



# The Effect of Kindergarteners' Perceptions of School on their Attitudes towards School

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is a) to investigate kindergarteners' perception of "school" through the impressions and images and b) to find out the effect of these perceptions on their attitudes towards school in cooperation with kindergarten teachers. This qualitative study is based on metaphor technique; the data of which is derived from kindergarteners' perceptions of "school", researcher's own observation of kindergarteners, and focus group interview with these kindergarteners' teachers. The research group for metaphors consists of thirty-five kindergarteners from two different classes in a state kindergarten in Bursa. Thirty-three relevant, twenty-one different metaphors are collected from the data. These metaphors are grouped under six different conceptual categories according to their common features. In addition, several interviews are carried out with the kindergarteners' teachers to determine the effect of these perceptions on kindergarteners' attitude towards school. According to the analysis of the data collected from metaphor study, kindergarteners mostly perceive "school" as a 'homelike' place to live in comfortably and happily beside learning new things and playing games. Only five kindergarteners regard "school" negatively, and are detected to have attitudinal and disorientation problem. Determining the ways to cope with the negative attitudes of these five kindergarteners to school can be the focus of a further study.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Metaphor technique in educational research

In order to find out how students perceive "school" in preschool period, metaphor technique is used as a data collection instrument. Metaphor is a simple technique to collect data on perceptions especially of young students at early ages. Basically, the meaning of metaphor is to explain a complex phenomenon or event by likening it to another phenomenon or event (Oxford et al., 1998). Aristo (2008) also defines metaphor

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as assigning a word a meaning other than its specific meaning which is possible by attaching the meaning of gender to kind, the meaning of kind to gender or the meaning of kind to another gender or according to a proportion (pp.59-60). According to Sennett (1980) “a metaphor creates a meaning greater than the sum of its parts” (p.78). In addition, Saban (2004) defines metaphor as a process of building linkages between knowledges in mind which make it possible to perceive and understand from the perspective of another subject. Shuell (1990) states: “If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures. For a picture provides only a static image while a metaphor provides a conceptual framework for thinking about something” (p.102). While Eraslan (2011) praises metaphor as a perfect technique to teach unknown things and a valid tool to store in mind and remember the knowledge acquired Sezer (2003) explains metaphorical thinking process in following stages:

- An abstract phenomenon (situation, event, concept) intended to be explained and made sense of,
- A concrete and explicit phenomenon used to explain this phenomenon and linguistic expression of this phenomenon,
- Specific equivalences and analogies formed between these two phenomena.

On the other hand, Balci (1999) claims that metaphorical thinking process is composed of two parts as “topic” and “vehicle”. While topic refers to a phenomenon, situation or concept explained or meant to be explained, vehicle refers to a term or terms used metaphorically (p.33). Furthermore, Midgley and Trimmer (2013) also emphasize the importance of using metaphor technique in educational research by indicating that the identification and analysis of constructed metaphors can be a beneficial tool to gain an improved understanding of students’ experience, to consider ways to better support parents, teachers, and schools and to contribute to students’ social and educational improvement (p. 7). When the literature is examined, it is seen that metaphors have been studied many times since 1980s in different disciplines of social and educational sciences. In Turkish research studies of Celikten (2006), Saban (2009), Aydin (2010), and Eraslan (2011), several metaphors were formulated about “culture”, “teacher”, “student”, “school”, “sociological” and “leadership”.

### *1.2. Preschool and kindergarten education*

Early childhood is defined as “occurring before the age of eight”, the period which children go through a very rapid and critical phase of development in their social and cognitive skills by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Accordingly, preschool education focuses on educating children from the ages of infancy till to age of compulsory elementary school education. Since the roots of early preschool education go back to the 1800s, when the educational and philosophical views of Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky, Rousseau, and Froebel were very much

influential in Europe, the system and the practices of preschool education, depending upon these different approaches and theories vary widely all around the world. (Mooney, 2000; Wortham, 2006).

