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To cite this article:

Bulut, A. (2021). Investigation of metaphorical perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of language development. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 7(2), 351-366. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.2126>

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Article Info

Article History

Received:

08 June 2020

Accepted:

13 January 2021

Keywords

Preschool

Teacher

Language development

Metaphor

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the mental images of preschool teachers' perceptions through metaphors about language development. Participating in the study was voluntary and a total of 110 preschool teachers participated in the study. The phenomenology design from the qualitative research designs was administrated in this study, aiming to specify the perceptions of preschool teachers on language development by means of metaphors. The obtained data were analyzed by content analysis technique. The metaphors developed by preschool teachers on language development were classified under 9 different categories. The category of language development based on labor and effort was represented by the following metaphors "sapling, tree, baby, chick, crawl, seed, ant, industry, jigsaw, bird wing, marathon, swim". Based on this category, it may be argued that preschool teachers consider language development a long journey, which requires labor, effort, love, care, and support and having various difficulties and sensitivities in itself. The category of language development as an expression of eternity and depth was represented by the following metaphors: "ocean, eternity, deep waters, iceberg, outer space, artwork". In addition, the metaphor of "ocean" draws attention as the metaphor, developed most among all categories.

Introduction

Having a history as old as the existence of human beings, language has always become a very important instrument for all nations to transfer their cultural values, customs, and traditions to the next generations. Human being has used language as an instrument to communicate with their surroundings, to understand cases, events, and phenomenon developing within their environment, to recognize the society in which they live and to act as an individual in the society in which they live (Gedik, 2020). Vygotsky claims that language is a problem-solving tool and helps children to monitor and reflect on their own thoughts and acquire metacognitive skills (Bodrova, Germeroth, & Leong, 2013). Aksan (1995) argues that language is a multilateral and advanced index allowing to transfer emotions, thoughts, and wishes to others by means of elements and rules, which are common in society regarding sound and meaning".

Language is an acquired process, not a learned process. While learning occurs consciously, the acquisition is a

process developing spontaneously. Therefore, language is not learned but develops spontaneously in time (Eker, 2006). Language development has been defined as the acquisition, retain of words, numbers, symbols, and the use of language in accordance with the rules (Aral et al., 2000). When examining in terms of language development, children are involved in the language acquisition process as of their birth. Developing effective use of language is of utmost importance for a child to express himself/herself, to establish positive and effective communication with others, to realize himself/herself. The development in language skills affects children's skills, such as thinking, communication, self-expression, questioning, and comprehension (Okyay, 2015).

Preschool education is an educational process, covering childhood years from birth to the beginning of primary school, providing rich stimulating environment opportunities appropriate for the personal characteristics and developmental levels of children in this age, guiding their development in the best manner in accordance with cultural values and characteristics of society in which they live (Poyraz & Dere, 2001). Pre-school education is an educational process that covers all experiences of children from their birth to the beginning of primary education. In this period, brain development and synaptic connections are very intensive and rapid. By development in these respects, psycho-motor, linguistic, cognitive, social, and emotional skills are established significantly (Atay, 2005). Preschool classrooms are generally considered a place of repeating communication with peers. The development of some complex pragmatic skills and peer-related social competencies are accepted to be the determining standards of preschool environments (Jenkins, Mulvey, & Floress, 2017). Turkish Ministry of National Education 2013 pre-school education program has been organized to include the achievements and activities supporting the language development of children. It is emphasized by linguists that language development is of importance in the preschool education period, and inadequate language development for any reason may affect the whole lives of children (Aydođan & Koçak, 2003). Preschool children can acquire desired behaviors by participating in many activities, and many concepts can be developed by these activities. The duty of a teacher is to guide children during these activities that s/he will plan in line with his/her goals (Demirel, 1993). The qualifications expected from a teacher are specified as knowledge about teaching methods and techniques, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, knowledge about students' development and their learning, teaching, and communication skills (Yeşilyaprak, 2002).

