

## The perceptions of international students learning Turkish through distance education on Turkish language course and language skills: A metaphor study

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### Highlights

- Although it is understood that students have problems in participating in distance Turkish learning and language skills activities, it can be said that they generally have positive opinions.
- Technology-related problems is one of the main barriers to effective online learning.
- Social interaction during the teaching of speaking and listening skills is insufficient.

### Abstract

In this study, the perceptions of international students who were learning Turkish through distance education regarding Turkish language course and language skills were examined. The research was designed in accordance with the phenomenology pattern. The study group of the research consisted of 27 international students who received Turkish preparatory education at a state university in Türkiye. To collect the data of the study, the students were asked to create a metaphor for the Turkish language course and language skills and to write the reason for this metaphor. The data of the research were collected electronically. The form created for this purpose was transferred to electronic media via Google Forms and sent to the e-mail addresses of the students. As the result of the study, it was seen that the metaphors created by international students about Turkish language course were gathered in six categories. Two of these categories consisted of positive and four of them were negative metaphors. When the students' metaphors for language skills were examined; three of the five categories created for reading skill were positive and two were negative; three of the four categories for writing skill were positive and one was negative; three of the four categories for listening skill were positive and one was negative. It was also determined that four of the five categories created for speaking skill consisted of positive metaphors and one of them consisted of negative metaphors.

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## 1. Introduction

COVID-19 continues to be an epidemic that affects the whole world even after two years since the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 infection (WHO) although the reduction of human contact has been tried to be controlled by distance. Some attempts to isolate people from the society as much as possible have some benefits in terms of public health, but it has also caused negative situations in many areas. One of them is the field of education. Due to the threat of COVID-19, educational institutions were faced with situations that are not yet known and had to move face-to-face courses online (Hodges, Moore, Lockee,

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Trust, & Bond, 2020), while trying to protect their staff and students from a rapidly advancing uncertain situation.

Pandemic measures have been put into practice for Turkey as in all countries and education has been moved to the online field. These institutions also include those who teach Turkish as a foreign language. The basics while learning a new language are accomplished by teaching language skills in an integrated way. While it is easier to manage one-to-one close contact and concrete learning with students in face to face classroom environment, it is relatively difficult to achieve them equally with distance education. Furthermore, it is thought that institutions and instructors are insufficiently involved in this process in terms of determining the basic principles of program, material, field, undergraduate education and distance education (Yurdakul & Duman, 2021). Starting from the pre-pandemic period to the present, research studies are available on instructors' views (Petersen, 2014 ; Carrillo & Flores 2020; Manibur Rahman, 2020; Eroğlu& Okur, 2021; Yurdakul & Duman, 2021; Kuvacı, 2020; Sipahioğlu , 2022) and students' opinions (Farrah & Al-Bakry, 2020; Hernández & Flórez, 2020; Karatay, Kaya & Başer, 2021; Tirtanawati, 2021; Bağrıçak Yılmaz, 2019; Alan, 2021; Kaleli Yılmaz & Güven, 2015; Bekdaş & Karaoğulları, 2021; Tuncay & Özçınar, 2009), and some research studies have been conducted to determine the place of Turkish as a foreign language learning systems in asynchronous communication environments (Pilancı, 2018). Those who learn Turkish as a foreign language did not want distance education except for compulsory situations (Karatay, Kaya & Başer, 2021), and they listed the reasons for this as system problems, limited interaction, inability to develop language skills, not being able to attend classes, and difficulty in teaching Turkish from a distance (Kartallıoğlu, 2022). In addition to some positive opinions, it was also determined that there were problems such as not being able to develop speaking and writing skills, problems arising from the internet and technological tools, communication problems, effective participation in classes and attendance problems (Karatay, Kaya & Başer, 2021). For these reasons, students mostly prefer face-to-face education (Özer & Çekici, 2020).

At this point, learning the perceptions of students about teaching Turkish as a foreign language can be beneficial both to help them and to contribute to those who are interested in the field so that we could see and prevent the existing problems and disruptions more clearly. Metaphors, which are a tool that we use automatically to better express our experiences about ourselves and our world (Akpolat, 2021) while getting information about what these perceptions are, and that helps us to better understand the world (Zhang & Hu, 2009) can be used as a method.

