

### Investigation of Preschool Teacher Candidates' and Philosophy Department Students' Metaphors on the Concept of Philosophy for Children

Merve ÖZTÜRER<sup>a</sup>, Özge ÖZEL<sup>b</sup>, Perihan ÜNÜVAR<sup>c</sup>

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#### Author Information:

a. Burdur Mehmet Akif  
University,  
Burdur Vocational High  
School,  
Burdur, Türkiye  
Orcid: 0009-0000-7005-2509  
merveozturer@gmail.com

b. Burdur Mehmet Akif  
University,  
Education Faculty,  
Burdur, Türkiye  
Orcid: 0000-0003-4992-483X  
ozgeozel@mehmetakif.edu.tr  
Corresponding Author

c. Burdur Mehmet Akif  
University,  
Burdur Vocational High  
School,  
Burdur, Türkiye  
Orcid: 0000-0002-6285-5181  
perihanunuvar@  
mehmetakif.edu.tr

#### ABSTRACT

Children learn to express their ideas clearly, support their thoughts with valid reasons, and engage in discussions with different people through the philosophy education they receive. This introduction to philosophy and philosophy education during early childhood is essential for their development. However, the concept of "Philosophy for Children" has not yet become widespread in Türkiye. The aim of this study is to examine and compare the metaphors used by pre-service preschool teachers and students in the philosophy department regarding "Philosophy for Children." The research was designed as a phenomenological study, which is a type of qualitative research. The study group consisted of 100 fourth-year university students from the 2023-2024 academic year, and data were collected using a form with three open-ended questions. The content analysis method was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the metaphors of prospective preschool teachers included categories such as mental processes, play and fun, creativity and imagination, meaninglessness and abstract thought, personal discovery and curiosity, perspective and future, as well as importance. In contrast, the metaphors identified by philosophy students included mental processes, metaphysics, difficulty and meaninglessness, education and training, communication and expression, development and flexibility, and importance. Overall, the concept of "Philosophy for Children" was primarily associated with the category of "mental processes." Both groups recognized "importance" and "mental processes" as common metaphors. Prospective preschool teachers emphasized the connection between early childhood and play, interpreting "Philosophy for Children" through the lenses of "play" and "fun." On the other hand, philosophy department students primarily interpreted and explained the concept through the category of "metaphysics."

### Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adayları ve Felsefe Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Çocuklar için Felsefe Kavramına İlişkin Metaforlarının İncelenmesi

#### ÖZET

Çocuklar tanıştıkları ve edindikleri felsefe eğitimiyle fikirlerini açıkça ifade etmeyi, fikirlerini geçerli nedenlerle desteklemeyi ve farklı kişilerle görüşlerini tartışmayı öğrenirler. Bu ise çocukların erken çocukluk dönemlerinde felsefeyle tanışması ve felsefe eğitimiyle mümkün olacaktır. Ancak henüz Türkiye’de “Çocuklar için Felsefe” kavramı yaygınlaşmamıştır. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmanın amacı okul öncesi öğretmen adayları ile felsefe bölümündeki öğrencilerinin “Çocuklar için Felsefe” konusundaki metaforlarını incelemek ve karşılaştırmaktır. Çalışma, nitel araştırma türlerinden olan fenomenolojik bir araştırma olarak tasarlanmıştır. Çalışma grubunu, 2023-2024 akademik yılında 100 4. sınıf üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplamak için üç sorudan oluşan bir form kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bulgulara göre aday öğretmenlerin metaforları; zihinsel süreçler, oyun ve eğlence, yaratıcılık ve hayal gücü, anlamsızlık ve soyut düşünce, kişisel keşif ve merak, bakış açısı ve gelecek ile önemlidir. Felsefe öğrencilerinin kategorileri ise; zihinsel süreçler, metafizik, zorluk ve anlamsızlık, eğitim ve öğretim, iletişim ve ifade, gelişim ve esneklik ile önemlidir. Çocuklar için felsefe kavramı, çoğunlukla ‘zihinsel süreçler’ kategorisi altında toplanmaktadır. ‘Önem’ ve ‘zihinsel süreç’ kategorisi iki bölüm için de ortak metafor olarak belirlenmiştir. Aday okul öncesi öğretmenleri, “Çocuklar için Felsefe”yi ‘oyun’ ve ‘eğlence’ kategorisi altında anlamlandırarak, erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların oyun ile bağlantısını vurgulamışlardır. Felsefe bölümü öğrencileri ise “Çocuklar için Felsefe” kavramını çoğunlukla ‘metafizik’ kategorisi altında anlamlandırmış ve açıklamıştır.

## INTRODUCTION

The term "philosophy" originates from the Greek words "philia" and "sophia," meaning "love of wisdom" (Yüce, 2019). This love of wisdom emphasizes curiosity, critical thinking, and questioning (Cevizci, 2010; Gruioniu, 2013). According to Aristotle (384-322 BC), an individual embarks on the path of wisdom by recognizing problems, expressing amazement, and acknowledging their limitations in knowledge (Arslan, 1996; Yüce, 2019). When viewed through a traditional lens, philosophy may be seen as the teaching and learning of historical philosophers and their ideas (Duruhan et al., 2014). Therefore, when considering the relationship between children and philosophy, it raises questions such as: How do children relate to philosophy? Do they possess the capability to acquire philosophical knowledge? Why might children struggle to grasp philosophical concepts, even though adults may have the maturity and knowledge necessary?

