TURKISH EFL LEARNERS' METAPHORS WITH RESPECT TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSEBOOKS

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Abstract: With the increasing interest in using metaphor as a research tool, metaphor has been more a means of understanding the components of thinking than a part of figurative device. As in other fields, research in the field of language teaching and learning has extensively used metaphors as to develop a better understanding of learners' beliefs, thoughts, and values about language learning process and its components. In line with this reasoning, the present study searches into EFL learners' perceptions about the concept of foreign language coursebook by means of metaphors. The participants were 150 EFL learners studying at Cyprus International University. The data were analyzed using the content analysis. The results of the study revealed that for most of the learners, language coursebooks are perceived as a planet, foreign country, secret garden, and space, which indicates uncertainty and enigma experienced by the learners.

Keywords: metaphors, English language learners, learning, foreign language course book.

Özet: Araştırma aracı olarak kullanımı artan metafor edebi bir sanat olmaktan çok düşünce sistemini anlamakta kullanılmaktadır. Metaforlar kullanımına diğer alanlarda olduğu gibi dil öğretimi ve öğrenimi alanında yapılan çalışmalarda da öğrencilerin dil öğrenme sürecine ilişkin inançlarını, düşüncelerini ve algılarını ortaya çıkarmakta sıkça başvurulmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı yabancı dil öğrencilerinin yabancı dil ders kitabına ilişkin sahip oldukları algıları metafor aracılığıyla ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Uluslararası Kıbrıs Üniversitesi Hazırlık Bölümü'ndeki 150 yabancı dil öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verilerinin analiz edilmesinde içerik analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda öğrencilerin büyük bir kısmının yabancı dil kitaplarını gezegen, yabancı ülke, gizli bahçe, ve uzay gibi kavramlar olarak algıladığı görülmüştür.Sonuçlar, yabancı dil öğrencilerinin yabancı dil ders kitapları hakkında yaşadığı belirsizlik duygusunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: metaphor, yabancı dil öğrencileri, öğrenme, yabancı dil ders kitabı.

Introduction

Metaphor as a reflective tool

As to analyze the way people organize their thinking and to explore the internal world of the individuals (including teachers and learners) many techniques such as narrative, storytelling, and reflection have been used. Nowadays, metaphors have been an essential part of the studies investigating the beliefs and values. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that "metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but they actually structure our perceptions and understanding". When a metaphor is employed, the schema is transported from its customary realm to a new realm. In Lakoff and Johnson's opinion (1980) metaphors help us in comprehending experiences and understanding what goes on around us. The reasons why metaphors are a powerful reflective tool vary. In Kliebart's opinion (1982) metaphors are "a fundamental vehicle of human thought". In addition, their expressibility, compactness, and vividness make metaphors be better conceptualized (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008; Ortony and Fainsilber, 1989). In the view of the philosophy of constructivism

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"knowledge is a constructed version of the world and each individual makes sense of his/her own world on the basis of his/her own personal experiments constructs, and hypotheses" (Kelly, 1955). Bredeson (in Balci, 1999) extends the importance of metaphors in unearthing beliefs by emphasizing that metaphors help people in generating ideas, concepts and theories for describing, examining, and understanding phenomena in education.

Metaphors in Educational Contexts

Considering metaphor as a process through which we construe the world as well as the essence of our thoughts and learning, metaphors undoubtedly stand as an essential tool for investigating our understanding and conception of education with its many components as the teacher, the learner, the teaching/learning context and so forth. Metaphors have been used as a research tool in a considerable number of studies in the fields of general education (White and Smith, 1994; Block, 1992; Çelikten, 2006; Saban, 2004). Cerit (2008) studied classroom teachers' metaphors about teachers and found out that teacher 2was perceived as the one who provides and transmits knowledge. In another study by Çelikten (2006), culture and teacher metaphors used in educational system were explored and the study yielded that teacher was mostly seen as a doctor or a gardener. Martinez, Sauleda and Huber (2000) investigated metaphorical conceptions of teachers regarding their images of learning and most of the metaphors were behaviorist and empiricist based. Shaw, Barry and Mahlios (2008) explored English and foreign language teachers' metaphors and their relation to conceptions of literacy. The findings of the study indicated that beliefs fall into nine themes including nurturing and guiding. In addition, Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) collected samples of metaphors about student-generated metaphors about language teachers and it was found out in the study that metaphors support the enlightened eclecticism approach toward language teaching. De Guerrero and Villamil (2001) collected 28 metaphors from English teachers and nine categories emerged. The metaphors that shaped curriculum theories in foreign language teaching were studied by Herron (1982). Herron distinguished two metaphors: "the mind body metaphor" in which language learning is viewed as mental gymnastics aimed to strengthen and discipline the learner's mind and "the production metaphor" where the aim of language education was to produce a marketable and skillful workforce (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008). Parvaresh (2008) studied metaphorical conceptualization of an adult EFL learner. The results of the study revealed that adult learner's ways of looking at his teacher and his language did not change over time. As for the metaphors regarding language coursebooks, McGrath (2006) studied teachers' and learners' images for coursebooks and he concluded that "there is value in teachers researching their learners' beliefs and attitudes- in relation to coursebooks and other aspects of the teaching and learning environment".