The word metaphor means to take from one place to another (Lakoff & Johnson, 2015). Zhang & Hu (2009) stated that metaphor gives a new meaning and extension to a word in the language system, builds a bridge between the known and the unknown, and reasonably relates the different meanings of the word to each other. Revealing and making sense of the images and metaphors that students create about language learning allows them to explore their thinking processes, while asking students to make concrete comparisons and analogies that match them, rather than directly asking questions about their beliefs and attitudes. When teachers learn about students' beliefs and subjective impressions about foreign language learning, they can provide a more individual and student-centered learning environment by adjusting teaching materials and activities accordingly (Farjami, 2012). While metaphors help us to make sense of our environment, they also have features such as descriptive and prescriptive. It helps instructors to create a classroom environment in which students with individual differences, diverse and different ideas come together (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). It is thought that identifying metaphors will help students determine their status and attitudes towards the target language, and will benefit the preparation of educational environments for them.

In this study, the perceptions of international students learning Turkish through distance education about Turkish language course and language skills were examined. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of distance Turkish language course, and under which categories are these metaphors listed?
2. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of language skills, and under which categories are these metaphors listed?
  - a. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of reading skills?
  - b. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of writing skills?
  - c. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of listening skills?
  - d. Which metaphors do international students use to explain their perceptions of speaking skills?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Model

In this study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, was used to determine the metaphorical perceptions of international students learning Turkish through distance education towards Turkish language course and language skills.

Phenomenology studies the phenomena that people are aware of but do not have detailed information about. These phenomena can occur in various forms such as people's experiences, perceptions and orientations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). According to Creswell (2021: 80), phenomenology “explains individuals' experiences and how they have objective experiences of the phenomenon and subjective experiences that are common to other people.” In this design, it is important that the participants forming the working group have direct experiences (Patton, 2014: 104). For this reason, in this study, the experiences of international students learning Turkish during distance Turkish language course were tried to be determined through metaphors. The students were asked what the distance education Turkish language course and language skills were like, and they were asked to explain the reasons. Thus, it was tried to determine the perceptions of the students regarding the distance Turkish language course and language skills.

### 2.2. Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 27 international students studying in various departments of a state university in Black Sea Region in Turkey in the 2019-2020 academic year.

**Table 1.**

Demographic Information of the Study Group

Variable	Categories	F	%
Country	Syria	4	14.8
	Iraq	3	11.1
	Azerbaijan	3	11.1
	Palestine	3	11.1
	Afghanistan	2	7.4
	Morocco	2	7.4
	Yemen	2	7.4
	Uzbekistan	2	7.4
	Pakistan	1	3.7
	Bangladesh	1	3.7
	Cameroon	1	3.7
	Mali	1	3.7
	Zambia	1	3.7
	Kenya	1	3.7
	Total	27	100

Gender	Female	5	18.5
	Male	22	81.5
	Total	27	100
Turkish Level	C1	27	100
	Total	27	100

According to Table 1, it is seen that the study group of the research consists of 27 international students from 14 different countries. Of these students, 4 of them are from Syrian; 3 from Iraq, Azerbaijan and Palestine; 2 from Afghanistan, Morocco, Uzbekistan and Yemen; and 1 from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Mali, Zambia and Kenya. Five (18.5%) of the students were female and 22 (81.5%) were male. All students have a C1 level of Turkish language proficiency.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

The form prepared by the researcher was used to collect the data of the study. The prepared form consisted of three sections. In the first part, the instructions for the data collection were available. In this section, the aim of the research was explained. In the second section, there were questions to determine students' demographic information such as nationality, gender, age and Turkish proficiency levels. In the last section, it was aimed to determine the perceptions of international students towards the Turkish language course and four basic language skills through distance education. In the prepared form, an example metaphor sentence related to each subject is given. Then, they were asked to fill in the missing parts in the following sentences by making an analogy. "Learning Turkish with distance education is like ..... Because....."; "The ability to read with distance education is like ..... Because....."; "The ability to write with distance education is like..... Because....."; Listening skill with distance education is like..... Because....."; "The ability to speak with distance education is like ..... Because.....". Thus, through metaphors, it was attempted to find out the perceptions of international students, who were learning Turkish through distance education, about Turkish language course and four basic language skills with distance education.

