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## From Students' Perspectives: EFL Learners' Metaphors about English Instructors in Turkey

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand university preparatory class students' mental images about their English language instructors through metaphors. With regard to this aim, 148 students enrolled in 16 different programs were required to write metaphors on the metaphor elicitation task including the statement "*my English instructor is like.....because.....*". Metaphor analysis technique including naming, elimination, deciding unit of analysis, categorization, quantitative analysis of data was employed for the analysis. 153 metaphors were sorted into 9 conceptual themes. While 'teacher as nurturer' was the leading category with 40 metaphors, 'teacher as someone good-hearted' followed it with 37 metaphors. It was seen that male participants emphasized good-hearted nature of language instructors and their ability to provide knowledge whereas female participants focused on their teachers' nurturer side. A closer interaction between the instructors and students could be attributed to the reason why students mostly had positive views concerning their language instructors.

**Key Words:** Metaphor, Preparatory Class, Language Instructor, Student Belief.

# Öğrencilerin Bakış Açılarından: Türkiye’de İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenenlerin İngilizce Öğreten Öğretim Elemanlarıyla ilgili Metaforları

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı üniversite hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğretim elemanlarına yönelik algılarının metaforlar aracılığıyla belirlenmesidir. Bu amaçla, Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde 16 farklı bölüme kayıtlı 148 öğrenciden "benim öğretmenim.....gibidir, çünkü....." şeklindeki bir ifadeyi doldurmaları yoluyla öğrencilerin İngilizce öğretim elemanları ile ilgili metaforları elde edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde, a) isimlendirme, b) ayıklama, c) analiz birimlerini belirleme d) kategorilere ayırma ve e) verilerin nicel analizi şeklinde 5 adımdan oluşan metafor analiz tekniği kullanılmıştır (Saban, Koçbeker & Saban, 2007). Verilerin analizinde metafor kullanımına uygun olmayan ifadelerin ayıklanmasından sonra 153 metafor 9 ayrı kavramsal temaya ayrılmıştır. 40 metaforla en yüksek kategori ‘yetiştirici olarak öğretmen’ kategorisiyken, bunu 37 metaforla ‘iyi kalpli biri olarak öğretmen’ kategorisi takip etmiştir. Kız ve erkek öğrencilerin ortaya koydukları metaforlar göz önüne alındığında ise, erkek öğrencilerin İngilizce öğretim elemanlarının iyi kalpli olma ve bilgi sağlama özelliklerini ortaya koyarken, kız öğrencilerin ise onların yetiştirici özellikleri üzerinde durdukları görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Metafor, Hazırlık Sınıfı, Öğretim Elemanı, Öğrenci İnancı.

## INTRODUCTION

It is a widely known fact that the process of language teaching and learning is affected from the interaction in the classroom between teachers and students (Wang & Castro, 2010). Due to the unpredictable nature of these interactions as well as the effect of school, management, students’ and teachers’ individual differences, teaching becomes more complex. In order to teach the language in an efficient way, scholars in the field of language teaching have long been working on providing the most effective language teaching method which has ultimately given way to the arise of post-method era (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). With the start of this era, our view of language teaching determined by the theory driven methods is redefined and restructured with all pedagogical perspectives signaling a move from positivist oriented to constructivist perspective (Crandall, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Challenging the traditional teaching and learning settings with all aspects falling short of success on the part of the learners, with the adaptation of constructivism in language teaching as well as other fields of education, teachers were seen in the core of language learning process and their roles in student-centered school environments were reconstructed again (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). In fact, in the constructivist pedagogy, learners were assumed to construct or reconstruct their knowledge and teachers were expected to give path for them to experience new things to learn. In line with this, the teacher in the classroom enabled students to discover and reconstruct their existing or new knowledge by providing them the most appropriate setting for their learning (Richardson, 2003).

Another aspect of constructivist approach to education was the importance attached to learners' individual differences together with their cognitive aspects in constructing the knowledge. The mental constructs the learners have in their minds affect the way they learn and their attitudes towards learning. To put it another way, metaphors as the mental constructs are the general mappings to conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another (Lakoff, 1992). Thus, in language education, students' success or learning the language is dependent on their attitudes towards learning the language. In addition to this, understanding students' views regarding their language teachers is also important, which may be a significant factor in affecting students' performance and attitudes in language classes (Mantiri, 2015).

In Turkey, English language is offered in all levels of education from primary to tertiary education and especially after the introduction of a comprehensive curriculum change that took place in 2006, constructivist approach to education was adapted in all levels. Specifically, in the context of Turkey's higher education system where most of the departments ranging from electrical engineering to international finance have one-year English preparatory class for the students who fail to pass English proficiency exam, preparatory school students' metaphorical images related to their teachers may be of significant value since it may also be contributor to their success or failure in language learning process.

A metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable” (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2007). A link is set between a concept (target domain) and another (source domain) by the creator of the metaphor in order to understand a complex idea. Especially when something abstract, novel, or

highly speculative to understand, metaphor is employed to explore and understand it (Yob, 2003). It is commonly employed by researchers in order to uncover meanings people attach to some aspects. Shuell (1990) emphasizes the power of metaphor by claiming that a metaphor represents words more than a picture does by providing a conceptual framework for thinking about something. Considering the functions of metaphor, it has invaluable significance in the context of education as well. It allows researchers to fully understand views of participants concerning education-related topics, such as teachers' views, philosophies, practices, students' views about their teachers, or teaching and learning taking place in the classroom. Specifically, students' vocabulary set may not be enough to explain all concepts when they are required to explain that term. The concept of language teachers' roles is also one of those abstract concepts which may be hard to explain directly. However, students may find it easier to explain that concept by attaching meaning to another concept which is more familiar to them through comparing it to that concept (Clarcken, 1997).

Though metaphors were popularly used in gathering views of instructors, teachers as well as administrators, only few researchers working on educational metaphors paid attention to students' views (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). Moreover, when the literature in this context is examined, it could be seen that although students' views concerning their language teachers have been investigated through metaphors, the number of studies examining university students' views regarding their instructors especially in the first year English preparatory classes is very limited (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Akbari, 2013). For this reason, it is obvious that more research is needed to fill this gap. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out metaphorical images of students of a state university concerning their English language instructors in the first year preparatory class. This research attempts to answer the following research questions;

- How do university preparatory class students conceptualize their English language instructors' roles through metaphors?
- To what extent are the students' metaphors generated about their English language instructors gender-related?

## **Literature Review**

In the related literature, there are a number of studies conducted both in Turkey (Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014; İnceçay, 2015; Kesen, 2010; Sayar, 2014) and abroad (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Hasim, Mohtar, Barnard, & Zakaria, 2013; Kamberi, 2014; Pierson, 2008; Fırat & Yurdakul, 2012),

which focused on metaphors in language teaching and learning as well as being related to university context.

Demirtaş and Çoban (2014) conducted a qualitative study to investigate tertiary students' beliefs about the instructors at the university through the metaphors. The study, in which 320 students participated, showed that university students had more negative metaphors regarding instructor, such as 'authority', 'prison officer', and 'mechanized being' when compared to the positive ones in which they were specified as 'orienting', 'leaders', or 'guides'. İnceçay (2015) also conducted a study related to metaphors generated for foreign language teaching. Two pre-service English teachers in a practicum class of teaching certificate course at university participated in the study in which pre-service teachers reflected on their images of the language teaching in three stages as pre-course, during, and post-course. Using a variety of data collection tools, such as metaphor completion task, semi-structured interviews, and follow-up e-mails, İnceçay (2015) found out that the common metaphors generated were 'ocean', 'farm', 'airplane', 'kitchen', and 'marriage'. The study also revealed that experience gained from teaching had an influence on the metaphorical images of the teachers prior to practicum. Stressing the significance of metaphors in language learning process, Sayar (2014) investigated 10 EFL teachers' and 200 students' conceptions of professional teacher identity through metaphors by means of interviews. Teachers' metaphors were categorized under 6 categories named teacher as 'neophyte', 'entertainer', 'interest arouser', 'expert', 'guide', and 'nurturer'. 14 major themes appeared as a result of the analysis of students' metaphors and they were named as teacher as 'agency of patience', 'authority', 'eager beaver', 'entertainer', 'expert', 'guide', 'Jekyll and Hyde', 'interest arouser', 'knowledge provider', 'mystery', 'neophyte', 'nurturer', 'patchwork', and 'trier to patience'. In short, studies explained here reveal that metaphors created by students tend to be more negative about language teachers; on the other hand, language teachers relate themselves with the growth and production and pre-service teachers generate metaphors, such as 'ocean', 'airplane', 'farm', and 'marriage' in terms of language teaching.

