DETERMINING THE METAPHORICAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE FOREIGNERS LEARNING TURKISH REGARDING TURKISH AND TURKISH CULTURE

Research article

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Abstract

In this research, it was aimed to determine learners' perceptions of the target language and target culture through metaphors. It is structured with a phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs. The participants of the study were selected by purposive sampling method. The participants of the research consisted of 101 learners studying Turkish at A2, B1, B2 levels at Ankara Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Language Teaching Application and Research Center and Gazi University Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Center which are located in Turkey. The data were analyzed by content analysis. As a result of the analyses, it was concluded that the learner perceptions regarding Turkish culture were completely positive and 7 learners had negative perceptions regarding Turkish. The frequency of metaphors produced by learners about Turkish is grouped from the highest to the lowest under 6 different categories as interlingual relationship, valuing/positive emotion, difficulty/easiness, need/necessity, individual experience and feature/systematicity. The metaphors they produce about Turkish culture were also grouped under 6 different categories from the highest frequency to the lowest as intercultural relationship, richness/diversity, valuing/positive emotion, always existing/being rooted, individual experience and universality.

Keywords: metaphor, perception, Teaching Turkish to foreigners, Turkish culture.

1. Introduction

It is a natural situation that Turkish learning foreign learners have certain perceptions about the target language and the objects, the spaces, the people and their lifestyles and values they interact along with this target language. Determining learners' perceptions of the target language and the target culture in the context of language-culture relationship have an importance to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching process and learner motivation, and thus to be able to direct the teaching practices, and to revise the curriculum together with the teaching books. Gömleksiz (2013: 651) states that perceptions and affective features are among the most important factors in foreign language learning. These perceptions and affective features include the learner's motivation, attitude towards language, and metaphors about the language in his memory. Metaphors are one of the main methods/ways of determining perceptions that are so important. Aydın and Pehlivan (2010: 821) state that metaphors can be utilized in planning, curriculum development, encouraging learning and developing creative thinking. In parallel with this view, Hoang (2014: 2) emphasizes language motivation, effort to combine language teaching and metaphor. According to Akkaya (2011: 2), language sometimes conveys meaning realistically, but sometimes it obscures it. Therefore, language needs metaphors in order to fully reflect reality rather than being a carrier. Cerit (2008: 694) defines metaphors as a tool in which individuals try to explain how they see life, environment, events and objects by using similes. Saban (2008a:

460) goes beyond this definition and states that metaphors are not only a means of transferring and explaining, but also serve the process of understanding. According to him, metaphor is a powerful mental tool that an individual can utilize to understand and explain an abstract, complex or theoretical phenomenon. Bowman (1996) supports this view of Saban, states that metaphors make a powerful impact on people not only in terms that they reflect perceptions, but also they shape their points of view. According to Bowman, metaphors are used to interpret reality and experiences. Supporting this view, Lakoff and Johnson (2015: 27) define metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing". In this context, it is clear that metaphor does not only have a conveying function. In short; a result is reached by embodying individuals' perceptions, attitudes and experiences through the metaphors they produce and facilitating difficult-to-explain situations.

Metaphors are not only affected from language but also affected by the environment, objects, other individuals and their lifestyles, traditions and customs with which the individual interacts. Therefore, it is not possible to isolate language from the cultural environment and culture from language. Demir (2020: 65) also emphasizes the language-culture relationship in this direction by stating that the language of the individual shapes her/his thoughts and culture. Byram (1988) stated that language does not have a context-free function; therefore, he is of the view that language refers to the context regarding culture. In this context, reflecting cultural features to foreign/second language teaching and to carrying out teaching activities in the context of culture gain importance. It is thought that making use of cultural elements in different communication situations/contexts and employing the cultural dimension of the language are important in terms of language teaching. Akkaya (2020: 317-318) states that the relationship between language and culture should be examined within the scope of why culture is important in foreign language education and what functions it has. According to him (2020: 317-318), culture turns into an indispensable part of language in language teaching. Within this framework, a language teaching carried out with awareness of the unbreakable bond between language and culture can achieve its goal.

Considering all this language-culture relationship and the connection of culture with language teaching, it is usual for foreign learners learning Turkish to have perceptions about Turkish and the elements they interact with. Thus, in the research, it was necessary to reveal the perceptions of the learners about the target language and target culture through metaphors.

Metaphorical perceptions have come to the fore in the studies on education in recent years. However, when the literature on teaching Turkish to foreigners is reviewed, it is seen that most of the studies that determine learners' perceptions through metaphors (Ariogul & Uzun, 2011; Akkaya, 2013; Kolaç & Aynal, 2015; Karatay, 2016; Karatay & Kartallıoğlu, 2019; Yiğit, 2020; Aktaş, 2021; Güngör & Özalan, 2021; Kahveci & Şetürk, 2021), were studied with only one group of learners (for example; Iraqi, Syrian, Finnish, Belgian, Mongolian…) and the studies executed with various learner groups, in other words with learners from different nationalities, (Boylu & Işık, 2017; Alptekin & Kaplan, 2018; Göçen, 2019; Kalenderoğlu & Armut, 2019; Erol & Kaya, 2020; Başkan & Özkan, 2021) are not enough. Moreover, within the studies conducted, no other study was found in which Turkish and Turkish culture were studied together and the perceptions of these two elements were revealed. Due to the stated reasons and with the thought that the diversity of the participants of the research will lead to a more comprehensive and more valid result, it is aimed to determine the perceptions of Turkish learning foreign learners about Turkish and Turkish

culture through metaphors in the research. In line with the purpose of the research, answers to the following questions were sought:

With which metaphors do the learners explain their perceptions of Turkish?

With which metaphors do the learners explain their perceptions of Turkish culture?

Under which categories are the metaphors produced by the learners about Turkish grouped?

Under which categories are the metaphors produced by the learners about Turkish culture grouped?

What is the distribution of metaphors produced by students according to their levels?

2. Method/Design and Participants

This research was structured with the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs. Phenomenology focuses on "how people perceive the phenomenon, 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 with others" (Patton, 2014: 104). According to Merriam (2013: 26), phenomenology is a design "suitable for studying effective, emotional and often intense human experiences".

Metaphors were used in the research, which aims to identify and describe perceptions in accordance with the phenomenological approach. "Metaphors used as data collection tools in educational sciences are generally used in scientific studies created with the qualitative research paradigm and serve as a tool to reveal the perceptions of the data collected population about the concept in the metaphor form" (Kılcan, 2021: 89). Ekren and Ökten (2019: 1701-1702) state that metaphors are a frequently used data collection tool in qualitative research and provide important data about teaching-learning processes; Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008: 212) also state that metaphors can be used as a qualitative data collection tool when they undertake the task of describing a situation, event or phenomenon.