Kendall (2000) explains why early childhood has a significant place in the general education system within the view that “7 is too late” to educate young children. In parallel, 3-year-old children’s brain is scientifically proven to operate twice as active as the adults’ brain by Shore (1997), especially under an enriched and stimulating learning environment in Rosenzweig’s experiment on rats (Morris & Maisto, 2005; Nielsen, 2006). Moreover, high-quality early childhood education not only makes a dramatic difference in the development of children, especially in their later school achievement but also contributes a lot to the well-being of their society, as well (Essa, 2003; Nielsen, 2006). In light of all these views on behalf of the significance of early childhood education, it can be said to be very beneficial to start education in the early years as soon as possible for young children who undergo a series of very significant social and cognitive changes at their early ages.

The early years in childhood are crucially important for the holistic development of young children. Therefore, the pre-school education should not only be seen as a daycare program to fulfill the needs of large numbers of working mothers by providing a safe environment for their young children during working hours. Instead, a quality preschool education should provide children early education environment and experiences with opportunities to build self-confidence, learn social skills, develop learning dispositions, and get prepared for school both psychologically and cognitively. The significance of early childhood education, even in the future of societies is also indicated as follows:

Being the most critical step in human development, early years education without doubt deserves more attention from politicians, academic staff and teachers, as well as families. In-depth investigation is needed so that Turkey can have in place a fully functioning early childhood education system, with higher quality programs and suitably trained teachers, appropriate learning environments and experiences, and, of course, a well-established system which brings together all these elements in harmony. (Usakli, 2010, p. 217).

Pre-school education can be said to enhance the kindergarten education, which is generally accepted to be the preparatory period for elementary school education. The German term “kindergarten” that refers to children’s garden, initiates from Friedrich Froebel’s play and activity institute, founded in Bad Blankenburg in 1837 as a social experience for children for their transition from home to school. Froebel’s goal was to take care of nourish children like plants in a garden. Similarly, the term “kindergartener” also refers to kindergarten pupil. According to Froebel (1782-1852), the German educationalist, and the founder of “kindergarten” school system, kindergarten education is a means for all human beings to start realizing the limitless potential, given by God, at an early age, and to discover their abilities and personalities through the development of creativity, language, and social skills. Although generally focusing on

spontaneous play and creative activities, just like preschool education, the kindergarten curriculum provides a transition for the children between their natural home and family environment to a wider and more structured social environment of their peers and guiding adults who are not their parents. Kindergarten education is accepted to be the beginning of formal education during ages five to six, which is fully integrated into the elementary school system (Herr, 2002; Healy, 2004).

In addition to this social development, Anne McGill-Franzen's research (2006) on the critical importance of kindergarten reading and writing, even claims that educators should help kindergarteners read and write before grade level, and also hopefully indicates that all kindergarteners are ready to acquire the literacy skills they need all throughout their lives.

The main objective of the Turkish Preschool Education Curriculum which is grounded on constructive philosophy within the views of Froebel, Montessori, Piaget and Vygotsky, is to support the developmental characteristics of children, to develop their self-care abilities and to prepare them for further education. The Turkish Preschool Education Curriculum, in which Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is also adopted, mainly consist educational leisure time activities and games, a long with which music, preparatory works for reading and writing, drama, field trips, and art activities are included (Ahi & Kildan, 2013).

The Preschool Education Curriculum operates as a framework for the education of 36 to 72 month old children in Turkish educational system. The objective of the recent curriculum is to support the psychomotor, social, emotional, cognitive, and lingual development of 36 to 72 month old children, in the scope of preschool education (Aral, Kandir & Can, 2002). The Preschool Education Curriculum was also reviewed and revised via the adoption of modern approaches in 2006 (MEB, 2006).

Despite the importance of early childhood development and preschool education in the society, our country is reported to be under the average of OECD's countries in the rate of schooling in preschool education, preschool teachers' career development, and budget and expenditure in preschool education (Aktan, Akkutay, 2014).

In the work of Sahin, Sak, and Sahin (2013), emphasizing the significance of parental involvement in early childhood education, parents, when asked about their views on the importance of preschool education, stress that "Preschool education is crucial and necessary for children to make friends, to develop skills of sharing and self-confidence, to learn rules of society and school, to get ready for primary school, and to enhance their self-expression and creativity" (p. 290).