The history of philosophy is deeply rooted in curiosity and the desire to understand one's environment. People often ask questions driven by their curiosity as they seek to comprehend and find meaning in the world around them (Özkan, 2020). Thomas Wartenberg, in his book "Big Ideas for Little Kids," posits that children are natural philosophers due to their innate curiosity (Wartenberg, 2009). Given this context, we can refer to children as natural philosophers because of their inherent drive to make sense of the world through questioning, creativity, and critical thinking. Wartenberg advocates for supporting these natural philosophical inclinations in children (Wartenberg, 2009). Such support can be achieved by introducing philosophy and philosophy education at an early age (Öğüt, 2019; Özkan, 2020; Wartenberg, 2009). Through philosophy education, children learn to articulate their ideas clearly, back them with valid reasoning, and engage in discussions with diverse individuals (Öğüt, 2019; Özkan, 2020; Wartenberg, 2009).

The concept of "Philosophy for Children" (P4C) was proposed by American philosophers Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) and Ann Sharp in the 1970s, resulting in a thinking education program of the same name (Taş, 2017). Recently, Lipman's approach has gained traction both nationally and internationally (Özkan, 2020). Direk (2016), who promotes the implementation of philosophy for children in our country, emphasizes in his book "Thinking on the Little Prince" that philosophical thinking should be introduced during early childhood (Direk, 2022). He argues that since philosophical education is rooted in questioning, it is crucial to start this education when children are young. Early

exposure to philosophy is essential for nurturing their natural and expansive imagination (Direk, 2016; Ögüt, 2019; Özkan, 2020).

Philosophy for children encourages young learners to contemplate specific philosophical concepts and problems, ask questions, reason, and engage in group discussions under the guidance of a trained adult (Direk, 2002; Erdoğan, 2018). The primary goal of this educational approach is to foster inquiry—encouraging children to ask questions, formulate hypotheses, investigate those questions, test their hypotheses, and freely share their thoughts with their peers (Taş, 2017). The development of questioning, curiosity, critical thinking, hypothesizing, and experimentation should first be cultivated in the prospective teachers who will guide these children, as it is important for teachers to embody these qualities (Yazıcıoğlu, 2023).

### Philosophy

Philosophy is a question that many find challenging to answer (Kökten, 2023). Often, we attempt to address this question by referencing the perspectives and writings of notable philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Dewey, or by stating that philosophy is of Greek origin and translates to "love of wisdom" (Kökten, 2023). Escaping the confines of these definitions, philosophy can also be understood as a process of questioning and thoughtful reflection (Aydoğdu, 2020). When discussing philosophy, the emphasis should be on the act of doing philosophy—engaging in philosophical thinking and adopting a philosophical perspective. Hence, we consider "philosophy as an activity" to be a fundamental concept (Kökten, 2023). A defining characteristic of philosophy as an activity is its challenge to accepted norms and ideas.

Philosophy involves the exploration of fundamental questions about life, knowledge, and beliefs, as well as the pursuit of answers (Solomon and Higgins, 2016). Some key principles of philosophy include understanding oneself, developing critical thinking skills, recognizing that not everything is self-evident, and cultivating curiosity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Philosophy is a reflective practice that engages not only with the subject matter but also with the process of thought itself, guiding and refining it (Kökten, 2023). Philosophical thinking encourages revision of thought processes, equipping individuals with tools for posing inquisitive questions, making important distinctions, establishing connections, tackling complex problems, evaluating propositions, articulating concepts, and organizing the criteria for making judgments and decisions (Cam, 2014; Kökten, 2023).

In the context of education, each component relates to the whole, and philosophy seeks to understand and encompass this entirety (Dirican, 2022). As an activity rooted in life, philosophy is closely connected to the realities we face (Işıldak, 2006). No course or subject exists independently of philosophy; we can analyze every aspect of life through a philosophical lens, recognizing that each discipline has an explicit or implicit philosophical foundation (Dirican, 2022). By applying a philosophical perspective, we can add meaning and value to seemingly isolated elements and systematically analyze the information taught at various educational levels (Dirican, 2022). Ultimately, philosophy serves as a means of personal growth and maturation (Dirican, 2022).

### **Philosophy for Children (P4C)**

Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp introduced the "Philosophy for Children" approach in the 1970s, developing a thinking education program under that name (Taş, 2017). While Lipman is recognized as a theorist who created the method known as "philosophy for children," it's important to note that he was not the first to engage children in philosophical discussions (Dirican, 2022). According to Taşdelen, nothing is truly new in philosophy, which can be seen as a positive aspect. This perspective allows us to trace the origins of philosophy with children back to Heraclitus (Dirican, 2022). It's said that Heraclitus, frustrated by the chatter of adults, would play games with children at the Temple of Artemis (Alpyürür, 2021; Dirican, 2022). The program aims to explore the relationship between "philosophy" and "childhood," with the practical goal of establishing philosophy as a comprehensive subject area in schools (Vansieleghem and Kennedy, 2011; Kökten, 2023).

In creating this program, Lipman embraced John Dewey's idea that the scientific inquiry process should serve as a model for classroom education (Kökten, 2023). Lipman argues that children begin to engage in philosophical thinking when they start asking the question "Why?" (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980; Kökten, 2023). Lipman and Sharp were influenced by the Socratic method while developing the program, which focuses on inquiry-based learning through philosophical thinking, questioning, and discussion (Marashi, 2008; Taş, 2017). In the Socratic method, a particular topic is examined by establishing cause-and-effect relationships within philosophical discussions, gradually developing the understanding of the topic (Stanley & Bowkett, 2004; Taş, 2017).

Not only did Lipman and Sharp utilize the Socratic method in developing the Philosophy for Children program, but they also drew on the educational theories of

Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Matthews, 2000; Taş, 2017). Lipman recognized that the university students he taught often lacked formal logical thinking and concluded that such reasoning could and should be taught at an earlier age (Özkan, 2020). The program incorporates inquiry-based activities centered on "Why?" questions, progressing from reading a philosophical text to formulating children's curiosity through questions and discussions (Lipman, 2011; Kökten, 2023). The underlying argument is that engaging in reading, questioning, and discussion will stimulate diverse ways of thinking and reasoning (Kökten, 2023).