The participants of the study were selected by purposive sampling method. Criteria have been determined in order to make criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling types. The group in which the data were collected is a heterogeneous group that studied Turkish at A2, B1, B2 levels in the 2021-2022 academic year and has different qualifications such as age, gender, educational status, and nationality. The reason why learners at A1 and C1 levels were not included in the study is that A1 level learners begin to acquire information about themselves or their immediate surroundings and daily life, and are able to understand simple narratives in general terms; therefore, they do not have the language proficiency to produce metaphors and the learners at the C1 level are experienced/advanced users (Council of Europe, 2001: 23); therefore, it is thought that it approaches native speakers of Turkish in terms of language proficiency.

Participants of the research consist of 101 learners studying Turkish at A2, B1, B2 levels at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Language Teaching Application and Research Center (DILMER) and Gazi University Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Center (TOMER) which are located in Turkey[1]. Information about the learners participating in the research is given in Table 1.

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[1] The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy (Date: 24. 02. 2022 and No: E-73257130-050.99-9045570).

Table 1. *Information about the learners participating in the research*

Level		f	%
	A2	45	44,55
	B1	39	38,62
	B2	17	16,83
	Total	101	100
Age			
	17-20	55	54,45
	21-25	22	21,78
	26-30	16	15,85
	31-35	8	7,92
	Total	101	100
Gender			
	Male	49	48,51
	Female	52	51,48
	Total	101	100
Educational Status			
	High School	56	55,44
	Graduate	11	10,90
	Post Graduate	34	33,66
	Total	101	100
Country			
	Germany	1	0,99
	Albania	1	0,99
	Azerbaijan	1	0,99
	Bangladesh	1	0,99
	China	1	0,99
	The Democratic Republic of Congo	1	0,99
	Indonesia	1	0,99
	Ethiopia	1	0,99
	Cameroon	1	0,99
	Montenegro	1	0,99
	Katar	1	0,99

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continuation of Table 1

Country		f	%
	Crimea	1	0,99
	Libya	1	0,99
	Lebanon	1	0,99
	Mongolia	1	0,99
	Moldova	1	0,99
	Mauritania	1	0,99
	Niger	1	0,99
	Uganda	1	0,99
	United Arab Emirates	2	1,98
	Kosovo	2	1,98
	Egypt	2	1,98
	Yemen	2	1,98
	Guinea	3	2,98
	Tunisia	3	2,98
	Afghanistan	4	3,95
	Kyrgyzstan	4	3,95
	Pakistan	4	3,95
	Somalia	4	3,95
	Palestine	5	4,94
	Iraq	5	4,94
	Iran	7	6,95
	Uzbekistan	7	6,95
	Kazakhstan	10	9,90
	Unstated	18	17,83
	Total	101	100

Data was collected from 45 learners at A2 level (%44,55), 39 at B1 level (%38,62) and 17 from B2 level learners (%16,83). 55 of the learners are in the 17-20 age range (%54,45), 22 are in the 21-25 age range (%21,78), 16 are in the 26-30 age range (%15,85), 8 are in the 31-35 age range (%7,92). 52 are female (%51,48) and 49 are male (%48,51). 56 of them stated that they were high school graduates (%55,44), 11 of them were university graduates (%10,90) and 34 of them were graduated from postgraduate education (%33,66). It is seen that they mostly come from countries such as Kazakhstan (f:10; %9,90), Uzbekistan (f:7; %6,95) and Iran (f:7; %6,95). 18 people did not state which country they come from.

2.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected from the written responses of 101 learners at DILMER and TOMER to the form prepared by the researcher. In the first part of the form, the questions for obtaining personal information (age, gender, educational status, nationality) and in the second part, "Turkish is like ….. Because …." and "Turkish culture is like ….. Because …." statements have been included and the learners were asked to complete these statements. Participation of learners in the study was on a voluntary basis. The learners were informed about the study before filling out the forms.

The collected data were analyzed by content analysis. Along with the content analysis, the stages used by Saban (2004, 2008b, 2009) in the analysis process of his studies "naming, elimination and refining, compilation and category development, ensuring validity and reliability" were complied with. First of all, the learners were given names such as L1, L2, L3… and marked on their forms. Then, a list of the metaphors produced by the learners and their justifications was made. Thus, it was checked whether they produced a valid metaphor. Metaphors were examined in terms of the subject and source, and the relationship between the subject and the source of the metaphor. Because Forceville (2002) states that in order for something to be qualified as a metaphor, its target area and source area must be known. In short, metaphors were discussed together with their justifications. Then, conceptual categorization was made by taking the common features of metaphors and justifications into consideration.

A number of studies were carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. Exact quotations from the justifications for the metaphors developed by the learners are included. The selection of the participants of the study, their characteristics, data collection and analysis processes were presented in a detailed and understandable way. Expert opinion was sought for the reliability of the study. An expert working in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners was given lists of metaphors and categories, and she was asked to match the metaphors with the categories. Afterwards, the expert's matches were compared with the researcher's. The expert whose opinion was consulted associated 7 metaphors with a different category. Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula was used to determine the consensus within the scope of reliability studies. According to this formula (Reliability=consensus/consensus + disagreement x 100), the percentage of agreement was calculated to be 92.39% (85/85+7x100). It can be stated that the reliability level of the research is high, based on the view that the desired reliability is achieved in cases where the agreement between the evaluation of the experts and the researcher is 90% or more in qualitative research (Saban, 2008: 467).

3. Findings

In this part of the research, firstly the metaphors produced by the participants about Turkish and then the metaphors they produced about Turkish culture are included.

3.1. Findings Regarding the Metaphors Produced About Turkish

Data were collected from 101 learners; however, 92 metaphors related to Turkish were obtained. Table 2 presents the by level distribution of 92 valid metaphors produced by learners.

Table 2. *The distribution of the metaphors produced by the learners about Turkish by levels*

Participant	Metaphor	f	%
	A2		
L46	Crossword	1	2,44
L48	Riding a horse	1	2,44
L49	A key to my dreams	1	2,44
L51	Sea	1	2,44
L52	My homeland	1	2,44
L53	Coffee	1	2,44
L54	Ice	1	2,44
L55	Mountain	1	2,44
L59	Arabic	1	2,44
L62	English	1	2,44
L64	Kyrgyz	1	2,44
L66	Tree	1	2,44
L73	Light	1	2,44
L75	My second home	1	2,44
L76	Love	1	2,44
L77	Chameleon	1	2,44
L78	Rainbow	1	2,44
L80	Space	1	2,44
L81	Montenegrin	1	2,44
L82	A safe garden	1	2,44
L39, L41	Persian	2	4,87
L44, L56	Drinking water/ water	2	4,87
L57, L60	Uzbek	2	4,87
L67, L68	German	2	4,87
L79, L83	Urdu and Arabic	2	4,87
L50, L61, L71	Sun	3	7,32
L58, L65, L72	Kazakh	3	7,32
L40, L42, L69, L70, L74	My mother tongue/ my own language	5	12,20
Total		41	100