Due to the Pandemic, it was decided to collect the data of the research in an electronic platform. The form created for this purpose was transferred to Google Forms and sent to the e-mail addresses of the students. The responses of the students constituted the data of the study.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The data of the research were analyzed through the content analysis technique. "Content analysis is defined as a systematic, repeatable technique in which some words of a text are summarized with smaller content categories with coding based on certain rules. It is a technique in which inferences are made for the objective and systematic recognition of certain features of a message" (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2016: 250). By means of content analysis, the data is defined and the facts that may be hidden in the data are determined (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Metaphors written by international students were analyzed using four stages: coding extraction, sample metaphor compilation, category development, and ensuring validity and reliability (Saban, 2008).

In the coding and sorting phase, the metaphors created by international students and their justifications were examined. The data that did not have a metaphor feature in the sentences of the students and that did not have a connection between the metaphor and its justification were eliminated. As a result of this examination, 12 students were excluded from the scope of the research. During the sample metaphor compilation phase, the metaphors created by the students were listed in alphabetical order. Thus, it was examined whether there were similar features between the metaphors created by the students and their justifications. In the category development stage, the metaphors created by the students were grouped. Then, considering the reasons of the metaphors, they were divided according to categories and themes. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, an expert's opinion was taken to explore whether the

metaphors obtained were suitable for the categories created. Then, the similarities and differences were examined by comparing the opinions of researchers and experts. Using the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) ( $\text{Reliability} = \text{consensus} / (\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement} \times 100)$ ), it was determined that there was a 92% agreement between the views of researchers and experts. For the items that could not be adapted, the expert and the researcher came together again and discussed the relevant items and reached a consensus.

### 3. Findings

The metaphors created by international students learning Turkish through distance education for the Turkish language course and four basic language skills were categorized according to their characteristics. The categories and metaphors created are presented in the tables below.

#### 3.1. Findings Concerning the Metaphors of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education Regarding Turkish Language Course

The metaphors arising from the perceptions of the Turkish language course of international students learning Turkish through distance education and the distribution of these metaphors according to categories are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

Perceptions of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education Towards Turkish Language Course

Category	Metaphors	F
Comfortable	Falling asleep, weekend, drinking a cup of coffee	3
Easy	Child game, computer game	2
Virtual	Mirage, silent film, writing in the dust on the floor, painting in your imagination, walking with closed eyes	5
Hard	Iceberg, information structures, holding two watermelons in one hand, boredom, climbing a mountain, studying by candlelight, a student running to his dreams, climbing a mountain without necessary materials, carrying something heavy without a crane from the first floor to the top floor, complicated like math and physics, to get lost	11
Practice	Knitting, math, driving	3
Technological Opportunity	A sharp knife, a never ending movie, war	3

In Table 2, it is seen that the metaphors of the international students learning Turkish through distance education about the Turkish language course were gathered in 6 categories: virtual, comfortable, difficult, easy, practical and technological opportunity. Students produced the most metaphors in difficult category and the least metaphors in the easy category. Even if only this table was taken into consideration, it could be understood that the students considered the distance education Turkish language course as difficult.

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Comfortable" were *falling asleep, drinking a cup of coffee on the weekend*. The common feature of the metaphors collected in this category was that they provided students with free time and provide flexibility. It was determined that the students felt comfortable during the lesson. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like a weekend, because you have a lot of time, you read a lot, you watch movies, you learn very quickly." (K6)*

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like drinking a cup of coffee, because you can get it whenever you want, and I can access the courses whenever I want without any difficulty." (K23)*



The metaphors of the students gathered under the "Easy" category were *child games* and *computer games*. The common feature of the metaphors collected in this category was that anyone who was interested and working in the course can do it. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like a child's game, because if you pay a little attention, you will succeed very easily. If you are careful in distance education, you will learn easily." (K4)*