As the foundation of the personality of an individual is laid during the preschool period, the preschool teaching, shaping children, guiding them to what is right and beautiful, discovering their skills, is of utmost importance (Acun & Erten, 1993). The problem topic of this investigation was to determine metaphorical perceptions in the mind of preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development. Metaphor is the indirect expression of a concept, situation, or object by using another concept or object (Deant-Reed & Szokolszky, 1993). Aristo defined metaphor as a linguistic structure producing an abnormal meaning and based on a linguistic transfer (Schechter et al. 2018). Metaphor is a way of developing an event, concept, or phenomenon with the same characteristics by comparing it with another event, concept, or phenomenon (Wehmeier, 1993). It is of importance for this study to investigate how language development is perceived by preschool teachers as a zone development that covers the acquisition and retention of sounds, words, numbers, symbols by a human being as of his/her birth, and using them in accordance with the rules of a language. Considered an important mental modeling mechanism for people to build and express their own world (Aslan & Bayrakçı, 2006), metaphors

have also important reflections on education.

When examining the literature on language development in the preschool period, it is identified that it has been investigated in different respects by the researchers (Allard, Joan, Kathleen, Robert, & Utako, 2017; Girgin, 2020; Guo, Tompkins, Justice, & Petscher 2014; Karoğlu & Çoban, 2019; Keskin, Ömeroğlu, & Okur, 2015; Sildir & Sümer, 2017). However, any metaphorical study on language development in the preschool period has not been identified in the related literature. In this regard, as the first step of basic education and a critical and sensitive period, the preschool period is of utmost importance in allowing children to acquire language development skills.

The motive behind this study is by which metaphors preschool teachers express their perceptions, thoughts regarding the concept of language development. While preparing and applying activities in pre-school education, the language development level of the children should be taken into consideration as well as all developmental characteristics (Ergin, 2012). It is of importance in this investigation that how pre-school teachers reflect and interpret the perception in their minds related to the concept of language development on the activities and achievements in current preschool education programs. It is considered that determination of the metaphors developed by preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development will contribute to raising children in the preschool period, will bring a different vision and perspective to educational activities in this field, and will fill an important literature gap in the related field.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of preschool teachers through metaphors regarding the concept of language development. In this respect, answers were sought to the following questions in this research:

1. Which metaphors are generally used by preschool teachers to explain their perceptions regarding the concept of language development?
2. Under what categories are the metaphors of the participants regarding the concept of language development classified according to their common characteristics?

Method

In this section, information was provided on the model used, the study group, data gathering, and data analysis.

Research Model

Aiming to determine teachers' perceptions about the concept of a student by means of metaphors, this investigation was designed as a descriptive study, and obtained data were analyzed by metaphorical data analysis within the scope of qualitative research tradition. Phenomenological research aims to reveal our experiences and the meaning we attribute to these experiences in our own world by focusing on the phenomena that we are aware of in daily life but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of (Titchen& Hobson, 2005; Yıldırım&Şimşek, 2013). It was attempted to reveal perceptions and mental images of preschool teachers

on language development by using the phenomenological design.

Study Group

The study group of this investigation consisted of 110 preschool teachers, working in official pre-school education institutions in a province in Turkey during the 2019-2020 academic year. The data regarding the study group is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Group

Gender	(f)	(%)
Female	96	87.2
Male	14	12.8
Total	110	100

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that most of the preschool teachers who participated in this research are female n=96 (87.2%), while the number of male teachers in the study groups is n=14 (12.8%).

Data Gathering

Related literature was examined when developing the data gathering tool (Akgün, 2016; Kuyucu, Şahin, & Kapıcıoğlu, 2013; Zembat, Tunçeli, & Akşin, 2015). In order to determine the opinions of the participating preschool teachers on the concept of language development, semi-structured forms with the statement “language development is..... similar/like; because,” were distributed. Preschool teachers were asked to write their metaphors about the concept of language development along with their justifications. In studies where metaphors are used, the word “like/similar... ..” is generally used to explain the connection between the subject of a mental image and the source of this mental image.

