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Metaphorical Perceptions of Preservice Social Studies Teachers About the Communication Skills

Arcan AYDEMİR¹, Turhan ÇETİN²

¹Artvin Çoruh University, Faculty of Education, Artvin, Turkey 0000-0001-8110-954X

²Gazi University, Faculty of Education, Ankara, Turkey 0000-0002-2229-5255

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the perceptions of preservice social studies teachers about communication; metaphors were employed to determine communication skill perceptions. In the study, a qualitative research method known as phenomenology design was employed. The study group included 127 preservice social studies teachers in various classes. In the study, metaphoric perceptions form was used to collect the data. The collected data were analysed with content analysis. The study findings demonstrated that preservice social studies teachers produced 36 valid metaphors in 7 different conceptual categories (a requirement, a nonverbal code system, a mutual process, a positive connotation, a unifying element, a dynamic phenomenon, communication as a method to reflect ideas). The total metaphor count and metaphor frequencies revealed that the highest number of metaphors was produced in the communications as a requirement category. The most repeated metaphor in this category was the requirement of water to sustain life. In this category, concepts such as blood, breathing, and oxygen, which are important for human life, were expressed as metaphors that represented communication skills.

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Keywords:

Communication, communication skills, metaphor, social studies.

1. Introduction

It could be suggested that the concept of communication is as old as the history of humankind. Individuals have been communicating with each other in one form or another since their existence. Various signs and sounds are among the first known forms of primitive communication. The first formal and distant forms of communication included the drawings on cave walls and stones. Later, around 4000 BC, written and verbal communication developed with the introduction of languages. The concept of 'information society' became prominent in the 20th century, especially due to rapid advances in communication technologies (Aziz, 2016). Individuals who possess knowledge could transfer this knowledge to their daily lives (Akbaba & Aksoy, 2019).

Communication refers to a process rather than a phenomenon with a beginning and an end. The party that initiates the communication process is the source that sends the message to the recipient (Işık, 2018). Signs that focus on the aim are required for communication to occur (Argyle, 1988). Their communication achievements distinguish humankind from other living beings, and they owe their superiority to that fact. Communication is an important tool for individuals to expand their social environment. Individuals must communicate with their environment, and this obligation led to individuals continuously sending messages to people around them (Orta, 2009; Aziz & Dicle, 2017).

Interpersonal communication is based on interaction. Interaction occurs when a message is sent in a one-on-one feedback loop (Castells, 2009). Interpersonal communications constitute social life, and communication is

¹ Corresponding author's address: Artvin Çoruh University, Faculty of Education, Department of Social Studies Education, Turkey
e-mail: arcan.aydemir@hotmail.com

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a significant requirement in social development (Bolat, 1996). The social communication phenomenon includes mass media and mass media tools (Yılmaz, 2003). Today, the concept of communication has different definitions in different professions, disciplines, and fields of study. Communication emerged to unite the human mind and abilities to meet human needs (Orta, 2009).

Communication processes include various elements that are expressed with different names. For example, Işık (2019) reported that the communication process includes six basic elements. These basic elements are; source, code, channel, message, target audience, and feedback. The source transmits the message to the receiver (target audience) using codes and various channels in basic communication processes. Following the response of the target audience, the source becomes the receiver. Bolat (1996), on the other hand, described the basic elements of communication as a simple communication model in 4 elements: sender, message, receiver, and channel. The communication model is presented in Figure 1 below.

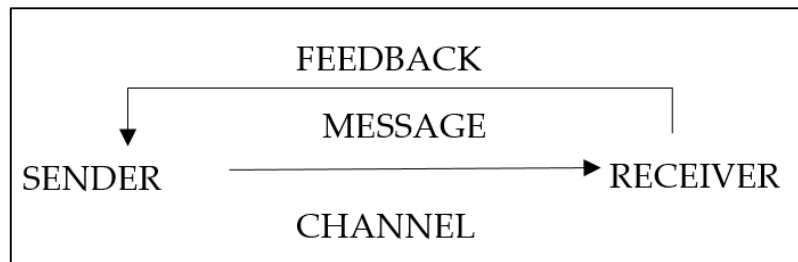


Figure 1. *The Basic Communication Model*

Education and instruction activities conducted in schools are communication activities. Communications among the instructor and the student and the administrator and other staff have an important effect on conducting adequate and healthy activities. Therefore, communication barriers should be determined and eliminated to establish healthy communications in a school environment (Bolat, 1996).