*"Learning Turkish through distance education is like a computer game, because even children can do it, I teach in front of the computer like playing a game." (K25)*

The common feature of the metaphors of the students gathered under the "Virtual" category was that distance education courses were not as beneficial as face-to-face education. It was gathered that the students did not find distance education realistic and useful. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like a mirage because it seems like something from afar, but we did not learn anything during the distance education process." (K1)*

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like watching a silent movie, because I can't find a sense of reality and I don't understand it." (F8)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Difficult" were *iceberg*, *information structures*, *holding two watermelons in one hand*, *boredom*, *climbing a mountain*, *studying by candlelight*, *a student running towards his dreams*, *climbing a mountain without necessary materials*, *carrying something heavy without a crane from the first floor to the top floor*, *complicated like math and physics*, *to get lost*. The common feature of the metaphors collected in this category was that various problems were encountered during education and it is not easy to overcome these problems. In addition, it was observed that students had difficulties during distance education. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish by distance education is like studying by candlelight, because you don't understand everything exactly and in a certain way." (K14)*

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like getting lost, because there is no direct way of communication between the students and the teacher. You have to do everything yourself." (K27)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Practical" were *knitting*, *math* and *driving*. The common feature of the metaphors collected in this category was that they should be repeated carefully for success in the courses. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like knitting because you cannot learn it easily, it takes a lot of time and effort to learn." (K18)*

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like driving a car, because you can be successful with a lot of practice." (K28)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Technological Opportunity" were *a sharp knife*, *a never ending movie* and *war*. The common feature of the metaphors collected in this category was the computer and internet-related problems experienced during the courses. It is understood from the metaphors of the students that these problems negatively affected the course. Eliminating these problems mentioned can make the lesson more efficient. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"Learning Turkish with distance education is like a never ending movie, because the computer constantly freezes and the lessons are interrupted." (F 15)*

*“Learning Turkish with distance education is like a war, because we struggle with the disconnected internet every day, and I have problems connecting to classes.” (F 17)*

### 3.2. Findings on Metaphors for Language Skills of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education

#### 3.2.1. Findings on Metaphors for Reading Skills of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education

The metaphors revealing the perceptions of international students about reading skills and the distribution of these metaphors according to categories are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Perceptions of International Students towards Reading Skills

Category	Metaphors	F
Developer	Friend, plenty of food, doing sports, watching a good movie, participating in a competition, sea waves, communicating, eating, decrypted old books, the sun	10
Struggle	Going on a journey, a philosophical novel, gaining rank, fishing in the sea, learning English, waging war on yourself	6
Entertaining	Novels, comics, holidays	3
Loneliness	Being under house arrest, vacation, toddler, blind person	4
Useless	Fairy tale, striving in vain, trying to understand blindly, always the same	4

In Table 3, it is seen that the metaphors of international students about reading skills were grouped in 5 categories: developer, loneliness, useless, struggle and entertaining. The students produced metaphors mostly in the developer category and the least in the entertaining category.

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Developer" were *Friend, plenty of food, doing sports, watching a good movie, participating in a competition, sea waves, communicating, eating, decrypted old books, and the sun*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that distance education courses improved students' reading skills. This situation indicates that the education given is beneficial for the students. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to read with distance education is like doing sports, the body gets stronger as you do sports, and the vocabulary and reading skills increase as you read.” (K9)*

*“The ability to read with distance education is like eating, because it improves us and we understand what we read more easily.” (K18)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Struggle" were *Going on a journey, a philosophical novel, gaining rank, fishing in the sea, learning English, waging war on yourself*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that students must work hard to be successful in reading skills. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to read with distance education is like gaining a rank, because when we study, we understand what we read better over time.” (K28)*

*“The ability to read by distance learning is like a philosophical novel because it needs focus to understand.” (K26)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the "Entertaining" category were *novels, comics, and holidays*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that students enjoy reading skills. Students' having positive thoughts for the course closely affects their success in that course. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to read with distance education. It's like a comic book, because the more you read it, the more you enjoy it.” (K19)*