On the other hand, the word “because....” is used to establish a logical basis for the metaphors developed (Lakoff, 1993). Next, the form link created on Google drive was sent to the preschool teachers electronically. They were given 15 minutes to write on the form. Those written in these forms constituted the main data source of the study.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed by content analysis. The content analysis refers to systematic studies covering the ones conducted in a certain time, in a certain field and evaluate them in a descriptive dimension in line with specific goals and criteria, and help define their tendencies and results (Falkingham & Reeves, 1998). Five stages were considered during the content analysis and evaluation. These stages are as follows: (1) naming metaphors, (2) eliminating and refining metaphors, (3) compiling and developing categories, (4) ensuring validity and reliability, and (5) transferring data to computer environment and presentation (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980).

(1) Metaphor coding and extraction phase: In this stage, the metaphors developed by participants were granted numbers starting from 1. It was paid attention to whether the metaphors developed by participants were expressed clearly or not. The metaphors expressed by participants were coded.

(2) Elimination and refining phase: In this stage, each metaphor was analyzed by examining the subject of a metaphor (1), the source of a metaphor (2), and the relationship between the subject and source of a metaphor. As a result of this examination, it was concluded that not all participating preschool teachers could develop valid metaphors. Some forms of the participants that did not contain a metaphor source or did not justify the metaphor were not evaluated. At the end of this elimination, 110 participating preschool teachers developed 50 valid metaphors on the concept of language development.

(3) Compilation and category development phase: In this stage, the metaphors developed by participants were categorized by considering their justifications and common characteristics. In the category development stage, 50 metaphors developed by preschool teachers were classified under 9 different categories according to their common characteristics. The producers of the metaphors were indicated in these categories by using letters and numbers.

(4) Ensuring validity and reliability phase: Regarding the reliability of the study, expert opinion was administered in order to identify whether the metaphors in conceptual categories represented the related category (Creswell, 2016). All metaphors ($n = 50$) and categories ($n = 9$) were presented to the opinions of 2 different field experts as a list. Later on, by considering the feedbacks obtained by expert opinion, the reliability of the research (Reliability Formula = $\text{Agreement} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement})$) was calculated (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The reliability of this study was found to be $50/50+4 \times 100 = 0.92$. Moser (2000) argues that the agreement between the expert and the researcher in a qualitative research at the rate of 90% and above indicates the reliability of the study.

(5) Transferring data to computer environment and presentation: The metaphors developed by the participants on the concept of language development were transferred to a computer. Frequencies(f) and percentages (%) of the metaphors developed by the participants were calculated and given.

Findings

In this section, the metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of language development are presented under two main titles. These are as follows: "the metaphors developed by preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development" and "the metaphor categories developed by preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development". The metaphors developed by preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development were given in Table 2.

Table 2. The Metaphors developed by Preschool Teachers regarding the Concept of Language Development

Metaphors Developed	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Metaphors Developed	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1. Ocean	10	9.09	26. Bird Wing	1	0.90
2. Sapling	8	7.27	27. Journey	1	0.90
3. Tree	6	5.45	28. Drive a car	1	0.90
4. Baby	5	4.54	29. Jigsaw	1	0.90
5. Eternity	5	4.54	30. Summit	1	0.90
6. Iceberg	4	3.63	31. Tale	1	0.90
7. Money Box	4	3.63	32. Seasons	1	0.90
8. Sky	4	3.63	33. Flying Balloon	1	0.90
9. Deep waters	4	3.63	34. Trust	1	0.90
10. Crawl	3	2.72	35. Mirror	1	0.90
11. Home Foundation	3	2.72	36. Sun	1	0.90
12. Chick	3	2.72	37. Life	1	0.90
13. Freedom	3	2.72	38. Experience	1	0.90
14. Treasure	3	2.72	39. Air	1	0.90
15. Fly	3	2.72	40. Water	1	0.90
16. Ladder	3	2.72	41. Rain	1	0.90
17. Seed	2	1.81	42. Footprint	1	0.90
18. Snowball	2	1.81	43. Industry	1	0.90
19. Ant	2	1.81	44. Marathon	1	0.90
20. Door	2	1.81	45. Brick	1	0.90
21. Therapy	2	1.81	46. Window	1	0.90
22. Torch	1	0.90	47. Trust	1	0.90
23. Outer Space	1	0.90	48. Art Work	1	0.90
24. Rebirth	1	0.90	49. Light	1	0.90
25. Chain link	1	0.90	50. Bridge	1	0.90

