

An investigation into first-year music education students' perceptions of their individual instruments via metaphorical representations in fine arts education departments

Güzel sanatlar eğitimi bölümü müzik eğitimi anabilim dalı 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin bireysel çalgılarına ilişkin algılarının metaforlar yoluyla belirlenmesi

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ABSTRACT

Metaphor is widely regarded as a powerful cognitive tool that individuals employ to comprehend and articulate abstract, complex, or theoretical concepts. Research on metaphor usage highlights its key functions, including the expression of abstract phenomena through concrete examples, the conveyance of figurative meanings, and the elucidation of ideas via comparison. Although metaphors are commonly utilized in everyday language, they have increasingly become a significant focus within scientific inquiry in recent years. Within this framework, the present study aims to identify the mental images (metaphors) that first-year students in the Department of Music Education associate with their individual instruments, employing the metaphor technique as a methodological tool. The study sample comprises 93 first-year students enrolled in the Music Education Departments of Fine Arts Education Faculties at four universities located in the Western Black Sea Region. To explore their metaphorical perceptions of their individual instruments, participants were asked to complete the sentence: "My individual instrument is like because" The resulting data were systematically categorized and presented accordingly. Findings indicate that students predominantly conceptualize their individual instruments using metaphors related to the category of "human." An analysis of the 43 metaphors produced reveals that students' most preferred metaphors tend to cluster in certain categories. In particular, the metaphors "my child" and "my family" stand out in the family category, while "friend" is prominent in the human category. In the nature category, "flower" and "sky" are frequently used, while "pencil sharpener" appears in the object category, and "cat" in the animal category. In the emotion category, the metaphors "love" and "a part of my body" are notably more common than others. Additionally, "water" in the essential needs category and "language" in the being a tool category are among the most frequently used expressions by the students. These results suggest a rich diversity in metaphorical conceptualizations, with a notable emphasis on human and relational imagery in students' perceptions of their instruments. Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be made: Instructors can actively use metaphorical language to enhance teaching; music departments can implement orientation programs or mentoring systems that help students navigate the emotional and psychological dimensions of learning an instrument.

Keywords: Metaphor, perception, music education, individual instrument

ÖZ

Metafor, bireylerin soyut, karmaşık veya kuramsal kavramları anlamlandırma ve açıklamada başvurduğu etkili bir bilişsel

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Geliş tarihi/Received: 22.08.2025 – Kabul tarihi/Accepted: 17.10.2025 – Yayın tarihi/Published: 30.10.2025

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araç olarak kabul edilmektedir. Metafor kullanımına yönelik incelemelerde, soyut olguların somut örnekler aracılığıyla ifade edilmesi, mecaz anlamı taşınması ve benzetmeler yoluyla açıklanması gibi işlevlerin ön plana çıktığı görülmektedir. Günlük yaşamda yaygın olarak kullanılan metaforlar, son yıllarda bilimsel araştırmaların da önemli bir odak noktası haline gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, söz konusu araştırmanın amacı, müzik eğitimi anabilim dalı birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin bireysel çalgılarına ilişkin zihinsel imgelerini metafor tekniği aracılığıyla belirlemektir. Çalışma gurubunu Batı Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde yer alan dört üniversitenin Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimi Bölümü Müzik Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı'nda öğrenim gören 93 birinci sınıf öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Bireysel çalgılarıyla ilgili metaforik algılarını öğrenmek amacıyla öğrencilerden , "Bireysel çalgım gibidir. Çünkü" cümlesini tamamlamaları istenmiştir. Elde edilen veriler kategoriler altında sınıflandırılarak sunulmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda öğrencilerin bireysel çalgılarını en fazla "insan" metaforu ile tanımladıkları belirlenmiştir. Üretilen 43 metafor incelendiğinde, öğrencilerin en çok tercih ettikleri metaforların bazı kategorilerde yoğunlaştığı görülmektedir. Özellikle aile kategorisinde "çocuğum" ve "ailem", insan kategorisinde ise "arkadaş" metaforları öne çıkmaktadır. Doğa kategorisinde "çiçek" ve "gökyüzü", nesne kategorisinde "kalemtraş", hayvan kategorisinde "kedi", duygu kategorisinde ise "aşk" ve "bedenimden bir parça" metaforlarının diğerlerine göre daha sık kullanıldığı dikkat çekmektedir. Ayrıca, temel ihtiyaç kategorisinde "su", araç olma kategorisinde de "dil" metaforları öğrencilerin en çok başvurduğu ifadeler arasında yer almaktadır. Bu bulgulara dayanarak şu önerilerde bulunulabilir: Eğitimci, öğretimi geliştirmek için metaforik dili aktif bir şekilde kullanabilir; müzik bölümleri ise öğrencilerin bir enstrüman öğrenirken yaşadıkları duygusal ve psikolojik süreçleri daha iyi yönetmelerine yardımcı olacak oryantasyon programları veya rehberlik sistemleri uygulayabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Metafor, algı, müzik eğitimi, bireysel çalgı