In a typical session, children sit in a circle, with the teacher also part of that circle (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). The structure of the session follows a continuous flow (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). Initially, children either read or are read a philosophical text, placing them in what Dewey refers to as an ambiguous situation, which sparks inquiry (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). Next, children pose questions based on the text they have encountered (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). After gathering these questions, recurring themes and concepts are analyzed, leading to the development of a discussion plan (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). These stages can be seen as the "intellectualization" of an initial difficulty, in line with Dewey's inquiry process, ultimately leading to a prioritized idea or hypothesis for further investigation (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). During the discussion, children collaborate to co-construct knowledge, analyze and develop ideas, explore assumptions, and self-correct their understanding, all in an effort to reconstruct the problem situation in a more meaningful way (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021).

In Dewey's inquiry process, actions related to the reasoning and testing stages of a hypothesis are implemented (Kökten, 2023; Oliverio, 2021). A philosophy program for children serves as a powerful tool for them to share their experiences and explore meaning (Kökten, 2023). Through this program, children can confidently express their views and opinions, cultivate doubt by being inquisitive, ask questions, and challenge the views of others (Kökten, 2023). The significance of the Philosophy for Children program lies in its well-researched approach to thinking, which focuses on developing inquiry and teaching the types of questioning that empower young children to think philosophically and critically (Fisher, 2007; Kökten, 2023). Taken together, these elements highlight that Philosophy for Children is an essential educational method and program that encourages deep thinking and helps children develop high-level cognitive skills (Kökten, 2023).



Philosophy for Children emphasizes the importance of children's direct philosophical inquiry (Çevik, 2023). In workshops designed around this approach, the goal is not to teach children about philosophers or their thoughts; instead, they are encouraged to learn and develop the method of philosophical reasoning in their own way (Çevik, 2023). Preschool children are especially active and curious at the start of their education. According to Lipman, children possess a natural curiosity (Özkan, 2020). However, once they enter the education system, their imagination and natural curiosity often become restricted (Özkan, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to protect and support the imagination and curiosity of children as they enter preschool education (Özkan, 2020). To foster a society where individuals are aware of the importance of questioning and critical thinking, this consciousness and awareness must be cultivated from an early age (Kökten, 2023). One effective way to achieve this is through the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach, which aims to instill in children the awareness of understanding, questioning, and thinking from early childhood (Kökten, 2023). The P4C approach is a vital option for equipping individuals and societies with questioning and critical thinking skills (Kökten, 2023).

This study aims to explore and compare the metaphors of pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy department students regarding the concept of "Philosophy for Children." The significance of this research lies in understanding how future educators of early childhood children perceive this concept, especially in comparison to students who engage with philosophy in a more analytical and rigorous way. While previous studies, such as the one conducted by Öcal and Aybek (2022), have examined the metaphors of teachers and students who received training on "Philosophy for Children," our research differs by focusing on pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy students who have not undergone any specialized training beyond their standard coursework. In our literature review, we encountered concepts like "Philosophy for Children," "Philosophy with Children," and "Philosophy Education." However, we did not find any research that specifically investigates the metaphors related to "Philosophy for Children" from the perspectives of students in these two distinct departments. Given this gap, our study seeks to answer the following three questions:

- 1) What metaphors do pre-service preschool teachers develop about the concept of "Philosophy for Children"?
- 2) What metaphors do philosophy department students develop about the concept of

"Philosophy for Children"?

- 3) What are the similarities and differences between the metaphors created by pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy department students regarding "Philosophy for Children"?

## METHOD

### Research Design

In this study, a phenomenological design, which is a type of qualitative research, was employed to explore the meanings attributed to the concept of "philosophy for children" as perceived by pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy students. Alongside the phenomenological design, the study also utilized content analysis to conduct an in-depth investigation of the concept of "philosophy for children."

Qualitative research is a method that employs various data collection techniques, such as interviews, structured questionnaires, and document analysis, to reveal perspectives and perceptions in a realistic and holistic manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that allows individuals to express their understanding, perceptions, feelings, and viewpoints regarding a specific concept (Rose et al., 1995). This method aims to grasp what individuals know subconsciously and understand their consciousness structures (Mayring et al., 2011).

Metaphors are among the data collection tools that are particularly useful in educational research (Midgley et al., 2014). They aid in understanding complex elements and concepts (Hartzell, 2002). Metaphor analysis is an effective method for the in-depth exploration of concepts and holds significant importance in qualitative research methods (Güneş et al., 2016).

### Participants

The study group for this research consisted of 100 fourth-grade students enrolled in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences during the 2023/2024 academic year. Of these students, 50 were pre-service preschool teachers, and 50 were students majoring in philosophy. The decision to include senior undergraduate students in the study group was based on the assumption that their knowledge of their respective fields is more advanced than that of lower-grade students. Additionally, fourth-year students in education faculties are recognized as pre-service teachers. The study sample was selected from senior undergraduates, incorporating 50 pre-service preschool teachers



and 50 philosophy students. To determine the study group, both criterion sampling and convenience sampling—methods of purposive sampling—were employed. In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). It is important to choose participants who are both interested in and knowledgeable about the research topic (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). Convenience sampling involves selecting a volunteer group that is easily accessible within the research context (Başaran, 2017). Furthermore, each interview form used to collect data was coded as O1, O2, ..., O50 for pre-service preschool teachers and F1, F2, ..., F50 for philosophy department students.