When examining Table 2, it was seen that the participating preschool teachers developed metaphors on the concept of language development. It was observed that 9.09% ($f=10$) of the participants mostly likened the concept of language development to an "ocean". Next, it was identified that while 7.27% ($f=8$) of the participants likened the language development to a "sapling", 5.45% ($f=6$) of them likened it to a "tree". Other metaphors developed by participants regarding the concept of language development are as follows, respectively: "baby" 4.54% ($f=5$), "eternity" 4.54% ($f=5$), "iceberg" 3.63% ($f=4$), "money box" 3.63% ($f=4$), "sky" 3.63% ($f=4$), "deep waters" 3.63% ($f=4$), "crawl" 2.72% ($f=3$), "house foundation" 2.72% ($f=3$), "chick" 2.72% ($f=3$), "freedom" 2.72% ($f=3$), "treasure" 2.72% ($f=3$), "fly" 2.72% ($f=3$), "ladder" 2.72%, "seed" 1.81% ($f=2$), "snowball" 1.81% ($f=2$), "ant" 1.81% ($f=2$), "door" 1.81% ($f=2$), "therapy" 1.81% ($f=2$).

The categories of metaphors developed by preschool teachers regarding language development are given in Table 3.

Table 3. The Categories of Metaphors Developed by Preschool Teachers Regarding Language Development

Categories	Metaphors	Metaphor Number (n)	Metaphor Number (teacher number) (f)	Metaphor Percent (%)
Language development based on labor and effort	Sapling (8), Tree (6), Baby (5), Chick (3), Crawl (3), Seed (2), Ant (2), Industry (1), Jigsaw (1), Bird Wing (1), Marathon (1), Swim (1)	12	34	30.90
Language development as an expression of eternity and depth	Ocean (10), Eternity (5), Deep waters (4), Iceberg (4), Outer Space (1), Art Work (1)	6	25	22.73
Language development as an expression of freedom and wealth	Sky (4), Freedom (3), Treasure (3), Fly (3), Journey (1), Summit (1), Drive (1), Flying Balloon (1)	8	17	15.46
Language development as an expression of progressivity	House Foundation (3), Ladder (3), Snowball (2), Chain Link (1), Seasons (1), Brick (1), Bridge (1)	7	12	10.90
Language development as a source of experience and light	Life (1), Trust (1), Light (1), Sun (1), Experience (1), Torch (1)	6	6	5.46
Language development as a reflection of cultural heritage	Money Box (4), Mirror (1), Footprint (1)	3	6	5.46
Language development as therapeutic and calming	Therapy (2), Tale (1), Rain (1),	3	4	3.64
Language development as a new beginning expression	Door (2), Rebirth (1), Window (1)	3	4	3.64
Language development as an indispensable thing	Air (1), Water (1)	2	2	1.81
Total	9	50	110	100

As provided in Table 3, the metaphors developed by preschool teachers regarding the concept of language development were collected in 9 different categories. These categories are as follows, respectively: (1) “*language development based on labor and effort*”, (2) “*language development as an expression of eternity and depth*”, (3) “*language development as an expression of freedom and wealth*”, (4) “*language development as an expression of progressivity*”, (5) “*language development as a source of experience and light*”, (6) “*language development as a reflection of cultural heritage*”, (7) “*language development as therapeutic and calming*”, (8) “*language development as a new beginning expression*” and (9) “*language development as an indispensable thing*”. It is also seen in Table 3 that 12 different metaphors were developed by 34 preschool teachers in the category “*language development based on labor and effort*”.