### *1.3. The significance and the purpose of the study*

The significance of early childhood education in the social, emotional, and cognitive growth of young children, in their readiness for a more structured and formal education life, and in the wellbeing and future of all societies is emphasized in a body of international literature (Kendall, 2000; Essa, 2003; Nielsen 2006; Herr, 2002; Heary, 2004; Usakli, 2010; Sahin, Sak & Sahin, 2013). In the light of all the views on behalf of the importance of preschool education, the focus and the scope of the present study on preschool education can be said to be significant and well chosen. Students' attitudes towards school is very much influential over school climate, learning situations and students' wellbeing and academic achievement (Thornburg, 1985; Abu-Hilala, Abdelfattahb, Abduliabbarb & Marshbc, 2007; Eccles & Wigfield, 2000; Holfve-Sabel, 2006; Schleicher, 2013). There is also a considerable body of research, conducted on elementary school students', early adolescents', adolescents', formal education students', language students', science students', and even art students' attitudes towards school (Gray & Mclellan, 2006; Cohen, 2006; Garcia-Sanchez & de Caso-Fuertes, 2005; Sainsburg & Shagen, 2004; Wang, 2000; Schweinle, Meyer & Turner, 2006; Wilkins & Ma, 2003; Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 2004; Merisuo-Storm, 2007; Pavloua & Kambourib, 2007). Research literature, on the other hand, critically lacks research on preschool students' attitudes towards kindergarten. Focusing on the attitudes of kindergarteners towards school, the present study is hoped to fill a significant gap in research literature.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate kindergarteners' perception on metaphoric of "school", and to explore how these perceptions reflect on their attitudes towards school. Within this main purpose, the following research questions are also inquired in the scope of the present study:

- What metaphors do kindergarteners construct about the concept of "school"?
- What are the conceptual categories under which these metaphors can be grouped?
- How do kindergarteners' negative perceptions of "school" reflect on their attitudes towards school?

## **2. Research material and method**

This paper is based on an action research in qualitative design. Metaphor is used as a qualitative research technique to investigate kindergarteners' perception of "school". In addition, observation and focus group interview are employed as further instruments for data collection in order to explore the effects of these perceptions on kindergarteners' attitude towards school. The metaphor study is applied on 35 kindergarteners of two classes in the state kindergarten which the researcher's four year old son is attending, as well. The metaphor study is conducted via structured interviews with each of the kindergarteners, in which the researcher tries to create a stress free, warm and friendly atmosphere in order to help the kindergarteners to use their creative imagination, and to

express their feelings and thoughts openly, sincerely, comfortably, and freely. Furthermore, the researcher makes a semi-structured focus group interview with the teachers of kindergarteners from two classes, “Butterflies”, and “Stars” in a separate and silent room in the kindergarten where they can easily concentrate on the issue and brainstorm on the solutions, or sometimes in the school garden, as well. The researcher also tries to create a friendly, and democratic atmosphere during the interviews so that the teachers take turns answering the researcher’s questions and declaring their ideas about the kindergarteners openly and freely.

### 2.1. Participants

The metaphor study is conducted with the participation of thirty-five kindergarteners attending a state kindergarten in the third week of the first term of 2015-2016 academic year. All of the kindergarteners are from two classes, named as ‘Butterflies’ and ‘Stars’ in this state kindergarten. In research group, eighteen kindergarteners are females whereas seventeen kindergarteners are males in between the ages of 4-6. The features of participants are shown in Table 1. In addition to this metaphor study, several interviews are held with the teachers of two classes to determine the effect of kindergarteners’ perceptions on their attitudes towards school. The names of the teachers, as the participants of the interviews and the stakeholders in the action research, are not mentioned in the study but coded as T1, the teacher of “Butterflies”, and T2, the teacher of “Stars”.

Table 1. Distribution of kindergarteners according to age and sex

		n	%
Age	4	20	57.1
	5	10	28.6
	6	5	14.3
	TOTAL	35	100.0
Sex	Female	18	51.4
	Male	17	48.5
	TOTAL	35	100.0

### 2.2. Limitations of the study

The study is conducted in a state kindergarten in Bursa. Among all the kindergartens, to elicit kindergarteners’ perceptions of ‘school’ and to conduct an action research, the

researcher chooses this kindergarten because her four year old son is attending this kindergarten. Therefore, she has a constant contact with the kindergarteners and teachers that gives her the chance to collect the data easily. In addition, instead of conducting the study upon all kindergarteners in the kindergarten, the researcher prefers to collect the metaphoric data only from two classes, one of which is her son's class. It means she knows these kindergarteners better and has chance to apply the metaphor study and carry out the action research easily. Due to her close relation with the teacher, the researcher also has the advantage of being able to work with the teacher in an easy and a continuous cooperation. Researcher's preferring to use convenience sampling as the sampling method in the scope of the study can be considered as the mere limitation of the present study.

