

Metaphoric Perceptions on the Concept of “Social Skills” of Preschool Teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the metaphoric perceptions on the concept of “social skills” of preschool teachers. This study which has phenomenology design, one of the basic qualitative researches, was carried on 46 preschool teachers working in the provinces of Amasya, Çorum, Ordu, Samsun, and Tokat. The forms given teachers which were written an expression like “Social skills are like Because.....” were used to collect data as “documents” in the study. Content analysis was used in data analysis. It was seen that the preschool teachers generated metaphors such as *tree, water, play dough, dough, ball, dessert, traffic, lego, mirror, heartbeat, tumbler, grinder, plastic ball, puppet, Rubik’s cube, living model, cake, mixer, bicycle, octopus, clown, safety belt, bag, soil, spider web, and food* regarding the concept of “social skills”. The metaphors produced are categorized as “*social skills in terms of their contributions*”, “*social skills in terms of acquisition processes*”, “*social skills in terms of the characteristics they have*” and “*social skills in terms of their indispensability*”. Accordingly, a total of 38 different metaphors collected in four categories have been identified. As a result, it has been revealed that preschool teachers have general view of social skills and suggestions were asserted to increase their knowledge, skills and experience from theory to practice.

Keywords: Social Skills, Metaphor, Preschool Teacher, Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Preschool period, the first six years of the life, is a period in which children are very dynamic, energetic, and enthusiastic. The child gains his/her first experiences in his/her family in this period, and gains new experiences through expanding social environments such as peers and teachers in the following period. The child has to have skills such as ability to express wishes properly, to solve any problem faced, to share toys, and to establish communication with the people around, in order to exist in the life as a strong individual, starting from the preschool years. In case of an inability to have such skills, undesirable behaviors would arise and acquisition of desired gains would be hindered. Children are required to have social skills in order to be individuals who get on with their environment, are accepted by peers, perform tasks related to school, are aware of their responsibilities, respect differences, and preserve the rights of others. Thus, such types of characteristics are emphasized by contemporary education approaches and defended by today's sense of education. Social skills, referred to in all fields of the life, are the skills that are exhibited through verbal ways such as thanking, asking for permission, apologizing, and expressing feelings, and through nonverbal ways such as making eye contact and using tone of voice properly while speaking. Adopting the method of determining and eliminating any deficiencies or inadequacies in the social skills of an individual is quite important for achieving the goal of the efforts at each levels of education. Social skills can be evaluated in many fields such as home and school, besides it is of great importance that social skills of preschool children are revealed by means of evaluations by parents/teachers, who are closely acquainted with them, as preschool children are in an egocentric period.

Evaluation of social skill levels of preschool children is performed by referring to the opinions of teachers or parents; it is possible to find differences in the opinions of teachers and parents, though (Aksoy, 2014; Can Yaşar, 2011; Hansa Bilek, 2011; Özbey, 2012; Winsler and Wallace, 2002). Such differences can derive from the differences in behaviors observed at the environment of home and school, while it is also possible that they arise a result of the differences between the expectations of parents and teachers. In this scope, there are results indicating that preschool teachers may be more realist in evaluating social skills of the children, nevertheless Akman, Baydemir, and Akyol (2011) detected that preschool teachers cannot reach a common definition for problem behaviors and expressed the aggressive and violent behaviors they face in their professional life in this scope. Similarly, in a study conducted by Milfort and Greenfield (2002) on five-six aged children of American, African, and Spanish origin, it was detected that there were differences in the evaluations made by teachers and by observers on the play behaviors and aggressiveness/non-aggressiveness of the children. Evaluations by preschool teachers for children can be neutral and their expectations from children can be valid only if preschool teachers have sufficient knowledge of social skills. This much is certain that competency of preschool teachers in social skills will contribute to carrying out the processes of education and teaching properly. It was found that the relationships between preschool children and their teachers contribute to increasing their level of social skills (Özyürek, Begde, and Yavuz, 2014; Özyürek and Ceylan, 2014/1; Tatlı and Alakoç Pirpir, 2015). The positive effects of such relationship between teacher and child are also possible to be revealed in the following periods (Bery and O'Connor, 2010).