Although an individual is susceptible to communication when born, communication skills do not emerge or develop automatically. Human interaction with the environment and a healthy communication environment affect the development of communication skills (Deniz, 2003). School is one of the places where people interact with those around them, making classroom or in-school learning a type of communication. Therefore, communication with students is essential, especially for educational activities to achieve their goals. In communication with students, many issues should be considered (Açıklalın & Turan, 2020):

- It should not be forgotten that each student has a unique world.
- The teacher should pay attention to their personal behaviour and attitudes.
- Criteria such as eye contact, facial expression, and tone of voice should be considered.
- Students should be encouraged, listened to, and understood.
- All kinds of fears and concerns should be eliminated.

Teacher competencies are important in paying attention to these issues in communication with students. It can be said that the content, acquisition, and objectives of teacher training programs effectively acquire these competencies. Communication, which is required in the vast majority of educational processes, has also been included as a skill in curricula in different educational areas. One of these fields is social studies.

Since social studies have an interdisciplinary approach, it is a discipline that enables to look at a subject from a different perspective (Çetin, Kılcan, Güneş, & Çepni, 2015). In this sense, it aims to gain some skills in the target group. One of the skills instructed in social studies is communication skills. Communication as a skill is based on goals, skills, achievements, and activities in the social studies curriculum (MoNE [Ministry of National Education], 2005; MoNE, 2018). Thus, the aim was to acquire basic communication skills from the target audience and conscious utilisation of the communication technologies (Kılıçoğlu, 2019). Social studies and preservice teachers should develop communication skills. Especially preservice social studies teachers should comprehensively perceive the communication skills content.

Metaphor means “transfer” and “transport”. The term metaphor includes literary concepts such as analogy and simile (Pollard, 2003). Metaphors are commonly used in language, thoughts, and behaviours in daily life

(Lakoff & Johnson, 2010). Metaphors could be used to express a single idea or long-term experiences. Metaphors provide rich imagery about the described content. Metaphors store valuable information and allow the information to become non-mediocre and original (Tompkins & Lawley, 2002). Metaphors can be used to understand and discover abstract, theoretical or new phenomena (Yob, 2003). They reflect incomplete or implied messages rather than communicating a message clearly (Tsai, Lo, & Tseng, 2017). Metaphors could sometimes lead to expressions that could be considered inaccurate (Caspi, 2018). Thus, it is important to examine the rationale behind the metaphors in detail.

Metaphors are frequently used in various fields, as well as the different areas in education. Metaphors play a role in developing models and theories tackled in various educational institutions such as schools and colleges (Botha, 2009). Therefore, models and theories can be shaped by examining the perceptions of various target audiences towards the concepts, skills, and values used in educational processes through the metaphors they produce. Metaphor studies conducted on concepts such as social sciences, such as history (Candan & Öztas, 2017; Er Tuna & Mazman-Budak, 2013; Kantekin, 2018), geography (Aydın, 2010; Çepni, 2013; Durmuş & Baş, 2016; Gökçe, 2016; Kantekin, 2018; Öztürk, 2007; Şahin & Kaya, 2016), social studies/course/teacher (Akça Berk, Gültekin, & Çençen, 2015; Akhan, Kılıçoğlu, & Gedik, 2014; Beldağ & Geçit, 2016; Çelikkaya & Yakar, 2015; Güven & Güven, 2009; Kantekin, 2018; Kuru & Pınaz, 2020) and some values (Aktepe, Uzunöz, & Sarıçam, 2020; Çelikkaya & Seyhan, 2017; Demirkaya & Çal, 2018; Gömleksiz, Kan, & Öner, 2012; İnel, Urhan, & Ünal, 2018; Kılcan & Akbaba, 2013; Kılcan & Akbaba, 2014; Seyhan, 2020; Ulu Kalm & Koçoğlu, 2017; Uzunöz, Aktepe, & Özağaçanlı, 2020) within the scope of social studies are important in terms of revealing how the nature of social studies is perceived by different target groups. Additionally, determining the perceptions about the skills in social studies through metaphors will also contribute to the evaluation of social studies in terms of skills.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that metaphorical perception studies (Ablak & Aksoy, 2018; Uymaz & Çalışkan, 2018; Seyhan, 2014) on the 2005 & 2018 social studies curriculum skills (MoNE, 2005; MoNE, 2018), and studies (Kaya, Çiftçi, & Gökdemir, 2019; Uygun & Arıkan, 2019; Uygun & Arıbaş, 2020) focusing on the communication skills of preservice social studies teachers, use data collection tools such as scale and inventory. Furthermore, there are studies in the literature that examine the perceptions of preservice teachers (Epeçan, 2016), university students (Koç Akran, Acidemir, & Uludağ, 2018), and preservice classroom teachers (Semerciöglü & Akçay, 2020) towards communication through metaphors. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature, especially in terms of focusing on preservice social studies teachers' metaphors towards communication.