1. INTRODUCTION

The journey of a music education program student is multifaceted, demanding the cultivation of both musical prowess and pedagogical expertise (Özgül, 2023). Central to this development is the intricate relationship they forge with their instruments, relationships that extend beyond mere technical proficiency to encompass profound metaphorical significance (Hallam & Bautista, 2018). Metaphors, as cognitive tools, offer a lens through which these students perceive, interpret, and articulate their experiences, shaping their identities as musicians and future educators (Kitchen, 2011). Exploring these metaphorical perceptions provides valuable insights into the evolving self-concept and professional identity (Saban, 2004) of music education students, revealing how their understanding of music, teaching, and their role in the classroom is shaped by their interaction with their instruments.

Metaphorical analysis serves as a potent tool for unravelling the intricate belief systems that music teacher candidates hold regarding teaching and learning (Ömür, 2022). The power of metaphors extends beyond mere linguistic devices, acting as blueprints for thinking and profoundly influencing how they perceive teaching and learning (Martínez et al., 2001). Unveiling these metaphors allows for a deeper understanding of how university students conceptualize their roles, responsibilities, and the overall educational process.

In a similar vein, students' metaphorical perceptions are not limited to abstract concepts like teaching and learning, but also extend to concrete elements of their educational journey—most notably, their individual instruments. The individual instrument, for students in music education programs, transcends its material function and acquires a metaphorical significance that reflects a range of personal meanings and associations. It is often perceived not simply as a musical tool, but as a companion, a vehicle for self-expression, a source of artistic inspiration, and even as an extension of the self. This transformation aligns with the notion that musical instruments are not passive objects but are deeply embedded in the musician's identity and emotional world (McPherson et al., 2012). The relationship between the student and their instrument thus becomes a site for the exploration of personal narratives, affective states, and creative aspirations. In this way, the instrument symbolizes the student's aspirations, challenges, and evolving artistic identity, functioning as a mirror of their personal and musical development (MacDonald et al., 2002). Through their interaction with the instrument, students come to develop their unique musical voice, solidifying the instrument's role as a partner in their artistic journey.

Understanding the metaphorical perceptions of music education program students has significant implications for music teacher education programs. By recognizing the power of metaphors in shaping beliefs and attitudes, lecturers can facilitate critical reflection on these perceptions, encouraging candidates to examine the underlying assumptions and biases that may influence their teaching practices. For instance, students who view their instrument as a "burden" may benefit from strategies to foster a more positive and empowering relationship, such as focusing on the joy of music-making and celebrating small achievements.

When the literature is reviewed, a significant number of studies conducted in the field of music and music education stand out. Girgin's study (2019) for example, explored pre service music teachers' perceptions of instrumental education through metaphor analysis. Vandewalker (2017) employed metaphor- and imagery-based instructions—such as “Play like Tinkerbell dancing” or “Play as if saying goodbye to a best friend”—and documented significant improvements in expressive tonal properties like loudness and tempo (e.g., crescendo, decrescendo, dynamics). Sven Bjerstedt Malm's (2015) study in jazz education conceptualizes instrumental learning metaphors as landscapes of musical learning, wherein the metaphor of storytelling represents students' improvisational journeys. Yazıcı (2015) investigated how primary school teacher candidates metaphorically perceive the concept of the music lesson. Koca (2012), along with Acay Sözbir and Çamlıbel Çakmak (2016), examined the metaphorical views of preschool teacher candidates; similarly, Umuzdaş and Umuzdaş (2013) focused on primary school teacher candidates, while Babacan (2014) studied students attending fine arts high schools, all in relation to the concept of music. Düzgören and Gerekten (2017) explored the metaphorical views of Anatolian High School students about the music lesson concept. In her study, Aydiner Uygun (2015) sought to explore the metaphorical perceptions of prospective teachers from various disciplines regarding traditional music genres. Additionally, Tez and Aydiner Uygun (2016) researched secondary school students' metaphorical perceptions of both the music lesson and the music teacher. Çevik Kılıç (2017) aimed at uncovering music teacher candidates' perceptions of the music education program. In Afacan's study (2021), the metaphors used by music students of the Faculty of Fine Arts regarding the concept of string instruments were identified and Ömür (2022) investigated how generation Z music education students view their ideal music teacher through metaphors.