Studies on Coursebook Evaluation in Turkey

As in many other countries where English is taught as a foreign language, language coursebook evaluation has been important component of research in the field of foreign language teaching. The studies have mostly focused on the contribution of the coursebooks on learning and teaching. İnal (2006) elaborates on an important aspect of textbook evaluation in Turkey. In his opinion, foreign language teaching in Turkey is mostly based on the coursebook, which leads to negative influence on teaching and learning. Coursebook evaluation in foreign language education in Turkey was studied by many researchers (Kayapınar, 2009; Tekir and Arikan, 2007; Arikan, 2004, Onay, 1998; Aydemir, 2002; Erentürk, 1999, Alptekin, 1993). The scope of the studies ranged from the role of coursebook evaluation in foreign language teaching to the effects of cultural biases in ELT textbooks. In

Turkey where foreign language education is compulsory, it becomes essential to search into learners' beliefs with respect to their conceptions of English language coursebooks. By eliciting learners' beliefs, language teachers may help learners develop positive attitudes towards language courses. However, the elicitation of learners' perceptions should be done in such a way that would ensure gaining insights into learners' ways of thinking about language coursebooks. Considering the importance of exploring learners' views, the present study aims to find Turkish EFL learners' metaphorical images of English language coursebooks.

Research Method

Design of the Study

The current study was conducted using the content analysis method, which is within the qualitative research paradigm. The reason for utilizing this method was that "*concepts and themes that are not noticeable using the descriptive approach may be seen by using the content analysis*" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). Data collected through metaphor elicitation method were analyzed and categorized by three researchers (two EFL teachers teaching at university and the researcher of the present study). The steps used in the categorization of metaphors can be summarized as follows:

- participants' metaphors and the rationale behind choosing these metaphors were listed
- main categories of metaphors were developed
- metaphors were grouped under main categories
- the distribution of the metaphors in each category was displayed in tables.

Participants

The participants of the current study were 150 Turkish students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) enrolled at Cyprus International University. All the participants were enrolled in the Department of Preparatory School at the time of the study. The participants range in age from 18 to 23. There were considerably more female learners (N= 93) than male learners (N=57) among the participants of the study. The participants were mostly majored in science, psychology, and engineering. Background information about what a metaphor is, how metaphors are generated, and some examples of metaphors were given to all the participants to make sure that the participants did not have any unclear point about the data collection stage of the study.

Data Collection

The current study which explores Turkish EFL learners' conception of foreign language coursebook was conducted at two stages. As the first step, learners' images about foreign language coursebook were elicited. All the participants (N=150) were asked to complete the sentence of "A foreign language coursebook is a/an……" Each participant was asked to finish the sentence with his/her own metaphor. Upon generating their own metaphors, the respondents were asked to write an explanation for the metaphor they generated for the notion "English language coursebook". At stage two, the participants were asked to express their thoughts about their metaphors on paper. There was no limitation for the length of the writing. The respondents were free to write their thoughts at home. The reason for asking participants to elaborate on the metaphor they generated was to have more reliable data and strengthen the data collection procedure.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

As the first step of analysis, the metaphors developed by participants were read by two researchers to determine the accuracy. The metaphors were then evaluated on the basis of their contribution to the study. The metaphors that included learners' perceptions of English language coursebook were included in the analysis of data. Irrelevant metaphors (e.g An English language coursebook is a book because we learn something) were excluded from the study. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. The metaphors developed by the participants were categorized into themes and content resemblance. As to create the themes under which metaphors were grouped, both the papers the participants wrote and the data obtained from interviews were analyzed. The number and the percentage of the participants that represented each metaphor in each category of theme were calculated.