### *2.3. Data collection procedure*

This action research is based on two different qualitative research techniques: metaphor and interview. Metaphor study is first conducted via a single-question questionnaire form on which the kindergarteners are expected to construct mental images about the concept "school" as in follows:

"School" is like .....because.....

Saban (2004) puts forward the idea that the phrase "is like" is used to associate more clearly the link between the topic and the vehicle of the metaphor in research studies where metaphors are used as qualitative research instrument (p.31). With the explanatory conjunction "because" the kindergarteners create sense reasons why they construct these metaphors which helps the researcher a lot in further steps of identifying the key words and forming conceptual categories accordingly. The metaphor study is applied on thirty-five kindergarteners consisting of two sections from two classes in the state kindergarten where the researcher's son is a kindergartener, as well. In addition to the metaphor technique, semi-structured interview and observation are used as secondary instruments for data collection in order to explore how kindergarteners' perceptions of "school" affect their attitudes towards school.

### *2.4. Data analysis*

#### *2.4.1. Coding*

At first, all the data collected from the metaphors, produced by thirty-five kindergarteners participated in the study is listed in alphabetical order in order to code them easily. In this step, the prompts, filled in Turkish by the researcher are all translated in English before being taken into analysis. Since two of the kindergarteners cannot build any proper metaphor on school are omitted from the scope of the metaphor study. After listing, coding, and excluding the irrelevant data, thirty-three relevant

metaphors are collected. Thus, a sample list of metaphors is prepared to compile kindergarteners' metaphorical images. The list of metaphors, given in Table 2, not only helped the researchers in grouping the metaphors under certain categories but also validated data analysis process and interpretations of the research, as well. In this stage, of thirty-three relevant metaphors, twenty-one different metaphors were produced, four metaphors were commonly shared by two or more kindergarteners whereas seventeen metaphors are constructed by only one kindergartener.

#### *2.4.2. Categorizing*

When it comes to developing conceptual categories out of twenty one different metaphors, the participants' metaphors of "school" are analyzed in terms of their common features. In other words, how the participants conceptualize the metaphors is analyzed. Each metaphor image is analyzed in terms of the metaphor topic "school", the metaphor vehicle and the ground which means the relationship between the topic and the vehicle. Later, each metaphor is associated with a certain theme. In the further steps, the single metaphors constructed by only one kindergartener are also taken into consideration while forming the conceptual categories. Therefore, as a result of this review and analysis, six different conceptual categories are formed and stated in the section of findings.

#### *2.4.3. Validity and reliability*

In order to establish the validity and reliability of the research, basically, the researchers clearly explained the whole data analysis process in details ranging from the decision on data collection instruments, collecting meaningful data via these instruments to the coding and categorizing the raw data into common categories step by step in details. The researchers also compiled a detailed list of metaphors to represent each of the metaphors. Furthermore, external expert opinion and peer-review are employed to confirm whether metaphors listed under six common conceptual categories represented all metaphors accurately or not. After determining twenty-one different metaphors and developing six common conceptual categories, the researchers transferred all data to SPSS package program for quantitative data analysis basically to calculate the number (f) and percentage (%) of participants that represented thirty-three relevant metaphors and six categories presented in Table 2. This very basic SPSS analysis contributed a quantitative dimension to the qualitative research and very much helped to improve validity and reliability of it as well.

### **3. Findings and discussion**

After conducting the metaphor study on kindergarteners, having interviews with their teachers, and analyzing the raw data collected by these two instruments, the researcher gives the findings in more concrete terms, in tables. She also discusses the findings in

categories and interprets them in sub-headings in accordance with the research questions she states in introduction.

