RESEARCH ARTICLE

Students' metaphoric perceptions regarding online education process including English language, English instructors and future life

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Abstract
The aim of the present study is to investigate the perceptions of prep-class students regarding online education along with English instructors, English language and their future life. Hermeneutic phenomenology method was employed and metaphors were used as a data collection tool to gather information from 80 prep-class students selected through convenience sampling method. The findings indicated that more than half of the participants (52.5%) have a negative attitude towards online education. A considerable number of students (73.7%) have a quite positive perception of English instructors. *"Universal language, new world, new people"* are among the most preferred metaphors for the participants' perceptions of English language. Moreover, 66.3% of the students are pessimistic about their future life. Hence, students are not in favor of online education although it is flexible and comfortable, which implies that online education should be a secondary option only when face-to-face education is impossible to implement.

Introduction

The rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have changed the way people construct and transform information and people have started to gain knowledge through electronic devices such as computers and mobiles over the last decades (Dreamson, 2020). The developing technology has accelerated the shift from a more traditional education system based on a face-to-face learning to a new delivery system based upon e-learning (Morris et al., 2020). By highlighting this change, Mclsaac and Gunawardena (1996) define online education as "no more than a hodgepodge of ideas and practices taken from traditional classroom settings and imposed on learners who just happen to be separated physically from an instructor" (p.

5). On the other hand, Paulsen (2002) suggests that online education is characterized by "the separation of teachers and learners, the use of a computer network to present or distribute some educational content and the provision of two-way communication via a computer network" (p. 1). Therefore, online education which is counted as a subset of distance education has come to the fore as a learning process supported by digital tools and technologies including blogs, wikis, skype etc. (Lamy & Regine, 2007).

Online education has captured the interest of the youths of today who were born into a digital era, so they are tech-savvy and proficient with the internet (Deal, 2002). To meet the needs of teachers and learners of new generation, distance web-based learning and teaching seem to remain popular and relevant in the field of education (Morrison, 2014). In this respect, the consideration of the immediate learning and teaching context can be associated with Gardner's socio-educational model that aims to explain foreign language learning in classroom settings. The socio-educational model is based on the analysis of four dimensions including the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting and learning outcomes to gain insight into language learning process (Gardner, 1985). Accordingly, the social and cultural setting in which students are learning another language determines their beliefs about that language and their level of motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). This setting affects their attitudes towards the learning situation including the teacher and the instructional programme, which has an impact on their future success and orientations (Gardner, 1985). Similarly, Yang et al., (2021) underline that educational setting plays an important role in students' language learning process. More specifically, the factors such as teacher appraisal, teacher support and teaching programme in an online learning environment contribute to the students' motivation and success (Yang et al., 2021). To summarize, learners' perceptions about online education, English language, English instructors determine their future success, so they are related to each other within the context of formal language learning (Dörnyei, 2001). These aspects are interdependent and they operate in collaboration to shape language learning behaviour of learners (Gardner, 1985). In this sense, Iqbal et al., (2022) investigate the perceptions and experiences of university students regarding the various aspects of online education. The findings point at a considerable dissatisfaction among the study population regarding online education due to the lack of institutional support and the quality of online

instruction on the part of their instructors. It is reported that the majority of the students would not like to opt for online classes in the future. Similarly, Moosavi and Dewitt (2023) inquire into the university students' perceptions of online education in English language learning. It is underlined that the students' expectations of an English course and their attitudes towards English language determine their perceptions regarding online education. Accordingly, the findings indicate that most students believe they can be efficient language users in the future if online learning addresses their learning needs such as teacher support and a friendly communicative environment. Likewise, Kaufmann (2015) assumes that negative perceptions of students regarding online education can lead to unfavourable learning outcomes including decreased motivation. On the basis of this assumption, the study conducted by Kaufmann (2015) with adult language learners demonstrates that learners' attitudes towards English language, English instructors and course designers contribute to online learning success versus failure, so it is possible to predict learning outcomes throughout the online education process. In brief, an implication can be derived from the studies conducted in this research field (Iqbal et al., 2022; Kaufmann, 2015; Moosavi & Dewitt, 2023) that learners' language learning in an online platform comes in sight as a complex process affected by how students perceive the language, language education, their language teachers and their future.Therefore, the attitudes learners hold towards the instructional programme and teachers along with their motives and goals should be identified in a holistic manner to clarify the online education practices of learners in line with Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985).

English Language Learning and Online Education

The use of technology as a medium for English language learning and teaching has gained popularity in order to increase the quality of education (Iqbal et al., 2022). Considering the limitations of formal English lessons in the classroom context such as time pressure and lack of materials, online platforms support students' learning process out of the classroom (Moosavi & Dewitt, 2023). By means of various tools and applications, English language learning process becomes enjoyable, interesting and flexible for learners (Mahyoob, 2020). On the other hand, epidemic and natural disasters come as other limitations that pave the way for a shift from the traditional pedagogical

approach to online education (Iqbal et al., 2022). So, online education becomes a viable option in the emergency situations. Since language learning entails continuity, it should not be restricted to institutional education (Mahyoob, 2020).

Web-based learning is regarded as one of the best options for the acquisition of the 21th century skills including collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking skills due to the fact that digital tools enable learners to reflect upon their own English learning process and transfer their knowledge to any new situations (Moosavi & Dewitt, 2023). Furthermore, the role of online education especially for prep-class students should be highlighted in such a way that it facilitates the attainment of crucial skills such as time management, adaptability and communication for their academic and professional life in the near future (Iqbal et al., 2022).

The Pros and Cons of Online Education

Digital innovations have opened doors to online education, which brings various benefits for both learners and teachers by meeting their needs in terms of accessibility of information, affordability, flexibility, self-motivation, self-regulation, improved collaboration and communication (Garrison, 2017). Accessibility of information regardless of time and place is one of the most essential advantages of online education in that it enables learners who do not have opportunity to attend to the traditional classroom settings due to the family, work, location and financial considerations to get access to knowledge through course materials including syllabi, presentations, documents, videos etc. (Rovai et al., 2008). In this respect, Yılmaz (2018) investigates the metaphorical perceptions of university students towards distance education and shows that students repeat metaphors such as a golden blessing and a great opportunity to define online education.

