



# Metaphorical perceptions of science high school students in Turkey about the concept of “English”

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## Abstract

The study aimed to determine the metaphorical perceptions of Science High School students about the concept of “English”, and to scrutinize the influence of their class level on the metaphors they produce. The participants of the study comprised 211 students at a Science High School in a district of Burdur province in Turkey. In the selection of the participants convenience sampling model was adopted on the volunteering basis. In the study, the phenomenology research model was utilized. To collect the data, students were invited to complete a form with the sentence structure; “English is like .... because ....” in written. A total number of 211 forms were collected, and 195 of these forms were included in the study, 16 irrelevant forms were kept out. In the analysis of the data the Content Analysis technique was used. The obtained metaphors were divided into 12 categories in terms of their similarities and the common features. These categories were also sub-categorized in 3 different groups as “positive, negative and neutral perceptions”. The result of the study revealed that the majority of the participants had positive perceptions about the concept of “English”.

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**Keywords:** English; metaphor; perception; science high school; students

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## 1. Introduction

Language is a communication tool in which people use signs and words to express their feelings and thoughts (Turkish Language Association, 2018). Language can be seen as an indispensable phenomenon in intercultural dialogues as well as being important in ensuring communication between individuals in a society. “Foreign language” is thought to be one of the concepts that come to mind first when talking about intercultural communication. It can be said that foreign language, which is seen as a communication tool by everyone who learns or teaches (Paker, 2012), is seen as one of the indispensable

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needs of societies today. In this context, it can be said that with the increasing communication thanks to the technological advances in the world, speaking foreign languages has become a necessity (Şahin & Kil, 2018). It can be said that the expectations are high in responding to this need and the perception of knowing at least two or more foreign languages even in job applications is increasing day by day (Kil, 2019).

Although the concept of foreign language includes many languages, it can be said that one of the languages that comes to mind first is “English”. It can be said that English is the most used and most popular language in the world today (Mbaya, 2001). As some of the indicators of this popularity; almost a quarter of the world's population speaks English fluently, politicians use English in intercultural communication, there are English advertisements and signs in travelled countries, and even menus in many restaurants abroad are in English (Crystal, 2003). Considering all these, it can be said that many words in our country have passed from English to our language and their effect is considerably high in the concepts (market, bus, train, football, basketball, fast food, restaurant, hotel etc.) we use in daily life. Perceptions in individuals' daily lives may sometimes be more important than phenomena and they may be more effective in guiding them (Gömleksiz, 2013). According to this, it is thought that individuals' perceptions about the concept of "English", which has such an impact on our lives, may be effective in learning English in our country.

“Metaphors” are thought to be important in revealing individuals' perceptions about a concept. Metaphors, which have been used since people started to perceive the world and are one of the effective and clever methods of conveying the findings, may be a strong way of establishing a strong connection with the readers of qualitative studies (Akyol, 2017). Indeed, the interest in metaphors has increased in scientific studies and this interest has become a part of the change of thought in creating metaphorical meaning to understand knowledge and the world (Cazeaux, 2007). In Cambridge dictionary (2019), metaphor is an expression that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object. According to Webster dictionary (2019), a metaphor is defined as a figure of speech that a word or phenomenon is used to show similarity or parallelism between another object or action. According to another definition, metaphor is the use of an expression out of its real meaning to show the similarity or connection between two things (Knowles & Moon, 2006). Based on these definitions, metaphors can be thought as a reflection of the picture that occurs in the minds of individuals regarding their perceptions about a phenomenon or concept.

As a result of the literature review, it is seen that there are metaphor studies for various concepts in our country, but the number of studies conducted on the concept of foreign language and English is very few. In this context, Gömleksiz (2013), in his study

of preservice teachers' metaphorical perceptions about foreign language concept, concluded that 54 metaphors were developed under the conceptual categories of "future, necessity, power, pleasure, travel, despair, difficulty and colonialism". Tosuncuoğlu (2018), in his study examining English language and literature students' metaphorical perceptions about the concept of English, has concluded that a total of 52 metaphors have been developed and the most preferred of these are "child, human, water, tree and ocean". Teskereci et al. (2019), in their study examining nursing students' metaphorical perceptions about the concept of English as a foreign language, found a total of 54 metaphors in seven categories: "labor, discovery, complex, necessity, facilitator, development and infinity". Bekdaş (2017), in his study examining high school students' metaphorical perceptions about English, found 249 valid metaphors from 9th and 12th grade students. And the top three metaphors he found in his study were "the book, water and mountain".