Studies conducted in other countries also revealed significant findings related to metaphors in language education on parties in terms of instructors and students. Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) examined metaphors created by 23 university students about language teachers and additionally investigated if metaphors generated were gender based apart from investigating the applicability of Oxford's typology of metaphors to the Malaysian context. In contrast to Turkish students as depicted in the study

conducted by Demirtaş and Çoban (2014), Malaysian students had positive metaphors mainly as ‘nurturer’ and ‘entertainer’, and out of 27 images, only two were negative. Additionally, in spite of not being statistically significant, metaphors created were gender-based in that female students had more gender-based metaphors, such as ‘mother’ or ‘child’s caretaker’. They also explained that Oxford’s typology of metaphors was applicable to the Malaysian context. In another study conducted in Malaysia, Hasim et al. (2013) investigated the metaphors generated by 72 trainee teachers of English about teacher roles and found that there were four main metaphor themes related to teacher roles, such as ‘facilitators’, ‘motivators’, ‘entertainers’, and ‘family-members’. In Macedonian context, Kamberi (2014) assessed the value of metaphors in foreign language teaching and learning with the participation of 32 university students as learners of English. In the study, teachers were visualized as ‘water’, ‘flower’, and ‘leader’ most, students as ‘flower’, ‘star’, and ‘fish’, and finally their major as ‘sky’, ‘river’, and ‘window’. Finally, Fırat and Yurdakul (2012) investigated university metaphors of 160 academicians from 15 different countries and found that the most common metaphors used were ‘community’, ‘garden’, ‘family’, ‘factory’, and ‘prison’.

From the literature it is clear that metaphors generated about the roles of English language instructors show that learners hold both positive and negative images in their minds. As Oktay and Osam (2013) state teacher roles in class are regarded differently by learners based on their perceptions about the teachers and the distinguishing features of teachers belonging to different subject matters also affect the way students conceptualize teacher roles. When it comes to English language, the nature of language teaching makes English language teachers unique when compared to other teachers of different subject matters since language teaching is a dynamic process and requires a close interaction. In line with this, Oktay and Osam (2013) also emphasize that the unique teacher roles English language teachers have need researching to clarify what roles they reflect in the class and how they are perceived by the learners. Thus, keeping the importance of roles English language instructors have especially in preparatory classes at universities, this study aimed at investigating the metaphorical images of university students concerning their English language instructors in the first year preparatory class.

## METHODOLOGY

### Setting and Participants

This qualitative study was conducted at a state university, as it aimed to investigate metaphors generated by university students. Students participated in this study were all studying English at the School of Foreign Languages which offers preparatory English education to students within a modular program. The students receive English in five levels under this modular program as A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1 the syllabi of which are based on CEFR and the instruction they have is based on teaching of four language skills with the purpose of equipping students with the necessary communication skills both for academic and daily needs in terms of foreign language.

This study was conducted at the very beginning of the Spring term of the 2015-2016 academic year. The participants were 148 students enrolled in 16 different programs of different faculties of a state university in Turkey. All the students were in their first-year English preparatory classes. Their ages ranged from 18 to 29 with a mean of 19.7 in male ( $n=69$ ) and 18.8 in female ( $n=79$ ) participants. The distribution of gender according to their English proficiency levels is illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The distribution of gender according to their English proficiency levels

	<b>A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1</b>
<b>Male</b>	15	43	9	2
<b>Female</b>	14	43	15	7
<b>Total</b>	29	86	24	9

As seen in Table 1, B1 level students constituted the largest group both in male and female students, followed by A2, B2, and C1 level students respectively.

### Instrument and Data Collection

This descriptive study was qualitative in nature. The data were gathered through a metaphor elicitation task including two parts. The first part was related to participants' demographic information, such as age, department of study, and gender. The second part included a prompt stating "*my English instructor is like.....because.....*"

aiming to reveal students' conceptualizations regarding their English language instructors. The resemblance between the generated metaphor and their instructors is explained through the word 'like' and explanation following it. This clarification is expected to make implicit beliefs explicit. The participants were given 25 minutes to write as many metaphors and explanations as they could.

## **Analysis**

Accepted as one of the most effective ways of reaching people's views regarding the topic under investigation, metaphor analysis, a method of discourse analysis, came into research stage with the famous work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Thus, the present study employed metaphor analysis, which is a qualitative research, as an analysis method by following the approach of Cameron and Low (1999) through (1) gathering metaphors, (2) generalizing from these metaphors to the conceptual ones, and finally (3) suggesting understandings and constructing people's beliefs. Basically, the analysis in the present study included 5 steps: (a) naming, (b) elimination, (c) deciding the unit of analysis, (d) categorization, (e) quantitative analysis of data (Saban, Koçbeker, & Saban, 2007). This analysis technique was adopted from the study of Saban and his friends (2007).