Online education offers teachers an efficient way to enhance and facilitate learning with the help of a variety of activities appealing to different learning styles (Okyar, 2023). At this point, Deal (2002) proposes "there is a range of multi-media tools available to create instructional materials to display text graphics, animation, video, and interactive simulations" (p. 22). This multimodality of online education assists learners to personalize learning process by adapting technology in accordance with their needs, interests and learning strategies (Savenye, 2005). At this point, the study of Farah and

Sholikhah (2020) based on the analysis of EFL students' perceptions about their online learning process stresses that three major metaphoric words used by students are hobby, game, and food respectively, which shows their positive attitudes towards online education.

It is crucial to note that online education can be used flexibly since it offers an option for the emergency remote teaching. In this respect, Karakaş et al., (2022) examine pre-service English teachers' emergency remote microteaching experiences and state that most participants feel progress in their linguistic skills, self-esteem, teaching competence, identity construction, critical/retrospective reflection and course preparation with favourable attitudes towards the profession, which corroborates the study of Koruyan et al., (2022) underlining the importance of online education for language learner in the event of any emergencies that disrupt face-to-face teaching.

Another merit is that students can build social networks through collaboration and interaction with learners from different parts of the world by eliminating cultural and geographical barriers (Badia et al., 2017). In this regard, in their study, Vayreda and Núñez (2010) indicate that students define online learning environment as a new place to be discovered easily. It is apparent that both reaching different parts of the world and getting a high-quality of education are affordable for learners through e-learning (Baran et al., 2011). On the other hand, Tuncay et al. (2011) inquire into the university students" metaphors in relation with e-education and underline a very interesting fact that 47% of the students consider e-learning to be equivalent to "rich students' education" and the metaphor of "richness". The answers also reveal that 48% of the participants perceive e-education as an imaginary world.

The fourth advantage of online education is that it requires learners to become responsible for their own learning process since they are given the choices of selecting and adapting learning materials with the aim of acquiring knowledge at their own pace (Morrison, 2014). Online education opens the pathways for improving learners' self-regulation skill which is counted as the primary factor affecting their success in that "successful students tend to have stronger beliefs they will succeed, higher self-responsibility, higher self-organization skills, and better technology skills and access" (Savenye, 2005, p. 2).

Besides the fact that technology-mediated distance learning has taken an important place in the field of education, it is worth noting that online education has also some drawbacks (Harasim, 2000). To illustrate, the difficulty of maintaining students' engagement and motivation can be regarded as a challenge for teachers since there are students who do not have self-discipline and fail to complete their online courses (Lamy & Regine, 2007). There is also a possibility that learners can lose their interest when they get delayed feedback that is conceived as another disadvantage of online education (Paulsen, 2002). Furthermore, the factor of unfamiliarity with online tools and activities affects learners' prolonged engagement negatively (Harasim, 2000).

Even if online education increases interaction among learners, it has a potential to cause social isolation due to the lack of face-to-face communication because it promotes virtual learning environments by pushing real- life learning contexts into the background, which dectracts learners from the feeling of belonging to a social community (Vezne et al., 2023). Accordingly, Kaban (2020) probes into the perceptions of students about the concept of distance education through metaphors. He remarks that metaphors of the participants towards distance education are gathered in the categories of "uselessness, education type, virtuality, individuality, irreplaceable, obligation, usage and school independence". When the statements of the participants are examined holistically, it is noted that the participants have a negative attitude towards distance education in general, which is in line with the study of Farah and Sholikhah (2020) who draw attention to the finding that EFL students perceive online learning negatively.

The last drawback comes with technical problems arising during online education (Paulsen, 2002). Karakaş et al. (2022) report in their study that having technical problems and lacking knowledge about how to use technological tools come as the challenges in online education. In the same way, Koruyan et al., (2002) consider lack of training on technological and technical issues as one of the main problems. Dealing with these problems necessitates teacher expertise and training in how to employ technological devices and tools efficiently (Lamy & Regine, 2007). However, it does not guarantee that every teacher keeps pace with technological innovations (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). In a nutshell, online education is said to be at the top of the

agenda with its advantages and disadvantages by assigning teachers a role of shedding light on the issues arising in online distance environments (Rovai et al., 2008).

Teachers' Roles

The improvements in technology and the internet have led educational practitioners to rethink the way of how knowledge is constructed inasmuch as this developing technology has brought about change in the educational paradigm from behavioral approaches to constructivist approaches (Baran et al., 2011). As a matter of fact, the current and modern educational approaches have redefined teachers' roles in a way that a teacher is "no longer a 'sage on the stage', the teacher now functions as more of a 'guide on the side'" (Morrison, 2014, p. 1). Teachers leave aside their roles of experts or authorities who are responsible for the delivery of content through the transmission of information and adopt a facilitator role making the process of picking this information easier for students (Lamy & Regine, 2007). Accordingly, Badia et al., (2017) propose five types of teachers' roles in online education: "supporting learning activity; managing social interactions; planning instructional design; guiding the use of technology and learning assessment" (p. 1195).

One of the most essential roles assigned to teachers is to support learning activity by directing students to activities fostering communication and collaboration in an online learning community (Rovai et al., 2008). During both synchronous and asynchronous learning periods, teachers are like an orchestra chief monitoring students' talking time with their peers and teachers, so they are perceived as effective communicators taking part in online discussions, building a good rapport and managing social interactions in that community (Savenye, 2005). At this point, the study of Gündüzalp and Demirtaş (2020) based upon the role of instructors from the perspectives of Turkish university students showcases that one of the most important roles of instructors is to be good communicators, which leads to a positive learning environment.

Another role of teachers is to promote learners' motivation by planning instructional design beforehand in line with their needs and interests (Finch & Jacobs, 2012). In this respect, Wan et al.'s (2011) research into the Chinese university students' beliefs about their English instructors' roles through metaphor analysis puts forward that they regard their instructors as co-workers and interest arousers who try to meet their

learning demands during online education. Moreover, teachers are co-learners in web-based learning and teaching process as they need necessary information about technical issues to meet the requirements of virtual learning environments and guide learners to use technological tools appropriately (Rovai et al., 2008). Accordingly, Cerit (2008) studies the concept of teacher through metaphor analysis from learners' perspectives and concludes that language teachers are seen as a bridge that connects students' own world with a new world by providing them with necessary information and skills. It is also important to note that teachers' role of assessing learning process comes into the forefront as a crucial task for enhancing e-learning practices at the end of online courses (Paulsen, 2002). They are in charge of evaluating the rate of learners' progress and the practicality, usability or effectiveness of technological tools (Badia et al., 2017). All in all, the roles teachers play in a distant web-based education process can be categorized as technical, managerial, pedagogical, and social (Baran et al, 2011).