*“The ability to read with distance education. It's like a holiday, because I'm learning and having fun at the same time.” (K25)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Loneliness" were *being under house arrest, vacation, toddler, blind person*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that the distance education courses made the students feel alone in their reading skills. The feeling of loneliness also negatively affects their interest in the course. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to read with distance education is like being under house arrest, because I read when I want and stop when I want. No one tells me what to do.” (K8)*

*“The ability to read with distance education is like a blind person, because there is no one standing over it and directing it.” (K14)*

It was also seen that the metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Useless" were *Fairy tale, striving in vain, trying to understand blindly, always the same*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that distance education courses were not beneficial for the development of students' reading skills. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to read with distance education is like fussing around, because I don't think reading from this distance helps us much.” (K17)*

*“The ability to read by distance learning is like blindly trying to understand, because in the end sometimes we don't understand anything.” (K20)*

### 3.2.2. Findings on Metaphors of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education Regarding Writing Skills

The metaphors that reveal the perceptions of international students about writing skills and the distribution of these metaphors according to categories are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

International Students' Perceptions of their Writing Skill

Category	Metaphors	F
A Useful Process	Building a big building, rain, engrave on stone	3
A Gradual Process	A tree, a baby lion, a growing flower, driving a car, football, soccer, a messy room that is difficult to organize, playing sports, getting a driver's license, riding a horse, painting	10
An Enjoyable Activity	Drawing a painting, writing a book, inventing something, painting, writing a magazine, compass, flying without wings	7
A Difficult Process	Quantum physics, school, writing on water, invisible pen, writing without a pen, decoding on the internet, studying physics and chemistry	7

In Table 4, it is seen that the metaphors of international students about writing skills were gathered in 4 categories: *a useful process, a gradual process, a difficult task, and an enjoyable activity*. Students produced metaphors in *a phased process category the most and a useful process category the least*.

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Useful Process" were *building a big building, rain, engrave on stone*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that distance education courses improved students' writing skills. It has been seen that distance education is beneficial for the development of students' writing skills. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:



*“The ability to write by distance learning is like building a big building, because we need to build a solid foundation, for that it needs to follow the lessons very carefully.” (K7)*

*“The ability to write with distance education is like rain because when it rains, plants grow, and when we attend classes, we improve in writing.” (K16)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Gradual Process" were *a tree, a baby lion, a growing flower, driving a car, football, soccer, a messy room that is difficult to organize, playing sports, getting a driver's license, riding a horse, painting*. In foreign language education, it takes some time to develop writing skills due to the alphabet difference. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that both time and work were required for the development of writing skills. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to write with distance education is like getting a license, because with time and practice, driving will get better, and our writing skills will get much better over time.” (K10)*

*“Distance-learning writing is like football because you need training and work to master it.” (K26)*

The metaphors of the students collected under the category of "An Enjoyable Activity" were *Drawing a painting, writing a book, inventing something, painting, writing a magazine, compass, flying without wings*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that students were happy when they expressed themselves correctly in writing. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to write with distance education is like a compass, because when I explain myself correctly, I am happy.” (K17)*

*“The ability to write by distance learning is like flying without wings, because you can freely write whatever you want.” (K14)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Difficult Process" were *Quantum physics, school, writing on water, invisible pen, writing without a pen, decoding on the internet, studying physics and chemistry*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that it was not easy to develop writing skills. It is seen that students have difficulties in writing skills. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to write with distance education is like writing on water because I write but I can't learn it well.” (K8)*

*“The ability to write with distance education is like studying physics or chemistry because it is not easy to learn.” (K22)*

### 3.2.3. Findings Concerning the Metaphors of Listening Skills of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education

The metaphors that reveal the perceptions of international students about listening skills and the distribution of these metaphors according to categories are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

Perceptions of International Students towards Listening Skill

Category	Metaphors	F
Informative	TV, whispering, listening to music, chatting with an elderly person	4
A Demanding Process	Running, cycling, playing games, playing guitar, playing football	5
A Pleasant Action	Sweet, fruit, chatting with a friend, joking	4
Good but Pointless	Rap song (3), listening to music (2), a Turkish song, listening to the Quran, listening to a whisper, being in a concert hall, foreign music, a	14

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quick poetry performance, a mysterious movie, waking up from the sound of rain, ghost

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In Table 5, it is seen that the metaphors of international students about listening skill were gathered in 4 categories: *good but pointless, informative, a demanding process, and a pleasant action*. Students produced metaphors most in the *good but pointless* category, and the least in a *pleasant action* category.