1.1. Purpose of the Research

The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of first-year music education students of Fine Arts Education Departments regarding their individual instruments through the use of metaphors. Within the scope of this main objective, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Through which metaphors do first-year music education students express their perceptions of their individual instruments?
2. Under which categories can the metaphors proposed by the students regarding the concept of individual instrument be grouped?

1.2. Significance of the Research

The perceptions that music department students hold about their individual instruments are likely to influence their motivation to practice, their attitudes toward their instruments, and consequently, their academic performance. Understanding students' perceptions of their instruments during the first year—the beginning of their educational journey—can help identify potential issues early on. This, in turn, makes it easier to take preventive measures and avoid negative outcomes throughout the course of their education. By identifying the dominant metaphors that shape their thinking, lecturers can tailor their instruction to address any potential misconceptions or limiting beliefs, promoting more effective and student-centered teaching practices.

Moreover, although there are metaphor studies related to various aspects of music education (Afacan, 2021; Avcı, 2020; Çevik Kılıç, 2017; Düzgören & Gerekten, 2017; Tez & Aydiner Uygun, 2016) no such research has been found specifically focusing on individual instruments. This highlights a significant gap in the literature, as the personal and symbolic meanings students attribute to their instruments can offer valuable insights into their artistic identity, emotional engagement, and overall educational experience. Understanding how students metaphorically conceptualize their instruments may contribute to the development of more responsive, student-centered approaches in music pedagogy and curriculum design starting from the first year of their studies.

2. METHOD

Phenomenography, recognized as a qualitative research approach, was adopted as the methodological framework for this study. Phenomenography focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of. In phenomenography, perceptions and events are presented in a realistic and holistic manner within their natural context. The model serves as a suitable methodological

basis for inquiries into phenomena that are known to some extent but whose complete meaning remains elusive (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980, p. 5) foundational definition, "the essential nature of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another".

Within the scope of this research, the phenomenon under investigation was identified as the ways in which students from the Music Education Program in the Fine Arts Education Department conceptualize their individual instruments through the use of metaphors. The metaphor method was chosen in this study because it allows for a deep and rich exploration of students' perceptions, emotions, and experiences related to their individual instruments. Metaphors help individuals express abstract concepts in a more concrete and relatable way, revealing how they make sense of and give meaning to their personal experiences. Through the use of metaphors, the emotional and symbolic connections that music education students form with their instruments can be better understood. This method makes it possible to uncover how instruments are perceived not merely as technical tools, but as extensions of identity and means of personal expression. Therefore, the metaphor method was selected as an effective tool for investigating such complex and layered meanings.

2.1. Ethical Approval of the Study

In this study, all the rules specified under the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions" have been fully observed. None of the actions listed under the second section of the directive, titled "Violations of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics," have been committed.

Study Group

This research was conducted with first year students from the Music Education Programs of the Fine Arts Education Departments at four universities located in the Western Black Sea Region. The criterion sampling method, a type of purposive sampling, was employed to select the participants. Criterion sampling involves the selection of individuals, events, objects, or situations that possess specific characteristics pertinent to the research problem (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009). In the present study, the primary criterion established by the researcher for participant inclusion was that students be enrolled in the first year of the Music Education Department. The study's sample comprised 93 students, of which 60 were female and 33 were male. It was determined that among the students, 35 had the violin as their individual instrument, 16 had the guitar, 11 had the flute, 9 had the viola, 8 had the cello, 8 had the baglama, and 6 had the piano.

