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# PROSPECTIVE PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF "CHILD": A STUDY OF METAPHORS

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to find out, using the metaphor technique, the images of prospective preschool teachers about "child". To do this, the study group consists of 123 prospective preschool teachers studying at the Preschool Teaching Department of Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Necmettin Erbakan University. The data obtained were analyzed. The participants made out 66 metaphors and these metaphors were categorized under 10 different headings according to their common features. The results indicate that the prospective teachers regard "child" mainly as an entity that can be shaped, in need of love and care.

**Key Words:** Metaphor, child, preschool, prospective teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings sometimes emulate organisms in nature while living with them and sometimes relate their own lives with those organisms and thus try to express themselves. Metaphors are one way of expressing oneself. Metaphor can be defined as expressing one concept or situation with another concept or situation based on the use of language for symbolic purposes (Abrams, 1999: 155). The word "metaphor" is derived from the Greek words "Metapherein" or "Metafora" (Levine, 2005). "Meta" means "to change" and "pherein" means "to carry". According to Lakoff and Johnson (2005: 27), "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Therefore, a metaphor is formed by referring the phenomenon of X as the phenomenon of Y explicitly or implicitly.

Primarily, what is meant by the concept of metaphor is explaining a complex phenomenon or event by likening it to another phenomenon or event (Oxford et al., 1998). Metaphor means assigning a word a meaning other than its specific meaning. That is possible by attaching (1) the meaning of gender to kind, (2) the meaning of kind to gender or (3) the meaning of kind to another gender or (4) according to a proportion (Aristo, 2008: 59-60). As Sennett (1980: 78) puts it, "a metaphor creates a meaning greater than the sum of its parts" and provides us with a new awareness. When there is too much or too little similarity or difference, a message intended to be given by means of a metaphor might not be understood. "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." (Shuell, 1990: 102). In other words, metaphor is a process of building linkages between knowledges in mind which make it possible to perceive and understand a



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subject from the perspective of another subject (cited in Saban, 2004). Metaphor is a perfect technique to teach unknown things and a valid tool to store in mind and remember the knowledge acquired (Eraslan, 2011).
"Metaphoric thought" means to generate thoughts using metaphors. Metaphorical thinking process consists of several stages: (Sezer, 2003):

1. An abstract phenomenon (situation, event, concept) intended to be explained and made sense of,
2. A concrete (explicit) phenomenon used to explain this phenomenon and linguistic expression of this phenomenon,
3. Specific equivalences (analogies) formed (fictionalized) between these two phenomena.

There are some others who argue that metaphorical thinking process is composed of two parts: "topic" and "vehicle". While topic refers to a phenomenon, situation or concept explained or meant to be explained, vehicle refers to a term or terms used metaphorically (Balcı, 1999: 33). Example: *"A child is like…….. because……."*.

When the literature is examined, metaphors have been studied many times since 1980s in different disciplines of social sciences. Some of these research studies are about education. Education makes use of metaphors in planning, developing training programs, promoting learning and developing creative thinking. There are also findings which suggest that metaphors are used to determine teachers' and prospective teachers' professional perceptions. In the research studies by Çelikten (2006), Saban (2004, 2008, 2009), Aydın and Pehlivan (2010), Eraslan (2011), Hacıfazlıoğlu, Karadeniz and Dalgıç (2011) several metaphors were formulated about "culture", "teacher", "student", "school", "sociological" and "leadership".

Teachers are among the main components of education and they play important roles in both school and society. Teachers' role and importance are undeniable in student success. In this context, the profession of teacher requires professionalism (Yıldırım, Ünal, Çelik, 2011). Teachers are guides that help students learn and facilitate their learning (Özdemir, Yalın and Sezgin, 2004: 90). Teachers are real architects of societies and artists that shape human personality (Cerit, 2006; Çelikten, 2006: Saban, 2004).

### The Importance of Research

Therefore, teachers' and prospective teachers' perceptions of "child" have great significance. When the literature is examined, it is observed that prospective teachers' metaphors regarding various phenomena were previously studied but no research study that specifically focuses on prospective pre-school teachers' perceptions was found. In this regard, this research study is believed to make up for this deficiency.

### The Aim of Research

This research study aims to determine prospective pre-school teachers' perceptions of "child" by means of metaphors. In line with this main aim, the following questions were sought to be answered:

1. What metaphors do prospective pre-school teachers have about the concept of "child"?
2. Under which conceptual categories can these metaphors be grouped?
3. Which feature of child do prospective pre-school teachers' metaphors about "child" mostly focus on?