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Informative" were *TV, whispering, listening to music, chatting with an elderly person*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that students understand when spoken slowly. It can be said that since students have just learned the language, they have difficulty in understanding fast speech. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to listen with distance education is like television, because you watch it on your television, you listen and learn.” (K4)*

*“The ability to listen with distance learning is like having a conversation with an old man, because after a while you realize that you have learned a lot.” (K28)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Demanding Process" were *Running, cycling, playing games, playing guitar, playing football*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that it was necessary to make an effort to understand what they were listening to. It has been stated when there is insufficient effort, understanding does not occur. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to listen with distance education is like playing the guitar, because the more we practice, the better we play, and the more we listen, the better we understand.” (K14)*

*“The ability to listen with distance learning is like riding a bike because you have to be careful and experiment a lot to learn.” (K22)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Pleasant Action" were *Sweet, fruit, chatting with a friend, joking*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that students were happy when they realized that they were listening. Listening is an important element of communication. Students may have difficulty communicating when learning a new language. Students who have effective listening skills feel more comfortable and happy. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*The ability to listen with distance education is like being with a friend, because the more you understand, the happier you are. (K3)*

*The ability to listen with distance education is like a joke, because people like a joke are happy when they understand it. (K6)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of “Good but Pointless” were *Rap song (3), listening to music (2), a Turkish song, listening to the Quran, listening to a whisper, being in a concert hall, foreign music, a quick poetry performance, a mysterious movie, waking up from the sound of rain, ghost*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that what students listened to sounds well but they did not understand. This negative situation can be eliminated with more listening activities. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to listen with distance learning is like a rap song, because I can hear everything but understand nothing.” (K7)*

*“The ability to listen with distance education is like a foreigner listening to the Qur'an, because he feels the emotion but cannot understand it.” (K12)*

### 3.2.4. Findings Concerning the Metaphors of Speaking Skills of International Students Learning Turkish Through Distance Education

The metaphors that reveal the perceptions of international students about speaking skills and the distribution of these metaphors according to categories are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

Perceptions of International Students towards Speaking Skill

Category	Metaphors	F
A Critical Action	money, life, gold, medicine, treasure, water	6
Guiding	Light (3), dark, straight road	5
Practice	Learning the language slowly, playing sports (2), singing by yourself, training, swimming, listening to the news	7
Aesthetic	art, meeting a girl, magic	3
A Useless Situation	Talking to oneself, a year without summer, imprisoned person, returning in an empty circle, chatting with an invisible person, staying on a deserted island	6

In Table 6, it is seen that the metaphors of international students about the distance speaking lesson were gathered in 5 categories as *a critical action*, *guiding*, *useless situation*, *practice* and *aesthetic*. Students produced metaphors mostly in the practice category and least in the aesthetic category.

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Critical Action" were *money, life, gold, medicine, treasure, water*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that speaking skill was very important. Students expressed the importance of speaking skills with the metaphors they created. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"The ability to speak with distance education is like gold because it is so precious. Good speech increases one's self-worth."* (K5)

*"The ability to speak with distance education is like water, because it is necessary for all, it would be very difficult to live without speaking."* (K26)

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Guidance" were *Light (3), dark, straight road*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that speaking skill supported students to communicate by providing self-confidence. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"The ability to speak with distance education is like a straight road, because it allows us to communicate."* (K16)

*"The ability to speak with distance education is like a light, because it shows you the way ahead."* (K10)

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Practice" were *Learning the language slowly, playing sports (2), singing by yourself, training, swimming, listening to the news*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that it was important to practice for the development of speaking skills. Practice is important for the development of language skills. In particular, speaking skills can improve better with practices for various situations. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*"The ability to speak with distance education is like training, because we need to prepare ourselves for communication."* (K27)