Today, considering English language proficiency as of great importance for personal or professional activities in life, and taking into account the brilliant student profile at Science High Schools in Turkey, it is safe to claim that their perceptions about the concept of "English" is significant. However, in the literature review, there seems to be a lack of studies about Science High School students' perceptions about the concept of "English". Therefore, a study of metaphor on this topic was thought to be necessary, and might increase awareness about it. In this context, the present study was conducted to determine the metaphorical perceptions of Science High School students in Turkey about the concept of "English". As a consequence, the research questions of this study can be stated as in the following:

1. What metaphors do the Science High School students in Turkey use about the concept of "English"?
2. How can these students' metaphors be categorized in terms of their common features?
3. Is there any difference among the categories derived from these students' metaphors in terms of their grades at school?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research model*

In the study, Phenomenology was utilized as a research model. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that can appear in a variety of forms, including events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts and situations. At the same time, it focuses on cases that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth understanding of (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In other words, in phenomenology, it is important how people perceive facts, how they describe it, how they feel about it, how they judge it, how they remember it, how they make sense of it, and how they talk about it (Patton, 2014).

## 2.2. Study group

In phenomenology researches, data sources are individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon that the research focuses on and who can reflect their experiences about it (Büyüköztürk, 2016). The participants of the study were 211 students at a Science High School in a district of Burdur province, Turkey in 2019-2020 school year. Among these students 54 students were 9th graders, 49 were 10th graders, 69 were 11th graders and the remaining 39 students were 12th graders (See Table 1). These students were determined via convenient sampling model and on the volunteering basis.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of students in respect to class variables

<b>Class level</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
9th grade	54	26
10th grade	49	23
11th grade	69	33
12th grade	39	18
Total	211	100

## 2.3. Data collection

In order to reveal Science High School students' metaphors about the concept of "English", each student was invited to complete the sentence; "English is like... because..." in written in detail by using a single metaphor. For this purpose, the students were given a form on which there was information about the purpose of the study and a section they would mark their grade levels as well as this sentence structure to complete. This form was checked by an Associate Professor in the field of Educational Sciences. In researches where metaphors are used as a research tool, the concept of "like" is often used to clearly reveal the link between the subject of the metaphor and the source of the metaphors (Saban, 2009). In addition to this, the term "because" is also included in the sentence, and students are asked to provide a justification for the metaphors they have produced (Saban, 2008). In this study, the answers of the participant students in the forms were used as the main data source.

## 2.4. Data analysis

In the study, the Content Analysis technique was used to analyze the data in order to reveal the concepts and relationships that could explain the collected data. Firstly, the collected data for this purpose were conceptualized, and then organized in a logical manner according to the emerging concepts. Finally, according to this, the themes describing the data were determined (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, the data analysis process was practiced in 5 stages (Saban, 2004; 2008; 2009): a) codification and elimination stage, (b) compilation a sample metaphor stage, (c) category development stage, (d) validation and reliability provision stage, and (e) data transfer to the computer stage.

### 2.4.1. Codification and elimination stage

In this stage, students' metaphors about 'English' concept were listed in alphabetical order. And the list was examined according to whether the metaphors were explicitly expressed or not. During that process, it was seen that some of the participant students did not produce a valid metaphor, or some students did not provide a valid rationale for their valid metaphor. Due to these reasons, 16 forms were excluded from the study. Some sample expressions excluded from the study are as follows:

*“English is like me because it is necessary once in a while” (9th grade).*

*“English is like a language because it is a language” (10th grade).*

*“English is like bad because I do not study except for the exam” (11th grade).*

*“English is like nothing because it is like nothing” (12th grade).*

### 2.4.2. Compilation a sample metaphor stage

After excluding 16 forms that were considered to be unsuitable for the purpose of the study, the data were re-examined and 195 metaphors produced by the students were listed again in an alphabetical order. Each metaphor was analyzed according to (1) the subject of the metaphor, (2) the origin of the metaphor, and (3) the relationship between the subject of the metaphor and its origin. As a result of this analysis, “sample metaphor expression” was chosen from the metaphors that are thought to represent each metaphor and “sample metaphor list” was created by compiling the metaphors that are supposed to represent each metaphor in the best way. The two main objectives of this list were: (a) to use metaphors as a reference source for collecting them in a certain category, and (b) to validate the data analysis process and comments of the study (Saban, 2008; 2009). In the study, participants were given codes to indicate their grade levels. Accordingly, 9th grade students were indicated as “9S1/ 9S2, ...”, 10th grade students as “10S1/ 10S2, ...”, 11th grade students as “11S1/ 11S2, ...” and 12th grade students as “12S1/ 12S2, ...”.