Next, 25 preschool teachers developed 6 different metaphors in the category “*language development as an expression of eternity and depth*”. 8 different metaphors were developed by 17 teachers in the category “*language development as an expression of freedom and wealth*”. While 12 teachers developed 7 different metaphors in the category “*language development as an expression of progressivity*”, 6 different metaphors were developed by 6 different teachers in the category “*language development as a source of experience and light*”.

In addition, 6 preschool teachers developed 3 different metaphors in the category named “*language development as a reflection of cultural heritage*”. While 4 preschool teachers developed 3 different metaphors in the category “*language development as therapeutic and calming*”, 3 different metaphors were developed by 4 preschool teachers in the category “*language development as a new beginning expression*”. It was determined that 2 preschool teachers developed 2 different metaphors in the category “*language development as an indispensable thing*”.

Category 1. Language Development Based on Labor and Effort

When examining Table 3, it is observed that preschool teachers developed the following metaphors in this category, respectively; *sapling*(8), *tree* (6), *baby* (5), *chick* (3), *crawl* (3), *seed*(2), *ant* (2), *flower* (1), *jigsaw* (1), *bird wing* (1), *marathon* (1) and *swim* (1). Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are provided below:

T67: “*Language development is like a small sapling because it grows and develops as long as it is cared for.*”

T38: “*Language development is like a tree because as new words are added to your vocabulary, your communication skills develop by holding on to the soil more tightly.*”

T4: “*Language development is like a baby because it always grows and develops.*”

T2: “*Language development is like a newly hatched chick because it is the beginning of a brand-new life and new things.*”

T18: “*Language development is like crawling because you learn how to walk as you try.*”

T59: “*Language development is like a seed because it grows and develops as much as it is fed.*”

T88: “*Language development is like an ant because we accumulate new things as much as we work.*”

Category 2. Language Development as an Expression of Eternity and Depth

25 participants developed 6 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *ocean (10)*, *eternity (5)*, *deep waters (4)*, *iceberg (4)*, *outer space (1)*, *artwork (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are given below:

T94: "Language development is like an ocean because you encounter endless floods as you dive deeper."

T1: "Language development is like eternity because every new acquisition is a new beginning."

T44: "Language development is like endless deep waters because their beginning and end are not clear."

T110: "Language development is like the invisible part of an iceberg because you cannot estimate what you will meet in this development process in the future."

Category 3. Language Development as an Expression of Freedom and Wealth

17 participants developed 8 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *sky (4)*, *freedom (3)*, *treasure (3)*, *fly (3)*, *journey (1)*, *summit (1)*, *and drive a car (1)*, *flying balloon (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by teachers regarding this category are given below:

T35: "Language development is similar to the sky because it reveals what is unknown in its eternity and depth."

T34: "Language development is similar to freedom because a human being exists as long as s/he express himself/herself."

T51: "Language development is similar to a treasure because every new thing you learn about language is your treasure."

T22: "Language development is similar to flying because the more we learn new things, the freer we get."

Category 4. Language Development as An Expression of Progressivity

12 participants developed 7 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *house foundation (3)*, *ladder (3)*, *snowball (2)*, *chain link (1)*, *seasons (1)*, *brick (1)*, *bridge (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are given below:

T86: "Language development is similar to the foundation of a house because the child with adequate language development is like a strong house, it cannot be destroyed."

T71: "Language development is like a ladder because as an individual climbs steps, s/he realizes how far s/he progresses."

T9: "Language development is similar to a snowball because as you learn new things, you can communicate more effectively with your environment."