Findings and Discussion

As to reveal Turkish EFL learners' perceptions regarding English language coursebooks, all the metaphors developed by the participants were categorized into themes which were designed on the basis of participants' elaborations on their metaphors both in the written (essays) and oral (interviews) forms. Table 1 displays the metaphors about English language coursebooks and the related themes.

Table 1. List of metaphors devised by EFL learners for the notion of "English language coursebook"

Theme	Metaphor	f	%
Pleasure	1. film	3	2
	2. song	4	2.6
	3. trip	2	1.3
	4. lullaby	1	0.6
	5. baby	2	1.3
Guidance and enlightenment	1. guide	12	8
	2. lamp	2	1.3
	3. map	6	4
	4. compass	2	1.3
	5. candle	2	1.3
Variety	1. circus	3	2
	2. spice	1	0.6
	3. garden	2	1.3
	4. department store	2	1.3
	5. casino	1	0.6
	6. wardrobe	1	0.6
	7. pizza	2	1.3
	8. rainbow	1	0.6
	9. house	1	0.6
Travel	1. ticket	3	2
	2. road	5	3.3
	3. navigation system	1	0.6
	4. magical carpet	1	0.6

Fear	1. dentist 2. tall building 3. tiger 4. dark room 5. ladder	4 1 1 3 1	2.6 0.6 0.6 2 0.6
Difficulty	1. baby 2. puzzle 3. sushi 4. star	1 12 1 1	0.6 8 0.6 0.6
Growth	1. seed 2. tree 3. flower	1 3 4	0.6 2 2.6
Taste	1. candy 2. chocolate	3 3	2 2
Preciousness	1. diamond 2. treasure box	1 2	0.6 1.3
Mystery	1. planet 2. foreign country 3. secret garden 4. space	3 18 1 2	2 12 0.6 1.3
Attractiveness	1. red rose 2. jewellery 3. lake	1 1 1	0.6 0.6 0.6
Big size	1. continent 2. mountain	3 2	2 1.3
Disaster	1. flood 2. hurricane	2 1	1.3 0.6
Reflection	1. TV 2. mirror	2 1	1.3 0.6
Power	1. artist 2. money 3. sport car	1 5 4	0.6 3.3 2.6
Total	57 metaphors	150	100

We see in Table 1 that 57 metaphors with respect to English language coursebooks were developed by the participants and the metaphors were grouped under 15 themes. In Table 1, it is seen that under the theme "pleasure", 5 different metaphors were represented by 12 learners. Among the metaphors in this category, the metaphor "song" received the highest frequency. That is, 4 of the participants believe that an English language coursebook is like a song which gives happiness and joy. Other metaphors under this theme are "film" (n= 3), "trip" (n= 2), "baby" (n= 2), and "lullaby" (n= 1). We can conclude that learners using these metaphors perceive the coursebook as a material that gives pleasure. It is also important to

note that learners using the metaphors "film" and "song" stated that they referred to a happy song and a film with a happy ending. As for the metaphor "baby" the rationale behind it was the colorful and joyful side of having a baby. Another category of metaphors belong to the theme "guidance and enlightenment". When Table 1 is inspected, it is seen that 24 learners developed 5 different metaphors in this category. For learners the most important metaphor which represents an English language coursebook is "guide". That is to say, from 12 participants' point of view, both an English language coursebook and a guide are similar in that they both provide guidance. Other metaphors of guidance and enlightenment are "map" (n= 6), "lamp" (n= 2), "compass" (n= 2), and "candle" (n= 2). It can be concluded that the learners using these metaphors expect a coursebook to guide the readers (what to do and how to do) and shed light onto the topic studied.