The fact that communication is a skill that the target audience should acquire in the social studies curriculums (2005 and 2018) and that communication is one of the important competencies of the teaching profession made it necessary to reveal how preservice social studies teachers perceive this skill. The results from such studies are important in guiding different course contents or process designs regarding how to teach preservice teachers communication skills.

The study's main purpose is to determine the perceptions of preservice social studies teachers for communication skills through the metaphors they produce. In line with this main purpose, the following questions were sought:

- What are the metaphors produced by preservice social studies teachers on communication skills?
- In which conceptual categories could the metaphors produced by preservice social studies teachers on communication skills could be grouped?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

In the present qualitative study, the phenomenology design was employed. Phenomenology focuses on uncovering possible meanings of situations and experiences (Annells, 2006). Communication is an important experience for people; thus, the perceptions of preservice social studies teachers on communication skills were investigated in depth based on metaphors.

2.2. Research Sample

The research sample was determined using the easily accessible sampling method, one of the non-probabilistic sampling methods. In easily accessible sampling, the researcher includes sampling that can be easily reached due to lack of time or opportunity (Özdemir, Şahin Tekin, & Esin, 2019). This sampling method was used due to the Covid-19 outbreak in Turkey. The study group included 127 preservice teachers attending Artvin Çoruh University, Faculty of Education, Department of Social Studies Instruction during the 2019-2020 academic year. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Research Sample

	Grade				Total	
	1 st Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%
Female	21	28	14	23	86	67.7
Male	8	10	9	14	41	32.3
Total	29	38	23	37	127	100

The study group included 127 volunteering first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior preservice social studies teachers, out of which 86 were female (67.7%) and 41 were male (32.3%).

2.3. Data Collection Tool

Before the data collection tool was developed, the literature (Epçaçan, 2016; Güven & Güven, 2009; Koç Akran, Acidemir, & Uludağ, 2018; Saban, 2004; Saban, 2008) was examined. The study data were collected with the "Metaphoric Communication Perceptions Form". The form included questions that aimed to determine student demographics such as gender and seniority and a fill in the blanks question: "Communication is like, because" . Furthermore, producing metaphors was explained with an example for the participants who may not know the concept of metaphor. The data collected with the data collection tool was the primary data source in the present study.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analysed, in detail, with content analysis based on the metaphor categories and the rationale behind them, as identified by the participants. The analysis was conducted in 5 steps (Saban, 2008; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

2.4.1. Denomination

Metaphors obtained from the participants were listed, and the frequency of the reoccurring metaphors was determined. The metaphors and their rationale were analysed in detail, and their correlations with communication skills were determined.

2.4.2. Elimination-Refinement

The analysis of the metaphors produced by preservice social studies teachers revealed that not all metaphors were associated with communication skills. Thus, all metaphors and justifications were analysed and classified based on the following criteria:

- The correlation between the source and topic of the metaphor,
- The solid rationale behind the metaphor,
- Production of poor metaphors (explaining a metaphor with reasons that could be considered in several categories).

Thus, the data sources that did not produce metaphors about communication skills but included explanations ("If there is no communication, the world has no meaning", "It allows us to convey our feelings and ideas", "It is the best way of expressing one's self", "Life without communication could not exist") were excluded.

A total of 26 data sources that did not include metaphors or included unrelated metaphors were excluded from the analysis. Thus, 36 valid metaphors were obtained from a total of 101 data sources. The data sources were coded as shown in Figure 2 below.