Category 5. Language Development as a Source of Experience and Light

6 participants developed 6 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *life(1)*, *trust (1)*, *sun (1)*, *light (1)*, *experience (1)*, *torch (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are provided below:

T11: “*Language development is similar to life because we learn in time by living.*”

T108: “*Language development is similar to trust because as you learn, you can recognize the language and use it correctly and consistently in life.*”

T80: “*Language development is similar to the sun because as you learn new things, your dark points become enlightened.*”

T62: “*Language development is like a light because it always lights your way.*”

Category 6. Language Development as a Reflection of Cultural Heritage

6 participants developed 3 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *money box (4)*, *mirror (1)*, *footprint(1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are given below:

T57: “*Language development is similar to a money box because you can understand from the speech of a child what s/he has accumulated and to what extent.*”

T30: “*Language development is like a mirror because it reflects the values of the society in which you have grown up.*”

T45: “*Language development is like our footprints because every child learns his/her mother tongue by modeling and imitating us.*”

Category 7. Language Development as Therapeutic and Calming

4 participants developed 3 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *therapy (2)*, *tale (1)*, *rain (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are given below:

T103: “*Language development is similar to therapy because a child relaxes as s/he talks, becomes happy as s/he expresses himself/herself.*”

T99: “*Language development is like a tale because as you listen to tales, you will both learn new things and travel to different worlds.*”

T8: “*Language development is similar to rain as soil becomes fertile and green when rain falls on ground, spirit of a human being becomes cheerful and alive as a language is learned.*”

Category 8. Language Development as a New Beginning Expression

4 participants developed 3 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *door (2)*, *rebirth (1)*, *window(1)*. Examples of metaphor

expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are provided below:

T12: *"Language development is like a door opening to different worlds because we start our communication with everything around us through language."*

T58: *"Language development is like rebirth because every new word gives a new life to our personality."*

T82: *"Language development is similar to a window because it may have different reflections that change depending on from where you look."*

Category 9. Language Development as an Indispensable Thing

2 participants developed 2 different metaphors in this category regarding the concept of language development. These metaphors are as follows, respectively: *air (1)*, *water (1)*. Examples of metaphor expressions created by preschool teachers regarding this category are given below:

T41: *"Language development is similar to air because as you speak, you feel you take breath."*

T3: *"Language development is similar to water because we can't do both without talking and without water."*

Discussion

Hildebrand (1981) argues that the period in which language develops fastest is from birth to 6 years old, and all language development levels related to speaking, listening, comprehension, reading and writing are affected in these ages. It is generally accepted that basic language skills are acquired until 5-6 years old, and the skills to use a language masterfully develop after 5-6 years old and continue until the age of ten (Demir & Yapıcı, 2007). As understood by these statements, the period covering preschool education is highly critical and sensitive regarding the language development of children. The activities to help a child's language development in pre-school education period may be classified in three groups. These activities are finger games supporting the enrichment of a child's vocabulary, reading a book, nursery rhymes, talking about a picture, dramatization, the activities allowing to learn new words and the activities supporting the development of self-expression skills by new words (Senemoğlu, 1989). The following conclusions were achieved based on the findings of this study, attempted to determine the perceptions of preschool teachers through metaphors regarding the concept of language development: When examining the categorical distribution of the metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of "language development", the first three categories were ranked as follows: Language development based on labor and effort (30.90%), language development as an expression of eternity and depth (22.73%) and language development as an expression of freedom and wealth (15.46%).

The category of language development based on labor and effort was represented by the following metaphors *"sapling, tree, baby, chick, crawl, seed, ant, industry, jigsaw, bird wing, marathon, swim"*. Based on the conclusion achieved by this category, it may be stated that preschool teachers consider language development a long journey, which require labor, effort, love, care and support and having various difficulties and sensitivities in itself. The category of language development as an expression of eternity and depth was represented by the following metaphors: *"ocean, eternity, deep waters, iceberg, outer space, artwork"*. In addition, the metaphor of

“*ocean, f=10*” draws attention as the metaphor, developed most among all categories. By the metaphors developed in this category, it was concluded that preschool teachers perceived language development as a concept, which has eternity, depth and various meanings in itself, having both known and unknown aspects and being full of beauty. The category of language development as an expression of freedom and wealth was represented by the following metaphors: “*sky, freedom, treasure, fly, journey, summit, driving a car, flying balloon*”. It may be urged that preschool teachers considered the language development an instrument of wealth liberating, glorifying and allowing to reach the summit, by means of the metaphors they developed in this category.

