid help students to express their opinions in a well-coordinated way. Due to the rapidness in the writing, a student who can transmit the knowledge to writing rapidly before losing the ideas can express himself/herself better (Karadag, 2016).

Despite the positive aspects of cursive writing, MoNE Directorate General for Basic Education decided to use printing instead of cursive writing on the date of 9 June 2017 (Gurbuzturk et al., 2018). In 2005 curriculum the voice-based method and cursive writing were taught for 12-lecture hours per week (MoNE, 2005). On the other hand, in the Turkish language course curriculum that was published in 2017, it was started to be implemented for 10-lecture hours per week, by adopting voice-based method and leaving the decision of using cursive or printed letters to the teacher. Due to the fact that cursive writing and printing have different natures, it was stated that preparatory studies should be made according to the preference. For instance, while the preparatory study is provided for cursive writing through curved, continuous etc. lines, it should be provided through vertical, circular etc. lines (MoNE, 2017).

In a research study that was conducted on the issue of leaving the decision of using cursive writing or printing to teachers in primary writing teaching with an amendment made in 2017, 13 participant teachers indicated that they do not agree with the decision. The teachers who stated that they do not agree with the decision of leaving the writing style to the decision of the teacher noted that; using the same writing style is a more accurate decision in terms of the unification of the education system, the implementation is correct to provide a smooth transformation from cursive writing to printing, yet might create long-term problems, and finally they noted that the

implementation might cause confusion not only across the country yet even within the school (Izci and Kaya, 2018).

In the scope of teaching, metaphors have been used as a medium of reflection, evaluation and investigation (Saban, 2006). A metaphor is a tool that is used for identifying people's perceptions (Arnett, 1999). Metaphorical thinking includes using an event or an object as a tool in order to identify the characteristics of a complex phenomenon or situation (Oxford et al. 1998). Metaphors are etiquettes, meanings or conceptual expressions that a concept connotes for an individual. It is a process of perceiving and understanding. It is a more important and stronger cognitive production process than explaining a concept with another concept because it expresses the possessed depth and experiences (Eraslan, 2011).

Lakoff and Johnson (2005) highlighted that an important part of our cognitive system is restructured by metaphorical relations and stated that the core of the metaphor is understanding and experiencing something (such as phenomenon, concept, object) according to something else. A metaphor is regarded as a cognitive tool that an individual can use for understanding and explaining a high level, abstract, complex or theoretical phenomenon (Yob, 2003). A metaphor is a way of thinking and perception that facilitates the learning process of a new knowledge as it transmits the meaning of a well-known situation to an unknown situation (Morgan, 1998). The use of metaphors can be seen as an interpretational medium. Because it allows for the emergence of a new perspective to be used for understanding a complex situation and performing an organizational analysis. Metaphors can be seen the concrete expressions of coordination and organization (Pipen, 2001 cited by Cerit, 2008). The given explanations imply that metaphors can also be seen as important mediums in terms of determining teachers' perceptions of cursive writing.

In our country, the renewed Turkish Language Course Curriculum (1st-8th grades) were accepted with the decision No.71 of Head Council of Education and Morality dated 05/08/2015. According to this, it was decided to gradually implement the Turkish Language Course Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades) by the 2016-2017 academic year starting from the 1st and 5th grades. Starting from the February 2017

the 2017 Turkish Curriculum Draft was temporarily suspended and it was declared that it is planned to implement the curriculum by 2018 in 5th and 9th grades. The implementation of initiating primary reading and writing teaching with cursive writing was brought to an end and printed letters have been put into practice. Starting from all the aforementioned alterations, studies conducted by language educators on primary reading and writing teaching have gained momentum (Kadioglu Ates and Kadioglu, 2017; Vatansever-Bayraktar, 2016a; Vatansever- Bayraktar, 2016b; Celenk, 2008; Senel, 2004;, Vatansever- Bayraktar, 2015; Tok, Tok and Mazi, 2008, Ozenc and Ozenc, 2016; Akyol and Duran, 2010; Akyol et al., 2014; Kadioglu Ates, 2015; Sahin, 2012). This study has an importance as it measures the impact of changing Turkish curriculums on students' comprehension levels.