Preschool teachers are expected to be the persons who have the opportunity to observe the social skills exhibited by children towards different conditions, and who are able to support the development of social skills in a systematical and conscious manner, thanks to their pedagogic formation education they received. The fact that preschool teachers act as an appropriate model with their attitudes and behaviors contributes to social skill acquisition of children, while the fact that they include social skill activities within the process of learning supports starting of a tendency towards positive social behaviors. In this process, it is extremely important that preschool teachers have knowledge and experience in many points in the dimensions of content, importance, evaluation, and development concerning "social skills". It is beyond any doubt that the perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of "social skills" affect their tendencies to give importance to and allocate time to social skills, and include social skills in the process of learning. In this line, emphasis should be put on how the perceptions of preschool teachers on "social skills" are. Use of metaphors, which reveals

the explanations of preschool teachers concerning the concept of social skills, is an effective way to determine their perceptions on “social skills”.

In the literature studies, perceptions on many important factors included in the content of education process such as education, educational administration, school, school management, Turkish education system, university, teacher, discipline, punishment-reward, drama, and values education over the source persons of the field of education (e.g. manager, teacher and teacher candidate) were analyzed by means of metaphors (For example; Akbaba-Altun and Apaydın, 2013; Anılan, 2017; Kasapoğlu, 2016; Kırıl, 2015; Oyman and Şentürk, 2015; Örucü, 2014; Özdemir and Akkaya, 2013; Pektaş and Kıldan, 2009; Saban, 2004; Saban, 2008; Şahin-Kalyon and Aksoy, 2017; Turhan and Yaraş, 2013; Yazar, Özekinci and Lala, 2017). In this framework, it is thought that examining the perceptions on the concept of “social skills” thoroughly will contribute to determining their perspectives and competencies with this regards, and will be a resource for knowing their outstanding characteristics. In the studies on social skills, it was seen that the levels of social skills (İnci and Deniz, 2015) and the relationships between the levels of social skills and the variables such as parent attitude/personal characteristics (Özyürek, 2015; Yaşar Ekici and Göger, 2018), level of self (Uysal and Kaya Balkan, 2015), temperament characteristics (Kılıç and Güngör Aytaç, 2017), behavior problems (Gültekin Akduman, Günindi and Türkoğlu, 2015), learning styles (EğİN Işık, 2019), play behaviors (Darwish et. al, 2001; Kılınç and Ceylan, 2018), value acquisitions (Tanrıverdi and Erarslan, 2015), vocabulary (İnan, 2019), commitment style (Yılmaz, 2018) and conflict tendencies of families (Köyceğiz, 2017) and communication styles of teachers (Paşlı, 2017) were examined. In these studies, the factors that affect social skills were revealed, while there are also empirical studies aiming to develop social skills. For example, the effects of creative drama education (Kıvanç Öztuğ and Çİner, 2018), mother supported education (Uysal, 2014), the program organized by the method of interactive book reading (Kerigan, 2018), story and play based education (Aksoy, 2014), robotic education practices (Türe, 2018), dancing music activities (Kurt, 2016), and psychological endurance program (Ünsal, 2016) on social skills were revealed. The studies on social skills, from theoretical to practical, agree on a single point: teachers have important responsibilities for development and teaching of social skills and they should be competent in the approaches towards developing social skills. It is considered that acquisition of social skills at early ages will be more functional and form a basis for the future learnings, besides it is required to take the steps for social skills in the context of preschool period. In line with these points, the situations in the conscious of preschool teachers, who are one of the milestones of preschool education, concerning social skills and the expressions explained by them regarding “social skills” are considered to be important. In this framework, the problem sentence of this study is constituted by the question of “How are the metaphoric perceptions on the concept of “social skills” of preschool teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal the metaphoric perceptions on the concept of “social skills” of preschool teachers. Answers to following questions have been sought to achieve this general purpose:

1. What are the metaphors generated by preschool teachers for the concept of “social skills”?
2. What are the conceptual categories of the metaphors generated by preschool teachers for the concept of “social skills”?

METHOD

Research Design

Basic qualitative research design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this research, which aims to reveal the metaphoric perceptions of preschool teachers on “social skills”. The

research focuses on determining the perceptions of preschool teachers on the concept of social skills and understanding the meanings that they create in this framework. In this line, in the basic qualitative research design that was used, the interpretations/explanations by preschool teachers for the concept of “social skills” and the types of meanings presented by preschool teachers about “social skills” were emphasized (Altheide and Johnson, 2011). In this research, the perceptions of the preschool teachers, who worked in different provinces, on “social skills” were revealed and the opinions of all of the preschool teachers, who involved in the research, were received by means of a written form, which are among the reasons why basic qualitative research design was preferred.