### Data Collection Tool

This study aims to examine the metaphors that pre-service preschool teachers and students from the philosophy department have regarding the concept of 'philosophy for children.' To collect data, we utilized interviews and developed an interview form consisting of three questions. In the first question, participants were asked to specify the undergraduate program they are attending. The second question asked them to complete the sentence: "Philosophy for children is .....". In the third question, they were prompted to further elaborate: "because.....". The interview form was created by the two researchers conducting the study, based on existing literature. Once prepared, the form was reviewed by two independent experts who were not part of the study to gather their opinions. The interview technique was chosen to explore the inner thoughts and perspectives of the participants regarding the research topic (Patton, 1987). This method is effective for gaining insight into participants' feelings, thoughts, interpretations, experiences, and attitudes (Sevecan et al., 2007). Using a standardized interview form ensures that the data collection process is consistent across all participants (McCracken, 1988; Kuzu, 2013). In preparing the interview form, we first conducted a comprehensive literature review on the research topic (Myers, 2013). Following this, we sought expert opinions to assess the appropriateness of the questions in relation to the study's purpose, subject, and objectives (Myers, 2013).

### Data Analysis

The qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the data collected in this study. This approach was preferred because it allows data to be organized within specific concepts and themes, transforming it into a language that is accessible to readers (Frankel et al., 2005; Sönmez et al., 2020; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). In qualitative content

analysis, key themes from the text are categorized, and multiple definitions of social reality are provided (Gül et al., 2021). This method facilitates the interpretation of specific phenomena and concepts (Gül et al., 2021). Studies employing qualitative content analysis aim to uncover the less visible aspects and implicit meanings of content, rather than just focusing on the overtly apparent (Yüksel, 2019). Content analysis involves gathering similar data according to predefined concepts and themes, which are then organized and interpreted for the reader (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). This method is typically applied to analyze interview transcripts, diaries, and other written materials (Patton, 2002; Sönmez et al., 2020). For these reasons, qualitative content analysis was selected and implemented to align with the objectives and analysis of this study.

### Validity and Reliability

In this research study, the identification of metaphors was explained in detail, with direct examples taken from participants' statements provided in the findings section. The qualitative data collected were first analyzed using the content analysis method. This qualitative information was then expressed quantitatively, and the frequency (f) of participants representing each metaphor was calculated. To enhance the reliability of qualitative research studies, certain measures should be implemented. These measures typically involve clearly articulating the reasons and methods behind the research strategies employed, allowing other researchers to apply these strategies in a similar manner (Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014). In this context, inter-rater reliability was assessed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) intercoding formula, yielding a reliability score of 94%.

### Ethic

The necessary permissions to conduct this research were obtained from the Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee, with decision number GO 2024/272 on May 7, 2024. All ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the preparation, data collection, and analysis phases of the study.

## FINDINGS

## Pre-Service Preschool Teachers' Metaphors of 'Philosophy for Children'

Figure 1. The World Cloud of Pre-service Teachers' Metaphors



Pre-service preschool teachers developed 16 different metaphors related to the concept of philosophy for children. These metaphors were categorized based on their common features and similarities. The metaphors were organized into seven distinct categories. Table 1 presents the metaphor categories, the specific metaphors belonging to each category, and their frequencies.

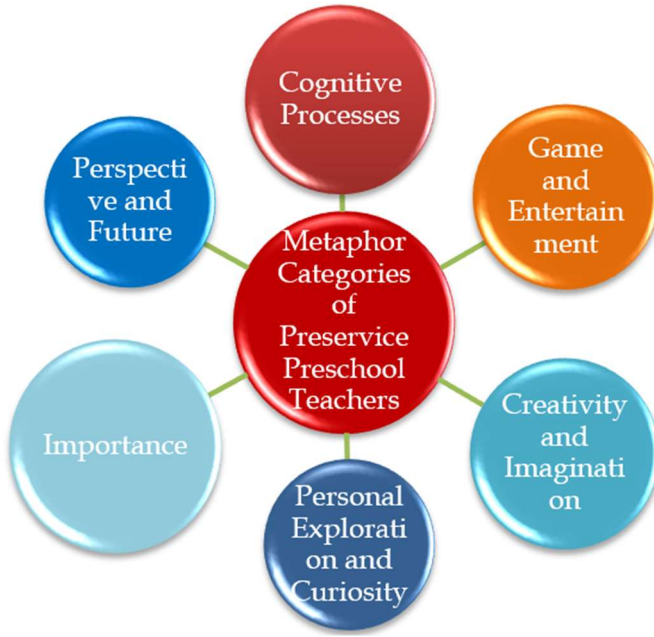
**Table 1**

*Categories of the Metaphors Developed by Preservice Preschool Teachers Regarding the Concept of "Philosophy for Children"*

Categories	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Cognitive Processes	Thinking (12), Inquiry (5), Questioning (3), To deliberate (2)	22
Game and Entertainment	Game (11), Entertainment (1)	12
Creativity and Imagination	Creativity (3), Imagination (1)	4
Meaninglessness and Abstract Thinking	Abstract (2), Chaos (1), Meaningless (1)	4
Personal Exploration and Curiosity	Curiosity (2), Self-Recognition (1)	3
Importance	Important- Necessary (3)	3
Perspective and Future	Perspective (1), Future shaping (1)	2

Upon reviewing Table 1, it is evident that the metaphors generated by pre-service preschool teachers are organized into seven categories. These categories are: "Cognitive Processes," "Game and Entertainment," "Creativity and Imagination," "Meaninglessness and Abstract Thinking," "Personal Exploration and Curiosity," "Importance," and "Perspective and Future." Additionally, some of the expressions provided by pre-service preschool teachers are included under these category headings.