Data Collection and Analysis

To identify the metaphors held by Music Education students regarding the concept of "*individual instrument*" students were asked to complete the sentence:

"My individual instrument is like ____, because ____."

They were given approximately 20 minutes to write their own metaphors. These compositions, written in the students' own handwriting, constituted the main data source for the research.

The analysis of the metaphors developed by the music education students was carried out in five stages (Saban, 2008):

1. Coding and elimination stage
2. Compilation of sample metaphors
3. Category development stage
4. Ensuring validity and reliability
5. Transferring data into digital format

Coding and Elimination Stage

At this stage, the researcher compiled a preliminary list of the metaphors generated by the participants. To do so, she assessed the participants' responses to determine whether a clearly articulated metaphor was present, whether a metaphor was expressed at all, and whether multiple metaphors were produced. The metaphors created by the students in the Music Education Program were then analysed for shared characteristics, and categorized accordingly, with particular attention given to those metaphors that appeared with greater frequency.

Study papers that were either left blank or contained metaphors that did not align with the accompanying explanation (a total of five) were excluded from the analysis.

Compilation of Sample Metaphor Images Stage

At this stage, the metaphors were reorganized alphabetically, and the raw data was re-examined for a second time. To illustrate each unique metaphor, a sample list was compiled by selecting the metaphorical expression from the participant that was deemed most representative of its conceptual meaning.

Category Development Stage

At this stage, the metaphorical images generated by the participants were examined in relation to the common characteristics they shared concerning the concept of the individual instrument. To investigate how this concept was conceptualized, the "sample metaphor list" was utilized. Each metaphor was analysed with respect to three key dimensions: (1) the subject of the metaphor, (2) the source domain of the metaphor, and (3) the relationship between the subject and its source.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, one of the fundamental criteria for establishing validity is the comprehensive reporting of collected data, along with a clear explanation of the analytical processes through which the researcher arrived at the study's conclusions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

To ensure the validity of the results in this particular study:

1. The data analysis process (especially how the 8 conceptual categories were derived) was explained in detail.
2. For each of the 43 metaphors obtained in the research, a sample metaphor image that was assumed to best represent it was compiled and all of these were included in the findings section.

To ensure the reliability of the research, expert consultation was employed to verify whether the metaphorical images assigned to the 8 conceptual categories accurately reflected the intended categorizations by two experts. The experts consulted in the study were academicians with 20 to 25 years of experience in the field of music education. The list of 43 metaphors and 8 conceptual categories obtained were given to another specialist and were asked to match them. After this process, agreement and disagreement terms were compared by using Miles and Huberman's formula (1994) $Reliability = \frac{\text{agreement}}{\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}} \times 100$. The expert only associated the metaphors of the sadness of life, child and my child with a different category than the researcher. In this case, the reliability was calculated as $reliability = \frac{40}{40 + 3} \times 100 = 93$.

3. FINDINGS

This section details the findings of the study. Table 1 illustrates the identified metaphorical expressions of the Music Education Program students, along with their corresponding codes and frequency distributions.

Table 1

Music Education Program Students' Metaphor Names, Corresponding Codes, and Frequency Distribution

Categories	Name of Metaphor	Number of Metaphors	Frequency of Metaphors
Human Being	Friend (17), child (5), human being (3), beloved (3), myself (3), woman (1)	6	32
Family	My child (8), My family (5) my brother (1), my spouse (2), my father (2)	5	18
Emotion	Love (2), a piece of my body (2), salted chocolate (1), life (1), food for my soul (1), marriage (1), brain (1)	7	9
Animal	Cat (2), panda (1), goat (1), chameleon (1), butterfly (1), pet (1)	6	7
Object	Sharpener (1), mirror (1), pencil (1), tangled ball of yarn (1) ATM (1), toy (1)	6	6
Being a Tool	Language (1), breath (1), emotion (1), thoughts (1), the sadness of life (1), my own reflection (1)	6	6
Nature	Flower (2), sky (2), tree (1), star (1)	4	6
Essential Need	Water (2), food (1), air (1)	3	4