In the first stage, all the metaphors generated by students were written down on a table with their explanations to find out total number of metaphors. Some of the metaphor elicitation tasks received from the students were not fully completed. They were highlighted in the first stage and following this step, all the responses were analyzed to identify 3 necessary elements: the topic (i.e. the English language instructor), the vehicle (i.e. the term to which the topic is compared), and the ground (the nature of the relationship between the vehicle and the topic). At this stage, 45 irrelevant and poorly structured responses were eliminated based on the 'mention of a metaphor but no provision of a rationale', 'plain description or no mention of a metaphor at all', and 'fuzzy/hybrid metaphor or difficulty placing the metaphor under one clearly recognizable conceptual theme' criteria of Saban et al. (2007). The number of well-generated metaphors were 158 after the elimination of 45 metaphors. Two criteria were adopted for the unit of analysis: categories should be based on metaphors mentioned by (a) more than two participants, and (b) both male and female participants. As a result of this, 5 more metaphors were eliminated. Through the investigation of related literature (Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Oxford et al., 1998; Saban et al., 2007) and participants' views, a total of 9 categories appeared. The disagreements between the researchers in classification of metaphors were



negotiated till the end of the analysis and a joint decision was reached for all. In the last stage, frequency and percentage for all metaphors for two genders were found out quantitatively.

## FINDINGS

In this section, nine conceptual categories were revealed with the sample metaphors categorized under these categories based on gender differences. These nine conceptual categories are as follows: 'teacher as guide', 'teacher as provider of knowledge', 'teacher as someone unpredictable', 'teacher as someone negative to students', 'teacher as someone hardworking', 'teacher as nurturer', 'teacher as knower', 'teacher as culture transmitter', and 'teacher as someone good-hearted'. 78 metaphors generated by female participants and 75 metaphors produced by male participants with a total of 153 metaphors were sorted into these categories. It could be seen that the same metaphor can take place in different categories due to the explanations following it.

### Teacher as Guide

There were a total of 7 metaphors generated by the students under this category. English language instructors were considered as 'guides' and 'protectors' of students. Female participants produced more metaphors compared to male ones in this category (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Teacher as guide

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as guide	Light (2)	Smart phones (1)	5	6.4	2	2.6
	My brother (1)	Religious leader (1)				
	Compass (1)					
	Flower (1)					

In this category, both female and male participants emphasized the guidance of their English instructors through the metaphors presented in Table 2. However, the metaphor choice of two genders differed according to their interests and the way they see their instructors. For instance, while male students preferred 'smart phones', which may be related to male students' interest in technology especially when compared to females participants,

female students focused on the tools that show the way for them, such as 'light' and 'compass' in symbolizing instructors' role of a guide.

Some of the sample metaphors created by the students in this regard are provided below:

*Light: He shows the way.*

*Compass: He shows us the way and protects us from going on the wrong way.*

*Religious leader: He informs people, teaches the truth.*

### Teacher as Provider of Knowledge

The basic premise of this conceptual category is that English language instructors are the main sources of information and knowledge for the students. Among the metaphors generated, the most popular one was 'book' which was followed by 'tree' and 'sun' (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Teacher as provider of knowledge

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as provider of knowledge	Water (1)	Book (6)	1	1.2	12	16
		Candle (1)				
		Tree (2)				
		Sun (2)				
		Library (1)				

Findings in this category showed that male participants' metaphors remarkably outnumbered those of female participants. The metaphors generated by male participants mostly included irreplaceable elements, such as 'Sun' and 'candle' for the light, 'book' for the information, and 'tree' for the oxygen. Therefore, they consider their instructors as the irreplaceable actors of their learning. Despite female participants only created one metaphor in this category, their perspective was in line with the male students.

Some examples of metaphors created by the students are as follows:

*Water: Water gives life to all cells. Our instructors enlighten us by sharing their knowledge with us.*

*Book: He teaches us knowledge and adds new things to our life.*

*Sun: He enlightens us.*

*Tree: Contextually trees are just living organisms but however, they actually give oxygen which all living kinds and the nature need.*

**Teacher as Someone Unpredictable**

Both genders created equal number of metaphors within this context. The instructors were perceived to have unstable mood in language classes. Students focused on their unpredictability negatively.

**Table 4.** Teacher as someone unpredictable

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as someone unpredictable	Caramel (1)	A sour chewing gum	5	6.4	5	6.6
	Closed box (1)	(1) Stray (1)				
	Human bomb (1)	Bomb (2)				
	Weather in Denizli (1)	Gall bladder (1)				
	Chameleon (1)					

In this category, language instructors' unstable mood was reflected mostly negatively both by male and female participants. The metaphors produced by the students showed that instructors' unpredictable behaviors and changing mood provoked discontent among the students. Although 'bomb' was used two times by male participants, there was not a dominating metaphor in this category. Some metaphors created by both genders are provided below:

*Caramel: It has both sweet and bitter sides.*

*Chameleon: His mood always changes. His reactions are very different.*

*A sour chewing gum: First, he makes you cry, but then makes you smile.*

*Gall bladder: If it is not under control, it may explode.*

**Teacher as Someone Negative to Students**

Both genders created equal number of metaphors also for this category in which English language instructors were mostly viewed negative

with several different metaphors, such as ‘enemy of students’, ‘shark’, and many others (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Teacher as someone negative to students

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
<b>Teacher as someone negative to students</b>	Hot pepper (1)	Enemy of students (1)	7	8.9	7	9.3
	Nitric acid (1)	Our president(1)				
	Homework machine (1)	Shark (1)				
	A movie which got 2 point on IMDB (1)	Traffic police who stops a driver without driver’s license (1)				
	Adolf Hitler (1)	Robot (1)				
	Robot (1)	Gun (1)				
	Ego ball (1)	Tree (1)				

There was not a dominant metaphor in this category. However, there was a difference between male and female participants with regard to how they perceived 'negativity'. Males were mostly concerned with the sudden controls of the instructors when students were not prepared enough for the class with the metaphors of 'shark' or 'traffic police who stops a driver without driver’s license'. On the other hand, female students found negativity in instructors’ way of behaving or lack of joy in class with the metaphors of 'Adolf Hitler' and 'a movie which got 2 point on IMDB'. Therefore, despite of the placement of these metaphors in the same category due to representing the same view, which is 'teacher as someone negative to students' in this context, both genders' point of view differed from one another. Some sample metaphors are provided below with their explanations.

*Nitric acid: Burns you when you come across*

*A movie which got 2 point on IMDB: You never get pleasure of watching but unfortunately you already started.*

*Adolf Hitler: He is always like a dictator. He makes you believe that you are a looser and he is the best.*

*Enemy of students: Some of them don't understand from student' psychology and they behave snidely.*

*Shark: My teacher attacks me when I'm not active in class like sharks attack to smell of blood.*

## Teacher as Someone Hardworking

Students also compared themselves with their language instructors in terms of their study habits and generated a total of 15 metaphors showing that the instructors are quite hardworking and studious. Although there was not a dominant metaphor, male participants created more metaphors in this context.

**Table 6.** Teacher as someone hardworking

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as someone hardworking	Robot (1)	Endoplasmic reticulum (1)	6	7.6	9	12
	Crazy (1)	(1)				
	Computer (1)	Android Marshmallow (1)				
	Student (1)	(1)				
	Computer with never ending battery (1)	Bee (1)				
		Clock (1)				
	Energy ball (1)	Energy drink (1)				
		Ant (1)				
		Friend (1)				
		Old men with white hair(1)				
	Atatürk(1)					

In this category, both male and female participants generated metaphors reflecting their instructors' effort to improve themselves academically (e.g. student, Android Marshmallow, robot) and their energy in the class (e.g. computer with never ending battery, energy drink, ant). The explanations of the metaphors showed that students favored their instructors' strenuousness.

*Computer with never ending battery: He is very energetic and fun. He provides information with the funniest way.*

*Energy ball: He gives us energy in class.*

*Android Marshmallow: They continue upgrading themselves and they never miss an update.*

*Bee: He works hard to make us gain knowledge.*

**Teacher as Nurturer**

This category, which included metaphors defining English language instructors as a nurturer, was the most popular category in general with a total of 40 metaphors. Students viewed instructors as a member of their families (e.g., mum, sister, brother, or an unspecified member of the family), objects protecting them from danger (e.g., sunglasses, barrier on the way), and helpers (e.g., psychologist, friend) (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Teacher as nurturer

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as nurturer	Mum (2)	Koala (1)	26	33.3	14	18.6
	Angel (6)	My sister (3)				
	Someone from my family (2)	Cat (1)				
	Friend (2)	Friend (4)				
	Angel (2)	Ottoman Empire (1)				
	Water (1)	Psychologist (1)				
	My mum (1)	Lane on the way (1)				
	Our family (2)	Computer (1)				
	Brother (1)	Barrier on the way (1)				
	Cotton (1)					
	Daisy (1)					
	Way (1)					
	Hero (1)					
	Pencil (1)					
	Music (1)					
	Sun glasses (1)					

Especially this category was the leading one for female participants. It was the second most popular category for male participants. Although metaphors produced by both genders seem similar in the way they conceptualize their English instructors as a nurturer, females mostly preferred family members, such as ‘mum’ and ‘brother’, or some concepts used in Turkish for their good heart like ‘angel’. Male students focused on the help they received from their instructors in learning English. For this reason, they preferred metaphors which are famous for helping others, such as ‘Psychologist’, ‘Ottoman Empire’, or ‘Friend’. However, in general both genders emphasized their instructors’ motivation to help them in every

aspect and protect them from potential dangers in their life. Some sample metaphors in this category are shown below.