### 2.4.3. *Category development stage*

In this stage, 195 metaphors produced by the participant students were examined in detail in terms of their common features and similarities. As a result of this, depending on the sample metaphor list, each metaphor was associated with a theme in terms of its perspective on the concept of "English". And a total of 12 different conceptual categories (for example, "a necessity", "a functional tool", "a universal phenomenon", "a boring process", "an endless phenomenon", etc.) were created.

### 2.4.4. *Validation and reliability provision stage*

"Validity" and "Reliability" are the two most commonly used criteria in terms of "credibility of results" which is accepted as one of the most important criteria of scientific research. Each researcher is expected to test the validity and reliability of the data collection tools and research model, and report the results (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this research, the data analysis process was explained in detail in order to ensure the validity of the research results. And the *sample metaphor expression*, which is assumed to represent each of the 195 metaphors best, was given in the findings.

In the content analysis, the personal comments of the researcher are valuable, but the coherence between different researchers is also important in the coding and classification of the data (Çetin, 2016). As the results obtained by the two researchers get closer to each other, the reliability increases (Ayazlar, 2015). To ensure the credibility of the research results, the important thing is to place similar data in previously agreed categories carefully by not excluding any data (Kızıltepe, 2015). In this context, in order to ensure the reliability of this study, an associate professor in the field of educational sciences was consulted by the researcher to confirm whether 195 metaphors in 12 categories represent the categories or not. The list of 195 valid metaphors obtained in the study and arranged in alphabetical order, and the list of 12 categories which were created by researcher were given to the associate professor who is also co-researcher of the study. The co-researcher was asked to match the sample metaphors on the 1st list with the categories on the 2nd list by not excluding any metaphors. Then, the researchers' matches were compared. The consistency analysis between the compared data was calculated by using Miles and Huberman's (2015) consistency calculation formula ( $P=[Na/Na+Nd] \times 100$ ). In this study, as a result of comparison analysis, 87% consistency was determined between the researchers.

### 2.4.5. *Data transfer to the computer stage*

After determining the 195 metaphors obtained from the research data and creating 12 categories based on the similarities of these metaphors, all data were transferred to the computer. The metaphors produced for the concept of "English" by the students were placed in the categories and the frequency (f) and percentage (%) calculations were made.

### 3. Findings

In this section, the findings about the metaphors produced by the participant students are analyzed, separated, and interpreted under different categories. According to the results of the content analysis, 195 metaphors out of 211 were found valid metaphors about the concept of “English”. The grouping of the categories were based on the common features of 195 valid metaphors and they are given in table 2 below.

Table 2. Grouping of the categories

Perception	Categories	f	%
Positive	English as a Requirement (35), English as a Functional Tool (23), English as an Enjoyable Activity (10), English as a Guide (9), English as a Valuable Asset (5)	82	42
Negative	English as a Difficult and Complex Process (31), English as an Obligation (12), English as an Unpleasant Phenomenon (11), English as a Boring Process (4)	58	30
Neutral	English as a Universal Phenomenon (27), English as a Process that Requires Effort (17), English as an Endless Process (11)	55	28
Total		195	100

Table 2 displaces the categories on students' metaphors and justifications in three main headings: positive, negative and neutral categories. A total of 82 (42%) metaphors in positive categories, 58 (30%) metaphors in negative categories, and 55 (28%) metaphors in neutral categories have been produced. Based on these findings, it can be said that nearly half of science high school students (42%) have positive perceptions, about one third of them (30%) have negative perceptions, and the remaining ones have neutral (28%) perceptions about the concept of English.

#### 3.1. Positive categories about the concept of “English”

##### 3.1.1. English as a requirement

Table 3. English as a requirement

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
Breath			2		2
Clothes				1	1
Dinner			1		1
Eye			1		1
Foot	1				1
Freedom			1		1
Future	1			1	2
Home			1		1
Important		1			1
Internet	1				1
Language		1			1
Language passport				1	1
Life		2			2
Living life freely	1				1
Lord of languages		1			1
Math				1	1
Necessary		1	1		2
Oxygen		1			1
Solar system				1	1
Speaking		1			1
Turkish			1	1	2
Water	3		4	1	8
Writing	1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 (%4)</b>	<b>8 (%4)</b>	<b>12(%6)</b>	<b>7 (%4)</b>	<b>35 (%18)</b>