### 3.1. Kindergarteners' metaphors on "school"

The metaphors constructed by the kindergarteners about the concept "school" are demonstrated in Table 2 with the number and percentage of kindergarteners representing each metaphor:

Table 2. Metaphors on "school" and the Number and Percentage of Kindergarteners that Represent Those Metaphors

Metaphor Code	Metaphor Name	frequency (f)	percentage (%)
10	House	6	18.12
16	Playing with Toys-Toys	4	12.12
9	Home	3	9.09
12	Learning	3	9.09
1	Atatürk	1	3.03
2	Bad Boy	1	3.03
3	Brocoli	1	3.03
4	Candy	1	3.03
5	Chocolate	1	3.03
6	Drawing Pictures	1	3.03
7	Eating Potato Chips	1	3.03
8	Garden with Flowers	1	3.03
11	Jeep	1	3.03
13	Parents	1	3.03
14	Playing Lego	1	3.03
15	Playing with Friends-Friends	1	3.03
17	Returning Home	1	3.03
18	Stomach Ache	1	3.03
19	Studying with Books	1	3.03
20	Swimming Pool	1	3.03
21	Watching Cartoons	1	3.03

According to Table 2, demonstrating kindergarteners' metaphors on "school":

- Kindergarteners participated in the metaphor study produced a total of thirty three relevant metaphors about "school".

- Seventeen of these thirty three metaphors are represented only one kindergartener whereas sixteen of them are represented by two or more kindergarteners.
- The metaphors listed in the first four counts are as follows: 1. house (6 kindergarteners, 18%), 2. playing with toys/toy-s (4 kindergarteners, 12%), 3. home (3 kindergarteners, 9%), 4. learning (3 kindergarteners, 9%).
- Twelve of the metaphors constructed by the kindergarteners can be associated with nonliving things such as house, broccoli, candy, chocolate, garden with flowers, jeep, and swimming pool whereas three of the metaphors can be associated with living things which are Atatürk, a bad boy, and parents.
- Two metaphors can be associated with abstract concepts which are home and stomach ache whereas in nine of the metaphors, the kindergarteners express their perceptions with actions such as listed as playing with toys, learning, studying with books, drawing picture, returning home, playing lego, playing with friends, eating potato chips, and watching cartoons.
- Four metaphors can be considered as to be negatively constructed when the grounds of each metaphor, which are the explanation or the logical reasons suggested by the kindergarteners for their metaphors: bad boy, broccoli, stomach ache, and returning home (4 kindergarteners, 12%). Twenty nine of the metaphors are positive metaphors, representing positive concepts or constructed within positive grounds (17 kindergarteners, 51.5%).

### *3.2. The conceptual categories*

In this section, the metaphors provided by the participants are grouped under six categories listed in terms of frequency and percentage. In order to develop these conceptual categories out of twenty one different metaphors, the researcher analyzes the metaphors in terms of their common features and associate each metaphor with a certain theme by trying to figure out how the kindergarteners conceptualize the metaphors. In parallel to these categories, logical explanations and reasons suggested by kindergarteners in the “because....” clause of the given prompt are analyzed and stated. As a result of this review and analysis, the metaphors are grouped under six different conceptual categories, stated and discussed in the headings below. Under each category, examples are given for each of the metaphors with their actual explanation.

#### *3.2.1. School as joy or fun*

Ten kindergarteners in total construct seven different metaphors classified in the conceptual category of “School as Joy or Fun”. Since most of the kindergarteners construct metaphors which can be grouped under the category of “School as Joy or Fun”, this category can be said to be a very significant category, showing the common tendency of kindergarteners in their perception of school (10 kindergarteners, 30.30%). The metaphor “Playing with Toys/Toy-s” is repeatedly constructed (4 kindergarteners, 9.09%)

whereas other metaphors in the category are constructed by only one kindergartener. The common reason drawn from kindergarteners' explanations of their metaphors in this category can be stated as school is a fun place where kindergarteners enjoy themselves via playing pleasurable games with their friends freely. In other words, the metaphors under this category indicates that kindergarteners generally have a positive perception of school as they feel stress-free, enjoyed and entertained at school.

