



## Classroom Teacher Candidates' Metaphoric Perceptions of the Concept of Communication

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### Öz

Communication is one of the leading skills expected from a successful teacher. The communication established within the school contribute to both professional and personal development of teachers. As the concept of communication is so important nowadays, "Effective Communication" course is offered in undergraduate programs in order to bring primary school teacher candidates in effective communication skills. The purpose of this study is to reveal the metaphors (mental images) used by primary school teacher candidates regarding communication. The research was carried out with 66 3rd and 4th year primary school teacher candidates. The participants were pre-service teachers who enrolled in the Effective Communication course in the Fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. In order to collect the data, an open-ended questionnaire form was prepared to reveal the opinions of the pre-service teachers regarding the concept of communication. In the questionnaire form, pre-service teachers were asked to complete blank spaces in the sentence, "Effective communication ..... like this; because.....". The following research questions were sought to answer: "Which metaphors do teacher candidates use to explain the concept of communication?" and "Under which categories can the metaphors used by the teacher candidates be grouped based on their common features?". The opinions of the teacher candidates on the concept of the curriculum were analyzed via content analysis. The analysis and interpretation process was carried out by taking into account the naming stage, the screening and refining stage, the compilation and categorization stage, and the validity and reliability stage. The result shows that teacher candidates give importance to the concept of communication and see this concept as vital. Because, according to the responses of the participants, the concept of communication is mostly compared to water, oxygen and shopping.

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## Introduction

The concept of communication can be considered as an action in which sound (language), text, visual or non-verbal tools are used. It is believed that good communication occurs when different communicative tools work together and harmoniously (Çalışkan & Yeşil, 2005). However, different techniques can be used to communicate. These techniques can either be direct communication skills or indirect communication skills. In direct communication, while the person expresses himself/herself by writing, verbally and practicing; in indirect communication, expressions such as body language, gestures, facial expressions and emphasis are used.

There is a close relationship between the communication we establish in daily life and the language. Language has the feature of being an easy and effective way that people have used for centuries while conveying their feelings and thoughts (Yıldız & Yavuz, 2012). There is an inseparable relationship between language and thinking. Language is limited to words belonging to the language in which a society speaks the worldview while determining the minds and imaginations of the speakers (Kaplan, 2002).

While defining a successful teacher, it is stated that they are defined as the people who can use their communication skills effectively and correctly (Çiftçi & Taşkaya, 2010). In addition to this, developing effective and correct communication skills is important for teachers' personal and professional development. As a result, teachers need to have advanced communication skills to be successful in their profession (Ihmeideh et al. 2010). At this point, many of the teacher candidates currently studying in education faculties will be interested in educational activities throughout their lives, so they must already have effective communication skills. In this context, metaphors that will improve the positive communication and education of teacher candidates will also increase their impact on their students.

It is seen that metaphors are used in education, communication and language. For example, metaphors in education are also a preferred tool for explaining complex concepts. It is also used in language and communication metaphors to explain skills such as understanding, speaking, listening and writing. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the metaphors about teacher candidates generally focus on the teaching profession, school, student and class concept, and classroom management (Saban, 2004; Ocak and Gündüz, 2006; Cerit, 2008; Semerci, 2007; Yıldırım et al., 2009; Aydın and Pehlivan, 2010; Altun and Apaydın, 2013).

Until 1980, the concept of metaphor was accepted as an art of speech and it has been involved in literary works. The concept of metaphor has become the center of many field studies with the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor put forward on this date (Alparslan, 2007). Although it comes from French as a term, in the Turkish Language Association Dictionary; "Metaphor" means "the word used in a different meaning rather than its real meaning as a result of a connection or drawing an analogy" ([www.tdk.gov.tr](http://www.tdk.gov.tr)). At this point, it can be said that the transfer of meaning from one object to another, which is perceptual similarity for metaphors, is not enough to describe a real phenomenon. It can be said that it would be more appropriate to understand and experience the object to be explained from other points (Semerci, 2007). In its shortest definition, metaphor is describing a term with another term (Marshall, 2010).