Study Group

This research was conducted over the preschool teachers working in the provinces of Amasya, Çorum, Ordu, Samsun, and Tokat located in the Central Black Sea Region of the Republic of Turkey. In the study, 12 each teachers working at preschool education institutions in the provinces of Amasya, Çorum, Ordu, Samsun, and Tokat of the Central Black Sea Region were reached by means of convenience sampling method within the academic year of 2018-2019. According to Patton (2014), it is aimed to reach in-depth information choosing the cases that are thought to have rich information in purposeful sampling. Convenience sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling techniques, is a technique of sampling that provides a researcher with speed and practicability upon choosing an easy-to-reach case (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In this line, it was ensured to reach a sampling to represent samples from the Central Black Sea Region and it was aimed to increase the validity of the study data. When the teachers reached within the scope of the study were requested to make an evaluation on social skills through metaphors, it was seen that some of the teachers (n=3) answered as “no idea”, while one (n=1) teacher expressed opinion saying, “I am not sure, I do not really have an answer”. In line with the purpose of the study, 10 preschool teachers ,who were detected to have filled in the data collection form delivered to them incompletely or incorrectly, were also excluded from the study group. In this line, the study group comprised of 46 preschool teachers working in the provinces of Amasya (n=10), Çorum (n=9), Ordu (n=8), Samsun ((n=9), and Tokat (n=10). The professional experiences of the preschool teachers in the study group were 13 years in average, minimum being 1 year and maximum being 25 years. All of the teachers in the study group had bachelor’s degree and were females.

Data Collection

A form that was prepared by the researcher and required completing an open-end expression was utilized to determine the perceptions of the preschool teachers in the study group on the concept of “social skills”. Each of the preschool teachers who enrolled into the study was given a form, containing the expression of “Social skills are like/similar to Because.....” so as to reveal their perceptions on the concept of “social skills”. It was explained to the preschool teachers that they should complete the sentence in the forms given to them, likening the concept of “social skills” to a unique image, object, or thing basing on their own opinions, and they did not receive any inducement. In the metaphor studies, the expressions of “like/similar to” were used to create a likening, while the expression of “because” was used to base such likening on a rational justification. In this scope, the same way was flowed with similar reasons. In this research, this method was utilized to ensure that the preschool teachers could make associations between “social skills” (the subject of metaphor) and the metaphors they would create, and could express justifications for these metaphors. The forms filled in by the preschool teachers in their own handwritings were used to collect data as “documents” in the study. There was no time limitation for the teachers to create metaphors for the concept of “social skills” and the forms filled in by the teachers were collected by the researcher by hand.

Analysis of Data

The metaphor forms filled in by the preschool teachers in their own handwritings were the main data source of the study as “documents”. The data collected in this line was analyzed by means of content analysis method. When content analysis is used, the collected data is conceptualized at first,

then these concepts are organized logically, and the cases that express the data accordingly are thematized. In other words, content analysis is the process of gathering and interpreting similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Different metaphor studies in the literature (For example; Anılan, 2017; Kasapoğlu, 2016; Oyman and Şentürk, 2015; Saban, 2004; Saban, 2008; Şahin-Kalyon and Aksoy, 2017; Yazar, Özekinci and Lala, 2017) were reviewed while analyzing the data, and in this line, content analysis was performed at the phases of (1) coding and extraction, (2) category development, (3) ensuring validity and reliability, and (4) interpreting the data. The processes carried out at these phases are as follows:

1) *Coding and extraction:* In the research, it was firstly reviewed whether the expressions made by the preschool teachers in the forms contained metaphors or not, then the source of the metaphor and the subject of the metaphor were reviewed, and besides, it was also reviewed if there was any rational justification between the subject of the metaphor and source of the metaphor. The preschool teachers who were detected to have any incomplete or incorrect statements in any manner on the subject of the metaphor or on the source of the metaphor in their expressions in the forms were excluded from the study group. In this framework, in addition to 4 different teachers who could not declare any opinions due to the reasons like “I have no idea” or “I am not sure”, the forms filled in by teachers who made general explanations without generating any metaphor with the statements such as “social skills start in the family” and without generating any likening for the concept of “social skills”, or who made explanations independent from the metaphor generated by them with the statements such as “social skills are the skills that must be taught”, were eliminated. In this line, the forms filled in by 10 different teachers in total reached in the provinces of Amasya, Çorum, Ordu, Samsun, and Tokat were excluded from the scope of the study, and the teachers who were detected to have filled in the forms in a complete and correct manner were included in the study group. The 46 preschool teachers in the study group were coded in the range of T₁-T₄₆ basing on the metaphor collection order and the statements of the teachers were evaluated using enumerated code names instead of their real names. The metaphors generated by the preschool teachers in the study group were presented in tables with their code names. Relational category framework was created out of the data obtained after this phase.