*Angel: He helps me when I have problems.*

*My mum: She is always lovely and always takes care of us. Even when we piss her off, she can stay calm and she gives advice for our future*

*Ottoman Empire: He helps everyone*

*Barrier on the way: He tries to keep us on the right way*

### Teacher as Knower

Apart from the students' belief in instructors' being hardworking, they also considered that the instructors are very knowledgeable not just about their classes but also about the world. Female participants' metaphors considerably outnumbered those of male participants in this category. Metaphors representing the owner of knowledge, such as 'Google', 'encyclopedia', and 'computer' were among the popular metaphors (see Table 8).

**Table 8.** Teacher as knower

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as knower	Phone (1)	Plane tree (1)	12	15.3	3	4
	Computer (2)	'Ekşisözlük' (1)				
	Google (2)	Philosopher (1)				
	Scholar (1)					
	Sea (1)					
	Book (1)					
	Encyclopedia (2)					
	An ardent reader (1)					
	Tureng dictionary (1)					

In this category, male participants were not only concerned with the knowledge of their instructors but also their questioning and interpretations on topics with the students. However, female students emphasized the instructors' knowledge variety and their deep knowledge in many topics. In addition, female participants' metaphors can be linked to their trust in their English instructors as well. Some sample metaphors in this category are below.

*Computer: They are very knowledgeable. I can get any kind of information from them.*

*Sea: He has endless knowledge.*

*Plane tree: He is a big man with his experience which has directly proportional with his brain and body.*

*Encyclopedia: He has an idea about each topic.*

*Google: He knows at least something about everything.*

### Teacher as Culture Transmitter

This was one of the least popular categories for male and female participants with only one metaphor for each gender. While female participants considered their language instructor as ‘booklet for different countries’ as they think that they know different cultures; male participants viewed their instructor as ‘binoculars’ because students think that he brings far and foreign culture closer.

### Teacher as Someone Good-hearted

This category was the second most popular category in general with a total of 37 metaphors from both genders. It was also the most popular category for males. Metaphors and explanations provided with them by the students in this category focused on the positive characteristics of the instructors. Among them, ‘angel’, ‘flower’, and ‘friend’ were the leading metaphors (see Table 9).

**Table 9.** Teacher as someone good-hearted

Role Category	Teacher metaphors		Female		Male	
	Female	Male	f	%	f	%
Teacher as someone good-hearted	Angel (6)	Flower(12)	15	19.2	22	29.3
	Flower (2)	Friend (7)				
	A real teacher (1)	Water(2)				
	Water (3)	Pollyanna(1)				
	Teddy bear (1)					
	Cotton (1)					
	Daisy (1)					

Students’ positive relationship with their English instructors was reflected in this category with several metaphors. How instructors behaved



in and out of classes affected students' metaphor choice in this category. The instructors' positive mood, smiling face, and supporting nature as well as their physical appearance were among the factors for students to generate these metaphors. In terms of gender difference, despite male participants used more metaphors compared to females, 'friend' and 'flower' metaphors constituted more than 85% of the metaphors produced by male participants in this category. Especially with the 'friend' metaphor, male students emphasized their close relationship and how they get along well with their instructors. On the other hand, the diversity of metaphors produced by female students was greater. The emphasis on good-heartedness with especially the metaphor of 'angel' and others was remarkable in this category. Some examples from students' metaphors are provided below.

*Angel: She never says a bad word and never humiliates someone.*

*Cotton: She is delicate, soft-hearted and sweet.*

*Flower: She is always smiling and sweet-talker.*

Moreover, despite similar number of metaphors generated by male and female participants for the categories of 'teacher as someone unpredictable', 'teacher as someone negative to students', and 'teacher as culture transmitter', there could also be significant differences between the views of male and female participants. Although language instructors were mostly considered as someone good-hearted, as nurturer, and as provider of knowledge for male participants; female participants emphasized the nurturer side of instructors. Teachers' good heartedness was also commonly reflected by female participants. However, compared to male participants' views of teachers as provider of knowledge, female participants mostly viewed their language teachers as knower.