## METHOD

In this research study, which is qualitative, metaphor techniques were used to obtain data. The research study was conducted with the participation of 123 prospective teachers studying at the Preschool Teaching Department of Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education in Necmettin Erbakan University during the academic year of 2012-2013. The participants have the following features:



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Table 1: Prospective Pre-school Teachers' Demographical Information

| DISTRIBUTION OF PROSPECTIVE PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS ACCORDING TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHICAL FEATURES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **n** | **%** |
| **GENDER** | FEMALE | 112 | 91,6 |
| | MALE | 11 | 8,94 |
| | **TOTAL** | **123** | **100** |
| **AGE** | 17-20 YEARS | 89 | 72,35 |
| | 21-25 YEARS | 33 | 26,82 |
| | 32 YEARS | 1 | 0,81 |
| | **TOTAL** | **123** | **100** |
| **SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL** | LOWER | 2 | 1,62 |
| | MIDDLE | 118 | 95,93 |
| | UPPER | 3 | 2,43 |
| | **TOTAL** | **123** | **100** |
| **TYPE OF HIGH SCHOOL** | GENERAL HIGH SCHOOL | 16 | 13,00 |
| | ANATOLIAN HIGH SCHOOL | 35 | 28,45 |
| | SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL | 1 | 0,81 |
| | VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL | 37 | 30,08 |
| | ANATOLIAN TEACHER'S HIGH SCHOOL | 30 | 24,39 |
| | OTHER | 4 | 3,25 |
| | **TOTAL** | **123** | **100** |
| **EDUCATIONAL LEVEL** | ENTRY LEVEL (1. and 2. Grades) | 70 | 56,9 |
| | GRADUATE LEVEL (3. and 4. Grades ) | 53 | 43,1 |
| | **TOTAL** | **123** | **100** |

## Data Collection

With the aim of identifying prospective pre-school teachers' metaphors of "child", each participant was asked to complete the following prompt: "Child is like… because …" The students were given a blank sheet of paper with this prompt written on the page. They were asked to focus on the metaphor they have written and clarify their reason. In research studies where metaphors are used as a means of research, the phrase "is like" is used to associate more clearly the link between the topic and the vehicle of the metaphor (Saban, 2009). With the concept "because" the participants produced a sensible reason in this study. The sheets of paper written by prospective teachers were used as a primary source of data in this study.

## Data Analysis

The metaphors made out by the participants were analyzed in five stages; (1) coding and sorting (2) compiling sample metaphorical images (3) category development (4) establishing validity and reliability (5) transferring data to SPSS for quantitative data analysis.

**During the stage of coding and sorting**, the metaphors produced by the participants were listed in alphabetical order. Whether the participants clarified their metaphors sufficiently or not was analyzed. Each metaphor



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supplied by the participants was coded. Besides, the sheets of paper with no metaphors and those which discuss general features of a child instead of a metaphor were excluded.

**During the stage of compiling sample metaphorical images**, 66 metaphors were collected after excluded papers were eliminated. At this stage, the metaphors were listed in alphabetical order and raw data were reviewed for the second time. A sample expression that represented each metaphor from student essays was chosen. Thus, a sample metaphor list was prepared by compiling students' metaphorical images that are believed to represent each of 66 metaphors. This list was prepared to serve two main aims: (a) using the list as a source of reference when grouping the metaphors under a certain category (b) to validate data analysis process and interpretations of the research.

**During the stage of category development**, the participants' metaphors of "child" were analyzed in terms of their common features. 66 metaphors were classified. In other words, how the participants conceptualized the metaphors was analyzed. For this aim, each metaphor image was analyzed in terms of (1) the metaphor topic ("child"), (2) the metaphor vehicle and (3) the ground which means the relationship between the topic and the vehicle. Later, each metaphor was associated with a certain theme in terms of perspective and 10 different conceptual categories were created.

**During the stage of establishing validity and reliability,** two important processes were carried out in order to establish the validity of research results: (1) Data analysis process (particularly the way 10 conceptual categories were formed) was explained in detail. (2) Compiling an exemplar metaphorical image that is believed to represent each of the 66 metaphors and including all metaphorical images in the section of findings. Expert opinion was sought to confirm whether metaphors listed under 10 conceptual categories represent the conceptual categories in question.