As a result of the literature review, many national and international studies on primary reading and writing teaching were found. Since the day it has started to be implemented the use of cursive writing in reading-writing education has become the subject of many research studies. In the majority of these studies, opinions and attitudes of teachers which are the main components of reading-writing teaching were examined. While some of the studies demonstrate the precedence of cursive writing and the preference of teachers to use cursive writing (Basaran and Karatay, 2005; Durukan and Alver, 2008; Karaman ve Yurduseven, 2008; Tok, Tok and Mazi, 2008; Yildirim and Ates, 2010; Duran, 2011; Baydik and Kudret, 2012; Sahin, 2012); some of them highlighted the negative aspects of cursive writing, primacy of printed letters and the fact that printed letters are preferred by teachers (Arslan and Ilgin, 2010; Bay, 2010; Akturk and Mentis Tas, 2011; Akman and Askin, 2014; Erdogan, 2012; Susar Kirmizi and Kasap, 2013; Ates, Cetinkaya and Yildirim, 2014; Bayat, 2014; Demir and Ersoz, 2016; Yilmaz and Cimbiz, 2016; Sarikaya and Yilar, 2017).

The change occurred in reading and writing teaching in a way to eliminate the obligation to use cursive writing and enable the use of printed letters demonstrates the importance of examining metaphors. The objective of this study is to examine the metaphorical perceptions of primary school teachers towards cursive writing.



## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study group of the research study consisted of primary school teachers who worked public and private schools in Bayrampasa, Kucukcekmece, Basaksehir, Kartal, Maltepe, Pendik districts of İstanbul province in the 2017-2018 academic year and participated to the study on a voluntary basis. In total, 185 teachers were contacted. All of the primary school teachers participated in the study experienced teaching cursive writing at primary school level at least for once. Each teacher was interviewed for 15 minutes on average. In the scope of the interview, the question of “Cursive writing is like.... Because...” was addressed, and teachers were asked to fill the given form. An explanation was made on metaphorical perception and examples were provided in the case of a need. The study is a qualitative study. In the data analysis, the content analysis method was employed. The teachers’ confirmations were received by reading out their expressions. The interviews were conducted by a single researcher in each institution that teachers work. Due to the fact that a single researcher was responsible in the data collection process, a comparison between the data was not required. The valid metaphors were coded appropriately, and afterwards, themes were created according to the related codes. The codes were associated with an inductive method and a code-theme matrixing was provided. As a result of the study, the metaphors concerning the cursive writing were categorized as codes and themes. In the light of the findings, suggestions were proposed.

The purposeful sampling method was used to determine the study group of the study. The criteria determined for this study is to include teachers who have taught cursive writing to first-grade students for a whole academic year in the last five years, have at least five years of professional experience and their genders. In the scope of the study, 185 teachers in total who work in primary schools in six different districts of the İstanbul province – three of them are located in the European and three of them are located in the Asian side-participated to the study. The study group that was organized on a volunteer basis consisted of teachers who work in 23 different primary schools in total. The attention was attached to the fact that teachers participated in the study on a volunteer basis. The teachers

who were selected for the study consisted of 85 female and 85 male teachers. Teachers who did not teach to first-graders in the last five years and newly appointed teachers were not included in the study.

### **Data Collection Tool**

The data of the study were collected via an interview form which was developed by the researchers, reviewed by receiving expert opinions and consisted of four open-ended questions. The draft of the form was prepared for the pre-implementation in line with the opinions of five experts – three experts work as teachers in a primary school and two experts work as academics. Afterwards, the form was given its final shape as a result of the implementations made with four teachers who were not included in the study group of the research study.

### **Data Collection Process**

Before the face-to-face interviews that were conducted in the scope of the research study, the teachers were reached under the permission of the school administration and an appropriate day and time were arranged. The face-to-face interviews took place in the schools that teachers work at. In this way, the teachers were enabled to feel more comfortable and researchers found an opportunity to observe teachers in their natural environment and take field notes. The face-to-face interviews were conducted for 15 minutes. The three researchers joined in all of the interviews. The participants' voices were not recorded. The opinions of the participants were converted to a written form with their consents.