The positive and negative aspects of online education along with teachers' roles in handling these aspects should be examined in detail for students to be successful learners in the future (Martín-Rodríguez, 2015). In other words, for learners to benefit from e-education of the highest order, it is essential to determine their perceptions about learning English and their instructors in an online educational context so that regulations can be made to make e-learning process more efficient for learners (Tamim, 2020).

Metaphors

Metaphors are considered as a useful means of data collection and analysis since they reflect how people think, act and construct reality, which yields rich and deep information on the part of researchers (Botha, 2009). Metaphors function as "a bridge from experience to mediation, representation, and symbolism, which in turn allows us to understand experience in new and deeper ways" (Oldfather & West, 1994, p. 23). In other words, metaphors make abstract thoughts understandable and clear through the explanation of unfamiliar concepts with familiar ones based on an analogy between them (Cerit, 2008). Additionally, through metaphors, teaching methods, techniques, materials, teacher and learner roles can be explained more effectively and easily as metaphors "act as powerful cognitive models through which educators and learners can understand educational phenomena by relating them to something previously

experienced" (Botha, 2009, p. 432). Thinking process of learners about the world comes to light through metaphoric perceptions (Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014).

The present study aims at examining the prep-class students' perceptions regarding online education process comprising English language, English instructors and their future life. To achieve this aim, the data based on prep-class students' perceptions were collected through metaphors which are believed to contribute to the explanation of phenomena under investigation. Addedly, metaphors as a data collection tool can assist learners to conceptualize their attitudes towards online education along with their instructors and provide insights into what they think of learning English language for their future life. In fact, there are many studies (Cerit, 2008; Farah & Sholikhah, 2020; Kaban, 2020; Tuncay et al.,2011; Wan et al., 2011; Yılmaz, 2018) conducted in this research area but it can be seen that they are based on either students' perceptions of online learning or their teachers' roles during online education. In accordance with Gardner's socio-educational model, the main aim of the present study is to fill the gap by investigating the perceptions of students regarding both online education and English instructors along with their future life in a holistic manner. To that end, four research questions stated below delve into students' emotional responses in relation to how their e-learning experiences limit or improve their perceptions.

1. What are the metaphors of prep-class students regarding the concept of online education?

2. What are the metaphors of prep-class students regarding their English instructors?

3. What are the metaphors of prep-class students regarding English language?

4. What are the metaphors of prep-class students regarding their future life?

Methodology

Research Design

To reveal the perceptions of prep-class students about online education, English instructors, English language and their future life, the data were collected through hermeneutic phenomenology method which focuses on people's experience of a phenomena (Oldfather & West, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology is one of the

methods in the qualitative paradigm which draws attention to the personalized interpretations of the participants in a specific context (Robson, 2002). Moreover, "hermeneutic phenomenology is particularly open to literary and poetic qualities of language, and encourages aesthetically sensitized writing as both a process and product of research" (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p.1). Hence, it was believed that this hermeneutic phenomenological research would bring the participants' experiences during online education process from their own perspectives to the fore in a detailed way through metaphors. In this direction, in the present study metaphor analysis was employed to explore learners' feelings, attitudes and opinions regarding the concept of online education including their English lessons, their instructors and their future life since metaphors "evoke one reality through the idea of another" (Allan, 2007, p. 354). In that way, metaphors were considered to open the doors for new insights for researchers through creative perspectives.

Participants

As the participants of the present study, 90 prep-class students from a large state university in western Turkey were selected as the convenience sampling since they were the students of the researcher. 48 of the participants were female and 42 of the participants were male whose ages ranged between 19 and 21. They were given information about the aim of the study and the roles they would play to realize this aim. After volunteers signed the consent forms, the researcher started to gather data. Since the researcher knew the participants, the process of gathering a detailed information from these students became easy. Namely, the issue of building trust and rapport among the researcher and participants was easily dealt with. Moreover, anonymity and data confidentiality were ensured to enable students to feel comfortable with their answers.

Procedure

To gain a deeper understanding of learners' perceptions towards online education including their English lessons, their instructors and their future life, learners were asked to answer four research questions in the sentence pattern of "………is like……….; because…………………." Blank spaces were allocated for students to write their emotions by leading them to generate longer and elaborative responses. This data collection tool was employed by the researcher to reveal participants' rationale behind

their thoughts. Moreover, the data were collected from the participants during their usual English lessons and they were given enough time to answer the questions via metaphors.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected through metaphors, content analysis which is a systematic method to interpret the meanings in the data through description and quantification of concepts was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the data analysis process, four stages were followed. Since the content analysis is based upon coding and identifying themes, naming the metaphors generated by the participants through codes falls into the first stage (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At this point, it is crucial to underline that 10 participants who did not provide an analogy along with a justification were not included into this stage. Secondly, the codes were sorted into different themes according to their common features.

Reliability in qualitative research is based upon "being thorough, careful and honest in carrying out the research" (Robson, 2002, p. 176). As the third step, reliability was ensured through constant testing and comparison of data in the present study. Additionally, inter-rater reliability employed to figure out the level of agreement between two raters about the codes was calculated through Cohen's Kappa. On the other hand, member-checking method was adopted to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the present study, so an outside researcher examined the compatibility of the codes and themes. After adjustments were made to achieve the consensus on the data analysis process, organizing and presenting findings in compliance with the codes and themes come into the fore as the last stage.

Results

The aim of the present study was to find out the perceptions of prep-class students regarding the concept of online education including their English instructors, English language and their future life. To achieve this aim, the data were collected from prep-class students through metaphors and examined in detail through the content analysis method. Metaphors stated by participants were grouped under the themes based upon their common features.

Prep-class students' metaphoric perceptions regarding online education

First of all, metaphors created by students regarding the concept of online education were classified under 8 themes as seen in Table 1 below. Namely, 25% of the participants used the theme of "digitalism" to explain their perceptions about online education and the theme of "relaxing" falls into the second rank with the percentage of 20, which is followed by "uselessness" (18.7%), "affective dimension" (15%), "difficulty" (12.5%), and "death" (3.8%) respectively. Additionally, "asociality" (2.5%) and "positive feelings" (2.5%) are the least frequent themes produced by participants. Overall, it is clear from Table 1 that throughout the themes, "*sleep*" (7), "*computer*" (5) and "*boring lessons*" (5) are the most popular metaphors among prep-class students.