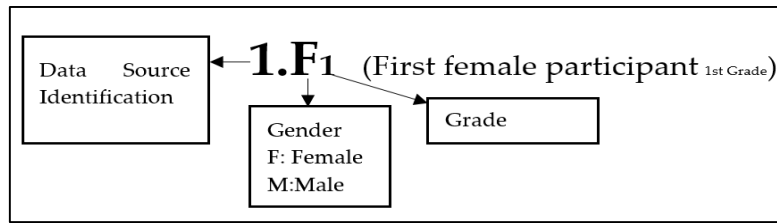


Figure 2. Data Source Coding

2.4.3. Categorisation

Metaphors and their justifications in valid data sources were analysed in detail. Certain conceptual categories were developed by grouping valid metaphors with similar concepts.

2.4.4. Validity and Reliability

Expert (social studies educator and language specialist) opinions were obtained to ensure the reliability of the study. The 36 metaphors and 7 conceptual categories developed by the authors were presented to the experts. Then, the categorisations conducted by the experts and the authors were compared. The final inter-coder agreement was determined with the Miles and Huberman (1994) reliability formula (Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement). In qualitative studies, an intercoder reliability rate of 90% or more is considered acceptable (Saban, 2008). Thus, the present study reliability was calculated as 92% (Reliability = 36 / (36 + 3)).

2.4.5. Transfer of Data to Computer Environment

Percentages and frequencies of valid metaphors were determined and tabulated in the present study. Then, separate tables were developed for each conceptual category, and the frequency of each metaphor was presented and interpreted in these tables. Finally, data samples of metaphor justification statements for the categories are provided.

2.5. Ethical

Before the research was carried out, permission was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board of Artvin Çoruh University Rectorate (Date: 08.05.2020, Number of Sessions: 2020/7).

3. Findings

The valid metaphors obtained in the study were arranged in alphabetical order, and frequencies and percentages were calculated. The results of the analysis conducted on the distribution of valid metaphors are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Distribution of Valid Metaphors Produced by Preservice Social Studies Teachers on the Concept of "Communication"

Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%
1. Agreement	3	2.97	13. Drug	2	1.98	25. Phone	1	.99
2. Air	1	.99	14. Exchange	4	3.96	26. Picture	1	.99
3. Barter	2	1.98	15. Flower	2	1.98	27. Power grid	1	.99
4. Bird	2	1.98	16. Food	4	3.96	28. Rainbow	2	1.98
5. Blood	3	2.97	17. Foundation of the building	3	2.98	29. Road	2	1.98
6. Bond	3	2.97	18. Fuel	1	.99	30. Sun	1	.99
7. Book	3	2.97	19. Life	7	6.93	31. Tranquillity	2	1.98
8. Breathing	3	2.97	20. Love	5	4.95	32. Tree	1	.99
9. Bridge	3	2.97	21. Mirror	3	2.97	33. Water	19	18.82
10. Colours	1	.99	22. Oxygen	5	4.95	34. Wearing clothes	1	.99
11. Commerce	2	1.98	23. Painting	1	.99	35. Vehicle	1	.99
12. Dove	2	1.98	24. Pencil	1	.99	36. Virus	3	2.97
Total							101	100

The review of Table 2 demonstrated that the participants produced 36 valid metaphors about communication skills. The most frequent metaphor on communication skills was the water metaphor (f = 19, 18.82%). This was

followed by life (f = 7, 6.93%), oxygen (f = 5, 4.95%), love (f = 5, 4.95%), exchange (f = 4, 3.96%), and food (f = 4, 3.96%). Furthermore, agreement, mirror, bond, building foundation, blood, book, bridge, breathing, and virus metaphors were mentioned by three participants. In contrast, flower, rainbow, dove, tranquillity, drug, bird, barter, commerce, and road metaphors were mentioned by two participants. A total of 12 metaphors, namely tree, vehicle, power grid, sun, air, pencil, wearing clothes, colours, picture, painting, phone, and fuel, were mentioned by one participant.

Thirty-six valid metaphors developed by the participants were discussed in 7 categories. In Figure 1 below, the distribution of the metaphors developed by the participants is presented based on the categories.