2) *Category development:* At this phase of the research, all the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers for the concept of “social skills” were transferred into computer environment and the generated metaphors were listed by the researcher based on the code order of the teachers. Among the metaphors generated by the teachers, the ones that were determined to have common traits were grouped under the same category. The categories were determined for the metaphors basing on their themes as a result of content analysis. While determining the categories, it was taken into consideration whether the metaphors under the same themes together constituted a meaningful whole or not. The 46 preschool teachers created 38 different metaphors in total for the concept of “social skills”. In this context, it was determined that some of the metaphors (tree, water, play dough, and dough) were generated by more than one teacher. Evaluating the relationship between the justifications of the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers and a theme, it was seen that the concept of “social skills” were expressed by the preschool teachers under four different conceptual categories basically.

3) *Ensuring validity and reliability:* The preschool teachers were not given any referring example and any inducement while generating metaphors, in order to ensure them to reflect only their own opinions during the research. The metaphors and statements presented by the participants were directly included and the results were interpreted based on the emerging opinions using direct citations to ensure validity of the research, since cogency and transmissibility are important. Further, expert opinions were also referred to at the phase of data analysis to ensure validity of the research. A consistency analysis was performed by broaching the metaphors that were grouped under conceptual categories to an academic member, who was competent in qualitative research and conducted studies on social skills in preschool period, in order to ensure inter-coder reliability of the study. The academic member who was referred to for opinion was asked to match the metaphors and these conceptual categories. Then, inter-coder reliability was revealed upon detecting the consensuses and dissensuses. The formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Dissensus}} \times 100$) was used to determine the consensuses and dissensuses at this phase. As a result of

the evaluation, the numbers of consensuses and dissensuses were calculated and it was determined that a total of 4 metaphors were included in different categories. Accordingly, it was detected that there was a consensuses of 91.3% among the evaluators in the study. The metaphors that were subjected to dissensus were revised and were included in the corresponding category as a result of a detailed review. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), expert consensus at and above 90% are reliable at a good level in qualitative researches. In this case, it was concluded that the expert reliability ratio of the study is at a sufficiently desired ratio.

4) *Interpretation of data:* At this phase, the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers and the categories representing such metaphors were placed into tables and figures. The numbers of the metaphors generated for the concept of “social skills” were also calculated and the tables included all the metaphors generated, starting from the most frequently repeated metaphors, based on the code orders of the teachers. Since the purpose of the study does not include a comparison among the provinces of Amasya, Çorum, Ordu, Samsun, and Tokat for the perceptions of the preschool teachers on the concept of “social skills”, the metaphors generated by all of the preschool teachers in the study group were reported without any separation. It was aimed to strengthen the study results by presenting direct citations consisting of certain metaphor expressions and their justifications obtained during the process, in the findings section of the study. At the end of this phase, the results based on the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers on the concept of “social skills” and the categories expressed by them through the metaphors were discussed and set forth in line with the literature studies.

FINDINGS

This section contains the findings obtained from the study. In line with the purpose of the study, the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers for “social skills” and the categories under which these metaphors are grouped were revealed. In this framework, the findings obtained are presented in order in tables.

Table 1. The Metaphors Generated by the Preschool Teachers for “Social Skills”

The Metaphors Generated for “Social Skills”	Total
tree (T ₂ , T ₃ , T ₂₃ , T ₄₁ , T ₄₂), water (T ₃₀ , T ₃₁ , T ₄₄), play dough (T ₁₂ , T ₁₉), dough (T ₂₅ , T ₃₉), ball (T ₁), dessert (T ₄), traffic (T ₅), lego (T ₆), mirror (T ₇), heartbeat (T ₈), roly-poly (T ₉), needs of tree (T ₁₀), cup full of coffee (T ₁₁), car (T ₁₃), play (T ₁₄), doll (T ₁₅), root (T ₁₆), electrical machine (T ₁₇), mill (T ₁₈), plastic ball (T ₂₀), puppet (T ₂₁), basic needs (T ₂₂), Rubik’s cube (T ₂₄), living model (T ₂₆), cake (T ₂₇), mixer (T ₂₈), bicycle (T ₂₉), octopus (T ₃₂), clown (T ₃₃), recorder (T ₃₄), the season of spring (T ₃₅), paper and pencil (T ₃₆), safety belt (T ₃₇), drinking glass (T ₃₈), bag (T ₄₀), soil (T ₄₃), spider web (T ₄₅), food (T ₄₆).	38 metaphors