## **DISCUSSION**

As the findings of this study show, the metaphors produced by the students regarding their English instructors were mostly positive despite of some negative views. Initially, for the first research question; the metaphors generated by the students towards English language instructors were similar to other studies conducted in Turkey and abroad (Inceçay, 2015; Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014; Kesen, 2010; Nikinita & Furuoka, 2008; Hasim et al., 2013; Kamberi, 2014; Sayar, 2014). Based on the findings of this study, university students at language preparatory class conceptualized the language instructors mainly as a 'guide', 'provider of knowledge', 'hardworking',

'nurturer', 'knower', and as 'someone good-hearted'. On the other hand, the students also had negative conceptualizations about their instructors as 'teacher as someone unpredictable' and 'teacher as someone negative to students'. In this respect, it seems clear that the students generated more positive metaphors than the negative ones.

Among the popular categories, 'teacher as someone good-hearted' and 'teacher as nurturer' draw attention due to high number of metaphors. The main reason why students generated more metaphors in these categories may be derived from students' explanations that they considered their instructors as someone from their family who helps and supports them anytime they need and the way they established relationship with the students through their smiling face, positive mood, and helpful nature. Moreover, instructors' impressive knowledge both in English and other topics, guidance, keeping students away from harm, and academic progress were among the other reasons for students to use positive metaphors for their English instructors. On the other hand, the negative metaphors were grouped under the categories of 'teacher as someone unpredictable' and 'teacher as someone negative to students'. The majority of the negative metaphors were created due to students' unpreparedness and unwillingness to attend and take active part in their English classes. However, there were also metaphors directly explaining instructors' negative characteristics as well. It was obvious from the explanations that instructors' effort to make students active in class and to make them study at home harder disappointed the students.

When the existing research conducted with the same purpose in mind - an investigation of metaphors generated by university students within the context of language learning process and instructors-is examined, both supporting and contradicting results could be found. In one of them, Demirtaş and Çoban (2014) found that students generated more negative metaphors which contradicts with the findings of the current study. In their study, Demirtaş and Çoban (2014) asserted that the reason why students generated more negative metaphors than the positive ones could be caused by the lack of communication and interaction between the sides. İnceçay (2015), however, also found similar findings with this study in that students' conceptualizing the instructors positively might indicate a closer interaction and communication between the instructors and students.

Teachers being visualized as 'guide', 'provider of knowledge', 'hardworking', 'nurturer', 'knower', and as 'someone good-hearted' were supported by various studies (Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014; Kesen, 2010; Nikinita & Furuoka, 2008; Hasim et al.,2013; Kamberi, 2014;Sayar, 2014).

Demirtaş and Çoban (2014) found a similar finding in their study in that among the positive conceptualizations of the teachers, students regarded them as ‘guides’ which was also found in this study. Similarly, Kesen (2010) had also found that students generated the metaphor of ‘guide’ as we found in this study. It is true that not only students but also the teachers themselves view their roles as the provider of knowledge or knower as the source of knowledge. Again, Kesen (2010) in her study found that teachers relate themselves with production and growth as well as having the duty of transmitting knowledge. Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) had similar findings in their study which support the findings of this study in many ways. Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) found that students conceptualized teachers as ‘guides’, ‘encyclopedia’ as the provider of knowledge, walking dictionary as ‘knower’, which are also found in this study. Hasim et al. (2013) found that students regarded teachers as someone from their family, namely as a family member. The finding of ‘teacher as a nurturer’ was also supported by the findings of the study conducted by Hasim et al. (2013). On the other hand, in terms of negative metaphors, the students as the participants of this study viewed teachers as someone unpredictable and as someone negative to students and similar findings were also found in the study conducted by Demirtaş and Çoban (2014). The results of another study conducted in Turkish context were also in line with the findings of the present study both in positive and negative metaphors (Sayar, 2014). In her study, while the most popular positive categories developed as a result of students’ metaphors for their English instructors were ‘teacher as nurturer’, ‘teacher as knowledge provider’, and ‘teacher as guide’; the most popular negative ones were ‘teacher as mystery’ and ‘teacher as neophyte’. Therefore, it might be claimed that Turkish EFL students are inclined to conceptualize their English instructors as a knowledgeable someone guiding and taking care of them in the process of learning English. However, at the same time they complain about teachers’ lack of expertise and their unplanned or unexpected actions in language classes.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study indicate that in spite of having generated positive metaphors about their instructors, the participants of this study also had a traditional standpoint related to teacher roles as the categories of ‘provider of knowledge’ or ‘teacher as knower’ attributing them traditional roles rather than the roles of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as ‘teacher as guide’ which received less number of metaphors created by the participants.

The second research question of this study sought answer to whether metaphors generated were gender based or not. Among the themes found as

a result of the analysis of the data gathered, female students outnumbered male students in metaphors ‘teacher as a guide’, ‘teacher as a nurturer’, and ‘teacher as knower’ while male students outnumbered female students in conceptualizing teachers as ‘provider of knowledge’, ‘teacher as someone hardworking’, and ‘someone good-hearted’.