According to Table 1, an examination of the metaphors and the number of participants who generated each metaphor reveals that students most frequently used certain metaphors within specific conceptual categories. In the "human being" category, friend (17) appeared most frequently. In the "family" category, the metaphors my child (8) and my family (5) were the most common. Within the "emotion" category, students frequently used the metaphors love (2) and a piece of my body (2). In the "animal" category, cat (2) was more common. For the "object" category, sharpener (1), mirror (1), pencil (1), tangled ball of yarn (1) ATM (1) and toy (1) appeared. In the "being a tool" category, the metaphors language (1), breath (1), emotion (1), thoughts (1), the sadness of life (1), my own reflection (1) appeared. Within the "nature" category, the metaphors flower (2) and sky (2) were dominant. Finally, in the "essential need" category, water (2) stood out as the most frequently used metaphor.

Below, Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Family" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Family" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
My child	8
My family	5
My spouse	2
My father	2
My brother	1
Total	18

According to the data presented in Table 2, the music education program students participating in the study generated a total of five metaphors related to the "family" category. It was found that within this category, students most frequently likened their individual instruments to their children or family members. The

metaphors developed by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasons behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like my child. Because I always need to allocate time for it" (Participant 2).

"My individual instrument is like my family. Because when I play it, I feel myself safe" (P 70).

"My individual instrument is like my spouse. Because no matter how strong our relationship is, there are still times when we do not agree" (P 60).

"My individual instrument is like my father. Because I began to grow with it, and it was present in all of my achievements" (P 71).

"My individual instrument is like my brother. Because It never leaves me alone; I can spend time with it whenever I want" (P 93).

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Human Being" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Human Being" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Friend	17
Child	5
Human being	3
Beloved	3
Myself	3
Woman	1
Total	32

According to the data presented in Table 3, the students participating in the study developed a total of six metaphors related to the "human being" category. The metaphors generated by the music education students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasoning behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like friend. Because it provides support during challenging moments, allowing me to divert my thoughts and regain focus" (P 91).

"My individual instrument is like a child. Because if I neglect it even slightly, it becomes unresponsive" (P 51).

"My individual instrument is like human being. Because it has emotions and feelings; it speaks and listens" (P 42).

"My individual instrument is like beloved. Because a lack of attention leads to a gradual distancing in our relationship" (P 10).

"My individual instrument is like myself. Because I always treat it with the same care and attention that I give to myself" (P 19).

"My individual instrument is like woman. Because I draw comparisons based on the shape and sound of my instrument" (P 65).

Table 4 displays the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Nature" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Nature" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Flower	2
Sky	2
Tree	1
Star	1
Total	6

According to the data presented in Table 4, the students participating in the study developed a total of four metaphors related to the "nature" category. Within this category, it was observed that participants most frequently likened their individual instruments to a flower and the sky. The metaphors generated by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasoning behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like flower. Because it becomes more beautiful as I devote time to it" (P 7).

"My individual instrument is like sky. Because it is soothing, relaxing, and filled with a sense of peace" (P 3).

"My individual instrument is like tree. Because it contains sounds as beautiful as birdsong and as rich as the sounds of forests" (P 5).

"My individual instrument is like star. Because it radiates brilliance, commands attention, and possesses a distinctive quality" (P 74).

Table 5 presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Object" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Object" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Sharpener	1
Mirror	1
Pencil	1
Tangled ball of yarn	1
ATM	1
Toy	1
Total	6

According to the data presented in Table 5, the students participating in the study developed a total of six metaphors related to the 'object' category. It was observed that each student likened their individual instrument to a different object within this category. The metaphors created by the participants, along with sample statements explaining the reasons for these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like sharpener. Because It sharpens my dull life" (P 86).

"My individual instrument is like mirror. Because it reflects back to me all my emotions and mistakes" (P 81).

"My individual instrument is like pencil. Because I can write and express whatever I wish" (P 79).

"My individual instrument is like tangled ball of yarn. Because it is difficult to unravel, but as it is unraveled, it provides a sense of peace" (P 72).

"My individual instrument is like ATM. Because it sustains my livelihood" (P 6).

"My individual instrument is like toy. Because it entertains me and helps me spend my time pleasantly (p 37).