Table 3. Data regarding the category of school as joy or fun

School as Joy or Fun	n	%
Playing with Toys-Toys	4	12.12
Candy	1	3.03
Chocolate	1	3.03
Garden with Flowers	1	3.03
Jeep	1	3.03
Playing Lego	1	3.03
Playing with Friends	1	3.03
TOTAL	10	30.30

In this category, the kindergarteners also explain the logical reasons for their choice of metaphor by using following statements:

- “School is like playing with toys because it is good for me.”
- “School is like candy because I really love candies.”
- “School is like chocolate because I like eating chocolate.”
- “School is like a garden with flowers because school is a nice place.”
- “School is like my uncle’s jeep because my uncle drives his jeep very fast that really excites me.”
- “School is like playing lego because I like playing lego with my father when he comes.”
- “School is like playing with friends because they always entertain me.”

### 3.2.2. School as a physical entity

The metaphor “house”, repeatedly constructed by six different kindergarteners, can be said to form the conceptual category of “School as a Physical Entity”. Being the most repeatedly constructed metaphor (6 kindergarteners, 18.12%), “house” can be said to be a significant metaphor since it symbolizes the pre-operational stage in Piaget’s (1951) theory of cognitive development when children, in between 2-7 ages, focus only on physical appearance of entities, and think in concrete terms, but cannot use logic or transform, combine or separate ideas (Bjorklund & Causey, 2012). It indicates the

physical perception of the kindergartens who cannot create any abstract image of school in their mind, but can only see it in physical terms as a concrete building. The common reason drawn from kindergarteners' explanations of their metaphors can be stated as school is the building, that is physically situated in a garden and consists of classrooms.

Table 4. Data regarding the category of school as a physical concept

English as a Physical Entity	n	%
House	6	18.12

In this category, the kindergarteners also explain the logical reasons for their choice of metaphor by using following statements:

- “School is like a house because it has walls and a roof.”
- “School is like a house because it has rooms in it.”
- “School is like a house because we can enter into it.”
- “School is like a house because we live in it.”
- “School is like a house because it has walls and windows.”
- “School is like a house because it has inside and outside there is garden and other things.”

### 3.2.3. School as a learning environment/educational institution

Six kindergarteners in total construct four different metaphors classified in the conceptual category of “School as a Learning Environment” (6 kindergarteners, 18.12%). The metaphor “Learning” is repeatedly constructed (3 kindergarteners, 9.09%) whereas other metaphors in the category are constructed by only one kindergartener. As it is clearly understood from their reasons and explanations for their metaphors, kindergarteners having constructed the metaphors under this category accept school as an educational institution and learning environment where they get together to learn new and useful things such as “Atatürk” or “drawing pictures”.

Table 5. Data regarding the category of school as a learning environment/educational institution

School as a Learning Environment/Educational Institution	n	%
Learning	3	9.09
Atatürk	1	3.03
Drawing Pictures	1	3.03
Studying with Books	1	3.03
TOTAL	6	18.12

In this category, the kindergarteners also explain the logical reasons for their choice of metaphor by using following statements:

- “School is like learning because we learn inhere.”
- “School is like Atatürk because I learn Atatürk at school.”
- “School is like drawing pictures because our teacher teaches us how to draw picture.”
- “School is like studying books because my sister always study with her schoolmates.”

#### 3.2.4. *School as a safe environment*

Four kindergarteners in total construct two different metaphors classified in the conceptual category of “School as a Safe Environment”. The metaphor home" which is repeatedly constructed (3 kindergarteners, 9.09%) whereas the metaphor “parents” is constructed by only one kindergartener. Drawn from the explanations of their metaphors, the kindergarteners, having constructed the metaphors under this category perceive school as a safe place where they are always with trustworthy people, and feel no threat or danger.

Table 6. Data regarding the category of English as a safe environment

English as a Safe Environment	n	%
Home	3	9.09
Parents	1	3.03
TOTAL	4	12.12

In this category, the kindergarteners also explain the logical reasons for their choice of metaphor by using following statements:

- “School is like home because we are all safe inhere.”
- “School is like a home because we do the same things we do at home as playing, eating etc.”
- “School is like a home because our teacher is like our mom.”
- “School is like our parents because I feel safe and happy with my parents.”