continuation of Table2

Participant	Metaphor	f	%
	B1		
L1	Communication tool	1	2,94
L3	Languages of Asian countries	1	2,94
L5	Door	1	2,94
L10	News	1	2,94
L13	Kyrgyz	1	2,94
L17	Sea	1	2,94
L19	English	1	2,94
L23	Game	1	2,94
L29	Indonesian	1	2,94
L31	French	1	2,94
L34	Funfair	1	2,94
L35	Water	1	2,94
L38	Knitting	1	2,94
L16	Chocolate	1	2,94
L18	Saz (a stringed instrument)	1	2,94
L26	American population	1	2,94
L30	Banana	1	2,94
L33	Cake	1	2,94
L2, L9	Bridge	2	5,89
L4, L10	Key	2	5,89
L6, L8	Journey	2	5,89
L14, L36	Urdu	2	5,89
L24, L25, L28	Arabic	3	8,82
L15, L20, L21, L27, L32	Uzbek	5	14,70
Total		34	100
	B2		
L84	Ship	1	5,88
L86	Colors	1	5,88

continuation of Table2

Participant		f	%
L87	Middle Eastern Languages (Arabic, Persian…)	1	5,88
L88	Mother's advice	1	5,88
L89	Bridge	1	5,88
L90	Roots of tree	1	5,88
L91	Rainbow	1	5,88
L93	Sea	1	5,88
L94	Drinking water	1	5,88
L95	A beautiful lady	1	5,88
L96	Mother	1	5,88
L97	Luck	1	5,88
L98	Drugs	1	5,88
L99	Drawing a picture	1	5,88
L100	Love	1	5,88
L85, L92	Arabic	2	11,80
Total		17	100

As seen in Table 2, 41 metaphors at A2 level, 34 at B1 level and 17 at B2 level were developed. At the A2 level, the metaphor of *my mother tongue/my own language* (f:5; %12,20) was produced the most, and at the B1 level, the most *Uzbek* (f:5; %14,70) metaphor was produced. At B2 level, all metaphors except *Arabic* (f:2; %11,80) were used once.

All the metaphors produced by the learners are combined. Metaphors for *Uzbek* (f:7; %7,61), *Arabic* (f:6; %6,53), *my mother tongue/my own language* (f:5; %5,44), *drinking water/water* (f:4; %4,34) were developed the most. *Bridge*, *Kazakh*, *sea*, *sun* 3 times; *Urdu*, *journey*, *key*, *Urdu and Arabic*, *rainbow*, *love*, *German*, *Kyrgyz*, *English*, *Persian* 2 times; other metaphors were produced once. Data of 9 learners in metaphor elimination and refinement phase were not considered valid because there was no metaphor in the form, it was left blank, the metaphor was without justification, or the justification was not semantically related to the written metaphor. These can be considered as data loss.

The metaphors developed by the learners regarding Turkish were examined with their justifications, and six conceptual categories were determined according to the relevance of the metaphors. The same metaphors produced by different learners were included in different categories. This situation is related to the meaning attributed to the metaphor and its justification. The determined categories and their frequency can be shown in a table as follows.

Table 3. *Distribution of metaphors produced by learners regarding Turkish by categories*

Categories	Interlingual Relationships	Need/ Necessity	Valuing / Positive Emotion	Difficulty/ Easiness	Feature/ Systemacity	Individual Experience
f	37	9	24	11	3	5
%	41,58	10,11	26,96	12,36	3,38	5,61

As seen in Table 3, the frequency of categories is arranged in an order from highest to lowest, *interlingual relations* (f:37; %41,58), *valuing/positive emotion* (f:24; %26,96), *difficulty/easiness* (f:11; %12,36), *need/necessity* (f:9; %10,11), *individual experience* (f:5; %5,61), *feature/systematicity* (f:3; %3,38). Three metaphors could not be included in these categories due to their justifications and were counted as out-of-category metaphors. Detailed information on which metaphors are evaluated under which categories are given in the tables below. The frequency with which the metaphors included in the category of interlingual relationships are produced is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. M*etaphors in the category of interlingual relationships*

Participant	Metafor	f
L26	American population	1
L19	English	1
L81	Montenegrin	1
L3	The languages of Asian countries	1
L31	French	1
L86	Colors	1
L87	Middle Eastern languages (Arabic, Persian…)	1
L90	Roots of tree	1
L39, L41	Persian	2
L13, L64	Kyrgyz	2
L78, L83	Urdu and Arabic	2
L14, L36	Urdu	2
L58, L65, L72	Kazakh	3
L40, L42, L69, L70, L74	My mother tongue/My own language	5
L24, L25, L28, L59, L85, L92	Arabic	6
L15, L20, L21, L27, L32, L57, L60	Uzbek	7
Total		37

According to Table 5, there are 37 metaphors in total, which can be classified in the category of interlingual relationships, 16 of which are different metaphors. Learners associated Turkish with other languages or their mother tongue. It is seen that the most frequently used metaphors in this association are *Uzbek*, *Arabic* and *my mother tongue/my own language*; these are followed by the *Kazakh* metaphor. *Urdu and Arabic*, *Urdu*, *Kyrgyz* and *Persian* 2 times; other metaphors were used once. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are as follows:

"Turkish is like Persian. Because there are similar words." (L39)

"Turkish is like my mother tongue. Because I speak Azerbaijani and Azerbaijani is close to Turkish." (L42)

"Turkish is like the languages of Asian countries. Because in these languages the subject of the sentence comes first, then the verb at the end. Moreover, the build of the sentence is complete different from that of Arabic." (L3)

"Turkish is like Urdu. Because Turkish sentence structure is the same as Urdu. There are Turkish words in Urdu. Therefore, it is easier for me to write sentences in Turkish." (L14)

"Turkish is like the American population. Because it is come from the mixing of many languages." (L26)

"Turkish is like Arabic. Because many of the same words." (L28)

"Turkish is like French. Because they has almost the same alphabets and some similar words." (L31)

"Turkish is like Uzbek. Because they are close languages." (L32)

"Turkish is like Urdi. Because the sentence structure is the same and some words are also the same. With this reson, I can understend Turkish very well." (L36)

"Turkish is like Arabic. Because about 70% the words come from Arabic." (L92)

"Turkish is like Kazakh. Because the two languages are similar." (L58)

"Turkish is like Kazakh. Because the words are somewhat the same." (L65)

"Turkish is like Urdi and Arabic. Because there are too many words in Turkish, Urdu and Arabic are the same." (L79)

"Turkish is like Montenegrin. Because there are too many Turkish words in Montenegrin." (L81)

"Turkish is like Urdu and Arabic. Because in these languages too much words are the same." (L83)

Table 5 shows which metaphors and how often are presented in the *need/necessity* category.