**During the transfer of data to SPSS package program for quantitative data analysis**, all data were transferred to SPSS statistical program after determining 66 metaphors and developing 10 conceptual categories. After this process, the number (f) and percentage (%) of participants that represent 66 metaphors and 10 categories were calculated and presented in the following table.

## FINDINGS

In this section, the findings regarding the metaphors developed by the prospective pre-school teachers (entry and graduate levels) about "child" were presented in tables and analyzed and interpreted under sub-headings according to research questions.

Table 2: Metaphors Developed About "Child" and the Number and Percentage of Students that Represent Those Metaphors

| Metaphor Code | Metaphor Name | frequency *(f)* | percentage *(%)* | Metaphor Code | Metaphor Name | frequency *(f)* | Percentage *(%)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| **1** | Dough(play dough) | 14 | 11,38 | **34** | Mother | 1 | 0,81 |
| **2** | Flower | 9 | 7,31 | **35** | Rubber | 1 | 0,81 |
| **3** | Tree | 8 | 6,50 | **36** | Raw material | 1 | 0,81 |
| **4** | Angel | 5 | 4,06 | **37** | Mud | 1 | 0,81 |
| **5** | Young Tree | 4 | 3,25 | **38** | Cloud | 1 | 0,81 |
| **6** | Water | 4 | 3,25 | **39** | Car | 1 | 0,81 |
| **7** | Mirror | 3 | 2,43 | **40** | Seed | 1 | 0,81 |



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| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8** | Soil | 3 | 2,43 | **41** | Clay | 1 | 0,81 |
| **9** | Diamond | 3 | 2,43 | **42** | Coal | 1 | 0,81 |
| **10** | Jewel | 3 | 2,43 | **43** | Gripping novel | 1 | 0,81 |
| **11** | Blank Plate (Tabula Rasa) | 3 | 2,43 | **44** | Smile | 1 | 0,81 |
| **12** | Treasure | 3 | 2,43 | **45** | Beauty | 1 | 0,81 |
| **13** | White sheet | 2 | 1,62 | **46** | Happiness | 1 | 0,81 |
| **14** | Blank sheet | 2 | 1,62 | **47** | Music | 1 | 0,81 |
| **15** | Plant | 2 | 1,62 | **48** | Joy of life | 1 | 0,81 |
| **16** | Work of art | 2 | 1,62 | **49** | Candy | 1 | 0,81 |
| **17** | Life | 2 | 1,62 | **50** | Little monster | 1 | 0,81 |
| **18** | Unhardened concrete | 2 | 1,62 | **51** | Source of fun | 1 | 0,81 |
| **19** | Bird | 2 | 1,62 | **52** | World taste | 1 | 0,81 |
| **20** | Note-book | 1 | 0,81 | **53** | Recent movie in theaters | 1 | 0,81 |
| **21** | Field | 1 | 0,81 | **54** | River | 1 | 0,81 |
| **22** | Garden | 1 | 0,81 | **55** | Grapefruit | 1 | 0,81 |
| **23** | Sponge | 1 | 0,81 | **56** | Tear | 1 | 0,81 |
| **24** | Casette | 1 | 0,81 | **57** | Innocence | 1 | 0,81 |
| **25** | Camera | 1 | 0,81 | **58** | Cotton | 1 | 0,81 |
| **26** | Empty dish | 1 | 0,81 | **59** | Poplar Tree | 1 | 0,81 |
| **27** | Morning | 1 | 0,81 | **60** | Adult | 1 | 0,81 |
| **28** | Painter | 1 | 0,81 | **61** | The world | 1 | 0,81 |
| **29** | Rainbow | 1 | 0,81 | **62** | Teacher | 1 | 0,81 |
| **30** | Individual | 1 | 0,81 | **63** | Philosopher | 1 | 0,81 |
| **31** | Light | 1 | 0,81 | **64** | Little man | 1 | 0,81 |
| **32** | Chest | 1 | 0,81 | **65** | Miracle | 1 | 0,81 |
| **33** | Lifetime | 1 | 0,81 | **66** | Bud | 1 | 0,81 |

### 1. Prospective teachers' metaphors of "child"

The metaphors developed by prospective teachers about "child" with the number and percentage of students representing each metaphor were presented in Table 1:

1. Prospective pre-school teachers produced a total of 66 metaphors about "child".
2. About half of the 66 metaphors (26 of them) were represented by only one student. The rest of 40 metaphors was represented by 2-14 students.
3. The metaphors listed in the first five counts are as follows: 1. dough (14 students, 11.38%), 2. flower (9 students, 7.31%), 3. tree (8 students, 6.5%) 4. angel (5 students, 4.6%), 5. young tree and water (4 students, 3.25%).
4. Students associated 19 of the metaphors with organisms, and 47 of them with things. The metaphors associated with organisms were listed as soil, seed, plant, poplar tree, young tree, mother, adult etc. while



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the metaphors associated with things were listed as empty dish, treasure, rubber, unhardened concrete, play dough, work of art etc.

## 2. Conceptual Categories Formed by the Metaphors in Terms of Their Common Features

In this section, the metaphors supplied by the participants were gathered under ten categories listed in terms of frequency. In line this aim, logical explanations and reasons suggested by prospective teachers for each metaphor were analyzed. The metaphors were placed in categories in terms of the concepts that they were respectively associated with.

### 2.1. Child as Moldable Raw Material

There are 12 categories in the category of child as moldable raw material. They are water, unhardened concrete, blank plate (tabula rasa), rubber, dough (play dough), raw material, mud, cloud, car, seed and coal. Dough (play dough) (14 students, 11,38%) is the most important item of this category. When the contents of the metaphors in this category are analyzed, it is possible to reach a common standpoint that a child is born hungry for knowledge and can acquire all abilities and habits for survival through education.

Tablo 3: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Moldable Raw Material

| Child as Moldable Raw Material | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Water | 4 | 3,25 |
| Unhardened Concrete | 2 | 1,62 |
| Blank Plate (Tabula Rasa) | 3 | 2,43 |
| Rubber | 1 | 0,81 |
| Play dough, dough | 14 | 11,38 |
| Raw material | 1 | 0,81 |
| Mud | 1 | 0,81 |
| Cloud | 1 | 0,81 |
| Car | 1 | 0,81 |
| Seed | 1 | 0,81 |
| Clay | 1 | 0,81 |
| Coal | 1 | 0,81 |

"Prospective teachers used the following statements when they defined the metaphors in the category of "Child as Moldable Raw Material":

- A child follows the way you pave and takes the shape of their container, but his/her essence will never change *(Male, 2.grade).*
- "Like an unhardened concrete, whatever dropped on it leaves a trace" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "A child learns and practices whatever we teach or show him/her" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "A child goes towards the way you direct him/her" *(Male, 1.grade).*
- "We can mould and shape a child the way we want him/her to be " *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Especially young children carry on with the way you shape them" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "A child takes the shape he/she is given "*(Female, 1.grade).*
- "A child becomes rain in an effective environment while he/she falls out in a strong wind" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "A child goes towards whatever way you direct him/her" *(Male, 1.grade).*
- "A child turns green and grows like a tree as you water him/her" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "A child is shaped by the environment and turned into a work of art" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "A child turns into a diamond if you process him/her, but if not, he/she keeps on turning into a coal" *(Female, 3.grade).*

### 2.2. Child as Organism in Need of Care and Protection

There are 2 metaphors in the category of child as organism in need of care and protection. Flower (9 students, 7,31%) is the most important item of this category. The contents of the metaphors found in this category emphasize that a child needs love and care.



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Table 4: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Organism in Need of Care and Protection

| Child as Organism in Need of Care and Protection | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Bud | 1 | 0,81 |
| Flower | 9 | 7,31 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Organism in Need of Care and Protection**"**

- "They get ready to mature" *(Female, 2. grade).*
- *"*A child grows and blooms if he/she is cared for. If not, he/she fades *"* *(Female, 2.grade).*

### 2.3. Child as Developing Organism

There are 4 metaphors in the category of Child as Developing Organism. They are rainbow, young tree, tree and plant. Tree (8 students, 6,5%) is the most important item of this category. When the contents of the metaphors found in this category are analyzed, it is emphasized that a child constantly grows and develops with necessary support and becomes a perfect individual if equipped adequately.

Table 5: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Developing Organism

| Child as a Developing Organism | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Rainbow | 1 | 0,81 |
| Young tree | 4 | 3,25 |
| Tree | 8 | 6,5 |
| Plant | 2 | 1,62 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Developing Organism**"**.