Examining the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers in Table 1 for “social skills”, it is seen that 38 different metaphors were generated. In this sense, it was detected that the most commonly generated metaphors were the metaphor of *tree* (by 5 teachers), then the metaphor of *water* (by 3 teachers), followed by the metaphors of *play dough* and *dough* (by 2 each teachers). Following these, it was revealed that the metaphors of *ball*, *dessert*, *traffic*, *lego*, *mirror*, *heartbeat*, *roly-poly*, *needs of tree*, *cup full of coffee*, *car*, *play*, *doll*, *root*, *electrical machine*, *grinder*, *plastic ball*, *puppet*, *basic needs*, *Rubik’s cube*, *living model*, *cake*, *mixer*, *bicycle*, *octopus*, *clown*, *recorder*, *the season of spring*, *pencil and paper*, *safety belt*, *drinking glass*, *bag*, *soil*, *spider net*, and *food* were generated, each of which used once.

Table 2. The Metaphors Generated by the Preschool Teachers for “Social Skills” Based on Categories

The Metaphors Generated for “Social Skills” Based on Categories			
<i>Social Skills in terms of Their Contributions</i>	<i>Social Skills in terms of Acquisition Processes</i>	<i>Social Skills in terms of The Characteristics They Have</i>	<i>Social Skills in terms of Their Indispensability</i>
ball (T ₁), tree (T ₃), dessert (T ₄), mirror (T ₇), cup full of coffee (T ₁₁), play (T ₁₄), doll (T ₁₅), root (T ₁₆), electrical machine (T ₁₇), mixer (T ₂₈), clown (T ₃₃), the season of spring (T ₃₅), food (T ₄₆).	play dough (T _{12, 19}), dough (T _{25, T₃₉}), lego (T ₆), cake (T ₂₇), recorder (T ₃₄), safety belt (T ₃₇), drinking glass (T ₃₈), Rubik’s cube (T ₂₄), living model (T ₂₆), puppet (T ₂₁), three (T ₄₁) soil (T ₄₃).	traffic (T ₅), heartbeat (T ₈), roly-poly (T ₉), car (T ₁₃), grinder (T ₁₈), plastic ball (T ₂₀), bicycle (T ₂₉), octopus (T ₃₂), tree (T ₄₂).	water (T _{30, T_{31, T₄₄}), tree (T_{2, T₂₃}), needs of tree (T₁₀), basic needs (T₂₂), pencil and paper (T₃₆), bag (T₄₀), spider web (T₄₅).}
<i>13 different metaphors</i>	<i>12 different metaphors</i>	<i>9 different metaphors</i>	<i>7 different metaphors</i>

The distribution of the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers for “social skills” based on categories is given in Table 2. Examining the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers based on categories, it was found that they were grouped under four different categories. These are (1) “social skills in terms of their contributions”, (2) “social skills in terms of acquisition processes”, (3) “social skills in terms of the characteristics they have” and (4) “social skills in terms of their indispensability”. Examples regarding the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers based on their categories are given below.

The findings of the study show that there are different metaphors generated by 13 preschool teachers under the category of “**social skills in terms of their contributions**”. It was found that the metaphors generated under this category are *ball, tree, dessert, mirror, cup full of coffee, play, doll, root, electrical machine, mixer, clown, the season of spring, and food*. Addressing these metaphors with their justifications, it is seen that the contributions of social skills are emphasized by the metaphors under this category, according to the evaluations by the preschool teachers.

The majority of the preschool teachers (T₁, T₃, T₁₅, T₁₆, T₂₈) declared the contributions of social skills such as preventing withdrawnness of children and ensuring them to socialize, ensuring them to play together, over the metaphors of *ball, tree, doll, root* and *mixer*. The following statements show them.

T₁: “They are similar to a ball. Because, when a ball moves slowly, it bounces slowly, too, and when it moves fast, it gets higher. Children with lower social skills are withdrawn and less social”.

T₁₅: “Social skills are like a doll. They ensure children to play together”.

T₁₆: “Social skills are similar to a root. Because, the stronger a root is, the stronger and robust a tree is. If we give the child social skills; strong, robust, and good results can be achieved like a root wrapping all around”.