Table 3 contains the metaphors produced by the students about the concept of “English” in the “English as a requirement” category. It is seen that 35 students produced 23 different metaphors in this category. The metaphors most produced by students are water (n = 8), life (n=2), future (n=2), necessary (n=2), breath (n=2), Turkish (n=2). When



other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as a requirement” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 11th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (6%) than the students at other grade levels. Based on these findings, it is seen that students liken English to the phenomena such as water, breath, oxygen, and life, which are indispensable for life. And this shows that students consider English very important. In addition, when considered in terms of grade levels, it can be interpreted that 11th grade students consider English more necessary than the students at other grade levels.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a language that should definitely be known by people”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like water because life is not possible without it” (9/S26).*

*“English is like water because it is always necessary” (11/S28).*

*“English is like water because we need it everywhere in our lives” (12/S20).*

*“English is like my life because I love it very much” (10/S27).*

*“English is like the future because it creates our future” (9/S41).*

*“English is like a breath because life doesn't exist without it” (11/S29).*

*“English is like Turkish because you cannot do without your mother tongue” (11/S65).*

*“English is like solar system because the world cannot exist without it” (12/S16).*

*“English is like a language passport because it is the basic communication need” (12/S27).*

*“English is like oxygen because everyone needs it” (10/S39).*

*“English is like internet because it may be necessary at any time” (9/S5).*

*“English is like clothes because it is necessary to have it in society” (12/S19).*

### 3.1.2. *English as a functional tool*

Table 4. English as a functional tool

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
Book				1	1
Clock				1	1
Door	2		2		4
Earthworm that airs the soil				1	1
Eye glasses			1		1
Hero			1		1
Ink			1		1
Internet	1				1
Key		4			4
Library				1	1
Lover			1		1
Passport		1			1
Rope		1			1
Sign		1			1
Trampoline			1		1
Water	1				1
Wind	1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 (%3)</b>	<b>7 (%3,5)</b>	<b>7(%3,5)</b>	<b>4 (%2)</b>	<b>23 (%12)</b>

Table 4 shows the metaphors of participants about the concept of “English” in the category of "English as a functional tool". It is seen that 23 students produced a total of 17 different metaphors in this category. In this category, 4 students liken English to the door and 4 students liken it to the key. When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as a functional tool” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 10th and 11th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (3,5%) than the students at other grade levels. According to this, it can be said that 10th and 11th graders find English more functional than other graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a functional language that helps us in many areas”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like a key because it opens every door” (10/S23, 10/S41).*

*“English is like a door because it opens up to the world of other people” (9/S8).*

*“English is like a door because it provides us with various possibilities” (11/S8).*

*“English is like a earthworm that airs the soil because it helps us think more complexly” (12/S3).*

*“English is like eyeglasses because it shows different perspectives” (11/S52).*

*“English is like a rope because it is easy to use and has a lot of usage” (10/S35).*

*“English is like water because it refreshes the person who knows it” (9/S44).*

*“English is like my lover because it helps in games” (11/S17).*

*“English is like a sign because it is used to communicate with everyone in the world” (10/S13).*

*“English is like a clock because it works perfectly when you insert the battery” (12/S13).*

*“English is like a trampoline because if you know it, it can take you up to a few levels at one time” (11/S58).*

*“English is like the wind because it takes you wherever you want” (9/S6).*

### 3.1.3. English as an enjoyable activity

Table 5. English as an enjoyable activity

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
Bitter chocolate			1	1	2
Game			1		1
Ground meat pita	1				1
Rubik's Cube				1	1
Spaghetti			1		1
Sudoku puzzle			1		1
Thriller series				1	1
Travel			1		1
Walnut			1		1

Total	1(%0,5)	6 (%3)	3(%1,5)	10 (%5)
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Table 5 illustrates the metaphors created by the participant students about the concept of English in the category of "English as an enjoyable activity". It is seen that 10 students have produced a total of 9 different metaphors in this category. In this category, 2 students liken English to the bitter chocolate. When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor has been produced by only one student.

When "English as an enjoyable activity" category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 11th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (3%) than the students at other grade levels. According to this, it can be said that 11th graders find English more enjoyable than other graders. In addition, the fact that 10th grade students have not produced any metaphors in this category shows that 10th grade students do not see English as an enjoyable activity.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; "English is an enjoyable language".