*Figure 2.* The Categories of the Metaphors



### *Category 1: "Mental Processes"*

In this category, pre-service preschool teachers participating in the research created the most metaphors regarding philosophy for children. They explained that this program stimulates cognitive skills in children and encourages their natural curiosity to question, think, and critique due to their developmental stage. Below are some student expressions from this category:

"Philosophy for children is reasoning. Because it involves thinking." (O4)

"Philosophy for children is asking questions. Children learn by asking and experiencing." (O6)

"Philosophy for children is thinking. Children question and critique things due to their sense of discovery." (O11)

"Philosophy for children is asking questions. Developing the ability to ask questions enhances analytical skills and helps children make sense of the world." (O14)

"For children, philosophy is the beginning of thinking. When a child starts to think about thinking, their horizon expands." (O22)

"For children, philosophy means questioning life in every aspect. It involves inquiry and making sense of their surroundings." (O26)

"Philosophy for children is questioning. It marks the start of their thinking process." (O42)

"Philosophy for children is understanding the world by asking various questions. At this age, children are like scientists; they want to find answers to any question they can think of and critique everything." (O47)

"Philosophy for children is thinking. After all, humans think all the time." (O50).

### *Category 2: "Play and Entertainment"*

In this category, the pre-service preschool teachers who participated in the research tried to explain the philosophy for children with children's bonds with play, children's learning through play and the importance of play in preschool education. Some student statements in this category are given below.

"Philosophy for children is play. Because play is the first contact with the child's life." (O2)

"Philosophy for children is play. Because children learn what they do not know through play." (O8)

"Philosophy for children is play-based learning. Because children learn by playing games and internalize it." (O16)

"Philosophy for children is play and fun. Because children grow up and learn through play." (O25)

"Philosophy for children is play. Because play is everything for a child. Therefore, I think that the child's philosophy of life is play." (O27)

“Philosophy is fun for children. Because philosophy is thinking and the best way for children to think is play and play is fun.” (O33)

### *Category 3: “Creativity and Imagination”*

In this category, the pre-service preschool teachers who participated in the research tried to explain philosophy for children as developing their imagination and supporting their creativity with thinking. Some student statements in this category are given below.

“Philosophy for children is the discovery of creativity. Because the discovery of creativity starts with thinking and philosophy is life itself.” (O3)

“For children, philosophy is imagination. Because their world of imagination is very wide.” (O30)

“Philosophy for children is Creativity. It is being actively involved in a mental process. It is to produce unusual solutions and develop different connections. It is brainstorming and developing different perspectives. Because philosophy is outside the standardized thought patterns and encourages productivity and thus enables the formation of innovative thoughts and materials.” (O38)

### *Category 4: “Meaninglessness and Abstract Thinking”*

The pre-service preschool teachers who participated in the research tried to explain philosophy for children in this category by stating that children would have difficulty in making sense of philosophy for children because they have not transitioned to abstract thinking and that philosophy for children would be complex. Some student statements in this category are given below.

“Philosophy for children is an abstract concept. Because philosophy is an abstract concept, and I don't think they can understand it.” (O5)

“Philosophy for children is complicated. Because the structure of philosophy can be a bit abstract for their minds.” (O10)

“Philosophy is meaningless for children. Because Philosophy is a subject that exists in all areas of life, but not every person can discover it, and I think it is especially heavy for children, so I think it will not make any sense to children.” (O48)

### *Category 5: “Self-Discovery and Curiosity”*

In this category, the pre-service preschool teachers who participated in the research tried to explain philosophy for children as children's questioning with a sense of curiosity



and discovering themselves. Some of the student statements in this category are given below.

“Philosophy for children is self-knowledge. Because children get to know themselves and their friends through play.” (O12)

“Philosophy for children is curiosity. Because they learn as they wonder and question.” (O43)

#### *Category 6: “Importance”*

In this category, the pre-service preschool teachers participating in the research tried to explain the importance of philosophy for children with its contribution to children's mental process skills, cognitive processes and learning. Some student statements in this category are given below.

“Philosophy for children is actually very important and necessary. Because all the cognitive processes that children will use to learn are at the basis of philosophy education.” (O19)

“Philosophy is important and necessary for children. Because it is one of the programs that can best teach children thinking, questioning, and the processes of searching for answers.” (O41)

#### *Category 7: “Perspective and Future”*

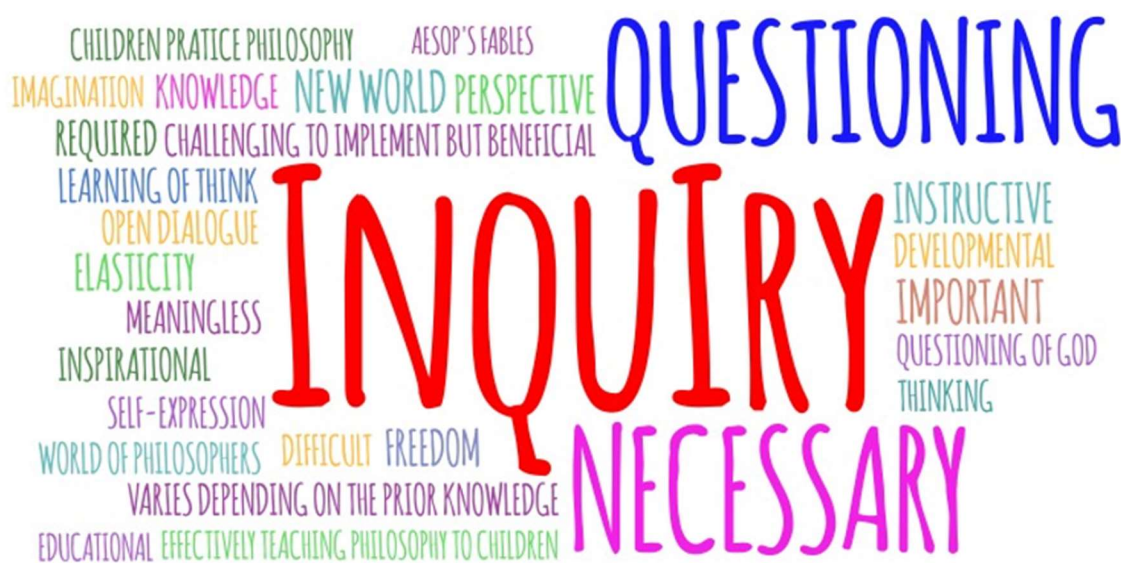
The pre-service preschool teachers who participated in the research tried to explain philosophy for children in this category with the aspect of developing and supporting different perspectives of philosophy and its contribution to the future thinking structures of children developing with philosophy. Some student statements in this category are given below.