Table 6 shows the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Animal" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Animal" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Cat	2
Panda	1
Goat	1
Chameleon	1
Butterfly	1
Pet	1
Total	7

According to the data presented in Table 6, the music education program students participating in the study generated a total of six metaphors related to the "animal" category. It was found that within this category, students most frequently likened their individual instruments to a cat. The metaphors developed by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasons behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like a cat. Because it is very ungrateful" (P 26).

"My individual instrument is like panda. Because it has a very beautiful, soft tone" (P 12).

"My individual instrument is like goat. Because no matter how much I practice, it never quite turns out the way I want; it is stubborn" (P 29).

"My individual instrument is like chameleon. Because the color, timbre, and tonal quality of the instrument change according to the musical work performed" (P 16).

"My individual instrument is like butterfly. Because the delicate fluttering of a butterfly's wings in the air describes the timbre of my instrument" (P 21).

"My individual instrument is like pet. Because I love it very much and never consider being without it" (P 49).

Table 7 below presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Emotion" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Emotion" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Love	2
A piece of my body	2
Salted chocolate	1
Life	1
Food for my soul	1
Marriage	1
Brain	1
Total	9

According to the data presented in Table 7, the students participating in the study developed a total of seven metaphors related to the "emotion" category. Within this category, students most frequently likened their individual instruments to "love" and "a piece of my body". The metaphors created by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasons behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like love. Because it gives both pain and pleasure" (P 87).

"My individual instrument is like a piece of my body. Because just as we fail at many tasks without using our hands, I experience similar difficulties when I do not play my instrument" (P 56).

"My individual instrument is like salted chocolate. Because from an outsider's perspective, it appears enticing, but after taking a bite, the appeal fades" (P 43).

"My individual instrument is like life. Because with its bitterness and sweetness, it belongs to me" (P 25).

"My individual instrument is like food for my soul. Because its sound brings me peace" (P 61).

"My individual instrument is like marriage. Because its character is sweet when playing familiar compositions, but turns challenging and sour during sight-reading" (P 85).

"My individual instrument is like brain. Because without it, the body is incomplete and loses its function" (P 11).

Table 8 presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Essential Need" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Essential Need" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Water	2
Food	1
Air	1
Total	4

According to the data presented in Table 8, the students participating in the study developed a total of three metaphors related to the "Essential Need" category. Within this category, students likened their individual instruments to water, food, and air. The metaphors generated by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the reasons behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like water. Because it is both delicious and indispensable" (P 35).

"My individual instrument is like food. Because you play a piece you love over and over, but after a while, your breath runs out" (P 38).

"My individual instrument is like air. Because it is important and indispensable" (P 68).

Table 9 presents the frequency distribution of metaphors related to the "Being a Tool" category among Music Education Program students.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of Metaphors Related to the "Being a Tool" Category Among Music Education Program Students

Name of Metaphor	f
Language	1
Breath	1
Emotion	1
Thoughts	1
The sadness of life	1
My own reflection	1
Total	6

According to the data presented in Table 9, the students participating in the study developed a total of six metaphors related to the "Being a Tool" category. Within this category, each student expressed their individual instrument using a different metaphor. The metaphors created by the students in this category, along with sample statements explaining the rationale behind these metaphorical associations, are presented below.

"My individual instrument is like language. Because I refrain from speaking on matters about which I lack understanding and without consistent practice, I am unable to perform" (P 1).

"My individual instrument is like breath. Because whether a person is happy or sad, they find relief after a deep breath" (P 84).

"My individual instrument is like emotion. Because It helps me express what I feel" (P 80).

"My individual instrument is like thoughts. Because I can reflect my thoughts and feelings" (P 48).

"My individual instrument is like the sadness of life. Because it is a tool to express my shortcomings" (P 23).

"My individual instrument is like my own reflection. Because I can express my feelings as I feel in it" (P 52).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of metaphors used by first-year music education students to describe their individual instruments reveals a rich and diverse set of perceptions, reflecting the deep personal and emotional connections they form with their instruments. The predominance of metaphors such as *friend*, *my child*, and *my family* suggest that students often view their instruments as close companions or integral parts of their personal lives. Emotional and human-related metaphors were particularly common, indicating that students tend to anthropomorphize their instruments, attributing to them qualities of sentient beings or emotional significance. This anthropomorphic framing aligns with previous research showing that musicians often imbue their instruments with qualities of sentience, emotional resonance, and extension of self. For example, *Musical Identities* by MacDonald et al. (2002) discusses how musical instruments can become central to identity, shaping how one understands one's own musical actions and social roles.