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*"English is like bitter chocolate because not everyone likes it but it gives pleasure to those who love it" (11/S27).*

*"English is like bitter chocolate, because the first taste is bitter and then begins to taste. It is like the first learning is difficult"(12/S4).*

*"English is like ground meat pita because it is good" (9/S14).*

*"English is like a walnut because its inside is beautiful and its outside looks solid" (11/S4).*

*"English is like a thriller series because it is fascinating" (12/S31).*

*"English is like a game because it is fun" (11/S40).*

*"English is like traveling because I can travel all around the world" (11/S67).*

*"English is like spaghetti because it is complex and enjoyable" (11/S21).*

*"English is like sudoku because it is very difficult at first, but it is very easy and fun when you learn" (11/S45).*

*"English is like Rubik's cube because it is hard to understand but enjoyable" (12/S28).*

#### 3.1.4. English as a guide

Table 6. English as a guide

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
Cultural school	1				1
Encyclopedia		2			2
Life			1		1
Map		2			2
Road			1		1
Source of the information		1			1
Torch	1				1
Total	2 (%1)	5 (%3)	2 (%1)		9 (%5)

Table 6 contains the metaphors produced by the participants about the concept of “English” in the “English as a guide” category. It is seen that 9 students produced 7 different metaphors in this category. The metaphors most produced by students are Encyclopedia (n=2) and Map (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as a guide” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 10th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (3%) than the students at other grade levels. And it shows that according to 10th graders, English is more guiding. Besides, the fact that 12th grade students have not produced any metaphors in this category shows that 10th grade students do not see English as a guide.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is an enjoyable language”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like an encyclopedia because it gives information and it is long” (10/S5).*

*“English is like an encyclopedia because it gives information” (10/S6).*

*“English is like a map because a different language guides me” (10/S8).*

*“English is like a cultural school because I don't learn English as a lesson. I think it increases our cultural level and respect” (9/S24).*

*“English is like a torch because we get enlightened as we learn” (9/S20).*

*“English is like life because it directs life” (11/S62).*

*“English is like a road because it determines where we are going” (11/S47).*

### 3.1.5. English as a valuable asset

Table 7. English as a valuable asset

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
Dollar				1	1
Euro				1	1
Fossil Oil			1		1
Gold bracelet				1	1
Money			1		1
Total			2 (%1)	3 (%1,5)	5 (%2,5)

In Table 7, metaphors created by the participants about the concept of “English” are given in the category of "English as valuable asset". In this category there are 5 metaphors produced by the students. When metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor has been produced by only one student. In this category, students liken English to gold bracelet, dollar, euro, money and fossil oil.

When "English as valuable asset" category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 9th and 10th graders have not produced any metaphors while 11th and 12th graders produce 2 metaphors in this category. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 10th and 11th graders consider English more valuable than 9th and 10th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a valuable language that increases its value day by day.”

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like a golden bracelet because it is useful to be able to speak” (12/S5).*

*“English is like Dollar because its value is increasing every day” (12/S37).*

*“English is like Euro because its value is constantly increasing” (12/S30).*

*“English is like money because it increases as it accumulates” (11/S57).*

*“English is like fossil oil because owning it ennobles us” (11/S63).*

### 3.2. Negative categories about the concept of “English”

3.2.1. *English as a difficult and complex process*

Table 8. English as a difficult and complex process

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
A door that is easy to open and difficult to go out		1			1
A foreign language			1		1
A wall that's hard to cross to other side			1		1
Algorithm		1			1
Bush				1	1
Darling				1	1
Deadlock				1	1
Encyclopedia	1				1
Ivy			1		1
Knot	2				2
Life			3		3
Mountain			2		2
Physics				1	1
Pig knot				1	1
Pomegranate	1				1
Puzzle		1			1
Puzzle with infinite pieces	1				1
Road	1		1		2
Rubik's Cube		1			1
School			1		1
Song				1	1
Soup		1			1
The painting that a novice painter tries to draw	1				1
Tomato			1		1
Watermelon			1		1

Woman	1				1
Total	8 (%4)	5 (%3)	12 (%6)	6 (%3)	31 (%16)

In Table 8, there are metaphors about the concept of “English” in the category of “English” as a difficult and complex process”. It is seen that in this category 31 students produced a total of 26 different metaphors. Most metaphors produced by students are life (n=3), mountain (n=2), knot (n=2) and road (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as a difficult and complex process” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 11th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (3%) than the students at other grade levels. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 11th graders consider English more difficult and complex than other graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a difficult and complex language to learn”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like life because it is difficult and complicated” (11/S14).*

*“English is like a mountain because it cannot be crossed to other side” (11/S43).*