Table 5. *Metaphors in need/necessity category*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L84	Ship	1
L4	Key	1
L5	Door	1
L49	A key to my dreams	1

continuation of Table 5

Participant	Metaphor	f
L6	Journey	1
L97	Luck	1
L2, L9, L89	Bridge	3
Total		9

There are a total of 9 metaphors, 7 of which are different metaphors, that can be evaluated in the category of *need/necessity*. Three of the learners who stated that Turkish is a need/necessity for them used the metaphor of *bridge* and the rest used the metaphor of *ship* (f: 1), *key* (f: 1), *door* (f: 1), *journey* (f: 1), *luck* (f: 1), *key to my dreams* (f: 1). The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are as follows:

"Turkish is like a bridge. Because it connects to education." (L2)

"Turkish is like a key. Because to open the doors of the future." (L4)

"Turkish is like a door. Because we have to pass through the Turkish gate to enter the university." (L5)

"Turkish is like a bridge. Because it will connect me to my future." (L89)

"Turkish is like luck. Because if you have it, your way is open." (L97)

Table 6 shows which metaphors and how often are included in the *valuing/positive emotion* category.

Table 6. *Metaphors in the category of valuing/ positive emotion*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L88	Mother's advice	1
L11	News	1
L16	Chocolate	1
L18	Saz (a stringed instrument)	1
L30	Banana	1
L33	Cake	1
L34	Funfair	1
L95	A beautiful lady	1
L96	Mother	1
L98	Drugs	1
L48	Riding a horse	1
L51	Sea	1
L52	My homeland	1
L53	Coffee	1

continuation of Table 6

Participant	Metaphor	f
L66	Tree	1
L73	Light	1
L75	My second home	1
L82	A safe garden	1
L78, L91	Rainbow	2
L76, L100	Love	2
L50, L71	Sun	2
Total		24

There are a total of 24 metaphors, 21 of which can be evaluated in the category of *valuing/positive emotion*. Learners who have positive emotions towards Turkish and value Turkish preferred *sun*, *love* and *rainbow* metaphors twice. They used other metaphors once. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are given below:

"Turkish is like saz (a stringed musical instrument). Because it is beautiful like the sound of the saz." (L18)

"Turkish is like a banana. Because it's soft and cute." (L30)

"Turkish is like a cake. Because it is such a sweet language." (L33)

"Turkish is like an funfair. Because for me it is very enjoyable. So I enjoy it." (L34)

"Turkish is like the sun. Because it is a very warm language." (L71)

"Turkish is like a rainbow. Because there are beautiful words and it is a precious language." (L78)

"Turkish is like a safe garden. Because it is a safe country." (L82)

"Turkish is like mother's advice. Because it is learned through love. For its wounds. Other languages are learned because people has to." (L88)

"Turkish is like a beautiful lady. Because I love this language." (L95)

"Turkish is like love. Because it is a beautiful language." (L100)

Table 7 shows which metaphors and how often are included in the *difficulty-easiness* category.

Table 7. *Metaphors in difficulty- easiness category*

Participants	Metaphor	f
L23	Game	1
L38	Knitting	1
L54	Ice	1
L62	English	1

continuation of Table 7

Participants	Metaphor	f
L77	Chameleon	1
L67, L68	German	2
L35, L44, L56, L94	Drinking water/water	4
Total		11

There are 11 metaphors in total, 7 of which are different, which can be considered in the *difficulty-easiness* category. *Drinking water/water* (f: 4) comes first among the metaphors preferred by learners who evaluated Turkish in terms of difficulty/ease. However, they also preferred the metaphors of *German* (f: 2), *chameleon* (f: 1), *English* (f: 1), *ice* (f: 1), *knitting* (f: 1), *game* (f: 1). The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are given below:

"Turkish is like a game. Because after winning each level, new challenges come." (L23)

"Turkish is like drinking water for me. Because it is a very beautiful and easy language." (L44)

"Turkish is like water. Because Turkish is a very easy language and it is close to Arab." (L56)

"Turkish is like German. Because it is very difficult to make sentences." (L67)

"Turkish is like German. Because it is hard to learn." (L68)

Table 8 shows which metaphors and how often are included in the *feature/systematicity* category.

Table 8. *Metaphors in the category of feature/systematicity*

Participants	Metaphor	f
L10	Key	1
L29	Indonesian	1
L80	Space	1
Total		3

It is the category with the fewest metaphors. *Space* (f: 1), *Indonesian* (f: 1), *key* (f: 1) metaphors were produced by associating them with the structural features of Turkish. The metaphors of some of the learners are presented with their justifications:

"Turkish is like a key. Because there are many possibilities." (L10)

"Turkish is like Indonesian. Because there is a very complex language, we use it especially with the effect of Arabic words." (L29)

Table 9 shows which metaphors and how often are included in the category of *individual experience.*

Table 9. *Metaphors in the individual experience category*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L8	Journey	1
L46	Crossword	1
L93	Sea	1
L99	Drawing a picture	1
L61	Sun	1
Total		5

Based on their own experiences, five learners developed the metaphors *journey* (f: 1), *crossword* (f: 1), *sea* (f: 1), *drawing a picture* (f: 1), *sun* (f: 1) regarding Turkish. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are as follows:

"Turkish is like a journey. Because I have a my very different and varied experienced." (L8)

"Turkish is like a crossword. Because this is a new experience." (L46)

"Turkish is like the sun. Because my life has lit up." (L61)

"Turkish is like the sea. Because it reminds me of Istanbul." (L93)

Table 10 includes metaphors that cannot be included in any category.

Table 10. *Out-of-category metaphors*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L1	Communication tool	1
L17	Sea	1
L55	Mountain	1
Total		3

Communication tool (f: 1), *sea* (f: 1) and *mountain* (f: 1) metaphors could not be classified due to their justifications and could not be included in the above-mentioned categories. Therefore, it is counted as an out-of-category metaphor.

3.2. Findings Regarding Metaphors About Turkish Culture

Data were collected from 101 learners; however, 92 metaphors related to Turkish culture were obtained. Table 11 presents the distribution of 92 valid metaphors produced by learners by levels.

Table 11. *The distribution of the metaphors produced by the learners about Turkish culture by levels*