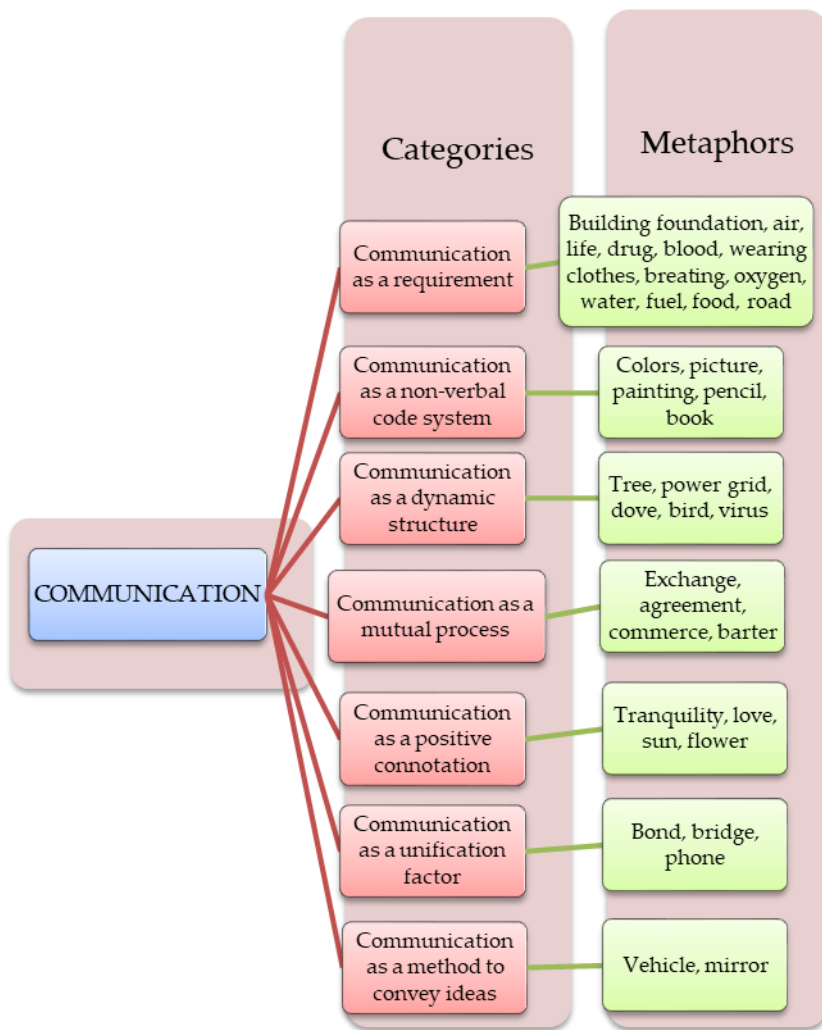


Figure 3. The Distribution of The Metaphors Based on Categories

Figure 3 demonstrates that ‘communication as a requirement’ included building foundation, air, life, blood, wearing clothes, breathing, water, fuel, food, and road metaphors; ‘communication as a non-verbal code system’ included colours, picture, painting, pencil, and book metaphors; ‘communication as a dynamic structure’ included tree, power grid, dove, bird, and virus metaphors; ‘communication as a mutual process’ included exchange, agreement, commerce, and barter metaphors; ‘communication as a positive connotation’ included peace, love, sun, and flower metaphors; ‘communication as a unifying factor’ included bond, bridge, and phone metaphors, and ‘communication as a way of reflecting ideas’ included vehicle and mirror metaphors.

In Figure 4 below, the total number of metaphors and data sources in each category are presented.