“For children, philosophy is shaping the future. Because philosophy is a system of thought that forms people's lives in general, I think that being involved with it at a young age will shape children's thinking structures and affect their lives.” (O34)

“For children, philosophy is a perspective. Because philosophy is the ticket to different dimensions of the thoughts created by society.” (O49)

### 3.2. Philosophy Department Students' Metaphors of 'Philosophy for Children'

Figure 3. The World Cloud of Philosophy Department Students' Metaphors.



Students from the philosophy department developed 28 distinct metaphors related to the concept of philosophy for children. These metaphors were organized into categories based on their shared characteristics and similarities. As a result, the metaphors were grouped into eight categories. Table 2 presents the categories of metaphors, along with the metaphors that belong to each category and their respective frequencies.

**Table 2**

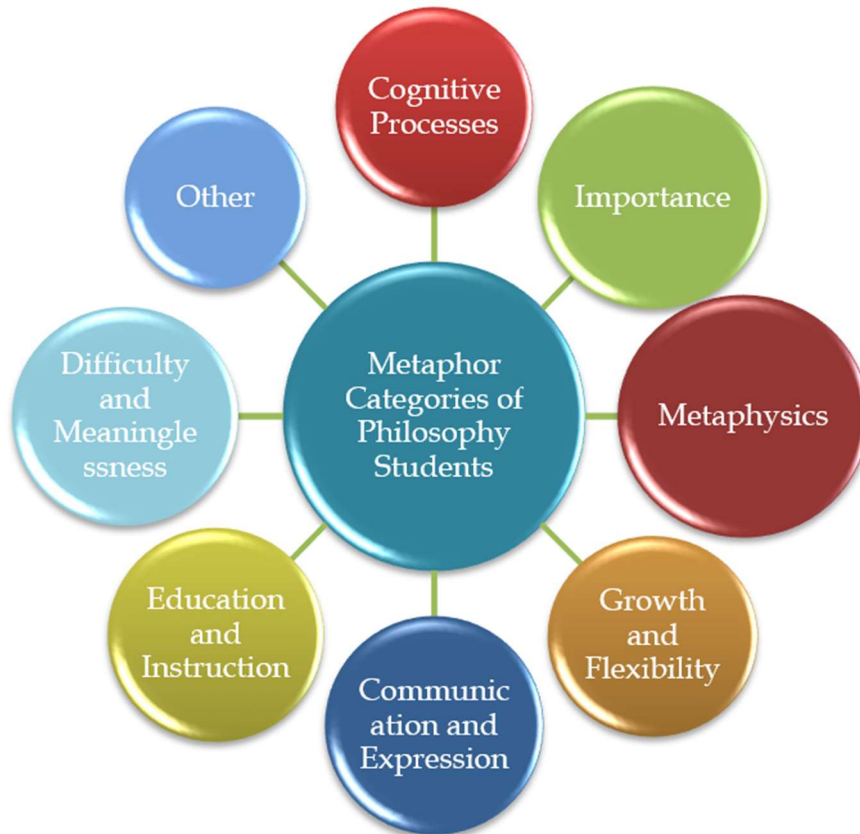
*Categories of the Metaphors Developed by Preservice Preschool Teachers Regarding the Concept of "Philosophy for Children"*

Categories	Metaphor	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Cognitive Processes	Inquiry (8), Questioning (5), Thinking (1)	14
Importance	Necessary (7), Important (3), Required (2)	12
Metaphysics	World of philosophers (1), Knowledge (1), New world (1), Questioning of God (1), Children practice philosophy (1)	5
Growth and Flexibility	Developmental (2), Elasticity (2), Imagination (1)	5

**Table 2***Continuing*

Communication and Expression	Open dialogue (1), Perspective (1), Self-Expression (1), Inspirational (1), Freedom (1)	5
Education and Instruction	Instructive (1), Educational (1), Effectively teaching philosophy to children (1), Learning to think (1)	4
Difficulty and Meaninglessness	Meaningless (1), Difficult (1), Challenging to implement but beneficial (1), Aesop's fables (1)	4
Other	Varies depending on the prior knowledge (1)	1

Upon examining Table 2, it becomes clear that the metaphors created by students in the philosophy department are organized into eight categories. These categories are: "Cognitive Processes," "Important and Necessary," "Metaphysics," "Growth and Flexibility," "Communication and Expression," "Education and Instruction," "Difficulty and Meaninglessness," and "Other." Under each category heading, the metaphors associated with that category, along with statements from some philosophy department students, are presented.

**Figure 4.** The Categories of the Metaphors

### *Category 1: "Mental Processes"*

In this category, students from the philosophy department engaged in research aimed at explaining philosophy to children. They combined the inherent questioning nature of philosophy with children's natural curiosity and their eagerness to ask questions. This approach not only helped children gain knowledge but also contributed to the development of their cognitive skills through philosophy for children. Below are some statements made by the students in this category.