T₂₈: “Social skills are similar to a mixer. Because, social skills are required to combine many things together and yield a beautiful thing, and to introduce the child into the society as a better individual and make him/her a qualified person”.

Part of the preschool teachers (T₇, T₁₄, T₁₇, T₃₃) emphasized social skills to have the role of facilitating learning and life, through the metaphors such as *mirror, play, electrical machine* and *clown*. These are as follows:

T₁₄: “Social skills are like play. Because, they make it easy for the children to learn like a play does”.

T₁₇: “Social skills are similar to electrical machines. Because, as electrical machines make our life easier, many things in the life of a child who gains social skills become easier”.

T₃₃: “Social skills are similar to a clown. Because, children love clowns so much and they can learn a lot thanks to clowns. They learn many other things thanks to social skills, too”.

In this scope, several preschool teachers (T₄, T₁₁, T₃₅) highlighted the aspect of social skills that give happiness/peace/joy generating metaphors of *dessert, a cup full of coffee* and *the season of spring*. For example;

T₄: “They are similar to a dessert. Because, it is possible to survive without dessert but if you have it, the life will be much better. Those who eat dessert will enjoy it and will be happy. Social skills are like it, too”.

T₁₁: “Social skills are like a cup full of coffee. Because, when one has it, it makes him/her peaceful”.

T₃₅: “Social skills are like the season of spring. Because, the nature is livelier and more colorful during spring. A person who has gained social skills is lively and colorful, just like spring. Just as spring gives people joy and happiness, a person who has gained social skills is joyful and happy”.

The metaphor of *food* was generated by only one of the teachers (T₄₆), which refers to the role of social skills in character development. The following justification for this metaphor emphasizes the contribution of social skills to character development.

T₄₆: “Social skills are like food. Because, food feeds a child and social skills feed character”.

On the other hand, as can be seen in Table 2, it was found that 11 different metaphors were generated by 13 preschool teachers under the category of **“social skills in terms of acquisition processes”**. It was seen that there are the metaphors repeated in the forms of *play dough* and *dough*, and besides, the metaphors such as *lego, cake, recorder, safety belt, drinking glass, Rubik's cube, living model, puppet, and soil*, among the metaphors generated under this category. Addressing these metaphors together with their justifications, it was determined that the preschool teachers revealed the situations regarding the acquisition processes of social skills under this category.

It was strongly emphasized (T₆, T₁₉, T₂₁, T₂₅, T₂₇, T₃₈) that social skills are configurable under this category. This reveals the characteristic of changeability by interventions. On the other hand, there are also metaphors that explain changeability depending on the shape/content of the cup or material. It is remarkable in the examples here that the teachers stated that children would be the individuals depending on how and to which direction they are forwarded by their teachers. In this scope, the metaphors of *lego, play dough, puppet, dough, cake, and drinking glass* were generated. The following expressions are the examples for these.

T₁₉: “Social skills are similar to play dough. Because, we shape social skills in a child and if the social skills are negative, we can turn them into positive. Just like we shape play dough...”.

T₂₁: “Social skills are similar to a puppet. Because, I can give social skills whatever shape I wish, as if I were doing it to puppet”.

T₂₅; “Social skills are similar to dough. Because, you shape dough and the shape you give to dough will come into view. Each ingredient you include in dough will determine the taste and consistency to occur”.

T₂₇; “Social skills are similar to a cake. Because, a cake takes the shape of the mold we use, and the ingredients we use make it what it is once it is baked, its taste will be different depending on the ingredients we use”.

T₃₈; “Social skills are like drinking glasses. Because, a glass will take what you pour into it”.

One of the preschool teachers (T₃₇) revealed a finding that there are some factors required to develop social skills, generating the metaphor of *safety belt*. This finding emphasizes that acquisition of social skills requires the child to be sometimes ready and sometimes eager to learn, and besides, it has a lifesaving role, too.

T₃₇; “Social skills are like a safety belt. Because, wearing safety belt requires self-discipline. It sometimes indicates development, and sometimes requires an effort. In the end, it saves lives”.

At this point, it was found that another preschool teacher (T₁₂) generated the metaphor of *play dough*, stressing the importance of social skills acquisition in early ages by means of providing the required materials and environment, in addition to the changeability characteristic of social skills. It was also seen that another preschool teacher (T₂₄) generated the metaphor of *Rubik’s cube*, which explains the necessity of determining the proper method in acquisition of social skills. In addition to this, it was found that one of the teachers (T₄₁), mentioning that it is necessary to provide sufficient and proper conditions for acquisition of social skills through the metaphor of *tree*, emphasized that it is only possible to raise children with social skills under this condition. These are explained by the statements given below.