When the total number of metaphors produced by both genders is investigated, there is almost no difference. However, remarkable difference can be seen in the categories ‘teacher as provider of knowledge’, ‘teacher as nurturer’, ‘teacher as knower’, and ‘teacher as someone good-hearted’. Among them, male students focused on the role of knowledge provider for their instructors which might show their previous language learning experiences with the dominance of teachers’ grammatical explanations. They mostly considered their instructors as the only source of knowledge rather than the person to communicate. It is also obvious that from male students’ perspective teaching is a process of delivering knowledge and learners’ role is to absorb the teachers’ knowledge (Saban et al., 2007). Male students also generated more metaphors compared to females in the category of ‘teacher as someone good-hearted’. However, in this category both male and female participants’ perspectives were the same. They were affected from the close relationships instructors established.

Female participants, on the other hand, favored their instructors’ nurturer and knower sides. Therefore, it might be claimed for the female learners that they consider their English language instructors not only as the owner of knowledge but also as the person who satisfies them emotionally by giving the feeling of security and comfort with the nurturer role. Female participants’ emotional sensitivity compared to males may be the factor in this aspect. In addition, they mostly preferred family members, such as ‘mum’ and ‘brother’ which might also reflect their emotional needs. Moreover, instructors’ knowledge in English and other topics helps especially female students develop trust toward the instructors.

At the same time, in negative metaphors generated, female and male students were equal, which shows that both male and female students generated equal number of metaphors which was also supported by the study conducted by Nikita and Furuoka (2008). Almost 10% of both male and female participants’ metaphors indicated instructors’ negative behaviors. Their unpredictability was also a concern for both genders.

## **CONCLUSION and IMPLICATIONS**

The main goal of this study was to investigate the metaphorical conceptualizations of preparatory class Turkish EFL students at a state university regarding their English language instructors. In general, the instructors were considered as ‘nurturer’ and as ‘someone good-hearted’. While only few students viewed their English instructors as a culture transmitter, the roles of knowledge provider, knower, and teacher as someone hardworking were almost equally emphasized. Some negative expressions were also produced by the students especially in terms of instructors’ unpredictability.

Concerning gender difference, while both genders agreed on their instructors’ role as ‘someone good-hearted’, and ‘nurturer’, they had different views regarding two categories, ‘provider of knowledge’ and ‘teacher as knower’. Male students had a more traditional perspective by defining their English instructors’ role as ‘provider of knowledge’ whereas female students preferred to use more metaphors emphasizing their extensive knowledge both in English and other topics.

In line with the findings of this study, it can be concluded that metaphor analysis is a precious and inspiring way for students to express their views about their English instructors. One of the implications drawn from the results of this study is that it provides an overall view of the students regarding their instructors which may be a good source for the instructors to reflect on their way of teaching. The metaphors students produced include the expressions that students may not express so overtly otherwise. Therefore, it may be employed in settings like the one in this study where students spend almost a whole academic year with a teacher and where it may be hard to express their exact underlying views concerning their instructors. Hence, investigating students’ views through metaphors and metaphorical analysis may be an effective educational tool in this respect.

Moreover, as a reaction to what has mentioned above, instructors should take the students’ views into consideration and act to meet their needs and expectations to develop their learning. In this way instructors find the chance to reflect on their way of teaching and their relationships with the students by considering students’ views.

In addition, instructors’ positive mood and attitude toward the students, smiling face, intellectual accumulation of knowledge both in the field of English language teaching and other global issues, caring and helpful

nature, and their academic progression may contribute to the positive views of students about their instructors. Students' positive views may eventually establish trust between the students and the instructors, which has a significant impact on students' success. On the other hand, instructors' unpredictable behaviors as well as some behaviors toward students due to ego satisfaction from the perspective of students lead to outbreak of negative feelings. Therefore, instructors' increased awareness of the positive and negative factors that trigger different views may be crucial for a better classroom atmosphere.

There are some limitations to this study, such as the sample size and lack of random sampling. In addition, the only demographic information taken into account in the analysis in this study was participants' gender. Also, all the participants were from the same university. Moreover, some of the metaphors generated by the students were eliminated during the analysis process which could have been categorized under some conceptual themes if there had been a chance to further investigate their explanations for that specific metaphor. This limitation warrants a further study in the same context which could involve personal interviews to deeply investigate metaphorical conceptualizations of the participants. Future research may also take into consideration the effect of instructors' gender and students' academic program as the factors that may have an impact on the metaphors students produce. Moreover, the metaphors concerning English preparatory class students' ideal instructors may also be investigated in future research.

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