Table 1

Metaphors and Themes Regarding the Concept of Online Education Constituted by Prep-class Students

Themes	Metaphors	N	%
Digitalism	Computer (5), Distance learning (4), Screen (3), Artificial learning(3), Virtual (2), Imaginary education (2),	20	25
Relaxing	Sleep (7), Comfortable (4), Endless sleep, Learning by lying, Easiness, Pyjamas, Bedtime	16	20
Uselessness	Fruitless(4), Inefficient (3), Unproductive (2), Flightless bird, Empty (2), Waste of time, Hollow, A lowland, Taking a driving licence online	15	18.7
Affective Dimension	Boring lessons (5), Unpleasant (3), Torture(3), Horrible dream	12	15
Difficulty	Challenging (4), Exhausting (2), A difficult period, A tiring journey, A tiresome learning, A challenging race	10	12.5
Death	Die young, Death, A tomb with flowers	3	3.8
Asociality	An antisocial world, Unsocial system	2	2.5
Positive feelings	Education type coming from paradise, Pleasing	2	2.5
Total		80	100

When the metaphors generated by the participants under the themes of "uselessness (18.7%), affective dimension (15), difficulty (12.5%), death (3.8%), asociality (2.5%)" are examined in detail, it can be inferred that 52.5% of the students are in a negative perception about online education. To illustrate, 4 students used the

word "*fruitless*" and 5 students used the word "*boring lessons*" as metaphors reflecting their feelings about online education. Furthermore, lessons in online education were explained by 4 students through the metaphor of "*challenging*".

On the other hand, the metaphors under the themes of "relaxing" (20%) and "positive feelings" (2.5%) underline the fact that 22.5% of the students have a positive attitude towards online education since 7 students used the metaphor of "*sleep*" to explain how they feel comfortable during their online lessons and one of the students described online education through the metaphor of "*an education type coming from paradise*" to express his good feelings.

The sample metaphors produced by participants to express their perceptions in relation with online education are given below in bold words.

> *P13: "Online education is **a tiring journey** because we cannot ask our questions to our instructor directly to understand the topic of the lesson, which makes us tired." (difficulty)*

> *P15: "It is like **dying young**. I have difficulties to keep my attention and focus on what my teacher talks about." (death)*

> *P19: "Online education is a **horrible dream** for me because I hate looking at screen for long hours." (affective dimension)*

> *P35: "It is an **antisocial world** in which I cannot communicate with my close friends as I do in face-to-face education." (asociality)*

> *P48: "I think it is an **education type coming from paradise** because I feel good in that lesson." (positive feelings)*

> *P40: "Online education is like **a lowland** because we cannot improve." (uselessness)*

> *P57: "Online education is similar **taking a driving licence online** because it does not work." (uselessness)*

Prep-class students' metaphoric perceptions regarding their English instructors

In terms of metaphors about English instructors, perceptions of the participants can be divided into 7 themes as shown in Table 2 below. Accordingly, the most common theme is "heroes" (30%). The themes of "friends" (21.3%), "authorities" (21.3%), "good people" (16.2%), "unlovely people" (5%), and "genius people" (3.7%) follow. Lastly, the theme of "source of knowledge" (2.5%) comes with the lowest percentage. Overall, the metaphors of *"flowers"* (9) and *"mother"* (7) are the most reccurrent ones generated by students as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Metaphors and Categories Regarding English Instructors Constituted by Prep-class Students

Themes	Metaphors	N	%
Heroes	Mother (7), Warriors (5), Fathers (4), Angels (4), Determined warriors, Protectors of galaxy, Pole stars, Raindrops falling into the desert	24	30
Friends	Fellow (5), Friends (5), Sincerity (4), A familiar friend, Intimacy, A close Friend	17	21.3
Authorities	Dominant (5), Adolf Hitler (3), Authority(3), Ruler (3), Dictator (2) Big brother	17	21.3
Good people	Flowers (9), The most beautiful flower in a flower garden, A precious person, Kind-hearted, Nice people	13	16.2
Unlovely people	Devils, Leaves falling in autumn, A woodpeck, unpleasant	4	5
Genius people	Ronaldo of English, Einstein, Sisifos	3	3.7
Source of knowledge	An unexplored valley, Sun	2	2.5
Total		80	100

The metaphorical perceptions of students in relation with English instructors including themes such as "heroes (30%), friends (21.3%), good people (16.2%), genius people (3.7%)" and "source of knowledge" (2.5%) revealed that 73.7% of the students have a quite positive perception of English instructors. To exemplify, 5 students used the metaphor of "*warriors*" to state that their teachers try hard to teach English to their

students in every condition, so instructors adopt the role of supporting learning activity. Students also considered their instructors as their *"friends"* and *"nice people"* due to their sincerity during online education. Their instructors can be said to manage social interactions within the classroom. Likewise, English instructors were seen as intelligent people like *"Einstein"* and source of knowledge like *"sun"* brightening students' life with their knowledge and experience. Therefore, English instructors adopt the role of guiding students by providing necessary information about the use of technology to gain knowledge.

On the contrary, the metaphors grouped under the themes of "authorities" (21.3%) and "unlovely people" (5%) stressed that 26.3% of the students have a negative perception of English instructors, which is clear in their metaphors including *"Adolf Hitler"* and *"devils"* showing instructors' negative behaviours and attitudes towards students during online education.

The sample statements including metaphors referring students' perceptions of English instructors are given below with bold words.

> P80: *"Teachers are like **flowers** and as students we are bees, so we have to smell their knowledge." (good people)*

> P45: *"My teacher is like a **sun** brightening my educational life." (source of knowledge)*

> P77: *"Teachers are like **raindrops falling into the desert**, they save you in every bad situation." (heroes)*

> P26: *"Instructor is an **unexplored valley**, so you can learn many things from her landscape." (source of knowledge)*

> P41: *"Instructors are **pole stars** because they can guide you when you get lost with school subjects." (heroes)*

> P35: *"Instructors'voices are like **a woodpeck**, so they are boring people." (unlovely people)*

*P66: "They are like **close friends** so you can have good time and have fun with them." (friends)*

*P60: "Instructor is **a big brother** who watches and controls you all the time." (authorities)*

*P16: "Our teacher is an **unpleasant** person beacuse she is checking all the time if we have learned the lesson with difficult questions and exams." (unlovely people)*

*P44: "My instructors are like **angels** because they come to the lessons with the activities and games we like, they always do what we want." (heroes)*

*P32: "Zoom platform is like a galaxy and English teachers are like **protectors of this galaxy** because they help us when the connection is gone." (heroes)*

Prep-class students' metaphoric perceptions regarding their English language

Students' metaphorical perceptions of English language are categorized into 9 different themes as in Table 3 below. Nominately, the theme of "universality" (18.7%) falls into the first rank, which is followed by the themes of "a different standpoint" (16.2%) and "essentiality" (13.7%). "Entertainment" and "valuableness" fall into the fourth rank with the percentage of 12.5. Moreover, the themes of "difficulty" (8.7%) "demanding" (6.2%) and "ability" (6.2%) follow respectively. "Fear" with the percentage of 5 comes as the least common theme. Based on Table 3, *"gold"* (5) and *"new people"* (5) are the most frequently used metaphors by prep-class students throughout 9 themes.