- "The most natural way of seeing colors all at once" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- *"*A child grows and fruits the way you take care of him/her" *(Female, 1.grade)*.
- "It is hard to hold on to life and once you make it, its grandeur is infinite" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "If you provide a child with enough sun and water, he/she blooms. If not, he/she dies" *(Female, 3.grade).*

### 2.4. Child as Source of Purity and Love

There are 6 metaphors in the category of child as source of purity and love. They are tear, innocence, angel, cotton, bird and poplar tree. What is emphasized in the contents of the metaphors found in this category is that a child owns an innocent nature since birth.

Table 6: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Source of Purity and Love

| Child as Source of Purity and Love | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Tear | 1 | 0,81 |
| Innocence | 1 | 0,81 |
| Angel | 5 | 4.06 |
| Cotton | 1 | 0,81 |
| Bird | 2 | 1,62 |
| Poplar tree | 1 | 0,81 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Source of Purity and Love":

- "The way they cry is innocence" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Children are sinless" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "They see life with all purity" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "Children are unaware of the world around them; they are pure, innocent and without sin" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Children are free" *(Female, 1.grade).*



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- "They are honest like a poplar tree; they tell the truth" *(Female, 1.grade).*

### 2.5. Child as Reflective Organism

There are 5 metaphors in the category of child as reflective organism. They are mirror, soil, note-book, field and garden. Mirror and soil (3 students, 2.43%) are two most important items of this category. When the reasons for the metaphors were analyzed, a close relationship was found between the education received by a child and the feedback. A child is seen as a natural reflector of the knowledge he/she is given in this category.

Table 7: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Reflective Organism

| Child as Reflective Organism | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Mirror | 3 | 2,43 |
| Soil | 3 | 2,43 |
| Note-book | 1 | 0,81 |
| Field | 1 | 0,81 |
| Garden | 1 | 0,81 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Reflective Organism":

- "Children express whatever they experience or feel; they are free of lies" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "When they are given enough care, you can be amply rewarded for your efforts" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "They record whatever they are told" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "You reap what you saw" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "If you take care of your garden and grow roses and lilies. If not, what you grow is thorns" *(Female, 1.grade).*

### 2.6. Child as Valuable Organism

There are 9 metaphors in the category of child as valuable organism. They are individual, work of art, diamond, jewel, light, chest, lifetime, life and mother. Diamond and jewel (3 students, 2.43%) are two most important items of this category. When the contents of the metaphors found in this category are analyzed, it is emphasized that children are valuable because they are the future.

Tablo 8: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Valuable Organism

| Child as Valuable Organism | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Individual | 1 | 0,81 |
| Work of art | 2 | 1,62 |
| Diamond | 3 | 2,43 |
| Jewel | 3 | 2,43 |
| Light | 1 | 0,81 |
| Chest | 1 | 0,81 |
| Lifetime | 1 | 0,81 |
| Life | 2 | 1,62 |
| Mother | 1 | 0,81 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Valuable Organism".

- "A child is realistic like an adult" *(Male, 4.grade)*.
- "A child requires efforts; he/she is a product and is special " *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "A child is precious and he/she means future" *(Male, 2.grade).*
- "A child is shaped and processed like a jewel and he/she becomes precious" *(Female, 2.grade).*



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- "A child becomes a good person in the future and lightens the way for others if his/her teachers are successful" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "A child has several unknown talents and many secret powers to be discovered" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "A child is valuable as he/she makes it possible to maintain life" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "Children get understood as time goes by" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Children are precious as we learn everything from them" *(Female, 3.grade).*

### 2.7. Child as Mysterious Organism

There are 2 metaphors in the category of child as mysterious organism. They are miracle and treasure. Treasure (3 students, 2,43%) is the most important item of this category. In the contents of the metaphors found in this category, it is emphasized that a child has many aspects to discover.

Table 9: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Mysterious Organism

| Child as Mysterious Organism | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Miracle | 1 | 0,81 |
| Treasure | 3 | 2,43 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Mysterious Organism":

- "Children see different aspects of events and see unnoticed things" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "Children have special feelings " *(Female, 3.grade).*

### 2.8. Child as Passive Recipient

There are 8 metaphors in the category of child as passive recipient. They are white sheet, sponge, blank sheet, cassette, camera, empty dish, morning and painter. White sheet and blank sheet (2 students, 1.62%) are two most important items of this category. When the contents of the metaphors found in this category are analyzed, it is emphasized that students are passive recipients and passive participants in educational activities.