"Philosophy for children is asking questions and wanting to learn about the things they see around them. Because with these answers, they reach their answers by causing them to eliminate the question marks in their minds." (F6)

"Philosophy for children is questioning. Because by questioning, correct knowledge is reached." (F11)

"Philosophy for children is questioning. Because it shows a path and they are solution-oriented, they are open to asking questions and do not stick to dogmas." (F15)

"Philosophy for children is to wonder and ask questions. Because children are curious and questioning creatures, they constantly ask questions for learning and in this way, they reach knowledge." (F22)

"Philosophy for children is asking questions. Because children are very curious and learn by asking questions." (F39)

"Philosophy for children is questioning. Because it forms the basis for the development of children's critical skills and prepares the ground for the formation of the ability to question." (F42)

### *Category 2: "Importance and Necessity"*

In this category, the philosophy department students described "Philosophy for Children" as essential for helping children develop future competencies and benefiting from philosophy to the fullest extent. They emphasized the importance of introducing philosophy at an appropriate level, noting that children's curiosity and questioning nature closely resemble the characteristics of philosophers. Thus, philosophy was seen as a valuable tool to support and nurture these traits. The following student statements illustrate these views:

“Philosophy is necessary for children. Because I think it will be a useful thinking activity for children to solve problems and produce alternative and original works both in the field of education and in their individual lives.” (F27)

“Philosophy should be compulsory for children. Because raising individuals who become thinking individuals starts from childhood.” (F31)

“Philosophy is essential for children. Because children are the real philosophers, they question the best. If they do this questioning with good and correct guidance, they can achieve fruitful results.” (F34)

“Philosophy is necessary for children. Because it educates and helps individuals in a way that can pave the way for the first acquaintance with philosophy on a pedagogically level ground.” (F35)

“Philosophy is important for children. Because philosophy is an education that should be given from an early age.” (F47)

“Philosophy is necessary for children. Because children are like philosophers, and it is important and necessary to increase these characteristics.” (F50)

### *Category 3: “Metaphysics”*

In this category, the philosophy department students described "Philosophy for Children" as a pathway to knowledge, its connection to the ideas of renowned philosophers, and its potential to influence intellectual processes on a deeper level. They emphasized that engaging with philosophy can stimulate children's critical thinking, enhance their intellectual curiosity, and encourage deeper reflection. The following student statements illustrate these views:

“For children, philosophy is the world of philosophers. Because philosophy is a concept that is generally known thanks to philosophers.” (F4)

“For children, philosophy is knowledge. Because it is to reach reliable and accurate knowledge.” (F8)

“Philosophy is a new world for children. Because it is a field that is deeper and engages their intellectual processes more than the daily approaches they generally encounter.” (F9)

#### *Category 4: "Development and Flexibility"*

In this category, the philosophy department students described "Philosophy for Children" as a means of providing children with a broader perspective, adapting philosophical concepts to a level suitable for children, and emphasizing the instructive impact of philosophy on their development. They suggested that introducing philosophy to children not only enriches their worldview but also supports their cognitive growth and critical thinking abilities. The following student statements illustrate these perspectives:

"For children, philosophy is elasticity. Because they do not wear blinders." (F10)

"Philosophy for children is developmental. Because we bring philosophy into a form suitable for children based on their developmental characteristics and age groups." (F26)

#### *Category 5: "Communication and Expression"*

In this category, the philosophy department students explained "Philosophy for Children" by highlighting its impact on children's mental process skills, its potential to broaden perspectives by challenging stereotypes, and its role in enhancing self-expression and inspiration. According to the participants, engaging children with philosophical thinking can help them develop more open-minded and critical perspectives, while also fostering their ability to articulate their thoughts more effectively. The following student statements illustrate these ideas:

"For children, philosophy is a perspective free from patterns with different perspectives. Because philosophy has the advantages of free thinking and gaining different perspectives rather than religious facts and patterns." (F5)

"Philosophy for children is inspiring. Because philosophy for children helps them question their own thoughts, develop their critical thinking skills and understand ethical values." (F28)

"For children, philosophy is a way of expressing themselves. Because every child expresses their thoughts and feelings according to their own value judgments. They can form various sentences to express themselves." (F41)

#### *Category 6: "Education and Training"*

In this category, philosophy department students discussed "Philosophy for Children" in the context of teaching philosophy to children, emphasizing the lifelong need for philosophical inquiry and its contribution to developing critical thinking skills.



According to these students, engaging children with philosophy from an early age can foster deeper reflection and analytical thinking that benefits them throughout their lives. The following participant statements reflect this viewpoint:

“Philosophy for children is instructive. Because they need it throughout their lives.”  
(F1)

“Philosophy for children is learning to think. Because life begins with thinking.”  
(F25)

“Philosophy for children is to explain philosophy to children correctly. Because children cannot philosophize like adults.” (F32)

#### *Category 7: “Difficulty and Meaninglessness”*

Philosophy department students participating in the research expressed that children might struggle to understand the abstract nature of philosophy, perceiving it as a challenging and complex concept. According to these students, young children may find it difficult to grasp philosophical ideas due to their developmental stage. The following statements from participants illustrate this perspective:

“Philosophy for children is Aesop tales. Because children do not understand.” (F43)

“Philosophy is difficult for children. Because children cannot understand philosophy and philosophical knowledge.” (F46)

#### *Category 8: “Other”*

Philosophy department students participating in the study explained the concept of *Philosophy for Children* (P4C) within this category by highlighting its dependence on the child's prior knowledge acquired from their environment. According to the participants, a child's understanding of philosophy may vary based on the perspectives and biases present in their surroundings. This idea is illustrated in the following student statement:

“Philosophy for children varies according to prior knowledge. Because it is a situation related to what kind of prior knowledge the segment has about philosophy. If the environment associates philosophy with ‘irreligion,’ philosophy for children is the non-existence of God and the rejection of divine powers. However, if the child is given prior knowledge about the ability to think, which is

the true meaning of philosophy, philosophy for the child is a tool for thinking. In short, it can be a concept that meets both sides, positive and negative.” (F23)