*“English is like a knot because it sometimes gets complicated” (9/S3).*

*“English is like a road because it is long and stony” (9/S29).*

*“English is like a door that’s easy to open and difficult to go out, because it is both understandable and complex, and a closed trap at the same time” (10/S30).*

*“English is like soup because it is complicated” (10/S1).*

*“English is like a bush because it cannot be extracted” (12/S14).*

*“English is like a pig knot because it is difficult to unravel” (12/S35).*

*“English is like a woman because it is difficult to understand” (9/S47).*

*“English is like a darling because it is never fully understood” (12/S10).*

*“English is like ivy because it is complex” (11/S14).*

### 3.2.2. English as an obligation



Table 9. English as an obligation

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
Game	1				1
Homework		2			2
Leech	1				1
Lesson	1	1	1		3
Managers				1	1
Obligation		1			1
Pen				1	1
Rule	1				1
Spinach				1	1
Total	4 (%2)	4 (%2)	1(%0,5)	3 (%1,5)	12 (%6)

Table 9 shows the metaphors about the concept of “English” in the category of "English as an obligation". It is seen that 12 students produced a total of 9 different metaphors in this category. Most of the metaphors are lesson (n=3) and homework (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When "English as an obligation" category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 9th graders, 10th graders (4%) and 12th graders (1,5 %) have produced more metaphors in percentage than 11th graders (1%). Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 9th, 10th, and 12th graders consider English more compulsory than 11th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a language that is compulsory to learn”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like lessons because it is only tried to be learned for the exam” (9/S32).*

*“English is like a school lesson because we study it at school” (11/S24).*

*“English is like homework because if we don't do it, we will get minus from life” (9/S7).*

*“English is like a rule because it is compulsory” (9/S2).*

*“English is like a leech because it doesn't leave us after 2nd grade” (9/S16).*

*“English is like a pen because it is official and it is a must” (12/S29).*

*“English is like managers because most things depend on it” (12/S22).*

*“English is a must because everybody speaks” (10/S31).*

### 3.2.3. English as an unpleasant phenomenon

Table 10. English as an unpleasant phenomenon

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
Boiling water			1		1
Cancer		1			1
Drug		1			1
Eggplant			1		1
German		2			2
Nightmare			1		1
Spoiled child				1	1
Stomachache		1			1
Torment			1		1
Wearing shoes with a ketchup inside			1		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>5(2,5)</b>	<b>5(2,5)</b>	<b>1 (1)</b>	<b>11 (6)</b>

Table 10 shows the metaphors about the concept of “English” in the category of “English as an unpleasant phenomenon”. It is seen that 11 students produced a total of 10 different metaphors in this category. German (n=2) is the majority. When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as an unpleasant phenomenon” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 10th and 11th graders (2,5%) have produced more metaphors in percentage than other graders. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 10th and 11th graders consider English more unpleasant than 9th and 12th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; *“English is a language that is unpleasant to learn”*.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like German because they belong to the same language family and both are unreasonable” (10/S33).*

*“English is like wearing a shoe which there is ketchup inside because it is disgusting” (11/S54).*

*“English is like torment because it makes you suffer” (11/S12).*

*“English is like a nightmare because it prevents people from speaking” (11/S11).*

*“English is like stomachache because it heals when pressed” (10/S3).*

*“English is like cancer because all people in Turkey hate it” (10/S24).*

*“English is like boiling water because it burns our inside and outside” (11/S6).*

*“English is like eggplant because I don't like it” (11/S64).*

*“English is like a spoiled child because he interferes in everything more or less” (12/S36).*

*“English is like a drug because it is addictive” (10/S36).*

#### 3.2.4. English as a boring process

Table 11. English as a boring process

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
Empty box	1				1
Puzzle	1				1
Semi-metal	1				1
Tortoise	1				1
Total	4 (%2)				4 (%2)

Table 11, illustrates the metaphors about the concept of “English” in the category of “English as a boring process”. It is seen that 4 students produced a total of 4 different metaphors in this category. It is seen that each metaphor has been produced by only one student. In addition, it is seen that all metaphors were produced by only 9th graders.