Table 3

Metaphors and Themes Regarding English Language Constituted by Prep-class Students

Themes	Metaphors	N	%
Universality	Common language (3), World (3), World Language (2), Global language, International communication, Universal network, Universal communication, Universal language, Network with the world, The door opening to the world	15	18.7
A different standpoint	New people (5), New cultures (2), A new person, A different window, Many worldviews, A new World, Big differences, Variety	13	16.2
Essentiality	Necessity (3), Water (2), Life, Lifesaving, Basic need, Obligatory case, Tom and Jerry, A piece of puzzle	11	13.7
Entertainment	Cheer (4), Joy (3), Enjoyment (2), A big joy	10	12.5
Valuableness	Gold (5), Gold bracelet (2), Investment in the Futıre, Investment	10	12.5
Difficulty	Marathon (2), Challenging (2), A difficult way, A tiring journey, Exhausting	7	8.7
Demanding	Land (2), Flower, A flower growing with water, Arable lands	5	6.2
Ability	Skill (3), Talent, A big talent	5	6.2
Fear	Fear (2), Nightmare, Horror film	4	5
Total		80	100

The themes of "difficulty" (8.7%) and "fear" (5%) include metaphors implying that 13.7% of the students perceived English language negatively in such a way that 2 students used the word *"marathon"* as a metaphor to describe the difficulty of English language learning process. In a similar manner, 2 students associated English language with the metaphor of *"fear"*.

Nevertheless, the themes of "essentiality (13.7%), valuableness (12.5%)" and "entertainment" (12.5%) include metaphors demonstrating that 38.7% of the students are in a positive view toward English language. For example, 2 students created a link between English language and *"water"* to emphasize the necessity of knowing English language for the maintenance of a good life. 5 students used the metaphor of *"gold"* in relation with English language that increases the quality of their life. Lastly, the

metaphors such as "*joy*" and "*enjoyment*" indicate that students have positive attitudes towards English language.

The sample metaphors indicating students' perceptions of English language are given below in bold words.

> *P21: "English is a **gold bracelet** because knowing English makes us rich in the future." (valuableness)*
>
> *P8: "English language is like **a flower growing with water**, so we always should take care of them by our efforts." (demanding)*
>
> *P15: "English is **a different window** because we can see different people and cultures from there." (a different standpoint)*
>
> *P69: "We are **Tom and English is Jerry,** so we have to catch it during our life because we need it." (essentiality)*
>
> *P55: "English language **is a piece of puzzle** of my life and to be happy I need it." (essentiality)*
>
> *P30: "English is a **horror film** because every time I feel anxious to learn another language." (fear)*
>
> *P29: "English language is like **a big talent,** if you know English you are intelligent." (ability)*
>
> *P5: "Learning English **is a big joy.** I like learning a new language." (entertainment)*

Prep-class students' metaphoric perceptions regarding their future life

The metaphors produced by students regarding their future life are gathered under four themes as shown in Table 4 in such a way that the theme of *"hopelessness"* has the highest rank with the percentage of 36.3 and *"uncertainty"* (30%) comes with the second rank. Whereas the theme of "hope" (18.7%) takes place in the third rank, "achievement" falls into the last rank with the percentage of 15. Within four themes, the

metaphors of "*darkness*" (6) is the most common one generated by students to make an analogy of their future life.

Table 4

Metaphors and Themes Regarding Future Life Constituted by Prep-class Students

Themes	Metaphors	N	%
Hopelessness	Darkness (6), Night (4), Dark (3), A dead luck (3), Black hole (3), Black (2), Black box, Artificial light, Lightless, A lightless sun, A functionless lamb, Greek calends, A dream not come true, Dark room,	29	36.3
Uncertainty	Ambiguity (4), Tunnel (3), Fog (3), Unknown route, Happenstance, Unknown route, An Unpredictable road, a momentary situation, Variability, Leap in the dark, Bottomless well, Limitless tunnels, Uncertain world, Foggy day, Foggy country, An unforesightful person, Hazy life	24	30
Hope	Sunny (3), Rainbow (3), A bright road, Sunny days, Stars, Green ways, A ship in Philippines, Source of hope, Wonderful life, Good, As fresh as daisy, Lively	15	18.7
Achievement	Success (4), Career (3), Experience (2) Diamond, Richness, A successful person	12	15
Total		80	100

Metaphors produced by the participants under the themes of "hopelessness" (36.3%) and "uncertainty" (30%) put emphasis on that 66.3% of the students can be said to be pessimistic about their future life. To exemplify, 3 students used the metaphors of "*dark", "a dead luck*" and "*black hole*" to express their perceptions towards their future life, which shows that they cannot see any good things that will happen in the future. Furthermore, the metaphors including *"fog", "tunnel", "foggy day"* and *"foggy country"* imply that students are not sure about what they will face in their future life. On the other hand, metaphors produced by the participants under the themes of "hope" (18.7%) and "achievement" (15%) indicated that 23.7% of the participants are optimistic about their future life, which is evident in their metaphors such as *"rainbow"* and *"diamond"*.

The sample metaphors regarding prep-class students' perceptions of their future life are given below in their statements with bold words.

> *P1: "For me, future life is **a black hole** and I cannot see any beautiful thing."*
> *(hopelessness)*

> *P12: "Future life is full of **suny days** because I believe good days will come."*
> *(hope)*

> *P22: "Future life is a **diamond** because I hope to be rich and successful."*
> *(achievement)*

> *P65: "My future is like **a foggy day** because nothing is clear." (uncertainty)*

> *P51: "I see my future as **darkness** because there is no hope for a beautiful*
> *life." (hopelessness)*

> *P8: "My future life will be like a **rainbow** because there will be many*
> *colorful events." (hope)*

> *P39: "My future is like a **tunnel** because I cannot see where I am going."*
> *(uncertainty)*

Discussion

In the present study, the perceptions of prep-class students towards online education, English instructors, English language and their future life were determined through metaphors. These metaphors obtained from students were grouped into themes. Hence, each research question including themes with a number of metaphors is discussed in detail separately.