On the other hand, being an individual who thinks metaphorically means being a constructivist learner. As a result, it provides a desired connection from the known to the unknown (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Besides, metaphors can help to create and restructure images in individuals with limited vocabulary and to make sense of those who are in educational practices (Çelikten, 2006). Sometimes metaphors can also be an important means of communication when the words in the limited vocabulary are not enough or where the expression needs to be strengthened. Metaphors enable the individual's mind to change from one form of comprehension to another form of understanding, allowing that individual to see a certain concept as another phenomenon (Döş, 2010).

Metaphors are about our minds and are often expressed verbally but can also be described in different ways from time to time. For example; It can be formed by talking, with gesture and facial expressions, emphasis, intonation, and even in graphical structures (Saban, 2004; Müller & Cienki,

2009). Metaphors are one of the basic tools developed by human beings to understand their inner world, express themselves correctly and communicate (Deant-Reed and Szokolszky, 1993). People also use metaphors to express the positive and negative expressions they use when communicating with each other. From this point of view, people often use metaphors to express themselves in their daily lives and to understand the individuals (Zanotto et al., 2008).

This research can also help to determine how students who study at the faculty of education develop and interpret the concept of communication throughout their undergraduate education and understand the concept of communication. Another aim of this research is to determine how senior students (teacher candidates) who attend a public university conceptualize their thoughts about communication with the help of metaphors. By identifying the metaphors that teacher candidates develop about communication, their approach to the concept of communication will be determined. In this research, the following questions were asked to be answered:

- With which metaphors do the teacher candidates explain the concept of communication?
- Under which categories are the metaphors collected by teacher candidates in terms of their common characteristics?

## Methods

In this study, the phenomenological method, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Phenomenological method (phenomenology) focuses on the cases that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.78). People encounter many events, problems and / or experiences throughout their lives, and the phenomenological method is a method used to determine the level of awareness of people about these situations.

### Study Group

The study group of the research consists of the primary school teacher candidates studying at a public university in the spring semester of the 2017-2018 academic years. The study group was formed by using convenience sampling method and criterion sampling method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). It consists of 59 teacher candidates (19 of male and 40 female). The distribution of the study group by gender is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage distribution of participants by gender

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	19	32,2
Female	40	67,8
Total	59	100

### Data Collection Instrument

Within the study, only the information of the volunteer teacher candidates was consulted. An open-ended question form was used to determine the metaphorical perceptions of the primary school teacher candidates at the end of the Effective Communication course. This course aims to inform students about the communication and communication process, to enable students to use this information effectively in daily life and professional life. To reveal the metaphorical perceptions of the primary school teacher candidates participating in the research about the concept of “communication”, each participant was asked to complete the relevant gaps by giving some expressions like: “Communication is like ..... because.....”. The teacher candidates were given 15 minutes to create metaphors and the metaphors that they developed with their handwriting were collected. The answers given by teacher candidates are the main data source of the study.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed with content analysis method. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The basic process in content analysis is to gather data similar to each other within the

framework of certain concepts and themes and to organize and interpret them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 259). The developed metaphors were analyzed in four stages. These stages are (1) coding data, (2) finding themes, (3) editing codes and themes, and (4) interpreting findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

63 teacher candidates who took the course "Effective Communication" were asked to fill the open-ended form. Metaphors developed by students, but whose rationale has not been written, have not been evaluated. Only 59 of these were evaluated and 4 forms were excluded. These documents were excluded from the evaluation because they were not qualified to explain the concept of communication. Three of the excluded documents were empty, and one expressed the concept of communication only with an adjective.

At the stage of determining the basic codes, two researchers worked independently at first and then they met and discussed until the consensus was reached on the codes. After the consensus was achieved, an expert was interviewed to ensure the reliability of the study, and the researchers and the expert reached a consensus.