*“The ability to speak with distance education is like the sport we do every morning, because the more we do, the more it benefits us than the day before. It is not difficult to take online speaking lessons during this period.” (K19)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "Aesthetic" were *art, meeting a girl and magic*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that it was important to influence the other party for the speech to be effective. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to speak with distance education is like magic, because our teacher's good speech impresses us a lot.” (K22)*

*“The skill of speaking with distance education is like an art, because as in art, we touch people's feelings with our speeches and we can express ourselves or an event, and we can tell our thoughts in our minds. Our speech has an etiquette just like in art. (K3)*

The metaphors of the students gathered under the category of "A Useless Situation" were *person, returning in an empty circle, chatting with an invisible person, staying on a deserted island*. The common feature of the metaphors created in this category was that distance education courses were useless in terms of speaking skills and students' speaking skills were not sufficiently developed. It is understood from the metaphors of the students that their speaking skills have not been developed at the desired level. Some of the students' views on this category were as follows:

*“The ability to speak with distance education is like a prisoner, because the speaking lesson is not suitable online, I think it is meaningless.” (K8)*

*“The ability to speak with distance education is like being on a desert island, because I think communication between people should be direct, that is, face-to-face.” (K17)*

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion**

Due to the pandemic, we had to switch to distance education unprepared. In the face of this unexpected situation, both students and teachers had difficulties compared to face-to-face education. Even the current face-to-face education process is concrete learning and despite the real environment and one-on-one interaction could not prevent the possible problems, the quality of distance education is very important, especially in language education. The universality of the principles of foreign language education ensures that it appeals to a wide audience working in this field. In this research, it is thought that it is critical to find out the problems in this field and to improve the current situation by determining the perceptions of international students towards foreign language education through distance education and four basic language skills.

The data obtained in the research were listed under a total of 24 categories. It was seen that 15 of these 24 categories were positive and 9 were negative. Therefore, it can be said that students generally had positive opinions about participation in distance learning Turkish and language skills activities. When the metaphors produced by the students were examined, it was understood that 78 of the 135 metaphors were positive and 53 of them were negative.

The metaphors of the international students learning Turkish through distance education about the Turkish language course were gathered in six categories, two of which were positive and four of which were negative, namely *virtual, comfortable, difficult, easy, practical* and *technological opportunity*. Students produced metaphors the most in the *difficult* category and the least in the *easy* category. It was understood that the students accepted the Turkish language course with distance education as difficult. It was determined that the positive metaphors in the *comfortable* and *easy* categories were created because students could be successful very easily due to the freedom and the opportunity to access the course at any time. When the negative metaphors in the categories of *virtual, difficult, practical* and *technological*

*possibilities* were examined, it was revealed that distance education was not useful enough, there was not enough communication between the teacher and the student, and computer and internet-related problems affected the lesson negatively.

In similar studies, it was determined that the majority of students had positive metaphors about face-to-face Turkish language course (Akkaya, 2013; Uçak, 2017; Boylu & Işık, 2017; Şengül, 2017; Karatay & Kartallıoğlu, 2019). However, in this study, it was observed that foreign students developed negative metaphors against distance Turkish language courses. Similarly, studies found that students encountered many problems during distance foreign language education and did not find distance foreign language education very productive (Aryanti, 2020; Öztürk Karataş & Tuncer, 2020; Tirtanawati, 2021; Farrah & Al-Bakry, 2020; Alan, Biçer & Can, 2020; Manibur Rahman, 2020; Allo, 2020; Tawhida, 2020; Atmojo & Nugruho, 2020; Rahman, 2020; Famularsih, 2020; Efriana, 2021; Kartallıoğlu, 2022).

The metaphors of international students about reading skills were grouped in five categories, three of which are positive and two of which are negative, namely *developer*, *loneliness*, *useless*, *struggle* and *entertaining*. The students produced metaphors mostly in the *developer* category and the least in the *entertaining* category. From the positive metaphors in the categories of *developer*, *struggle* and *entertaining*, it is understood that with the development of reading skills, students easily understood what they read over time, thus reading turned into an enjoyable activity. Among the metaphors in the negative categories of *loneliness* and *useless*, it was seen that the students described the reading skill as useless because there was no one to guide them and they could not realize their mistakes.