The third category of metaphors which has the highest number of metaphors is "variety". For students the metaphors that best explain their perception of a language coursebook are "circus" (n= 3), "garden" (n= 2), "department store" (n= 2), "pizza" (n= 2), "spice" (n= 1), "casino" (n= 1), "wardrobe" (n= 1), "rainbow" (n= 1)), and "house" (n= 1). It is easily seen that learners developing these metaphors imply the combination of different tastes (as in spice and pizza), different colors (as in rainbow and garden) or different sections (as in department store). We can conclude that learners perceive an English language coursebook as a material that presents different colors, tastes, or feelings. It was highlighted by the participants during the interviews that they developed these metaphors by making a comparison between their language coursebooks and other coursebooks such as maths coursebook or history coursebook. The fourth category of metaphors in Table 1 is "travel". The most important metaphor under the theme of travel is "road". For 5 of the participants, an English language coursebook is like a road. When interviewed, the learners generating this metaphor stated that the resemblance lies in both length and duration. That is, for learners using the metaphor "road", an English language coursebook takes a long time to finish and there is both the start and finish as in a road. Other metaphors under the theme of travel are "ticket" (n= 3), "navigation system" (n= 1), and "magical carpet". The metaphor "magical carpet" stood among the others as the learner using this metaphor stated that a magical carpet takes people to mysterious places so does a language coursebook. In contrast to themes and metaphors discussed so far, the metaphors under the theme of "fear" imply the negative perceptions of Turkish EFL learners in regard to the concept of English language coursebook. The metaphors in this category are "dentist" (n= 4), "dark room" (n= 3), "tall building" (n= 1), "tiger" (n= 1), "ladder" (n= 1). The reasons why learners associate an English language coursebook with these concepts that carry the feeling of fear might be attributed to learners' past classroom experiences. That is, inappropriate coursebook selection by the language teacher might have caused learners to develop fear for language coursebooks.

The metaphors under the theme of "difficulty" reveal various reasons for the choice of metaphors. For the metaphor "puzzle" (n= 12) (which has the highest frequency among the other metaphors in this category) learners stated that just like a puzzle, language coursebooks are confusing and mostly difficult to deal with. This metaphor (as in the metaphors under the category of fear) implies a negative perception of the learners regarding the language coursebooks. Other metaphors in the category of difficulty are "baby" (the difficulty of taking care of), "sushi" (the difficulty of eating), and "star" (the difficulty of reaching). The theme "growth" presents a positive perspective of the learners. The metaphors under this theme are "flower" (n= 4), "tree" (n= 3), and "seed" (n= 1). During the interviews, the learners creating these metaphors stated that a language coursebook like others help learners to develop themselves in time.

In Table 1 we see that under the theme "taste" 2 metaphors were represented by learners: "candy" (n= 3) and "chocolate" (n= 3). The participants using these metaphors for the concept of an English language coursebook stated that candy and chocolate always taste sweet so does a language coursebook. They added that reading a language coursebook always instilled the feeling of good taste in them.

For the learners who associated the language coursebook with preciousness, the metaphors were "diamond" (n= 1) and "treasure box" (n= 2). As to explain the baffling aspect of an English language coursebook, learners used the metaphors "planet" (n= 3) and "foreign country" (n= 18). It is noteworthy to mention that of these two metaphors "foreign country" has the highest frequency among all the others developed by 150 participants. That is, for 18 Turkish EFL learners, an English language coursebook can best be described by using the metaphor "foreign country". When asked during the interviews, most of the participants stated that the reason for such an analogy is that a language coursebook presents the culture of that country.

The participants who claimed to be attracted by English language coursebooks used the metaphors "red rose" (n= 1), "jewellery" (n= 1), and "lake" (n= 1). The common point in all these metaphors was that all these meant beauty for the learners as did a language course book. As for the theme "size" we see in Table 1 that 5 learners created two metaphors: "continent" (n= 3) and "mountain" (n= 2) for the concept of an English language coursebook. The learners who perceived a language coursebook as either a continent or a mountain stated that both continents and mountains are huge as is a language coursebook. When asked to elaborate on the analogy, the participants told that language coursebooks are mostly long and contain a huge body of information to be acquired. Indeed, the rationale behind using these two metaphors implies the difficulty that the learners seem to experience in language classes. The learners who associated an English language course book with disaster used the metaphors "flood" (n= 2) and "hurricane" (n= 1). These two metaphors under the theme of disaster imply the negative perceptions of learners about language coursebooks. The participants creating flood and hurricane metaphors stated that most of the time the language coursebooks they read were full of novel things and once they started studying the books they got lost and found themselves in failure. We can assume that language coursebooks used in language classes do contain a huge body of new information for the learners and if not handled with utmost care, these books may cause the learners to lose track of the course. Another category of metaphors consist of two metaphors developed by learners with respect to their perceptions of an English language course book. These are "TV" (n= 2) and "mirror" (n= 1). These two metaphors under the theme of reflection display positive perceptions of the language learners. The reason for learners' developing these metaphors might be attributed to activities that both reinforce practice and reflect learners' knowledge in language coursebooks.