### Findings

Themes consisting of the answers given by teacher candidates about the concept of communication are: "Communication is vital", "Communication is the effort to establish meaning and relationship and sharing", "Communication has elements" and "Communication has different aspects". In line with the results, the metaphors of the theme "Communication is vital" are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** "The metaphors of the theme "Communication is vital"

Reasons	Frequency (f)	Metaphor
-We can't live without water.	6	
- If we don't drink water, our body needs water after a while.	1	
- Water is one of the basic needs.	2	Water
- We cannot live without oxygen.	6	Oxygen
- To continue living, we need food as well as communication	3	Food
- We can neither understand nor speak without the brain.	2	Brain
- -Every organ in our body receives a message from the brain and does what is desired.		
-A match cannot be without ball, life cannot be without communication.	1	Soccer ball
-Soil is the basis of life just like communication.	1	Soil
Total	22	

As seen in Table 2, 22 of the 59 metaphors are under the theme of "Communication is vital". Nine water metaphors, six oxygen metaphors, three food metaphors, two brain metaphors, one soccer ball and one soil metaphor were used in this category. All the metaphors include cases used in positive meanings. The main point of the 22 metaphors is that the concept of communication is seen as an indispensable element of life and that life cannot be continued without communication.

The table showing the metaphors and frequency status of the second theme "Communication is the effort to establish meaning and relationship and sharing" are given below.

**Table 3.** The metaphors of the theme "Communication is the effort to establish meaning and relationship and sharing"

Reasons	Frequency(f)	Metaphors
- Both are made mutually,	3	Shopping
- It is an effort to establish mutual meaning,	2	
- There are also two people and assistants in shopping.	1	
- Both connect mutual situations.	3	Bridge
- Vein also helps organs to connect.	2	
- My cat is the one who understands me best in this life.	1	Cat
-The spring water shares its water with those who come to it.	1	Spring Water
-Elements exchange elements to coexist.	1	Chemical Bond
-When a person looks at nature, he/she feels something and tries to understand.	1	Nature
- There is also mutual sharing when sending files.	1	Sending document in Computer
- There is mutual sharing in both cases.	1	Heat Transfer
- We give water to the tree, and in return, it gives us oxygen.	1	Tree
-The safelight also illuminates us to understand and be understood.	1	Safelight
Total	19	

As can be seen in Table 3, 19 of the 59 metaphors are under the theme of "Communication is the effort to establish meaning and relationship and sharing". Six of the responses include shopping metaphor, three of them include bridge metaphor, two of them include vein metaphor and each of these items are belong to one metaphor: cat, spring water, chemical bond, nature, sending document on computer, heat transfer, tree and safelight. All the metaphors include cases used in positive meanings. The main point of these 19 metaphors is that the concept of communication should be mutual, communication is sharing and a process of establishing a relationship and meaning.

The metaphors written about the third theme, "Communication Has Elements" and the table showing the frequency status are given below.

**Table 4.** The metaphors of the theme "Communication Has Elements"

Reasons	Frequency(f)	Metaphor
-There are many colors in the rainbow. Communication also has many elements.	1	Rainbow
-The family also has elements such as mother, father and child.	1	Family
-The person who sends the gift is shipper, the person who receives it is addressee, the cargo is the distributor (connector), being happy is feedback.	1	A gift is sent by cargo
-There are electricity, water and natural gas pipes in the infrastructure. In communication, these pipes are receiver, sender and message.	1	City infrastructure
-The sender is the airport, the receiver is the airport to be visited, the source is the plane, the message is the passenger, the feedback is the return route.	1	Plane
-Different elements on the traffic signs express different meanings.	1	Traffic Signs
-Class also has many elements.	1	Class
Total	7	

As seen in Table 4, 7 of the 59 metaphors evaluated are under the theme of "Communication Has Elements". In the responses of the theme, rainbow, family, gift sent by cargo, city infrastructure, plane, traffic signs and class metaphors were used. The main point of the 7 metaphors is the view that the prominent point in the concept of communication has sub-elements of communication.