In the literature, it has mentioned that the majority of foreign students' perceptions about face-to-face (Karatay & Kartallıoğlu, 2019) and distance (Famularsih, 2020; Kartallıoğlu, 2022) reading courses were positive. It can be said that these results were positively received by the students, whether in the form of face-to-face or distance education courses for reading skills in foreign language teaching.

The metaphors of international students about writing skills are gathered in four categories: *a useful process*, *a gradual process*, *a difficult task*, and *an enjoyable activity*, three of which were positive and one was negative. Students produced metaphors at most in *a gradual process* category, and at least in the *beneficial* category. It was determined that positive metaphors in the categories of *a useful process*, *a gradual process*, *an enjoyable activity* were created with the idea that writing is a useful skill that developed over time, and that people became free when they reached a certain competence in writing. From the negative metaphors in *a difficult task* category, it was understood that the writing skill was not easy to learn no matter how much practice is done.

In the studies of Öztürk Karataş and Tuncer (2020), Famularsih (2020) and Kartallıoğlu (2022) on teaching writing skills through distance education in foreign language education, it was seen that the courses taught through distance education in foreign language education had a positive effect on students' writing skills. In Mahibur Rahman's (2020) study, it was determined that foreign language learners had difficulty in writing skills in distance education, and this may be due to the structure of the language learned, the technology skills of the students and the interest in the course.

The metaphors of international students about listening skills are collected in four categories, three of which are positive and one is negative, namely *good but pointless*, *informative*, *a demanding process*, and *a pleasant action*. Students produced metaphors most in the *good but pointless* category, and the least in *a pleasant action* category. Among the positive metaphors in the categories of *informative*, *a demanding process*, *a pleasant action*, it was revealed that it was necessary to spend effort for the development of listening skills, various information was obtained through listening, and they were happy when they understood the other party during communication. Among the negative metaphors in *good but pointless* category, it was determined that listening sounded good, but they did not understand anything about the students' listening skills. It was observed that the majority of the students compared the listening activity to a rap song -due to the rapid speech of the other person. Similar with these results of this study, Klimova



(2021) found that according to the foreign language learners listening activities were not sufficient during language courses with distance education. Emphasizing the importance of listening for communication, it was stated that more activities are needed. In the research of Pham, Luu, Mai, Thai, and Ngo (2021), it was determined that students had difficulties in listening skills because there were not enough listening activities in distance foreign language lessons. According to the results of the studies mentioned, even if a sufficient number of activities are carried out, students consider listening learning with distance education difficult.

The metaphors of international students about speaking skills are gathered in five categories, four of which were positive and one was negative, as *a critical action, guiding, useless situation, practice and aesthetic*. Students produced metaphors most in the *practice* category and least in the *aesthetic* category. It was determined that speaking skill, among the positive metaphors in the categories of *a critical action, guiding, practice and aesthetics*, was very important both in educational life and in social life, an effective speech would make them successful, and it was essential to practice for the development of speaking skill. In the negative metaphors in the category of *a useless situation*, it was determined that the students experienced a sense of loneliness due to the distance of the courses and could not communicate with other people. In the studies carried out, it was determined that in foreign language education carried out through distance education, students could not practice speaking as in face-to-face education and their speaking skills did not develop at the desired level (Hernández & Flórez, 2020; Öztürk Karataş & Tuncer, 2020; Kartallıoğlu, 2022). This is also similar to the results of the study. It is thought that it could be beneficial to consider the results of the studies carried out in order to improve the conditions of distance education, which might cover an uncertain process, and to enable more students to receive education more effectively.

## 5. Suggestions

Research should be conducted to determine students' attitudes, motivation, self-efficacy and anxiety towards distance learning. In this way, students' thoughts on distance learning should be determined in various ways and educational studies should be shaped in this direction.

Since not every student's technology knowledge and computer skills are the same, language teaching platforms can be created that all students can use easily.

Students expressed a lack of student-student and student-teacher interaction, especially during the teaching of speaking and listening skills. In this respect, communication between teacher and student should be increased and enhanced in order to eliminate the feeling of loneliness and isolation that occurs during the teaching of these skills

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