The categories of language development based on labor and effort, language development as an expression of eternity and depth, and language development as an expression of freedom and wealth, in which most of the metaphors were developed, were followed by the categories below, respectively: language development as an expression of progressivity (10.90%), language development as a source of experience and light (5.46%), language development as a reflection of cultural heritage (5.46%), language development as therapeutic and calming (3.64%), language development as a new beginning expression (3.64%) and language development as an indispensable thing (1.81%). The category of language development as an expression of progressivity is represented by the metaphors “*house foundation, ladder, snowball, chain link, seasons, brick, bridge*”. By the metaphors developed in this category, it was concluded that preschool teachers stated language development as a process, which is interwoven depending on age and development of an individual, developing progressively and continuing in this respect.

Moreover, preschool teachers emphasized that the activities and acquisitions which children will experience in this period regarding language development will be effective in learning a language adequately and will function as a bridge to carry them to the future with stronger steps. The category of language as an experience and light source is represented by the metaphors “*life, trust, light, sun, experience, torch*”. It may be urged that preschool teachers described language development in this category as a process providing the life of an individual with energy and light, and full of consistent knowledge and achievements learned by doing and living. The category of language development as a reflection of cultural heritage is represented by the metaphors “*money bank, mirror, footprint*”. When examining the metaphors developed by preschool teachers in this category, it may be stated that they have developed metaphors emphasizing that language development is a carrier of cultural heritage and knowledge, includes the footprints of the past and the steps of the future.

The category of language development as therapeutic and calming is represented by the metaphors of “*therapy, tale, rain*”. Preschool teachers described the language development in this category as something which is good for inner worlds of people, allowing them to get relaxed with a calming effect. The category of language development as a new beginning expression is represented by the metaphors of “*door, rebirth, window*”. It may be stated that preschool teachers expressed the language development in this category as the beginning of a new world enabling people to know different cultures and to provide them with a universal perspective. The category of language development as an indispensable thing is represented by the metaphors of “*air, water*”. It has been determined that preschool teachers used expressions about the language development in this category, which

describe it as necessary for people as much as the air they breathe and as indispensable as much as the water they drink.

Conclusion

The metaphors developed by preschool teachers on language development were classified under 9 different categories. The category of language development based on labor and effort was represented by the following metaphors "sapling, tree, baby, chick, crawl, seed, ant, industry, jigsaw, bird wing, marathon, swim". Based on this category, it may be argued that preschool teachers consider language development a long journey, which requires labor, effort, love, care, and support and having various difficulties and sensitivities in itself. The category of language development as an expression of eternity and depth was represented by the following metaphors: "ocean, eternity, deep waters, iceberg, outer space, artwork". In addition, the metaphor of "ocean" draws attention as the metaphor, developed most among all categories. Based on these conclusions, language development may be defined as a process that shows a gradual development depending on people's labor and effort, age and development process, which require support, which has an eternal depth and wealth in itself, which liberate a human being as s/he learns. Language development may also be defined as an instrument, which is indispensable for people, full of learning processes by doing and living, giving people peace as it develops, carrier of the cultural heritage, and mediating to learn different cultures. The following suggestions may be given based on the conclusions achieved in this study:

It has been identified upon the metaphors developed by preschool teachers on the concept of language development that language development is a process that should be supported. In this regard, in-service training courses and seminars may be organized to expand the awareness and qualifications of preschool teachers, who will support children in language development education during preschool education. It has been concluded that language development is a process, which is full of learning processes by doing and living. In this respect, if preschool teachers carry out activities related to implementation and practice rather than theoretical knowledge in accordance with real-life dimension of education during language development period of students, language development processes of children will become faster and will be proper for this process. According to another conclusion achieved in this study, academic and scientific studies may be carried out on what kind of activities may be developed to contribute the children with difficulty in language development process during preschool education by considering therapeutic and calming aspects of language development process.

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