The metaphors of the last theme, "Communication has different aspects" and the frequency status is given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The metaphors of the theme "Communication has different aspects"

Reasons	Frequency (f)	Metaphor
--It's like human talk.	2	Sounds of birds
-You can interact with people in every way (audio, written, visual) thanks to social networks.	2	Social networks
-It interacts with all aspects, both verbal and non-verbal.	1	Google
-If you push too hard, the balance is broken as in communication.	1	Mechanical pencil
-You'll be happy if you succeed both.	1	Oscar awarded director
-It is infinite like the sky.	1	Sky
--The tree grows stronger as it takes root in the ground.	1	Tree
-The more properly a child grows, the healthier it will be. Communication is the same, the better communication is established, the healthier it progresses.	1	Child
-There is an obligation to be a part of the nation and to socialize.	1	Nation
Total	11	Total

As seen in Table 5, 11 of the 59 metaphors are under the theme of "Communication has different aspects ". In the responses of the theme, there were two bird sounds and two social network metaphors. There were also metaphors like Google, mechanical pencil, Oscar awarded director, sky, tree, child and nation metaphor. Each of them represents one metaphor. All the metaphors include cases used in positive meanings. Although 11 metaphors do not have a single main point, they expressed opinions on different aspects of the concept of communication.

### Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The main purpose of this research is to reveal the perceptions of the students of Education Faculty, who are about to begin their teaching profession, about the concept of communication through metaphors. In this study, which aims to determine teacher candidates' perspectives on the concept of communication, it was determined that 59 metaphors were created.

Based on the metaphors created by the teacher candidates regarding the concept of communication, 4 themes were created. These themes are "Communication is vital", "Communication is the effort to establish meaning and relationship and sharing", "Communication has elements" and "Communication has different aspects". The most important metaphors that emerged in the study; "Water (9)", "Oxygen (6)", "Shopping (6)", "Food (3)" and "Bridge (3)".

It has been observed that the metaphor studies on the phenomenon of communication in the national literature are quite limited. However, in the study of Yılmaztekin (2015), English teacher candidates used the word "Communication" in 15 different meanings. The main finding that emerged in this different finding meaning study is that effective communication is vital and it is primarily important for teachers.

As a result of our study with similar results, teacher candidates expressed vital and primarily important elements in their metaphors instead of communication. Another similar study in the literature was carried out by Aydemir and Tekin (2018). According to the results of the analysis of the metaphor study applied to the subjects, the communication phenomenon to be created between the teacher-student-parent is vital and this trio needs to work and communicate like a team.

In another metaphor study conducted by Akgül (2017) on individuals of different age groups of society, individuals over the age of 65 compared the phenomenon of communication mostly to "water" and "oxygen".



As a result, in this research, it was seen that the primary school teacher candidates explained the concept of communication not only with positive metaphors but also associated the concept of communication with the things that were non-living but vital for human beings. According to this result, it can be said that teacher candidates give importance to the concept of communication and see this concept as vital. Because, according to the responses of the participants, the concept of communication is mostly compared to water, oxygen and shopping.

In the context of these results obtained from the research, the following suggestions can be made:

- Metaphors of the concept of communication can be determined by different student groups or individuals, and more contributions can be made to the literature.
- Metaphors of the concept of “communication”, which is of high importance for teachers, can be determined with the teachers currently working.
- Studies can be carried out for the ministry, national education directorates and school administrators to pay more attention to the concept of “communication”, which is of high importance for teachers.
- Metaphor studies can be conducted for teacher candidates or teachers who are currently working, including effective speech, body language, etc., which are the sub-branches of communication.

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