### **Data Analysis**

In the research study, the content analysis method was employed for the data collection qualitative data analysis technique. The main purpose of the content analysis is to reach concepts and relations that can explain the collected data. The process took place in the content analysis is to combine similar data in the framework of specific concepts and themes, and to interpret them to be clear for a reader (Yildirim and Simsek, 2008). The researchers took a participant consent from the teachers regarding the findings of the study. Majority of the teachers developed a negative metaphor towards cursive writing.

## Findings

**Table 1. Metaphors Used to Describe Cursive Handwriting**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
*Torment	*Arabic
*Complexity	*Tree
*Continuity	*Scarecrow
*Art	*Torture
*Functionality	*Characteristic Writing
	*Art
	*Wool
	*Snake
	*Arabic Alphabet *Knotty
	Problem *Ottoman
	*Life
	*Ornament
	*Calligraphy
	*Pushing a Boulder Uphill
	*Monster
	*Ball of Yarn
	*Visual Feast
	Picture
	*Motion Picture
	*Taking a Bus
	Disturbance
	*Obstacle
	*Difficult Game
	*High-Speed Train
	*Worm
	*Labyrinth
	*Sea Wave
	*Soup
	*Knitting
	*Knocking a Head Against a Brick Wall
	Cuneiform
	*Equation with Three Unknowns
	*Halay
	*War
	*Running before Crawling
	*Embroidery

### **METAPHORICAL THEMES**

Torment, complexity, continuity, art, functionality

### **METAPHORICAL CODES**

Arabic, tree, scarecrow, torture, characteristic writing, art, wool, snake, Arabic alphabet, knotty problem, Ottoman, life, ornament, calligraphy, pushing a boulder uphill, monster, ball of yarn, visual feast, picture, motion picture, taking a bus, disturbance, obstacle, difficult game, high-speed train, worm, labyrinth, sea wave, soup, knitting, knocking a head against a brick wall, cuneiform, equation with three unknowns, halay, war, running before crawling, embroidery.

### **CODES OF THE TORMENT THEME**

Torment, scarecrow, knocking a head against a brick wall, obstacle, difficult game, equation with three unknowns, war, running before crawling.

### **CODES OF THE ART THEME**

Piece of art, sculpture, halay, art, characteristic writing, Ottoman, ornament, calligraphy, visual feast, embroidery.

### **CODES OF THE COMPLEXITY THEME**

Arabic alphabet, Arabic, knotty problem, wool, tree, monster, snake, high-speed train, ball of yarn, disturbance, soup, cuneiform.

### **CODES OF THE CONTINUITY THEME**

Life, picture, worm, labyrinth, wave, knitting, pushing a boulder uphill.

### **CODES OF THE FUNCTIONALITY THEME**

Bus instead of a plane, motion picture, pushing a boulder uphill.

### ***EXAMPLE OPINIONS***

Examples of the torment theme

«Cursive writing is like torment. Because it is very difficult to write and teach it»

«Cursive writing is like torment. Because both writing and reading are problems»

«Cursive writing is like a scarecrow. Because it compels students and scares them away from writing, school and education»

### ***Examples of the torment theme***

Cursive writing is like a sculpture. Because it is very difficult to make it but when it is done well, it is wonderful to be watched.

Cursive writing is like a piece of art. Because the technique and visuality of this writing preference show the attention attached to it.

Cursive writing is like art. Because it requires ability, effort and attention.

Cursive writing is like characteristic writing. Because it looks more ascetical in comparison to printed letters.

Cursive writing is like halay. Because when it is done well, it is an art. All the letters pursue their art in harmony.

### ***Examples of the complexity theme***

Cursive writing is like the Arabic Alphabet. Because it is as complex as that.

Cursive writing is like the Arabic. Because all of the letters look like each other and indistinguishable.