Nature-related and essential need metaphors, such as *flower*, *sky*, and *water*, highlight the aesthetic and vital role instruments play in students' lives. Moreover, essential need metaphors (e.g., *water*, *air*) underscore life sustaining value students place on their instruments. Such metaphors indicate that students perceive their instruments not only as sources of beauty but also as crucial components of their emotional and creative well being. Similarly, in their studies, Kalay Meydan and Özdemir (2023) found that 3.87% of amateur musicians described playing an instrument using metaphors related to nature. According to Babacan's (2014) study, participants of her research stated that they see music as essential needs. Another metaphor produced by the participants of Düzgören and Gerekten's research (2017) regarding the concept of music lesson is essential need like oxygen, breath, water and food.

The presence of metaphors in the "being a tool" category, including *language*, *breath*, and *thoughts*, underscores the instrument's function as a medium of self-expression. Instruments become expressive conduits through which students articulate thoughts, feelings, and artistic intentions. Likewise, a study of Avcı (2020) revealed that participants of her research stated that the piano is as important as their life and hold it as dear as their emotions. Although object and animal metaphors were less frequent, they further contribute to the broad spectrum of meanings assigned to instruments.

Overall, the variety and depth of these metaphors reflect not only how students conceptualize their instruments, but also how these instruments influence their identity, emotions, and artistic experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings regarding the metaphors used by first-year music education students to describe their individual instruments, the following recommendations can be made for educators, curriculum designers, and music departments:

1. Given the strong emotional and personal associations students have with their instruments—reflected in metaphors like *friend*, *my child*, and *family*—educators can incorporate reflective activities (e.g., journaling, group discussions, metaphor-based assignments) that allow students to articulate and explore these connections. This can enhance motivation, deepen engagement, and foster emotional resilience in the learning process.
2. The diverse metaphors indicate that each student builds a unique relationship with their instrument. Teachers can adopt student-centered pedagogies that recognize and support this diversity, allowing for differentiated instruction and encouraging students to bring their personal interpretations and emotional narratives into their practice and performance.
3. Since metaphors serve as a powerful means of understanding and communicating abstract or complex experiences, instructors can actively use metaphorical language to enhance teaching. For example, guiding students with imagery like "play this phrase as if you're speaking to a loved one" or "shape the sound like a rising wave" can improve musical expression and technical interpretation.
4. Understanding how students perceive their instruments in their first year provides critical insight for early intervention. Music departments can implement orientation programs or mentoring systems that help students navigate the emotional and psychological dimensions of learning an instrument, potentially improving long-term academic success and well-being.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Ethics Committee for Human Research in Social Sciences (date: 08.02.2017, number: 2017/50).

Author contribution

Study conception and design: SAS; data collection: SAS; analysis and interpretation of results: SAS; draft manuscript preparation: SAS. Author reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

Source of funding

The author declare the study received no funding.

Conflict of interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Etik kurul onayı

Çalışma, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimlerde İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından onaylanmıştır (tarih: 08.02.2017, sayı: 2017/50).

Yazarlık katkısı

Çalışmanın tasarımı ve konsepti: SAS; verilerin toplanması: SAS; sonuçların analizi ve yorumlanması: SAS; çalışmanın yazımı: SAS. Yazar sonuçları gözden geçirmiş ve makalenin son halini onaylamıştır.

Finansman kaynağı

Yazar, çalışmanın herhangi bir finansman almadığını beyan etmektedir.