The metaphors of prep-class students regarding the concept of online education

Prep-class students' metaphorical perceptions of online education can be explained with 8 different themes including "digitalism (25%), relaxing (20%), uselessness (18.7%), affective dimension (15%), difficulty (12.5%), death (3.8%), asociality (2.5%)" and "positive feelings" (2.5%).

First of all, with the theme of digitalism, 25% of the prep-class students used metaphors such as *"computer, virtual, artificial learning"* and "*imaginary education",* which implies that online education is far from authenticity as in the statement of the P72 that *"Online education is like an artificial learning because we do not have real materials that we can see or touch*.". At this point, Darling-Aduana (2021) stated in her study with young adults that students are more engaged and learn better when exposed to authentic work that creates opportunities for higher-order thinking with real-world applications. It is clear that authentic learning allows students to connect course material to their lives, which is evident in the findings of the present study since prep-class students also feel themselves as being in a dream during online education as stated by the P58 that "*Online education is an imaginary education because when it is over, we awaken from our dream and turn back to the reality*". It can be inferred from the metaphors created by prep-class students that they are not in favor of online education as it does not give the impression that they engage in authentic learning that helps them in the real world, which yields similar results with previous studies (Allen et al., 2002; Fedynich et al., 2015). Additionally, Yılmaz (2018) determined the metaphorical perceptions of university students towards distance education and pointed out that students use the metaphor of "imagination remaining training" to define distance education because they think that they cannot get what they expect because there is no real classroom or teacher.

The theme of asociality (2.5%) including metaphors such as "*an antisocial world"* and "*unsocial system"* stresses the separation of students and instructors resulting in a transactional distance between them. Hence, %2,5 of the participants stated that online education system makes them unsocial learners who do not have opportunities to communicate in Engish, which in turn, affects their language learning process negatively as Gillies (2008) pointed out that the lack of interaction between students and teachers prevents a real feeling of love and sincerity necessary for language learning success. Moreover, under the theme of "uselessness" (18.7%), prep-class students created metaphors such as "*fruitless, inefficient, unproductive, flightless bird, empty, waste of time, hollow, a lowland"* and *"taking a driving licence online".* They mentioned that their effort and time on online education are futile, so they likened online education to "*a flightless bird".* It can be summarized that prep-class students are in the

opinion that they cannot get receive a high-quality education which is in line with the study of Iqbal et al., (2022) underlining the dissatisfaction of university students with online learning because of the quality of instruction.

The themes such as "affective dimension (15%), difficulty (12.5%)" and "death" (3.8%) underline the fact that prep-class students have negative beliefs about online education. Namely, 15% of the students used *"horrible dream"* and *"torture"* as metaphors for online education stated by the P19 that *"Online education is a horrible dream for me because I hate looking at screen for long hours.".* The underlying reason for their negative perceptions can be related to the lack of opportunities to improve their language skills during online education as the P30 emphasized that *"Online education is like a hollow and I could not find anything to fill in this hollow.",* which corroborates the previous studies conducted in this research area (Ardito et al., 2006; Kaban, 2021; Tao & Yeh, 2008) demonstrating that university students created the metaphor of uselessness for distance education because of issues such as unsuitable learning environments, unavailability of electricity, and connectivity.

Whereas the prep-class students' perceptions (52.5%) are negative, 22.5% of them have positive views in such as way that the theme of "relaxing" (20%) includes the metaphors like "*sleep, endless sleep, comfortable, bedtime, pyjamas"*. Hence, it can be said that prep-class students feel good as they do while they are sleeping. Moreover, 2,5% of the students have positive feelings about online education by correlating it with "*an education type coming from paradise"*. At this point, Rashid et al., (2022) investigated students' emotions towards online education and reported that students linked online education with an enjoyful learning situation that increases their motivation for learning. It is apparent from these findings that prep-class students are pleased with online education since it provides a flexible and comfortable learning environment, which is considerably in line with the studies conducted in this research area (Joo et al., 2011; Farah & Sholikhah, 2021; Tuncay et al., 2011).

The metaphors of prep-class students regarding English instructors

The metaphorical perceptions of prep-class students regarding their English instructors can be handled in terms of the themes including "heroes" (30%), "friends"

(21.3%), "authorities" (21.3%), "good people" (16.2%), "unlovely people" (5%), "genius people" (3.7%) and "source of knowledge" (2.5%).

Within the theme of heroes, 30% of the students conceptualized their instructors mainly as "*mothers, warriors, fathers, angels, determined warriors, protectors of galaxy, pole stars*" and "*raindrops falling into the desert*", which draws attention to the finding that students admire their instructors. This is evident in the statement of the P33 that "*I am the biggest fan of my Englih instructor because she is a determined warrior to teach English language with us without being bored*". In this regard, André et al., (2020) investigated students'perceptions of teaching behavior and stated that students appreciate their instructors when they are good at classroom management and giving clear instruction. On the other hand, the prep-class students' admiration of their English instructors can be attributed to their instructors' noteworthy content and pedagogical knowledge since 2.5% of the participants linked their instructors with sources of knowledge like a "*sun*" and "*an unexplored valley*". This can be inferred from the saying of the P26 that "*Instructor is an unexplored valley, so you can learn many things from her landscape.*", which yields similar results with the study of Ahkemoğlu and Mutlu (2016). They investigated the university students' mental images about their English language instructors through metaphors and reached the conclusion that most of the students conceptualize their English instructors as the provider of knowledge by using metaphors such as water, sun, deep ocean and moon. In a similar vein, in the present study, 3.7% of the participants defined their English instructors as genius people like "*Ronaldo of English, Einstein, Sisifos*" implying that students regard their English instructors as role models for them. In this respect, Starcic, and Lebeničnik (2020) investigated university students' perceptions of their educators and found that the students perceive their teachers as effective designers and role models for information and communications technology (ICT). On the other hand, The P32 stated that "*Zoom platform is like a galaxy and English teachers are like protectors of this galaxy because they help us when the connection is gone.*". Thus, it is obvious that instructors adopt the role of guiding the use of technology during online education, which is supported by various studies conducted in this field (Hasim et al., 2013; Kesen, 2010).