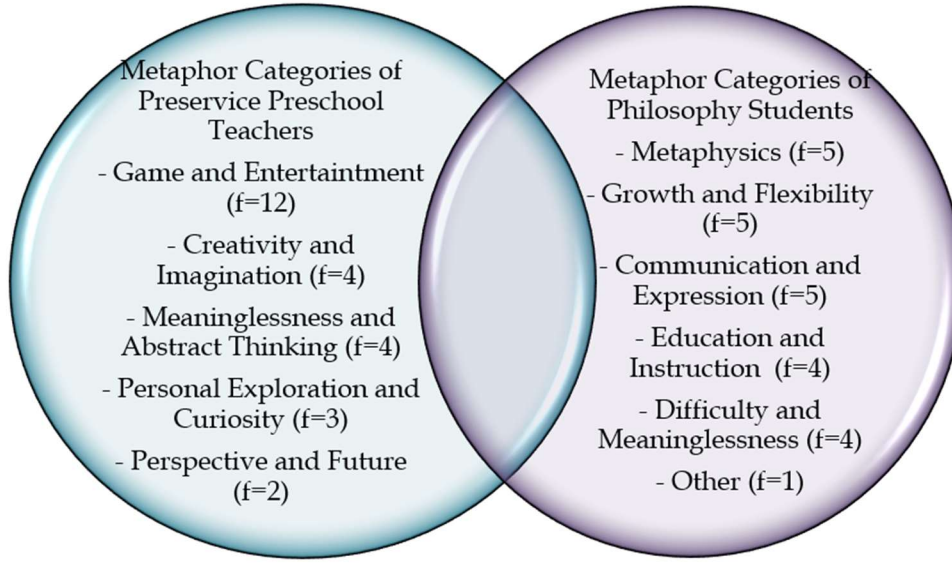
This response suggests that the perception of P4C is not only shaped by the individual child's cognitive development but also by the cultural and ideological context in which they are raised. It reflects an awareness of the diverse interpretations that philosophy can have and the potential impact of these interpretations on a child's conceptualization of philosophical inquiry.

### 3.3. The Differences and Similarities Between Metaphors of “Philosophy for Children”

When examining the metaphor categories developed by pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy department students regarding the concept of *Philosophy for Children* (P4C), two common categories emerged: *Mental Processes* and *Importance*. Beyond these shared categories, pre-service preschool teachers developed five additional, unique categories, while philosophy department students created six distinct categories.

Among the shared categories, *Mental Processes* had the highest metaphor frequency for both groups, indicating a mutual perception of P4C's influence on children's cognitive abilities. For philosophy department students, the second most frequently developed category was *Importance*, emphasizing their view of P4C's significance. In contrast, the second most prominent category for pre-service preschool teachers was *Play*, a category that did not appear among the philosophy department students' responses. This difference suggests that pre-service preschool teachers may have a more child-centered perspective, viewing P4C through a playful and practical lens, while philosophy students focus more on abstract and conceptual interpretations.

Figure 5. Similarities and Differences between Metaphors



## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to explore the metaphors developed by pre-service preschool teachers and philosophy department students regarding the concept of “Philosophy for Children” (P4C). Three research questions guided the analysis, resulting in the identification of 16 distinct metaphors from pre-service preschool teachers and 28 from philosophy department students. These metaphors were categorized into seven and eight categories, respectively, with a total of 36 different metaphors collected from 100 distinct opinions. The findings revealed both commonalities and differences between the two groups, reflecting varied perspectives on the concept of P4C.

A significant portion of the metaphors from both groups fell under the category of “Mental Processes” indicating a shared perception of P4C’s potential to enhance children’s cognitive skills. This aligns with the findings of Zulkifli and Hashim (2020), who reported that P4C positively influences critical thinking skills. Similarly, Colom et al. (2014) demonstrated the long-term benefits of P4C on cognitive abilities. The tendency of both groups to associate P4C with cognitive development suggests a general recognition of its educational value.

However, differences emerged in the interpretation of P4C. While pre-service preschool teachers predominantly associated P4C with play and fun, philosophy department students approached it from a more abstract, conceptual perspective. This divergence is consistent with the findings of Öcal and Aybek (2022), who noted that pre-service teachers view P4C through a child-centered lens, while philosophy students adopt

a more theoretical viewpoint. The strong association between P4C and play among pre-service preschool teachers may result from their focus on early childhood education, where play is a foundational aspect of learning (Ayan & Memiş, 2012). Conversely, the abstract interpretations by philosophy students may stem from their academic training, which emphasizes complex and theoretical understandings of philosophy.

Notably, both groups also developed a limited number of negative metaphors, perceiving P4C as difficult, complex, or meaningless for children. This skepticism may reflect a lack of familiarity with implementing philosophical inquiry in early childhood education, coupled with concerns about children's abstract thinking abilities. The perception that children may struggle to grasp philosophical concepts may result from insufficient exposure to practical applications of P4C in educational contexts.

The findings underscore the need for integrating P4C into teacher education programs more comprehensively. While both groups recognize the cognitive benefits of P4C, the limited understanding of its practical application, particularly among pre-service preschool teachers, suggests the importance of increasing applied P4C training. Introducing more hands-on P4C courses could help pre-service teachers develop practical skills for facilitating philosophical discussions with young children, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation.

Future research could further explore the perspectives of pre-service teachers and philosophy students through in-depth interviews, providing deeper insights into their views on P4C. Comparative studies examining the metaphors of pre-service teachers who have received P4C training and those who have not could also shed light on the impact of training on their conceptual understanding. Such research could provide valuable evidence for the incorporation of P4C into teacher education curricula, enhancing pre-service teachers' readiness to implement this approach in early childhood settings.

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