Participant	Metaphor	f	%
	A2		
L39	Other Islamic cultures	1	2,32
L40	Birth Place	1	2,32
L45	Honey flowing in our knowledge	1	2,32
L46	Floors of building	1	2,32
L48	Western culture	1	2,32
L49	A new world	1	2,32
L52	Red	1	2,32
L53	Colorful	1	2,32
L54	Cotton	1	2,32
L55	Summer season	1	2,32
L57	Art	1	2,32
L59	Sun	1	2,32
L63	Somalian culture	1	2,32
L64	Kyrgyz culture	1	2,32
L66	Flower	1	2,32
L67	German culture	1	2,32
L70	Tulip flower	1	2,32
L71	Education	1	2,32
L77	Forest	1	2,32
L78	Arabic and European culture	1	2,32
L79	Asian and European culture	1	2,32
L81	Bosnia and Herzegovinan culture	1	2,32
L82	Deep well	1	2,32
L83	Gold	1	2,32
L42	Iranian culture	1	2,32
L41, L44	Afghan culture	2	4,69
L69, L74	Uzbek culture	2	4,69
L76, L80	Arabic culture	2	4,69
L50, L51, L72	Rainbow	3	6,97

continuation of Table 11

Participant	Metaphor	f	%
L62, L65, L68, L73	Kazakh culture	4	9,34
L56, L58, L60, L61, L5	Sea	5	11,62
Total		43	100
	B1		
L1	Ceramic	1	2,86
L4	Saudi Arabian culture	1	2,86
L5	A window to the past	1	2,86
L7	Gold	1	2,86
L8	Unique	1	2,86
L10	Phenomenon	1	2,86
L11	Other Islamic cultures	1	2,86
L12	Western culture	1	2,86
L14	Pakistani culture	1	2,86
L17	Sun	1	2,86
L23	Universe	1	2,86
L25	Romanian culture	1	2,86
L28	Most of the world	1	2,86
L29	Both Arabic and European culture	1	2,86
L31	Guinean culture	1	2,86
L16	History	1	2,86
L18	Summer rain	1	2,86
L21	Asian culture	1	2,86
L26	Peacock	1	2,86
L27	Azerbaijani culture	1	2,86
L32	Random	1	2,86
L2, L6	Flower	2	5,71
L3, L15	Sea	2	5,71
L30, L38	Rainbow	2	5,71
L20, L33	Uzbek culture	2	5,71

continuation of Table
11

Participant	Metaphor	f	%
L9, L24, L34	Arabic culture	3	8,55
L13, L19, L22	Iranian culture	3	8,55
Total		35	100
B2			
L84	Endless sea	1	7,14
L85	European culture	1	7,14
L86	Tale	1	7,14
L88	Miniature of the world	1	7,14
L89	Life	1	7,14
L90	Depth of sea	1	7,14
L93	Arabic culture	1	7,14
L94	Iranian culture	1	7,14
L95	A great history	1	7,14
L96	Rainbow	1	7,14
L97	A hot tea in the cold	1	7,14
L98	Garden	1	7,14
L99	Colors	1	7,14
L100	A large space	1	7,14
Total		14	100

As can be seen in Table 11, 43 metaphors at A2 level, 35 at B1 level and 14 at B2 level were developed. At A2 level, metaphors of the *sea* (f:5; %11,62), *Kazakh culture* (f:4; %9,34); At B1 level, the metaphors of *Iranian culture* (f:3; %8,55) and *Arabic culture* (f:3; %8,55) were produced the most. At the B2 level, all metaphors were used once (%7,14). All the metaphors produced by the learners are combined. Metaphors of the *sea* (f:7; %7,60), *Arabic culture* (f:6; %6,52), *rainbow* (f:6; %6,52), *Iranian culture* (f:5; %5,43) were developed the most for Turkish culture. *Kazakh culture*, *Uzbek culture* 4 times; *Western culture/European culture*, *flower* 3 times; *Arabic and European culture, gold, Afghan culture, sun, Other Islamic cultures* 2 times each; other metaphors were produced once. Data of 9 learners in metaphor elimination and refinement phase were not considered valid because there was no metaphor in the form, it was left blank, the metaphor was without justification, or the justification was not semantically related to the written metaphor. These can be considered as data loss.

The metaphors developed by the learners regarding the Turkish culture were analyzed with their justifications, and six conceptual categories were determined according to the relevance of the metaphors. The same metaphors produced by different learners were

included in different categories. This situation is related to the meaning attributed to the metaphor and its justification.

The categories and their frequency can be represented by a table as follows.

Table 12. *The distribution of the metaphors produced by the learners about Turkish culture by categories*

Categories	Intercultural Relationships	Always Existing/ Being Rooted	Richness/ Diversity	Universality	Valuing/ Positive Emotion	Individual Experience
f	42	9	18	3	12	3
%	48,28	10,35	20,69	3,44	13,80	3,44

As seen in Table 12, the frequency of categories is ordered from highest to lowest as *intercultural relationships* (f:42; %48,28), *richness/diversity* (f:18; %20,69), *valuing/positive emotion* (f:12; %13,80), *always existing/being rooted* (f:9; %10,35), *individual experience* (f:3; %3,44), *universality* (f:3; %3,44). Five metaphors could not be included in these categories due to their justifications and were counted as out-of-category metaphors.

Detailed information on which metaphors are evaluated under which categories are given in the tables below. The frequency with which the metaphors included in the category of *intercultural relationships* are produced is shown in Table 13.

Table 13. *Metaphors in the intercultural relationships category*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L63	Somalian culture	1
L64	Kyrgyz culture	1
L67	German culture	1
L40	Birth place	1
L8	Unique	1
L79	Asian and European culture	1
L4	Saudi Arabian culture	1
L14	Pakistani culture	1
L25	Romanian culture	1
L31	Guinean culture	1
L53	Colorful	1
L21	Asian culture	1
L27	Azerbaijani culture	1
L81	Bosnia and Herzegovinan culture	1
L11, L39	Other Islamic cultures	2

continuation of Table 13

Participant	Metaphor	f
L41, L44	Afghan culture	2
L29, L78	Arabic and European culture	2
L12, L48, L85	Western culture/European culture	3
L62, L65, L68, L73	Kazakh culture	4
L20, L33, L69, L74	Uzbek culture	4
L13, L19, L22, L42, L94	Iranian culture	5
L9, L24, L34, L76, L80, L93	Arabic culture	6
Total		42

According to Table 13, there are 42 metaphors in total which can be classified in the category of intercultural relations, 22 of which are different. The learners associated Turkish culture with other cultures and their own culture or made comparisons with other cultures. It is seen that the most frequently used metaphors in this association are *Arabic culture* (f: 6) and *Iranian culture* (f: 5); these are followed by the metaphor of the *Uzbek culture* (f: 4) and the *Kazakh culture* (f: 4). *Western culture/European culture* 3 times; other *Islamic cultures*, *Afghan culture*, *Arabic and European culture* 2 times and other metaphors were also used once. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are as follows:

"Turkish culture is like unique. Because it is not like Arab or European culture. There is a unique difference that I feel." (L8)

"Turkish culture is like Uzbek culture. Because our languages are close and we are in the same language." (L20)

"Turkish culture is like Arabic culture. Because both cultures overlep in nature, religion and many other things." (L24)

"Turkish culture is like Afghan culture. Because there are a lot in common." (L41)

"Turkish culture is like Iranian culture. Because they are both Muslims and neighbors." (L42)

"Turkish culture is like Kazakh culture. Because the same hospitable people." (L62)

"Turkish culture is like Asian and European culture. Because Turkish culture is a mixture of Asian and European cultures." (L79)

Table 14 shows which metaphors are included in the category of always *existing/being rooted* at what frequency.