#### 3.2.5. *School as disturbance*

Under the conceptual category of “School as Disturbance”, four kindergarteners in total construct four different metaphors (4 kindergarteners, 12.12%). All metaphors in this category are not repeated but constructed by only one kindergartener. When the logical explanations of the kindergarteners for their metaphors are examined, it is clearly seen that all the metaphors “Bad Boy”, “Broccoli”, “Returning Home”, and “Stomach Ache” stand for something bad, unwanted, avoided, annoying, and disturbing about school.

Indicating the kindergarteners' negative attitude problem which is also the central concern and the main research question of the present study, the conceptual category of "School as Disturbance" is the most significant category among all.

Table 7. Data regarding the category of school as disturbance

School as Disturbance	n	%
Bad Boy	1	3.03
Brocoli	1	3.03
Returning Home	1	3.03
Stomachache	1	3.03
TOTAL	4	12.12

In this category, the kindergarteners also explain the logical reasons for their choice of metaphor by using following statements:

- "School is like the bad boy in Stars because I hate him." (G2-from Stars)
- "School is like broccoli because my mother always gets me to eat but I hate it." (B1-from Butterflies)
- "School is like returning home because I hate school every day, but I like returning my home." (B2-from Butterflies)
- "School is like stomachache because my stomach aches at school." (G3-from Stars)

When the ground in which they construct the metaphors is analyzed, the kindergarteners are commonly said to have a rather negative impression and image of school in their minds. They perceive school as an unwanted, and disturbing entity that they dislike and try to avoid going to or being at.

### 3.3. *The effect of kindergartens' perceptions of "school" on their attitudes towards school*

In order to find out how kindergarteners' negative and positive perceptions of "school" reflect on their attitudes towards school, the researcher carries out a semi-structured interview with the teachers of the classes "Butterflies" and "Stars". After conducting the metaphor study, the researcher starts the interview to investigate the attitudes of two kindergarteners who remain silent during the interview and cannot build any metaphor on school. T2 (the teacher of "Stars" and the kindergarteners G2 and G3), states that one of the kindergarteners who remain silent is from her class. She reminds that her kindergartener cannot answer the question just because she feels ill that day, but points out no attitudinal or orientation problem about her in general. In contrast, T1 (the teacher of "Butterflies" and the kindergarteners G1, B1, and B2) points out a problem in

the attitude of G1 who is the other kindergartener not answering in interview. She also says that she must have been too excited to use her imaginative power and to create a proper metaphor. T1 additionally declares that G1 is such a shy and introvert child that she always has a hard time getting her in class activities and getting any proper answer or reaction from her.

Moreover, both teachers share the idea that all of twenty-nine kindergarteners, having constructed positive metaphors do not show any negative attitude towards school. The teachers also declare that some of the kindergarteners had some problems in their adaptation to the school especially in the beginning of the academic year but they say that those kindergarteners have got oriented to school after a couple of days along with the regular school program. On the contrary, according to their teachers, all of the kindergarteners G2, G3, B1, B2 who construct negative metaphors can be said to have negative attitudes towards school from the beginning of the academic year. The teachers also say that these kindergarteners have no preschool education before which means it is their first time to be a part from their families. For this reason, these kindergarteners haven't been oriented to school, school's education program, and school rules, yet. They cannot participate properly either in class activities or in free play. Besides, their disorientation and improper behaviors, such as being too much shy and introvert or being too much active and even aggressive affect the class climate, and the learning environment in a negative way. Hence, the metaphor study shows that kindergarteners' perception of school, either positive or negative, has a parallel effect or reflection on their attitudes towards school. In other words, kindergarteners very much reflect their perception of school to their attitudes towards it. The analysis of the findings, drawn from metaphor study also indicates five problematic cases of five kindergarteners who are detected to have negative attitudes towards school: The first case is G1 from "Butterflies" who does not construct any metaphor, and talk much during the metaphor study. The second case is G2 from "Stars" who constructs the metaphor "bad boy". When the ground in which she constructs the metaphor is analyzed, it is obvious that she likens school to a friend of her at kindergarten who usually teases her by his annoying jokes and always makes fun of her. Through her metaphor, she obviously points out the reason why she dislikes her school. The third case is B1 who constructs the metaphor of "broccoli" and likens school to a food that he dislikes eating. He also explains the reason for his metaphor as his mother always gets him to eat but he hates broccoli. According to B1, just as she faces him to eat broccoli, his mother forces him to go to school although he resists and cries. The fourth case is B2 who likens school to "returning home" as he says he hates school, but likes returning home. The fifth case is G3 from "Stars" who is the last pupil of T2. G3 explains the logical reason for her choice of metaphor as "School is like my stomachache because my stomach aches at school."