When “English as a boring process” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that all metaphors have been produced by only 9th graders. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 9th graders consider English more boring than 10th, 11th, and 12th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a language that is boring to learn”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like an empty box because it is very boring” (9/S18).*

*“English is like a puzzle because sometimes it is fun and sometimes it is boring” (9/S36).*

*“English is like a turtle because it is very slow and boring” (9/S31).*

*“English is like semi-metal because it is very good when I understand but it is very boring when I don't understand” (9/S18).*

### 3.3. Neutral categories about the concept of “English”

#### 3.3.1. English as a universal phenomenon

Table 12. English as a universal phenomenon

<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>9th grade f (%)</b>	<b>10th grade f (%)</b>	<b>11th grade f (%)</b>	<b>12th grade f (%)</b>	<b>Total f (%)</b>
A common language				1	1
Civility				1	1
Communication	1				1
Culture			1		1
Freedom			1	1	2
Friendship	1				1
Guitar	1				1
Human		1			1
Keystone		1			1
Mother	1				1
Music		1		1	2
Numbers		1			1
Ocean			1		1
Ottoman				1	1
Powerful	1				1
Smiling	1				1
The sound of the universe	1				1
Tree	1			1	2
Water	2	1			3

World			3		3
Total	10 (%5)	5 (%2,5)	6 (%3)	6 (%3)	27 (%13,5)

Table 12 contains the metaphors produced by the students about the concept of English in the "English as a universal phenomenon" category. It is seen that 27 students produced 20 different metaphors in this category. The metaphors mostly produced by students are water (n=3), world (n=3), freedom (n=2), music (n=2), and tree (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor has been produced by only one student.

When "English as a universal phenomenon" category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 9th graders have produced more metaphors in percentage (5%) than the students at other grade levels. Based on these findings, it is seen that students consider English as a global language. In addition, it can be interpreted that 9th graders consider English more global than other graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; "English is a universal language which is widely used in the world".

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*"English is like world because it covers the whole world" (11/S37).*

*"English is like a tree because its roots are strong" (9/S25).*

*"English is like music because it is universal" (10/S4).*

*"English is like water because it covers most of the world" (10/S32).*

*"English is like my mother because people does what it says in everywhere" (9/S43).*

*"English is like the Ottoman Empire because English contains very different words due to the spreading area of the language though it is a simple language" (12/S33).*

*"English is like the ocean because it is universal, unifying, connecting continents" (11/S48).*

*"English is like a keystone because it is the common point of all languages" (10/S26).*

*"English is like numbers because it is a global language" (10/S14).*

*"English is like smiling because it is universal" (9/S42).*

### 3.3.2. English as a process that requires effort

Table 13. English as a process that requires effort

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
Flowers / Plants			1	1	2
Game	1				1
Instrument	1	1			2
Math exam			1		1
Math question			2		2
Painting	1			1	2
Pet	1				1
Pipe	1				1
Saving money			1		1
Shopping				1	1
Tree		1	1		2
Wrestle		1			1
Total	5(%2,5)	3(%1,5)	6 (%3)	3 (%1,5)	17 (%8,5)

In Table 13 is analyzed, there are metaphors created by the students about the concept of “English” in the category of "English as a process that requires effort". It is seen that 17 students produced a total of 12 different metaphors in this category. The metaphors mostly produced by students are tree (n=2), flowers/plants (n=2), math question (n=2), instrument (n=2), and painting (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor has been produced by only one student.

When "English as a process that requires effort" category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that and 11th (3%) graders 9th (2,5%) have produced more metaphors in percentage than other graders. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 9th and 11th graders consider English more demanding process than 10th and 12th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a language that can be learned better if more effort is made”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like a tree because it grows as you work” (10/S28).*

*“English is like a flower / plant because it becomes beautiful as you feed it” (11/S53).*

*“English is like a pet because it requires interest, care and effort” (9/S17).*

*“English is like wrestling because you can't do it without training” (10/S19).*

*“English is like pipe because it is okay if you know how it is blown” (9/S23).*

*“English is like a math question because the result is reached as you deal with it” (11/S56).*

*“English is like musical instruments because it is learned as it is practiced” (10/S40).*

*“English is like a game because sometimes it is necessary to play again and again to pass the level” (9/S46).*

*“English is like saving money because it accumulates as you add money” (11/S44).*

*“English is like a painting because attention is paid to the finest detail” (9/S11).*

### 3.3.3. English as an endless process

Table 14. English an endless process

Metaphors	9th grade f (%)	10th grade f (%)	11th grade f (%)	12th grade f (%)	Total f (%)
An endless road			1		1
Number			1		1
Ocean			2	1	3
Sea			1		1
Space		1	1		2
Water			2	1	3
Total		1 (%0,5)	8 (%4)	2 (%1)	11 (%5,5)

Table 14 illustrates the metaphors created by the students about the concept of “English” in the category of “English as an endless process”. It is seen that 11 students produced a total of 6 different metaphors in this category. The metaphors mostly produced by students are ocean (n=3), water (n=3), and space (n=2). When other metaphors are examined, it is seen that each metaphor was produced by only one student.