Table 14. *Metaphors in the category of always existing/being rooted*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L95	A great history	1
L57	Art	1

continuation of Table 14

Participant	Metaphor	f
L82	Deep well	1
L86	Tale	1
L90	Depth of sea	1
L3	Sea	1
L5	A window to the past	1
L23	Universe	1
L16	History	1
Total		9

There are 9 different metaphors that can be evaluated in the category of *always existing /being rooted*. Learners used a great *history* (f:1), *art* (f:1), *deep well* (f:1), *tale* (f:1), *depth of sea* (f:1), *sea* (f:1), *a window to the past* (f:1), *universe* (f:1), *history* (f:1) metaphors. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications, are as follows:

"Turkish culture is like a window to the past. Because it shows us a different and diverse picture of it from the past." (L5)

"Turkish culture is like a universe. Because it has a history of its own." (L23)

"Turkish culture is like a deep well. Because there are very deep words." (L82)

"Turkish culture is like a tale. Because the meanings used to come past." (L86)

Table 15 shows which metaphors are included in the *richness/diversity* category at what frequency.

Table 15. *Metaphors in richness/diversity category*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L98	Garden	1
L77	Forest	1
L84	Endless sea	1
L88	Miniature of the world	1
L17	Sun	1
L32	Random	1
L54	Cotton	2
L15, L61	Sea	2
L2, L6	Flower	2
L30, L38, L50, L51, L72, L96	Rainbow	6
Total		18

There are a total of 18 metaphors in this category, 10 of which are different. *Rainbow* (f: 6) comes first among the metaphors preferred by the learners. *Flower*, *sea* and *cotton* were preferred twice each. Other metaphors are written once. The metaphors of some of the learners, along with their justifications are as follows:

"Turkish culture is like the sea. Because it's that wide." (L15)

"Turkish culture is like the sun. Because it is so vasty and diversey." (L17)

"Turkish culture is like random. Because many nations live in this country." (L32)

"Turkish culture is like a rainbow. Because it is a colorful culture." (L50)

"Turkish culture is like cotton. Because it accepted many cultures." (L54)

"Turkish culture is like a rainbow. Because it has different colorful colors." (L72)

"Turkish culture is like a miniature of the world. Because it can be seen from various angles in the cultures of all corners of the world, in Turkish culture." (L88)

"Turkish culture is like a garden. Because it is full of different flowers." (L98)

Table 16 shows which metaphors and how often they are included in the category of *universality*.

Table 16. *Metaphors in the category of universality*

Participant	Metafor	f
L10	Phenomenon	1
L28	Most of the world	1
L58	Sea	1
Total		3

Metaphors in this category are less than in other categories. The metaphors of *phenomenon* (f: 1), *most of the world* (f: 1), *sea* (f: 1) were produced by associating the existence of Turkish culture throughout the world. The metaphors of two of the learners, along with their justifications, are given below:

"Turkish culture is like a phenomenon. Because everyone in the world lives." (L10)

"Turkish culture is like most of the world. Because it is so famous." (L28)

Table 17 shows which metaphors and how often they are found in the *valuing/positive* emotion category below.

Table 17. *Metaphors in the category of valuing/positive emotion*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L97	A hot tea in the cold	1
L99	Colors	1
L52	Red	1
L55	Summer season	1
L66	Flower	1

continuation of Table 17

Participant	Metaphor	f
L70	Tulip flower	1
L1	Ceramic	1
L18	Summer rain	1
L56, L75	Sea	2
L7, L83	Gold	2
Total		12

Sea and *gold* metaphors from 10 different metaphors in the *valuing/positive emotion* category were preferred by two learners each. The metaphors of *summer rain*, *ceramics*, *tulip flower*, *flower*, *summer season*, *red*, *colors*, *a hot tea in the cold* were used once for each. The metaphors of some of the learners who have positive emotions towards Turkish culture and attach importance to Turkish culture are given below, along with their justifications:

"Turkish culture is like ceramics. Because each one is unique." (L1)

"Turkish culture is like gold. Because Turkish culture has a valuable history." (L7)

"Turkish culture is like summer season. Because it is a beautiful and interesting culturre." (L55)

"Turkish culture is like a flower. Because it sounds good. Just like flower kind is and gentle, Turkish culture is juste like that. People are kind. They make a lot of help." (L66)

"Turkish culture is like a hot tea in the cold. Because you feel warm by the behavior of the people." (L97)

"Turkish culture is like colors. Because as you paint, it gives meaning to its surroundings." (L99)

Table 18 shows which metaphors and how often they are found in the *individual experience* category.

Table 18. *Metaphors in the category of individual experience*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L46	Floors of building	1
L49	A new world	1
L59	Sun	1
Total		3

Another category with low metaphor frequency is the category of *individual experience*. Based on their own experiences, three learners produced the metaphors of *floors of building* (f: 1), *a new world* (f: 1), *sun* (f: 1) related to Turkish culture. The metaphors of some of the learners along with their justifications are presented below:

"Turkish culture is like floors of building. Because I am exploring these floors." (L46)

"Turkish culture is like a new world. Because it's a new culture for me, I see something else." (L49)

Table 19 includes metaphors that cannot be included in any category.

Table19. *Out-of-category metaphors*

Participant	Metaphor	f
L26	Peacock	1
L45	Honey flowing in our knowledge	1
L60	Sea	1
L71	Education	1
L89	Life	1
Total		5

The metaphors of *peacock* (f:1), *honey flowing in our knowledge* (f:1), *sea* (f:1), *education* (f:1) and *life* (f:1) could not be classified due to their justifications and could not be included in the above-mentioned categories. For this reason, it was accepted as an out-of-category metaphor.

4. Conclusion&Discussion&Recommendations

Knowing the perceptions of learners about the language and culture they are learning, solving their problems together with increasing their motivation, and restructuring all aspects of teaching by reviewing are important issues in terms of improving the teaching process. Because while positive metaphorical perceptions affect foreign language learning positively, negative metaphoric perceptions affect negatively (Gömleksiz, 2013: 652). In short, determining the metaphorical perceptions of the learners, learning what the target language and culture means to them will contribute to the fact that language teaching in general and Turkish as a foreign/second language teaching in particular will be more efficient and will contribute to success in teaching. In this direction, in this qualitative study, it is aimed to determine the metaphorical perceptions of foreign learners who learn Turkish about the target language Turkish and Turkish culture in the context of language-culture relationship. As a result of the analysis of the answers given by 101 learners at A2, B1, B2 levels to the form prepared by the researcher, the following results were obtained:

Mostly, *Uzbek*, *Arabic*, *my mother tongue/my own language* metaphors were developed concerning Turkish. When we examine the number of metaphors developed according to the levels, the most common metaphor is *my mother tongue/my own language* at A2 level, and the *Uzbek* metaphor at B1 level. Considering the most produced metaphors at A2 and B1 levels, it can be stated that the highest frequency is in the category of *interlingual relationships*. It is not possible to make an exact judgment for B2 level. Because at the fewest participantsare is at B2 level and all metaphors except Arabic (f: 2) were used once. Similar metaphors are also included in the researches of Kalenderoğlu and Armut (2019). They determined that the learners associated Turkish mostly with sea at B1 level, with Persian at B2 level, and at C1 level, it is described as my own language/my mother tongue.