Table 10: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Passive Recipient

| Child as Passive Recipient | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| White sheet | 2 | 1,62 |
| Sponge | 1 | 0,81 |
| Blank Sheet | 2 | 1,62 |
| Cassette | 1 | 0,81 |
| Camera | 1 | 0,81 |
| Empty dish | 1 | 0,81 |
| Morning | 1 | 0,81 |
| Painter | 1 | 0,81 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as a Passive Recipient"

- "You are confronted with what you draw" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "Children get what you give them, either good or bad" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "Chidren are like a blank sheet, so everything written on that sheet improves children's personality" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "They record everything happening around and use it as a life experience" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "They record everything they experience" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Children get whatever you give them and whatever they see" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "When people wake up in the morning, they are usually vigorous and hungry for knowledge" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "They interpret what they observe in their way" *(Female, 2.grade).*



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### 2.9. Child as Source of Happiness and Joy

There are 13 metaphors in the category of child as source of happiness and joy. They are gripping novel, smile, beauty, happiness, music, joy of life, candy, little monster, source of fun, world taste, recent movie in theaters, grapefruit and river. When the contents of the metaphors found in this category are analyzed, it is emphasized that a child is an unconditioned source of love and has a nature that embraces all colors.

Table 11: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Source of Happiness and Joy

| Child as Source of Happiness and Joy | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gripping novel | 1 | 0,81 |
| Smile | 1 | 0,81 |
| Beauty | 1 | 0,81 |
| Happiness | 1 | 0,81 |
| Music | 1 | 0,81 |
| Joy of life | 1 | 0,81 |
| Candy | 1 | 0,81 |
| Little monster | 1 | 0,81 |
| Source of fun | 1 | 0,81 |
| World taste | 1 | 0,81 |
| Recent movie in theaters | 1 | 0,81 |
| Grapefruit | 1 | 0,81 |
| River | 1 | 0,81 |

Prospective teachers used the following statements in the category of "Child as Source of Happiness and Joy":

- "Children give happiness when you go deeper inside" *(Male, 2.grade).*
- "What we see as wrong is right for them" *(Male, 4.grade).*
- "Children provide us with life and happiness" *(Female, 3. grade).*
- "They always shine" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "They soothe when they are cared for" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "We are influenced by their joy" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "Naughty children are cute" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "You can never know when and what they are going to do" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "They are free of evil; they are pure and without sin" *(Female, 2.grade).*
- "They are so sweet" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "Exciting at first, but then unlovable" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "A child is like a food. Although it seems bitter, you enjoy the taste when you eat it" *(Female, 4.grade).*
- "Unless the source is depleted, its energy will not run out; it will keep flowing" *(Female, 4.grade).*

### 2.10. Child as Basis of Future Society

There are 5 metaphors in the category of child as basis of future society. They are adult, the world, teacher, philosopher, little man. In the contents of the metaphors found in this category lies the idea that a child is a guarantee of the future of a nation.

Table 12: Data Regarding the Category of Child as Basis of Future Society

| Child as Basis of Future Society | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Adult | 1 | 0,81 |
| The world | 1 | 0,81 |
| Teacher | 1 | 0,81 |
| Philosopher | 1 | 0,81 |
| Little man | 1 | 0,81 |



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Prospective teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of "Child as Basis of Future Society":

- "Children know their responsibilities" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "A child embraces thoughts and people from every color" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "There is a lot to learn from them" *(Female, 3.grade).*
- "Children think of unexpected things and asks unpredictable questions" *(Female, 1.grade).*
- "Children understand everything" *(Female, 3.grade).*

**3. Features of a child that the metaphors developed by prospective teachers about "child" focus on**

Metaphors developed by prospective teachers about "child" mostly suggest that a child is born with an empty reservoir. The common standpoint is that a child can be shaped by education. Another fact is that a child constantly needs care and love for his development.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Individuals who attend faculties of education in order to become pre-school teachers bring their personal attitudes about learning, teaching and child as a result of the informal observations and experiences with different teachers that they had during their pre-university years. Therefore, it is of great concern to study prospective pre-school teachers' perceptions of "child". The findings of this research study which was designed with the aim of investigating prospective pre-school teachers' perceptions about "child" using metaphors draw attention to a few important points.