T₁₂; “Social skills are like play dough. Because, it is possible to give different shapes to play dough. Social skills are just like play dough. The more we make efforts to teach these skills, the more successful child will be. For this, we can have the required material, provide a proper environment, and we can give whatever shape we would like to do. In order for a child to acquire social skills, we can give the desired shape to him/her at early ages, and ensure him/her to practice these skills in his/her daily life”.

T₂₄; “Social skills are similar to Rubik’s cube. Because, you have to find convenient methods to develop social skills”.

T₄₁; “Social skills are similar to a tree. Because, when we give due care to and prepare a convenient environment for our tree or sapling, it will grow and develop. Similarly, when we provide our children with sufficient conditions, they will become a well-developed green tree, acquiring them social skills”.

Two of the preschool teachers (T₂₆, T₃₄) highlighted through the metaphors they generated that social skills are learned by means of model. The following statements show this situation.

T₂₆; “Social skills are similar to a living model. Because, social skills are also learned through models”.

T₃₄; “Social skills are similar to a recorder. Because, a large part of social skills are learned by taking models”.

In addition to this, one of the preschool teachers (T₄₃) made an expression through the metaphor of *soil* that social skills are learned by doing/experiencing. This metaphor that highlights the requirement for the processes based on practice for acquisition of social skills is as follows.

T₄₃; “Social skills are similar to soil. Because, since social skills are mostly acquired by doing and experiencing, they are similar to soil”.

As another finding, it is seen in Table 2 that there are different metaphors generated by 9 preschool teachers in the study group under the category of **“social skills in terms of the characteristics they have”**. The metaphors generated under this category are *traffic*, *heartbeat*, *roly-poly*, *car*, *grinder*, *plastic ball*, *octopus*, and *tree*. Examining these metaphors based on their justifications, it can be said that the preschool teachers remarkably made explanations for several characteristics of social skills. T₅ made a description through the metaphor of *traffic* that social skills contain some rules and free proper behaviors. At this point, explanations related to the behavioral features of social skills are found.

T₅: “Social skills are similar to traffic. Because, there are rules in traffic, but when it turns green, it is free to go. Social skills contain some rules, too, but proper behaviors are free to do”.

Some of the preschool teachers (T₈, T₁₃) highlighted through the metaphors of *heartbeat* and *car* that social skills are repeated behaviors under this category, and stressed that they will exist in life as they are learned.

T₈: “Social skills are like heartbeat. Because, when learned, they will always continue to exist in the life of a child”.

T₁₃: “Social skills are similar to a car. Because, social skills go with you wherever you go, like a car does”.

It was determined that the majority of the preschool teachers (T₉, T₁₈, T₂₀, T₂₉, T₄₂) here made explanations through the metaphors of *roly-poly*, *grinder*, *plastic ball*, *bicycle*, and *tree* that social skills are a developmental process and they take children forward. The following statements express these situations highlighted commonly by the teachers under this category.

T₉: “Social skills are similar to a roly-poly. Because, when we give children a skill, we think that they learn it; however, we then find out that they did not learn it. We continue to teach them. We teach it and it advances, they forget what they have learned, or it disappears if they do not practice it. A roly-poly is also like this; but at the end, what we have taught will be learned one day”.

T₁₈: “Social skills are similar to a grinder. Because, always something is added into them”.

T₂₀: “Social skills are similar to a plastic ball. Because, the social skills that we give and teach children will go to the desired direction like a ball”.

T₂₉: “Social skills are similar to a bicycle. Because, they continuously and always takes us forward”.

T₄₂: “Social skills are similar to a tree. Because, like a tree completing its development from a seed and then to a sprout, in that spreading seeds to a field, they advance gradually and slowly, take a shape of a tree, in other words, they become socialized”.

In addition to these, it was suggested through the metaphor of *octopus* generated by T₃₂ that social skills contain many different behaviors. This emphasizes that social skills are multi-dimensional skills.

T₃₂: “Social skills are similar to an octopus. Because each of the tentacles represents a different social skill. Social skills contain skills such as social solidarity, welfare, sharing, kindness words, values education, etc.”.