The metaphors of the *sea*, *rainbow*, *Arabic culture* and *Iranian cultur*e were mostly developed regarding Turkish culture. Considering the number of metaphors developed

according to the levels, the metaphors at A2 level are the *sea*, *Kazakh cult*ure, and at B1 level, the metaphors of *Iranian culture* and *Arabic culture* are seen the most. Taking the most produced metaphors at A2 and B1 levels into consideration, it can be stated that the highest frequency is in the category of *intercultural relationships* and *richness/diversit*y.

It was also evaluated whether the learner perceptions of Turkish and Turkish culture were positive or negative. It was concluded that only 7 learners had a negative perception about Turkish. The students expressed their negative perceptions on the grounds that Turkish is difficult and confusing with the metaphors of *game* by L23 coded learner, *Indonesian* by L29 coded learner, *knitting* by L38 coded learner, *ice* by L54 coded learner, *German* by L67 coded learner, *German* by L68 learner, *chameleon* by L77 learner. It is seen that this result of the research coincides with the findings of similar studies aiming to determine metaphorical perceptions. Akkaya (2013) determined that the majority of Syrian learners who learn Turkish have positive metaphorical perceptions about Turkish. Kolaç and Aynal (2015) stated in their research that Turks living in Sweden are in a positive attitude and perception towards Turkish. The frequency of positive emotion category in Boylu and Işık's (2017) research; that is, the number of learners who have positive feelings towards Turkish is high. Karatay and Kartallıoğlu (2019) found that Mongolian learners studying in Turkey developed more positive metaphors for the concept of Turkish. Güngör and Özalan (2021) also determined that the 6 metaphors concerning Turkish produced by Finnish learners who learn Turkish are not negative.

In this research, no learner has a negative perception about Turkish culture. Similar to the result of this research, in the metaphorical perception determination research conducted by Karatay (2016), Iraqi learners learning Turkish; it was determined in the research of Karatay and Kartallıoğlu (2019) that Mongolian learners produced positive metaphors for Turkey and indirectly for Turkish culture; therefore, they had a positive metaphorical perception. Karatay (2016), in his study to determine the metaphorical perceptions of Iraqi learners, determined that the learners have a positive perception in terms of tolerance, peace, freedom, trust, food culture, natural beauty and common culture. Alptekin and Kaplan (2018) concluded in their research that foreign learners have a positive metaphorical perception towards Turkish culture in general. Aydın (2017), in her research examining the perceptions of foreigners learning Turkish about Turkey and Turkish, determined that the learners generally reported positive opinions about Turkish culture.

Since the learners participating in this research learned Turkish in Turkey; therefore, almost all of them have a positive perception towards both Turkish and Turkish culture, as they have the opportunity to witness the language-culture relationship directly. It is thought that their positive perceptions lead them to learn Turkish, encourage them and increase their motivation about learning Turkish. Therefore, this situation will positively affect the perspective of Turkish culture and Turkey, along with the success of language teaching.

The metaphors produced by the learners regarding Turkish were grouped under 6 different categories. The categories are *interlingual relationships*, *valuing/positive emotion*, *difficulty/easiness, need/necessity, individual experience*, and *feature/systematicity* from highest to lowest in frequency. Similar categories are also seen in other metaphorical perception studies. In Akkaya's (2013) study conducted with Syrian learners, the learners developed their metaphors in 8 different categories: communication, valuing, harmony, knowledge, language structure, vocabulary, interlingual interaction, and individual difference. Considering the research results of Boylu and Işık (2017), it is seen that the learners' metaphors are in the categories of positive feeling, need, interlingual relationship and finding it difficult. Aydın (2018) in her research has classified the metaphors expressed

by bilingual Turkish teachers in Macedonia in 8 different categories as identification/valuing, being a basic need, always existing/being rooted, owning/protecting, being rich/vocabulary, being widespread in the world/universality, being informed/ giving information and being harmonious. Göçen (2019) revealed that learner metaphors are grouped under 5 different categories as interlingual relationship, features, systematicity, richness, difficulty-easiness. In the research of Erol and Kaya (2020), it is seen that learner metaphors are gathered in 8 categories as language structure, interlingual relationship, positive emotion, need, discomfort, novelty, eternity and communication.

The categories with the highest frequency are *interlingual relationships* (f: 37) and *valuing/positive emotion* (f: 24). One of the categories with the highest frequency in Akkaya's (2013) research is valuing, positive emotion in Boylu and Işık's (2017) research, and identification/valuing in Aydın's (2018) research. The category of *interlingual relationship* is among the categories with the highest frequency in the studies of Göçen (2019), Erol and Kaya (2020), and Aktaş (2021), as it is in this study. In Akkaya's (2013) research, the category of interlingual interaction is the category with the lowest frequency. This may be due to the fact that Akkaya worked with only one group of learners, only Syrians.

In this study, it was determined that in the category of interlingual relationship, learners associate/compare Turkish with their mother tongue or with different languages in terms of similarity-difference. The most preferred metaphors in this category are *Uzbek*, *Kazakh*, *Arabic* and *my mother tongue/my own language* metaphors. Other languages associated with Turkish are *Urdu and Arabic*, *Urdu*, *Kyrgyz* and *Persian*, *Middle Eastern languages*, *languages of Asian countries, French, Montenegrin* and *English*. The reason why the frequency of *Uzbek*, *Arabic* and *Kazakh* is high may be that the number of learners from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and countries where Arabic is spoken such as Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Tunisia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Lebanon, Libya, Qatar in the participant group is high. The fact that the words in the languages with which the learners have a relationship are also in Turkish may have a role in the learners' relationship between Turkish and their own or other languages. It can be argued that this connection between Turkish and another language that learners liken has a positive effect on their learning of the target language, Turkish, and will enable them to learn Turkish more easily and comfortably. In summary, It can be said that learners' beginning with associations or differences by comparing Turkish with other languages will affect their success of learning Turkish positively. Kalenderoğlu and Armut (2019) stated that the participants in their research mostly preferred to make similes for Turkish with other languages such as my mother tongue/my own language, Persian, Arabic, Azerbaijani Turkish. Göçen (2019) also determined in her research that Arabic is the leading language associated with Turkish. According to the results of Erol and Kaya's (2020) research, the languages that are likened to Turkish are Arabic, Azerbaijani Turkish and the languages of Asian countries. Participants in Aktaş's (2021) research compared Turkish to languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Kazakh, Uzbek or languages spoken in the Middle East, East, Far East, and Central Asia. In the research of Boylu and Işık (2017), it is seen that learners generally liken Turkish to their mother tongue, and it is not a language that comes to the fore in terms of frequency.