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

In the scope of the present study, the researcher carries out metaphor study to investigate kindergarteners' perception of "school" through the impressions and images and to find out the effect of these perceptions on their attitudes towards school in cooperation with kindergarten teachers. In parallel to the views of Midgley and Trimmer (2013) on behalf of the use of metaphor technique in education research, the researcher identifies and analyses each of the metaphors constructed by the kindergarteners in order to better understand their perceptions about school, to elucidate their attitudes towards school, to better support their teachers, and parents, and eventually to contribute to students' social and educational improvement.

The results, derived from the analysis of the thirty three relevant, twenty one different metaphors on school are listed as follows:

- The conceptual category of “School as Joy or Fun” which a majority of the metaphors can be grouped under demonstrates the common tendency of kindergarteners in their perception of school (10 kindergarteners, 30.30%). The metaphors, categorized under this group significantly indicate that kindergarteners mostly perceive school as a fun place where they enjoy playing pleasurable games with their friends freely. In other words, kindergarteners participated in the metaphor study generally have a positive perception of school as they report to feel stress-free, enjoyed and entertained at school.
- Being the most repeatedly constructed metaphor of the study (6 kindergarteners, 18.12%), “house” can be said to be the most significant metaphor among all since it can be said to symbolize the physical perception of the kindergartens who cannot create any abstract image of school in their mind, but can only see it in physical terms as a concrete building that is physically situated in a garden and consists of classrooms.
- Only a few kindergarteners can be claimed to have rather negative perception of school (4 kindergarteners, 12.12%). The negatively constructed metaphors, “Bad Boy”, “Broccoli”, “Returning Home”, and “Stomach Ache” all stand for something bad, unwanted, avoided, annoying, and disturbing about school.

After the identification and the analysis of kindergarteners' metaphors on school, the researcher investigates how kindergarteners' perceptions of school reflect on their attitudes towards school via observation and semi-structured interview with their teachers. As a result of her own observation on the kindergarteners and interview with their teachers, the researcher concluded the points about the effect of kindergarteners' perceptions of school on their attitudes towards school which are listed as follows:

- Twenty-nine kindergarteners, having constructed positive metaphors do not show any negative attitude towards school. As the teachers commonly reported, the kindergarteners who have positive perception of school have no problem not only in their adaptation and orientation to the school but also in school obedience and social interaction with their peers and school personnel, as well.

- Four kindergarteners who construct negative metaphors on school can be said to have negative attitudes towards school from the beginning of the academic year. The kindergarteners, perceiving school negatively, haven't been oriented to school, school's education program, and school rules, yet. They also have problems in participating in class activities or in free play.

As a conclusion, the kindergarteners' positive or negative perception of school has a parallel reflection on their attitudes towards school. Five problematic cases of five kindergarteners who are detected to have negative attitudes towards school in the scope of the present study can be examined in a more detailed way in a further study which may focus on the possible educational ways to cope with the negative kindergartener attitudes towards school.

In the light of all the conclusions, the following recommendations are given that can help to contribute to kindergarteners' educational and social improvement if followed by the kindergarten teachers:

- Kindergarten teachers should investigate and analyze their pupils' perceptions of school in a systematic way in the beginning of every academic year in order to arrange educational activities accordingly.
- Kindergarten teachers may prefer to use metaphor technique, which can be appropriate to the cognitive level of children in preschool ages, in their research on kindergarteners' perceptions or attitudes.
- Kindergarten teachers should perceive the learning environment as a constant base to be observed and each of their pupils as an individual case to be investigated.
- Kindergarten teachers should continuously reflect the findings of their observation on their pupils and on the learning environment on their teaching.
- Kindergarten teachers should always accept their educational methods, techniques and applications as something that should be adjusted, and improved continuously.

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