Additionally, 21.3% of the participants considered their English instructors as their friends through metaphors such as "*fellows, friends, sincerity, a familiar friend, intimacy, a close friend*". Students' perceptions of friendship can be related to their instructors' role of supporting learning activity with their smiling face, help and sympathetic behaviours. This is obvious from the interpretation of the P2 that "*My English instructor is like a familiar friend because he never judges me when I am wrong, so he just replies me by smiling in these situations*". Along the same line, 16.2% of the students atrributed the feature of good people to their English instructors by generating metaphors of "*flowers, the most beautiful flower in a flower garden, a precious person, kind-hearted*" and "*nice people*". This finding points at a good relationship between prep-class students and their English instructors who are good at managing social interactions during online education. Hence the findings imply that prep-class students attach importance to student-teacher relationships, which corroborates the results of Erarslan and Asmalı (2017) who investigated the preparatory class students' perceptions of English instructors. Their study revealed that students used teddy bear, daisy and flower as metaphors to describe their teachers, which shows that teachers satisfy them emotionally by creating a sense of security. Likewise, Raufelder et al., (2016) examined how students perceive good and bad teachers based on their daily school experiences and demonstrated that students prioritize teachers' (inter)personal dimensions over their academic abilities in everyday classroom interactions when evaluating them as educators.

It is an undeniable fact that students (73.7%) generated mostly positive connotations about their English instructors unlike their views on online education. However, they (26%) also had negative conceptualizations such as "authorities" and "unlovely people". Accordingly, 21.3% of the students perceived their English instructors as authorities as they used metaphors including "*Adolf Hitler, dominant, authority, ruler, dictator, big brother*". At this point, the P59 declared that "*My teacher is like a dictator who puts some rules to see my face and hear my voice in every minute of online course*". It can be inferred that prep-class students prefer a friendly learning and teaching environment as in the case of the study conducted by Moosavi and Dewitt (2023) laying emphasis on the students' expectations of a welcoming and warm English lesson.

Furthermore, 5% of the students named their English instructors as unlovely people, which is clear in their metaphors of "*devils, leaves falling in autumn, a woodpeck*" and "*unpleasant*". For instance, the P16 stated that "*Our teacher is an unpleasant person because she is checking all the time if we have learned the lesson with difficult questions and exams.*", which addresses the instructors' way of assessment perceived negatively by the students. This finding complies with the earlier studies (Ahkemoğlu & Mutlu, 2016; Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Sayar, 2014) coming to a conclusion that students feel bore and bad when they get high educational pressure from their teachers.

The P19 also remarked that "My English teachers are like devils because they do not understand your psychology. They always take care of hardworking students and want you to do your best.". Therefore, some students developed negative perceptions regarding their English instructors because of their strict rules and efforts to make them active and successful during the online lessons and this situation dissappointed them, which yields similar results with the study of Jasia et al., (2018) stating that students don't feel good when teachers do distinction by taking much take care of good students rather than some weak students.

The metaphors of prep-class students regarding English language

Findings showed that prep-class students' perceptions regarding English language can be identified with 9 themes including "universality" (18.7%), "a different standpoint" (16.2%), "essentiality" (13.7%), "entertainment" (12.5%) "valuableness" (12.5%), "difficulty" (8.7%), "demanding" (6.2%), "ability" (6.2%) and "fear" (5%).

Under the most popular theme, "universality", 18.7% of the participants created metaphors such as "common language, world, world language, international communication, universal network, universal communication, universal language, network with the world" and "the door opening to the world". Students' metaphorical perceptions revealed that they are aware of the fact that English is a common language functioning as a vehicle for them to connect with the world. In a similar vein, 16.2% of the participants made an analogy between English language and a different standpoint through the metaphors of "new people, new cultures, a new person, a different window, many worldviews, a new world, big differences" and "variety". This is evident in the

statement of the P15 that "English is a different window because we can see different people and cultures from there". This finding corroborates the study of Erdem (2018) and that of Guerrero and Villamil (2002) who demonstrated that students describe English language as travelling around a new world in which they take new steps to discover different people and culture. Furthermore, it can be concluded from students' metaphors of "cheer, joy, enjoyment" and "a big joy" that 12.5% of the participants see learning English language as an entertaining activity. This is stated by the P5 that "Learning English is a big joy I like learning a new language.", which yields similar patterns with related studies (Jın et al., 2014; Pishghadam, 2011). It can be summarized that prep-class students have a feeling of happiness or pleasure while they are learning English as a means to explore the world. This finding is compatible with the study of Jiménez (2018) who explored students' perceptions about English learning in a public university and reported that many participants enjoy and benefit from learning English in this globalized world nowadays.

With the theme of essentiality, 13.7% of the students generated metaphors of "necessity, water, life, lifesaving, basic need, obligatory case, Tom and Jerry" and "a piece of puzzle". In this regard, the statement of the P69 that "We are Tom and English is Jerry, so we have to catch it during our life because we need it." and the statement of the P55 that "English language is a piece of puzzle of my life and to be happy I need it." directly manifest that students are aware of the significance of English language to increase the quality of their life. For that reason, 12.5% of the participants associated English with the metaphors of" gold, gold bracelet" and "investment", which is in line with the findings of Gömleksiz (2013) stressing the positive metaphorical perceptions of students regarding foreign language. Similarly, Ansow et al., (2022) inquired into university students' perception toward English learning and found that students have positive attitudes towards learning English language since it is key to get job in the future and widen their knowledge of the world.

On the other hand, 8.7% of the students conceptualized English language with difficulty by using such metaphors as "marathon, challenging, a difficult way, a tiring journey" and "exhausting". Likewise, 6.2% of the students emphasized the demands needed for learning English through metaphors including "land, flower, a flower

growing with water" and "arable lands". This finding makes it clear that prep-class students know that they should make an effort to learn English even if learning English is a difficult process. Additionally, because of the difficulty, 5% of the students associated English language with the metaphors of "fear, nightmare, horror film", pointing at their negative attitudes towards English. This is considerably in line with the study of Su (2015) who investigated the metaphorical perceptions of EFL students and found that students mostly have negative attitudes and unpleasant feelings about English learning by matching it with the words such as suffering and death. However, it is noteworthy to underline that 38.7% of the prep-class students have a positive conceptualization of English language even if 13.7% of the students perceive English language negatively. Hence, prep-class students accept that English language is vitally important for their future career and learning English can change their life positively although they regard learning English challenging and time-consuming, which corroborates the previous studies conducted in this research area (Badia, et al., 2017; Farah & Sholikhah, 2020; Gündüzalp & Demirtaş, 2020; Iqbal et al., 2022; Wan et al., 2011; Vezne et al., 2023; Yılmaz, 2018).