When the metaphors in the category of *valuing/positive emotion*, which has the second highest frequency, are examined, it is seen that the learners try to explain their positive emotions towards Turkish and the value they attach to it, in general, with something they like. In this category *mother's advice*, *news*, *chocolate*, *saz (a stringed musical instrument)*, *banana*, *cake*, *funfair*, *a beautiful lady*, *mother*, *drugs*, *riding a horse*, *sea*, *my homeland*, *coffee*, *tree*, *light*, *my second home, a safe garden, rainbow, love, sun* metaphors explain the

value and importance of Turkish for learners, and also give an idea about why they are learning Turkish. Akkaya (2013) also found that Syrian participants, who developed positive metaphors about Turkish in his research, developed the metaphors of *mother*, *home* and *human* most, similar to this finding of the research.

In the *difficulty/easiness* category, which has the third highest frequency, learners revealed how they perceived Turkish in terms of difficulty or easiness through metaphors. *Drinking water/water* is one of the metaphors preferred most by the learners. In addition, they preferred the metaphors of *German*, *chameleon*, *English*, *ice*, *knitting* and *game*. Turkish is easy for 4 learners who produced the metaphor of *drinking water/water* and the learner who produced the *English* metaphor; Turkish is difficult for 2 learners who produced *German* metaphor and for the learners who produced the metaphors of *ice*, *game*, *chameleon*, *knitting*. The number of learners who thinks Turkish is difficult is more than those who think it is easy. it can be thought that learners have difficulties in learning Turkish since Turkish is an agglutinative language, contains many suffixes, verb comes at the end of in the syntax, and is separated from the Indo-European, Hami-Sami, and Sino-Tibetan language families due to these features (Ergin, 2009: 7-8). In the study conducted by Aktaş (2021) with Turkish language learners in Belgium, it was determined that Turkish was described as difficult by the learners and therefore they had a negative perception towards Turkish. This means that it is not only those who learn Turkish as a second language like the participants of this research, but also as in Aktaş's research, those who learn Turkish as a foreign language also think that Turkish is difficult.

The most preferred metaphor in the *need/necessity* category, which is another category, is *bridge*. Other metaphors are *ship*, *key*, *door*, *journey*, *luck*, *a key to my dreams*. According to the research results of Boylu and Işık (2017) and Aydın (2018), learners attributed great importance to Turkish by associating it with basic needs in order for human beings to survive such as *mother*, *breath*, *air*, *water* and *sun*. However, the learners in this study described Turkish as a need/necessity that will pave the way for education, future and university, and moreover, in all areas of life.

In the category of *individual experience*, the learners developed the metaphors of *journey*, *puzzle*, *sea*, *drawing a picture*, and *sun* for Turkish based on their own personal experiences and life.

In the category of *feature/systematicity*, which is the category with the lowest frequency, there *space*, *Indonesian*, *key* metaphors produced by associating with Turkish structural features. In Karatay's (2016) research, learners expressed their negative perceptions about the features of Turkish with spelling rules, suffixes, and grammar metaphors. However, considering the justifications for the metaphors of space, Indonesian, key in this study, it is not possible to say that the learners have a negative perception.

The metaphors produced by the learners regarding the Turkish culture were also grouped under 6 different categories. The categories are *intercultural relationships*, *richness/diversity*, *valuing/positive emotion, always existing/being rooted*, *individual experience* and *universality* from highest to lowest in terms of frequency. In another study (Alptekin & Kaplan, 2018) in which learners' metaphorical perceptions of Turkish culture were determined, metaphors were not categorized.

Almost half of the metaphors produced regarding Turkish culture are grouped under the category of *intercultural relationships*. Learners who associate/compare Turkish culture with other cultures or their own cultures mostly used the metaphors of *Arabic culture* and *Iranian culture*. These were followed by the *Uzbek culture*, *Kazakh culture*. The reason for the high

frequency of these metaphors may be because the number of learners from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, from countries where Iranian culture is dominant, such as Iran, Afghanistan, or where Arab culture is lived, such as Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Tunisia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Lebanon, Libya, Qatar is high in the participant group. That there is such a perception towards Turkish culture which contains elements from many cultures, has associations and similarities with different cultures and that the category of intercultural relationship is the category with the highest frequency can be considered as an acceptable situation. Moreover, it can be thought that it depends on familiarity such as knowing Turkish and Turks before encountering Turkish and Turkish culture. However, the studies conducted on the fact that being familiar with Turkish culture, Turkish and Turks before encountering the Turkish culture has no effect on the image of the country should be mentioned (Kahraman, 2018: 108-109).

In the *richness/diversity* category, which is the second highest frequency, *rainbow* is the leading metaphor among the metaphors preferred by learners. The learners associated the richness of Turkish culture, the fact that it contains many cultures, and its interaction with other cultures, with the rainbow being colorful. They also likened the richness and diversity of Turkish to the metaphors of *flowers*, *sea*, *cotton*, *garden*, *forest*, *endless sea*, *miniature of the world*, *sun* and *random*.

The category with the third highest frequency is *valuing/positive emot*ion. The learners explained that they have positive emotions towards Turkish culture and that they value/care this culture with the metaphors of the *sea*, *summer rain*, *ceramic*, *tulip flower*, *flower*, *summer season, red, colors, a hot tea in the cold*.

The learners expressed their perceptions that Turkish culture has a deep past with the metaphors of *a great history*, *art*, *deep well*, *tale*, *depth of sea*, *sea*, *a window to the past*, *universe*, *history* in the category of *always existing/being rooted*. This category consists of metaphors showing the belief that Turkish culture has existed since the past and will continue doing so in the future. In Alptekin and Kaplan's (2018) research, the participants produced metaphors that Turkish culture has a very rich, mysterious and deep-rooted history.

The categories of *individual experience* and *universality* have an equal number of metaphors. In the category of *individual experience*, the metaphors of *floors of building*, *a new world*, *sun*, produced by learners regarding Turkish culture based on their own experiences are included and *phenomenon*, *most of the world*, *sea* metaphors produced by learners by associating the existence of Turkish culture throughout the world and its recognition all over the world are included in the category of *universality*.

The number of such studies on the determination of metaphorical perceptions should be increased, as research will guide those concerned in the development of language teaching policies in general, teaching Turkish as a foreign/second language in particular, directing teaching practices, and making teaching more efficient. In line with the results of such studies, studies aimed at developing and reinforcing positive perceptions should be planned and implemented. Because positive perceptions affects the perspective towards Turkish culture and Turkey positively, it increases learners' motivation by encouraging them to learn Turkish and increasing the success of learning the target language. Necessary arrangements should be made and measures should be taken in all dimensions of education (textbooks, instructors, curriculum, in-class and extra-curricular activities…) in order to determine and correct negative perceptions and eliminate them. Considering the knowledge that affective features are positively effective in the learning process, both in-class and extra-curricular activities and additional studies can be executed on metaphors. This research was carried out for two elements, Turkish and Turkish culture. In future studies, perceptions of each of the

reading, writing, speaking and listening skills can be questioned or metaphorical perceptions related to more elements can be determined.

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