The theme "power" indicates positive perceptions of the learners as in the theme "reflection". When Table 1 is inspected, it is seen that the metaphors under the theme power are "artist" (n= 1), "money" (n= 5) and "sport car" (n= 4). The learners who associated an English language coursebook with an artist, money, and sport car believe that being an artist, having money, or owning a sports car symbolize power. When asked to elaborate on their metaphors the participants using these metaphors stated that when they read an English language coursebook, they had the feeling of doing something demanding.

The table below summarizes the findings on the basis of positive and negative themes.

Table 2. Themes of metaphors with positive and negative connotations.

Themes with positive connotations			Themes with negative connotations		
Themes	f	%	Themes	f	%
Pleasure	12	8	Fear	10	6.6
Guidance and enlightenment	22	14.6	Difficulty	15	10
Variety	14	9.3	Mystery	24	16
Travel	10	6.6	Big size	5	3.3
Taste	6	4	Disaster	3	2
Preciousness	3	2			
Attractiveness	3	2			
Reflection	3	2			
Power	10	6.6			
Growth	8	5.3			
Total	**93**	**100**		**57**	**100**

Table 2 displays the themes that have positive and negative connotations of the metaphors developed by participants with respect to the concept of an English language coursebook. It is seen in Table 2 that while the number of themes with positive connotations is 10, the number of themes with negative connotations is only 5. That is, the total number of metaphors developed under the themes that have positive connotations is 93 while the number of metaphors under the themes with negative connotations is 57. We can assume that more than half of the participants developed metaphors that have positive connotations. The first three important themes under positive connotations are "guidance and enlightenment" (n= 24), "variety" (n= 14) and "pleasure" (n= 12). We can say that nearly one –third of the participants perceive an English language coursebook as a material that provides them with guidance, variety and pleasure. This finding might be attributed to learners' good experiences in language classes. Other themes that imply the positive perceptions of learners are "travel", "power", "taste", "preciousness", "attractiveness", "reflection", "growth" In Table 2, it is also seen that 57 metaphors that fall into 5 themes with negative connotations were developed by learners. The theme "mystery" stands out among all the other themes with negative connotations (n= 24). As to imply the baffling features of language coursebooks, learners developed the metaphors "planet", "foreign country", "secret garden" and "space" all of which fall under the theme mystery (see Table 1). Another theme of metaphors that indicates the negative perceptions of learners is "difficulty". Learners developed the metaphors "baby" "puzzle", "sushi", "star" as to reveal their perceptions of an English language coursebook (see Table 1). Other themes that imply negative perceptions of the learners are "fear", "big size" and "disaster".

Conclusion and Discussion

It is beyond doubt that selection of coursebooks for language learning is of great importance as it is the source of motivation on the part of the learners. It is also known that language teachers follow some specific criteria (e.g. learners' needs, learners' interest, level of the learners, availability, course objectives…etc) in choosing coursebooks for language classes. However, the most crucial point seems to be learners' beliefs and attitudes about language coursebooks. Therefore, learners' views of language coursebooks should certainly be elicited. Metaphors have been an essential part of the studies investigating the beliefs and values.

Lakoff (1980) states that "metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but they actually structure our perceptions and understanding". Metaphors have also proven to be a reliable research tool to elicit beliefs and attitudes of language learners and teachers (McGrath, 2006; Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008).

The present study aimed to explore Turkish EFL learners' images of English language coursebooks through the use of metaphor as a research tool. The total number of metaphors created by learners was 57. Of these metaphors, "planet", "foreign country", "secret garden", and "space" constitute the category "mystery" which stands as one of the themes a high frequency among the other themes of metaphors. We can conclude that in Turkey where foreign language education is compulsory and is still a demanding task for most of the learners, language coursebooks are perceived as a planet, foreign country, secret garden, and space as all these represent the feeling of uncertainty or enigma experienced by the learners. The reason for such analogies might be attributable to inappropriate selection of language textbooks by language teachers.

The theme with the second highest frequency of metaphors is "guidance and enlightenment" The metaphor which has the highest frequency in this category is "guide". That is 12 of the participants perceive an English language coursebook as a guide that helps them to find their ways around. It is encouraging to see that more than half of the participants' metaphors of language coursebooks imply the positive perceptions that the learners have. However, it should also be noted that one-third of the participants' metaphors reveal the negative perceptions they have. It should be within the objectives of the language teacher to elicit learners' views of language coursebooks and choose the textbooks accordingly as to help language learners have positive attitudes towards language courses and eliminate negativity caused by the language coursebooks.

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