The metaphors of prep-class students regarding future life

In terms of prep-class students' perceptions about their future life, it is possible to mention four themes including *"hopelessness" (*36.3%), "uncertainty*"* (30%), "hope" (18.7%) and "achievement" (15%). First of all, with the theme of "hopelessness", 36.3% of the participants generated the metaphors such as "*darkness, dark, night, a dead luck, black, black hole, black box, artificial light, lightless, a lightless sun, a functionless lamb, Greek calends, a dream not come true"* and "*dark room*". This finding is obvious in the statement of the P51 that *"I see my future as darkness because there is no hope for a beautiful life."*. Prep-class students' hopelessness can be attributed to their dissatisfaction with language learning process during online education. This is in line with the study of Saltürk (2021) who analyzed students' perception on the concept of academic achievement and the barriers about their future life. Accordingly, he stated that students have difficulty in shaping their future plan because of the dissatisfaction with their education life. From another perspective, the P6 remarked that "*My future is like a dead luck because I could not learn English in online education and this year was*

my only option to learn English before passing to my department.". Hence, students' previous learning experiences affect their point of views about their future life, which is in compliance with the findings of studies in this field (Joo et al., 2011; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008).

Under the category of uncertainty, 30% of the prep-class students produced "ambiguity, tunnel, fog, unknown route, happenstance, unknown route, an unpredictable road, a momentary situation, variability, leap in the dark, bottomless well, limitless tunnels, uncertain world, foggy day,foggy country, an unforesightful person" and "hazy life", highlighting that students are pessimistic about their future life, which has a similar result with the study of Osgerby et al., (2018) who explored the university students' thoughts about their future life through visual metaphors and concluded that they regarded the process of thinking about future daunting because they had difficulty to assess their strengths and weaknesses clearly. Addedly, Donald et al., (2018) focused on university learners' perceptions of their future life in terms of their education life and reported that students have negative emotions about their future career due to the uncertainty in employment issues in their department.

On the contrary, 33.7% of the participants can be said to be optimistic about their future life, in that, they generated metaphors such as "*sunny, rainbow, a bright road, sunny days, stars, green ways, a ship in Philippines, source of hope, wonderful life, good, as fresh as daisy*" and "*lively*" under the theme of hope. To illustrate, the P8 stated that *"My future life will be like a rainbow because there will be many colorful events.".* Similarly, Zhang (2022) reported that EFL students have positive mood and future outlook in relation to their language learning process, which in turn affects their academic achievement positively. Another positive perspective of prep-class students regarding their future life is obvious in the metaphors produced by them as *"success, career, experience, diamond, richness, a successful person",* which yields very similar results with the previous studies (Beausaert et al., 2011; Pope & Denicolo, 2001). Likewise, the positive beliefs of prep-class students regarding their future life can be related to their satisfaction with language learning process during online education, namely, the P4 declared that "*I see my future life as a diamond because I have improved my English during online lessons due to the help of my teacher*".

Conclusion

The findings of the present study yielded comprehensive understanding of each research question. Firstly, in terms of online education, it can be said that the most popular associations of students such as "*computer, distance learning, screen, artificial learning, virtual, imaginary education*" can be gathered under the theme of "digitalism". At this point, while expressing their justifications, 52.5% of the students approached online education negatively. They conveyed their negative feelings through metaphors such as "*torture, death, hollow, fruitless*" and "*challenging*". On the other hand, 22.5% of the students handled online education positively by using the words *"comfortable, pleasing*" and "*an education type coming from paradise*" as metaphors.

When it comes to prep-class students' perceptions regarding their English instructors, the most remarkable finding elicits that a considerable number of students (73.7%) had a quite positive perception of English instructors, which is supported by metaphors as *"mothers, flowers, a precious person, kind-hearted, sun, sincerity*" and "*angels".* In a nutshell, even if more than half of the students were not in favor of online education, they were satisfied with their instructors' attitudes, behaviours and roles during online education.

The examination of the prep-class students' metaphors expressing their emotions about English language showed that prep-class students regarded English language as a common language which opens the doors to different cultures, people and beliefs under the most popular themes of "universality" and "a different standpoint". Additionally, 13.7% of the participants expressed their negative feelings about English language through metaphors such as "*nightmare, marathon*" and *"horror film*". Nevertheless, 38.7% of the students were in a positive view towards English language, which is obvious in their metaphors including "*life, joy, gold, investment".* It should be noted that prep-class students were conscious of the important place of English language to reach their aim throughout their lives although they found learning English language as a tiring and challenging process.

Lastly, findings put emphasis on that 66.3% of the students can be said to be pessimistic about their future life. The metaphors such as "*darkness, black hole, a dead luck, fog, bottomless well, tunnels*" and "*unknown route*" generated by students draw

attention the fact that they based their negative beliefs about future life on hopelessness and ambiguity. All in all, it is important to highlight that students are not in favor of online education even though it is flexible and comfortable. This finding may imply that online education should be an option only when face-to-face education is impossible to implement for students since the analysis of their metaphors does not yield positive attitudes towards online education. Therefore, the present study gives us an insight into how online education practices and teachers' roles in relation with English language learning should be regulated in a way that prep-class students develop positive perspectives about their future life when the conditions require the implementation of online education.

Implications & Suggestions

The fact that we have been living in the digital literacy age underlines the importance of employing technology for learning and teaching, which gives rise to the prominence of online education system. However, it is noteworthy to underline that online education should be taken as a secondary option for learners in the light of their negative perceptions regarding online education. Still, some implications can be given to ensure the effectiveness of online language teaching and learning process. First and foremost, the finding that more than half of the students have a negative perception about online education requires educational practitioners to both delve into the reasons of this situation and make regulations to achieve success at the desired level.

It is a well known fact that students' learning experiences and interactions with their instructors play a crucial role in their predictions on how their future life will be. From this viewpoint, Sun and Chen (2016) suggest that learners' psychological states contribute to their learning performance, which in turn, leads to positivity on the part of students about future. To sum up, metaphors created by students along with their justifications that reflect how they perceive online education given by English instructors to teach English language should be given utmost importance to meet the expectations of students from the future life.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

This research study was conducted with the Research Ethics Committee approval of Bursa Technical University, dated 11.04.2022

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