When “English as an endless process” category is evaluated in terms of grade levels, it is seen that 11th graders (4%) have produced more metaphors in percentage than other graders. And it is seen that 9th grade students haven’t produced any metaphors in this category. Based on these findings, it can be interpreted that 11th graders consider English learning process more endless than 9th, 10th and 12th graders.

The common features of the metaphors in this category can be summarized as follows; “English is a dynamic language that is constantly evolving”.

Some students' expressions regarding the metaphors in this category are as follows;

*“English is like water because it doesn't stop if it is fluent” (11/S5).*

*“English is like an immense ocean because language learning is endless and deep water” (12/S12).*

*“English is like space because it is endless” (11/S34).*

*“English is like an endless road because it has no end” (11/S49).*

*“English is like the sea because if you don't know how to swim you will drown” (11/S42).*

*“English is like numbers because it goes on forever” (11/S18).*

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, Science High School students' perceptions about the concept of English are tried to be revealed through metaphors. For this purpose, 211 Science High School students completed the sentence structure “English is like.....because .....” provided in a form. In the process, 16 of the forms filled in by 211 students were excluded from the study since they were not suitable for the purpose of the study. It was determined that the participant students produced 127 different metaphors in total.

Based on the findings obtained in the study, 195 valid metaphors were collected in 12 different categories according to their similarities and common features. These 12 categories were categorized under 3 main headings: positive (n=5), negative (n=4) and neutral (n=3) categories. Positive categories are; “*English as a requirement (35), English as a functional tool (23), English as an enjoyable activity (10), English as a guide (9), and English as a valuable asset (5)*”. Negative categories are; “*English as a difficult and complex process (31), English as an obligation (12), English as an unpleasant phenomenon (11), and English as a boring process (4)*”. And neutral categories are; “*English as a universal phenomenon (27), English as a process that requires effort (17), English as an endless process (11)*”. When the findings are examined, it is seen that a total of 82 (42%) metaphors in positive categories, 58 (30%) metaphors in negative categories, and 55 (28%) metaphors in neutral categories have been produced by students. Based on these results, it can be said that the majority of science high school students have positive and neutral perceptions about the concept of English. Gömleksiz (2013)'s study on determining pre-service teachers' metaphorical perceptions about the concept of “foreign language” supports this finding. On the other hand, this finding does not coincide with the findings of Limon (2015)'s study on determining 9th and 10th grade



students' metaphorical perceptions about English as a foreign language. In addition, the results of Bekdaş (2017)'s study on determining high school students' metaphorical perceptions about English doesn't also coincide with this finding.

When it is evaluated in terms of grade levels, 16 ninth grade students (30%), 20 tenth grade students (41%), 28 eleventh grade students (41%), and 17 twelfth grade students (44%) have produced metaphors in positive category. According to this information, it can be said that 12th grade students have more positive perceptions about the concept of *English* than other grade level students. On the other hand, when metaphors collected in negative categories are examined, it is seen that 16 ninth grade students (30%), 14 tenth grade students (29%), 18 eleventh grade students (26%), and 10 twelfth grade students (26%) have produced metaphors. Accordingly, it can be said that 9th grade students have more negative perceptions about the concept of *English* than other grade level students. Finally when neutral categories are evaluated, it is seen that 15 ninth grade students (28%), 9 tenth grade students (18%), 20 eleventh grade level students (29%), and 9 twelfth grade students (23%) have produced metaphors. In this context, it can be said that 11th grade students have more neutral perceptions about the concept of *English* than other grade level students.

As a result, it can be said that majority of the participant students perceive English as a universal and functional language that should be learned. On the other hand, it can be said that the number of students who perceive English as a difficult and boring language to learn is also considerable. It can even be said that some students, who experience learned helplessness by thinking that they cannot learn despite their efforts, remain passive and generalize this passivity to undesirable situations (Senemoğlu, 2015). In this context, it is thought that the lack of questions regarding the English course in the university entrance exams may also cause students to experience a lack of motivation for English.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the perceptions of the participant students about the concept of "English", it is assumed that some obstacles can be eliminated and the English language learning process can be made more efficient. It can be suggested to carry out studies on determining metaphorical perceptions about "English" in other educational institutions in order to find out the necessary solutions to language learning problems by detecting especially negative perspectives of the students.

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