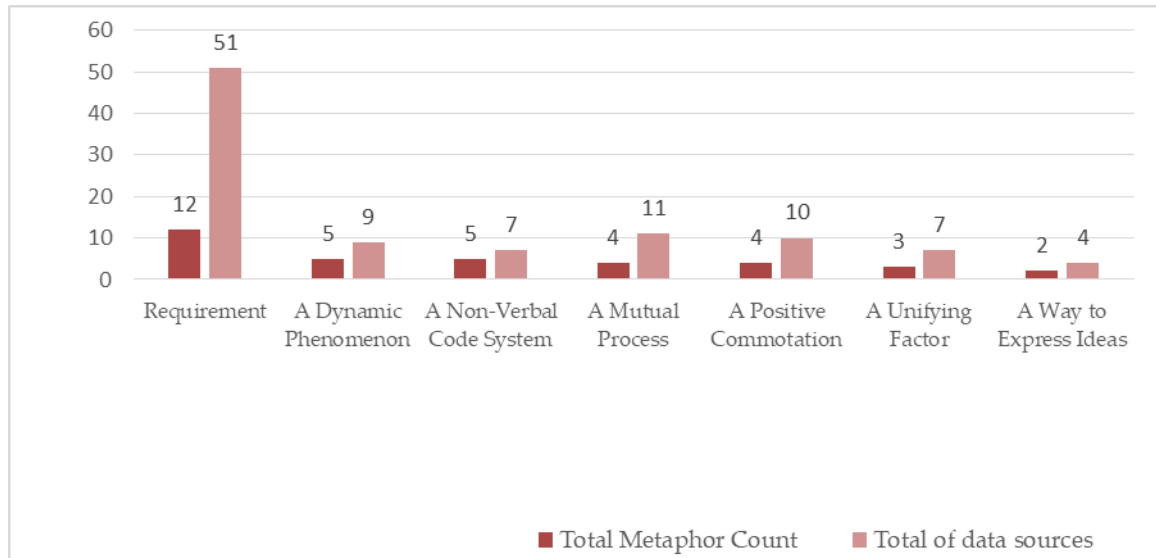


Figure 4. The Quantitative Distribution of Metaphors and Data Sources Based on Categories

The review of Figure 4 demonstrated that the highest number of metaphors and data sources were in the category 'communication as a requirement' (Total metaphors (f) = 12, Total data sources (f) = 51). Conversely, the category with the least number of metaphors and data sources (number of participants) was 'communication as a way of expressing ideas' (Total metaphors (f) = 2, Total data sources (f) = 4).

Conceptual Categories

The metaphors produced by the participants on communication skills were analysed in detail based on the categories. In this section, the categories and the metaphors in each category and their frequencies are reported. Furthermore, examples of the participants' metaphor justifications are presented for each category.

Communication as a requirement

The first category developed was 'communication as a requirement'. Table 3 below presents the findings of the metaphors in this category.

Table 3. Findings in the Communication as a Requirement Category

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a requirement	12	The foundation of the building	3
		Air	1
		Life	7
		Drug	2
		Blood	3
		Wearing clothes	1
		Breathing	3
		Oxygen	5
		Water	19
		Fuel	1
		Food	4
		Road	2
Total		51	

The analysis revealed that the most frequently mentioned communication skill metaphor was water (f = 19), followed by life (f = 7), oxygen (f = 5), food (f = 4), foundation of the building (f = 3), blood (f = 3), breathing (f = 3), drug (f = 2), and road (f = 2). Air, clothing, and fuel were produced by a single participant. There were 12 metaphors in this category. The examples of the justifications for the water metaphor, which was the most frequent metaphor, are presented below:

"Communication is like water because there is no life without it." (16.F3)

"Communication is like water because it is necessary." (13.F3)

"Communication is like water because it is indispensable. We cannot stay alive without it, we cannot live without communication." (61.M1)

"Communication is like water because we cannot live without communication, like water. Our needs and desires would not be met." (10.F2)

"Communication is like water because both are indispensable for human life." (60.F2)

The justifications for the other metaphors are presented below:

"Communication is like the foundation of a building because the foundation keeps the building erect and communication keeps the humanity erect." (92.M3)

"Communication is like life because one cannot really live without communications; humans are social beings." (87.F3)

"Communication is like life because there is no life without communication." (85.F2)

"Communication is like blood because it is similar to the liquid of life." (30.F1)

"Communication is like wearing clothes because humans need to communicate with another in every moment of life." (80.M2)

"Communication is like breathing, because when both end, life ends as well." (24.M1)

"Communication is like oxygen because one cannot breathe without it." (72.F1)

"Communication is like eating because it is required as much." (53.F4)

"Communication is like eating because we cannot exist for a long time without it." (52.M1)

Communication as a dynamic phenomenon

The communication as a dynamic phenomenon category was created because participants considered communication skills as a dynamic phenomenon in the metaphors and the rationale behind these metaphors. The frequencies of the metaphors are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Findings of the Communication as a Dynamic Phenomenon Category

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a dynamic phenomenon	5	Tree	1
		Power grid	1
		Dove	2
		Bird	2
		Virus	3
		Total	9

The review of Table 4 demonstrated that the most frequent metaphor in the communication as a dynamic phenomenon category was 'virus' (f = 3). Furthermore, dove (f = 2), bird (f = 2), tree (f = 1), and power grid (f = 1) were also mentioned. A total of 5 metaphors were included in the category. The examples of the justifications mentioned by the participants are presented below:

"Communication is like life because its branches and roots reach everywhere. Communication reaches everywhere as well." (101.M3)

"Communication is like a power grid because everywhere could be reached." (91.M4)

"In my opinion, communication is like a dove, because when we communicate, we can express our views freely like a dove." (89.F1)

"Communication is like a bird because you can reach anywhere whenever you wish." (76.M1)

"Communication is like a virus because it spreads rapidly." (5.M1)

"Communication is like a virus because it affects people." (4.F4)

Communication as a non-verbal code system

Another category determined was the 'communication as a non-verbal code system' category. In Table 5 below, findings on this category are presented.

Table 5. Findings in the Communication as a Non-Verbal Code System Category

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a non-verbal code system	5	Pencil	1
		Book	3
		Colours	1
		Picture	1
		Painting	1
		Total	7

As seen in Table 5, 5 metaphors developed by the participants were included in the category. The most frequent metaphor was 'book' (f = 3). The examples of the justifications mentioned by the participants are presented below:

"Communication is like a pencil because it is more than an object that you need to express your emotions." (82.F4)

"Communication is like a book because it contains numerous emotions." (79.F2)

"Communication is like the colours because it reflects the emotions you wish to express like the meanings of different colours." (21.F4)

"Communication is like a painting because it makes a different sense every time you look at it." (8.F2)

Communication as a mutual process

In Table 6 below, findings on communication as a mutual process category are presented.

Table 6. Findings in the Communication as a Mutual Process Category

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a mutual process	4	Exchange	4
		Agreement	3
		Commerce	2
		Barter	2
		Total	11

This category included metaphors such as exchange, agreement, commerce, and barter. The most frequent metaphor was 'exchange' (f = 4). A total of 4 metaphors were included in this category. The examples of the justifications mentioned by the participants are presented below:

"Exchange occurs between at least two people." (100.F2)

"Communication is like an agreement, the articles of which depend on the parties, because all the words we say, all our behaviour, even a small gesture reflect approval or rejection. In this agreement, every conflict or consensus is just a matter of time." (47.F3)

"Communication is like barter because it is mutual." (58.F4)

"Communication is like commerce because both are mutual." (6.F2)

Communication as a positive connotation

It was determined that the participants had positive perspectives towards communication skills in certain metaphors and justifications presented for these metaphors. The findings on this category are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. The Findings on the Communication as a Positive Connotation Category

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a positive connotation	4	Flower	2
		Sun	1
		Tranquillity	2
		Love	5
		Total	10

As seen in Table 7, there were 4 metaphors in this category. The most frequently mentioned metaphor was 'love' (f = 5). This was followed by flower (f = 2), tranquillity (f = 2), and sun (f = 1). The examples of the justifications mentioned by the participants are presented below:

"Communication is like a flower because it becomes more beautiful when you take care of it." (41.F₁)

"Communication is like a sun because we are enlightened when we communicate." (39.F₃)

"Communication is like tranquillity because when we talk, we can solve many problems and we feel better." (84.M₂)

"Communication is like love; it multiplies when shared." (20.M₄)

Communication as a unifying factor

Another category determined was 'communication as a unifying factor'. The findings on the metaphors in the category are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. *The Findings on the Communication as a Unifying Factor Category*

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a unifying factor	3	Bond	3
		Bridge	3
		Phone	1
		Total	7

The review of Table 8 demonstrated that the category included the metaphors bond, bridge, and phone. Among the metaphors in this category, the most frequently mentioned ones were bond (f = 3) and bridge (f = 3). The examples of the justifications mentioned by the participants are presented below:

"Communication is like a bond because the dialogue formed by two or more people binds people to each other." (94.M₂)

"Communication is like a bridge because it connects the two banks and allows people to reach their destination." (77.F₄)

"Communication is like a phone because it connects us with the world." (57.M₃)

Communication as a way to express ideas

The last category developed to classify the metaphors produced by the participants about communication skills was the 'communication as a way to express ideas' category. The findings on the category are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. *The Findings on the Communication as a Way to Express Ideas Category*

Category	Total of Metaphors	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Communication as a way to express ideas	2	Vehicle	1
		Mirror	3
		Total	4

The review of the metaphors in the category demonstrated that the most frequently mentioned metaphor was 'mirror' (f = 3). There were 2 metaphors in this category. The examples of justifications for the vehicle and mirror metaphors are presented below:

"Communication is like a vehicle because it allows us to transport and reveal our ideas." (97.M₄)

"Communication is like a mirror. It reflects our inside to the outside." (96.F₄)

"Communication is like a mirror because it allows us to face ourselves and communicate with the emotions." (45.F₂)

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Certain conclusions were extrapolated based on the findings obtained by analysing the metaphors and justifications of the participants on communication skills. Krippendorff (1993) classified communication with the metaphors 'container', 'channel', 'control', 'transfer', and 'dance ceremony'. Epçaçan (2016) expressed participants' metaphors regarding communication in seven categories; nature, love, connection, basic needs, tools, and technology, due to his study on preservice teachers. In the present study, communication metaphors

were categorised as a requirement, a non-verbal code system, a mutual process, a positive connotation, a unifying factor, a dynamic phenomenon, and a way to express ideas. It can be said that the categories created for the data obtained in the study are similar to the categories created in similar studies in the literature. This situation can be interpreted as perceiving the communication skills of different groups in similar ways.

The analysis of the total number of metaphors and metaphor frequencies in each category revealed that the highest number of metaphors were in the communication as a requirement category (7 categories in total). It could be suggested that the participants perceived communication skills as a vital requirement. The most frequent metaphor in the category was the water metaphor which is necessary to sustain life. Also, in this category, metaphors such as blood, breathing, and oxygen, which are important for human life, were mentioned as metaphors for communication skills. Similarly, Semercioğlu and Akçay (2020) found that preservice classroom teachers regarded communication as a vital concept and compared it to water and oxygen. In their study of the metaphors of university students regarding the concept of communication, Koç Akran, Acıdemir, and Uludağ (2018) found that this concept is mainly compared to water, breath, and oxygen, which are in the basic needs category. Findings obtained in the literature also support the results of this study.

The category with the least number of metaphors was the 'communication as a way to express ideas' category. Based on the participant data, the metaphors in this category included 'mirror' and 'vehicle'. Furthermore, metaphors with an active and prevalent structure (such as tree, power grid, dove, bird, and virus) were included in the communication as a dynamic phenomenon category. Metaphors emphasising non-verbal communications (such as pencil, book, colours, picture, and painting) were included in the communication as a non-verbal code system category. Furthermore, metaphors aiming to establish connections and unification (such as bond, bridge and phone) were in the communication as a unifying factor category.

A life without communication, which is an indispensable part of the phenomenon of life that starts with birth, is not possible. It is important to consider the feedback to discuss the communication process that occurs with the presence of at least two phenomena (Perçin Akgül, 2014). The communication as a requirement and mutual process categories emphasised the communication process and its properties. The analysis of the communication as a requirement category demonstrated that participants compared the communication skills to vital concepts such as water, oxygen, life, breathing, blood, fuel, and food. The communication as a mutual process category included metaphors such as agreement, exchange, barter, and commerce, which entail at least two individuals.

In their study, Özdemir, Şahin, and Öztürk (2019) determined teachers' perceptions about leadership skills of school principals using metaphors. They reported that primary, secondary, and high school teachers mentioned the 'politician' metaphor the most. Furthermore, similar to the present study, the participants also mentioned metaphors such as book, water, and telephone for the communication skills of the school principals.

In studies focusing on the communication skills of preservice social studies teachers, it was found that communication skills were positively high (Kaya, Çiftçi, & Gökdemir, 2019; Uygun & Arıkan, 2019). The study data analysis revealed that the preservice social studies teachers mentioned metaphors that included positive connotations about communication skills. Metaphors such as flowers, sun, tranquillity, and love were included in the communication as a positive connotation category.

5. Recommendations

Various recommendations are presented below based on the experiences in this study. Metaphors could be used to understand and explain a concept, value, or skill. Thus, the metaphor method could be employed to determine a set of overlooked features or how a concept, value or skill is considered. In addition to the concept of communication, metaphor studies could be conducted to understand better the content of various concepts, values, or skills in human relations and communication sub-dimensions. Participants' evaluation of communication as an indispensable part of life (like water) makes it necessary to include this skill more in practical lessons, especially in teacher training programs. In this context, using different methods, techniques, approaches, sample scenarios, situations, and activities for teaching communication skills in teacher training could be expanded.

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