Çıkar çatışması

Yazar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedir.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1. Giriş

Bilişsel ve dilsel bir araç olarak metafor, bireylerin soyut, karmaşık veya duygusal açıdan yüklü olguları daha tanıdık ve somut imgeler aracılığıyla kavramsallaştırmalarına olanak tanır. Müzik eğitiminde metaforlar yalnızca birer iletişim aracı değil, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin gelişen müzisyen ve eğitimci kimliklerine, inançlarına ve deneyimlerine açılan birer pencere işlevi görür. Bu çalışma, birinci sınıf müzik eğitimi öğrencilerinin bireysel çalgılarına ilişkin olarak oluşturdukları metaforik temsilleri incelemekte ve öğrenme, çalışma ve mesleki biçimlenmelerini şekillendiren temel algıları ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

2. Yöntem

Bu araştırmada fenomenografik nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Bu çalışma Türkiye'nin Batı Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde yer alan dört üniversitenin Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimi Fakültelerine bağlı Müzik Eğitimi Anabilim Dallarında öğrenim görmekte olan toplam 93 birinci sınıf öğrencisiyle yürütülmüştür. Katılımcıların bireysel çalgıları; keman, gitar, flüt, viyola, viyolonsel, bağlama ve piyano olarak çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Veriler, öğrencilere yöneltilen "Bireysel çalgım ... gibidir, çünkü ..." biçimindeki açık uçlu bir ifade aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bu ifade, öğrencilerin çalgılarıyla kurdukları ilişkileri metaforik olarak ifade etmelerini sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Elde edilen yanıtlar, kodlama, kategorileştirme, uzman görüşüyle geçerlik denetimi ve güvenilirlik hesaplamalarını içeren çok aşamalı bir analiz sürecine tabi tutulmuştur. Analiz sonucunda değerlendiriciler arası uyum oranı %92 olarak belirlenmiştir.

3. Bulgular

Araştırma bulguları, öğrencilerin toplam 43 farklı metafor ürettiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Bu metaforlar daha sonra sekiz kavramsal kategori altında toplanmıştır: aile, insan, doğa, nesne, hayvan, duygu, temel ihtiyaç ve araç olma. Bu kategoriler arasında insanla ilişkili metaforlar en baskın grubu oluşturmuştur. "Arkadaş" (f=17), "çocuk" (f=5) ve "sevgili" (f=3) metaforları, öğrencilerin çalgılarını birer yoldaş, bağımlı ya da yakın bir partner olarak insana benzetme eğiliminde olduklarını göstermektedir. Aile kategorisi de dikkat çekici bir şekilde öne çıkmıştır; "çocuğum" (f=8) ve "ailem" (f=5) metaforları, öğrencilerin çalgılarını kişisel yaşamlarının ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak deneyimlediklerini, bakım, sorumluluk ve aidiyet duygularını bu ilişkiye yansıttıklarını göstermektedir. Diğer kategoriler ise çalgı deneyimini farklı boyutlarda zenginleştirmiştir: "çiçek" ve "gökyüzü" gibi doğa metaforları; "kedi" ve "kelebek" gibi hayvan metaforları; "aşk" ve "bedenimin bir parçası" gibi duygu temelli metaforlar; "su" ve "hava" gibi temel ihtiyaç metaforları ile "dil" ve "düşünceler" gibi araç metaforları, öğrencilerin çalgılarını yaşamlarının vazgeçilmez bir unsuru olarak konumlandıklarını göstermektedir.

4. Öneriler

Araştırma bulgularına dayanarak müzik eğitimi alanındaki öğretmenler, program geliştiriciler ve müzik bölümleri için bazı öneriler sunulmuştur. Öğrencilerin "arkadaş", "çocuğum" ve "ailem" gibi metaforlarla ifade ettikleri güçlü duygusal bağlar, öğretim sürecine yansıtıcı etkinliklerin (günlük yazma, grup tartışmaları, metafor temelli ödevler vb.) dâhil edilmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu tür etkinlikler, öğrencilerin motivasyonunu ve duygusal dayanıklılığını artırabilir. Çeşitli metaforların varlığı, her öğrencinin çalgısıyla kendine özgü bir ilişki kurduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin, farklılıkları tanıyan ve öğrencinin kişisel anlam dünyasını öğrenme sürecine dâhil eden öğrenci merkezli yaklaşımlar benimsemeleri önerilmektedir. Ayrıca, metaforik dilin bilinçli kullanımı soyut müzikal kavramların anlaşılmasını kolaylaştırabilir ve öğrencilerin ifade gücünü geliştirebilir. Son olarak, öğrencilerin çalgı algılarının erken dönemde belirlenmesi, müzik bölümlerinin oryantasyon ve mentorluk programlarıyla duygusal ve akademik destek sağlamalarına yardımcı olabilir.