First of all, it requires several metaphors to elucidate the concept of "child". For example, a child is regarded as "mirror", "work of art", "play dough", "innocent", "angel", "flower", and "little monster". As Weade and Ernst (1990: 133) put it, "metaphors are selective and they represent a part, but not the whole, of the phenomena they describe." Alternative metaphors are needed to elucidate certain educational phenomena fully. Thus, it is impossible to define the concept of "child" with one metaphor only. As Yob (2003: 134) highlights, "Primarily, a metaphor is not the thing being referred to but a symbol of it. If it were the same as the thing it was referring to it would not be needed. Therefore, it is other than and in some respects less than what it refers to, even when referring powerfully and provocatively. One way to compensate for this deficiency in representation is to employ a variety of metaphors (…)"

Secondly, perceptions about "child" are grouped under ten conceptual categories (child as moldable raw material, child as organism in need of care and protection, child as developing organism, child as source of purity and love, child as reflective organism, child as valuable organism, child as mysterious organism, child as passive recipient, child as source of happiness and joy, child as basis of future society). The most popular themes were child as moldable raw material (12) and child as source of happiness and joy (13). The fact that prospective teachers see a child as moldable raw material proves that they adopt a traditional approach to education. The approach of seeing a child as the constructor of his own life and education still does not prevail. According to educational theory of Kant, "Man may be either broken in, trained, and mechanically taught, or he may be really enlightened. Horses and dogs are broken in; and man, too, may be broken in" (Negiş Işık, 2012). However, the aim is to teach children how to think. This aim must be the principle of all activities. In brief, children should be raised as individuals that control their thinking, understanding and behaviors rather than a passive recipient of knowledge.

The findings obtained in a research study by Saban (2099: 317) which explores prospective primary school and field teachers' metaphorical images about the concept of "student" draws attention to several important findings: it requires numerous metaphors to explain the concept of "student" fully. For example, students can be described as "raw material", "defective organism", "compliant organism", "social capital" or "empty mind". Besides, it can be described as "valuable organism", "developing organism", "constructor of his own knowledge" and "active participant". Saban, Koçbeker and Saban (2006) asked a total of 1222 prospective teachers (485 males, 737 females) majoring in the programs of Primary School Teaching, Computer and Instructional Technology Teaching and English Language Teaching to formulate a metaphor regarding the



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concept of "teacher". According to the research findings, prospective teachers formulated a total of 111 valid metaphors. While male students regarded teachers as "shaper/molder", "guide/path finder" and "cooperative/democratic leader", female students regarded teachers as "knowledge provider", "supporter of personal development" and "character developer". Students majoring in the program of Primary School Teaching considered teachers' roles as "supporter of personal development" and "character developer"; students majoring in the program of English Language Teaching considered teachers' role as "guide/path finder"; students majoring in the program of Computer and Instruction Technologies Teaching considered teachers' roles as "knowledge provider" and "cooperative/democratic leader" more than those in other programs did.

Thirdly, it was found that there is a relationship between creative and abstract thinking skills and grade level as a result of the metaphors developed by prospective teachers about the concept of "child". A superficial and traditional thinking style prevails in the metaphors developed by entry level prospective teachers about "child". It was also found that graduate level prospective pre-school teachers have a structuralist modern approach. Therefore, when the grade level rises, students make use of rather abstract analogies to express their metaphorical images about "knowledge". This finding is related to the age range of children. A study by Dinç-Artut and Tarım (2006) investigated whether grade level influences primary school students' understanding an abstract phenomenon like the concept of place value in Mathematics. This research study was carried out with 728 students from various socio-economic status studying at the second, third, fourth and fifth grades in 18 primary schools. According to the research results, as grade level rises, students make fewer errors about place values (2.grade 62,8%; 3.grade 53,7%;4.grade 49,2%; 5.grade 44,1%).

In conclusion, according to the research findings prospective pre-school teachers' notions about "child" are mainy positive. This research study proves that prospective pre-school teachers have various metaphors about "child", which are grouped under 10 conceptual themes. Research studies that compare the perceptions of prospective teachers about "child" with those of teachers in practice using metaphor techniques could provide educators with significant information and new perspectives. Furthermore, discussing the results of such research studies in pedagogical formation courses will help prospective teachers improve, change and question their perspectives about the future roles of "child" and reconstruct their teacher identities.

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