Cursive writing is like the Arabic Alphabet and writing. Because both are unreadable and I cannot understand it. Especially if students write it.

Cursive writing is like a tangled wool. Because it mingles.

Cursive writing is like a big poplar tree. Because it is as complex as a poplar tree.

Cursive writing is like a monster. Because it is very bad, complex and scary when it is poorly written.

### ***Examples of the continuity theme***

Cursive writing is like the movement of a snake. Because it is written without moving a hand.

Cursive writing is like a high-speed train. Because it brings speed along.

### ***Examples of the functionality theme***

Cursive writing is like a motion picture. Because we watch movies and live the real life. With the same logic, we learn cursive writing and use printed letters.

Cursive writing is like taking the bus instead of a plane. Because it is like choosing the difficult option while there is an easier option.

## **Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations**

The metaphorical codes of interviewed teachers were collected under five different themes. «Torment, complexity, continuity, art, functionality». In total, 37 metaphors were produced. Metaphors were produced under the themes of torment, functionality and complexity as an indicator of negativity. On the other hand, positive metaphors were developed under the themes of continuity and art.

Arici (2012) found out in the study that was conducted with teachers and students that both teachers and students are not informed about the requirements of cursive writing and they do not understand the importance of it. Bayraktar (2006) also reached a similar result in his study. Bayraktar (2006) identified that first-grade students make various mistakes in cursive writing such as not being able to italicize letters, writing letters clearly and legibly, and creating an aesthetic inclination. In the research study carried out by Arslan (2012), Sahin (2012) and Memis and Harmankaya (2012) it was found out that students face difficulties in terms of writing certain letters. In a similar way, Kadioglu (2012a) also concluded that students confront difficulties in cursive writing. According to the results of the study conducted by Ozgun (2010) with 752 primary school teachers, it was established that students are more successful in printing, have difficulties in drawing practices for cursive writing, and insufficient materials complicate the use of cursive writing.

Filiz et al. (2017), revealed that primary school teachers and students generally face difficulties in terms of cursive writing. Teachers find cursive writing frightening, challenging and aggravating. The metaphors indicated by students showed that they have a negative attitude towards cursive writing. It was seen that both students and teachers reach an agreement on cursive writing.

The research study, “Examination of Primary Reading and Writing Teaching in the Framework of Teacher Opinions” which was conducted by Yurduseven (2007) presented that implemented dimension is less positive as student have difficulties in terms of cursive writing, crowded classroom complicate the implementation of the program and reading and writing process occurs slowly due to spelling.

The research study titled “Examination of Spelling Period in the Process of Reading and Writing Teaching via Voice-Based Sentence Method” which was conducted by Zayim (2009) revealed that pre-school education has positive reflections on reading and writing teaching, the voice-based sentence method is more convenient and easy in comparison to the former system for children to start reading, cursive writing compels students, and difficulties related to cursive writing arise.

The study conducted by Duran (2011) titled “Teacher Opinions on Writing Styles of Cursive Writing Letters” found out that primary school teachers do not find cursive writing education meaningful. Furthermore, primary school teachers indicated that bringing back the writing education with printed letters is necessary. The research findings of the study carried out by Aktas and Baki (2014) which aimed at identifying Turkish language teachers’ opinions on cursive writing supports the aforementioned result. Durukan and Alver (2008); Akturk and Mentis Tas (2011); Sahin (2012) and Akman and Askin (2014) stated that primary school teachers identified important problems in cursive writing teaching, and have difficulties related to the given situation.

The appropriateness of cursive writing’s incurvity and contiguity to the Turkish language should be discussed among linguists. The existence of many dotted and stripped letter, words that consist of almost twenty letters and not moving the hand bring about many problems both for students and teachers. The obligation to writing in italics can be eliminated. The writing style which was made optional in 2017 program should be confirmed and provided in a uniform manner across the country. In this aspect, a new font can be used such as the Ataturk Era writing example. Opinions of parents on cursive writing can be analyzed. The opinions of parents who tried to support their children in reading and writing learning with cursive writing for 13 years can be investigated.

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