Nevertheless, examining Table 2, it is found that 7 different metaphors were generated by 10 preschool teachers in the study group under the category of **“social skills in terms of their indispensability”**. It is seen that this category contains commonly repeated metaphors of *water* and *tree*, as well as includes metaphors such as *needs of tree*, *basic needs*, *pencil and paper*, *bag*, and *spider web*. Evaluating these metaphors together with their justifications, it was revealed that most of the preschool teachers (T₂, T₁₀, T₂₂, T₂₃, T₃₀, T₃₁, T₃₆, T₄₀, T₄₄, T₄₅) agreed that social skills are in some way indispensable in terms of their contributions in different aspects.

In this scope, it was determined that the preschool teachers stated that social skills are an important part of our lives like oxygen, water, and paper-pencil and the life would be incomplete without them. It is also remarkable that the metaphor of *water* here is the most repeated one (by T₃₀, T₃₁, and T₄₄) among the metaphors. The relevant examples are presented below.

T₂: "They are similar to a tree. Because, trees are indispensable for people since they are the source of oxygen. Social skills are also indispensable for people."

T₃₀: "Social skills are like water. Because, it is impossible to think a life without social skills. Just as water is indispensable, social skills are indispensable, too".

T₃₁: "Social skills are similar to water. Because, water is indispensable for our lives. It is impossible to think a life without water. Social skills are an important part of our lives, too".

T₃₆: "Social skills are like a pencil and paper as an object. Because, there is no one who does not use these objects. Education is impossible without these objects".

T₄₄: "Social skills are similar to water. Because, as water is important for life, so are social skills for a qualified life".

T₄₅: "Social skills are similar to spider web. Because, a spider shapes its life with the web it spins; it has to pass through the webs in order to get the future gains. Similarly, people need to learn social skills in order to keep pace with the social environments and situations and to complete their own skills, just as a spider needs to spin a web... We need to establish and gain social skills like spider webs. These skills will affect our future lives, ourselves".

Further, it was found that three preschool teachers (T₂, T₁₀, T₂₂, T₂₃) generated metaphors under the metaphors of *needs of tree*, *basic needs*, and *tree*, through likening with similar contents. The preschool teachers remarked through these metaphors that social skills are necessary for existing in the society, are an important factor that makes a human a human, and are the skills that a child must learn in order to exist in the society. The examples stating these are as follows.

T₁₀: "I would liken social skills to needs of a tree. Because, a tree needs soil, sun, and water to grow up. In that, as there is a need for so much things for a tree to grow up, so the people need solidarity, welfare, communication, and empathy, in that social skills, in order to exist and take root in society, in the same way".

T₂₂: "Social skills are similar to basic needs. Because, as a child needs to food, shelter, protection, etc., so s/he also needs social skills to exist in society, to be an individual aware of his/her responsibilities, and to learn sharing".

T₂₃: "Social skills are similar to a tree. Because, an individual deprived of social skills is like a tree with dried leaves and without fruits. As what makes a tree beautiful is its leaves and fruits, social skills are one of the important factors that makes a human a human".

Another preschool teacher (T₄₀) suggested through the metaphor of *bag* that social skills are indispensable, emphasizing that social skills exist in every moment of the life. For example:

T₄₀: "Social skills are similar to a bag. Because, we take our bags wherever we go, and similarly, we carry social skills with us throughout the life".

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, which examined the perceptions of the preschool teachers on the concept of "social skills" by means of metaphors, it was detected that 38 different metaphors were generated by the preschool teachers. It was seen that these metaphors explained social skills under the categories "in terms of their contributions", "in terms of their acquisition processes", "in terms of their characteristics", and "in terms of their indispensability". In this scope, the fact that the most diverse metaphors were under the category of "social skills in terms of their contributions" shows that the

preschool teachers mostly addressed social skills in the context of their contributions. Similarly, in the study by Noz (2018), it was seen that teachers described social skills mostly in terms of establishing interpersonal communication and fitting into society. This finding expresses that preschool teachers focus more on the effect of social skills, in other words, they maintain a result-oriented approach, rather than the acquisition ways and development processes of social skills.

It was detected that the metaphors generated by the preschool teachers under the category of “social skills in terms of their contributions” were ball, tree, dessert, mirror, cup full of coffee, play, doll, root, electrical machine, mixer, bicycle, clown, the season of spring, and food. It was concluded through the evaluations by the preschool teachers through the metaphors they generated that social skills substantially promotes the roles of the children such as preventing them from being withdrawn and increasing their sociality, ensuring them to play with each other, ensuring them to be qualified persons, and facilitating their learning and their lives. In the results of many studies in the literature, contributions of social skills similar to the findings of this study are emphasized. For example, there are findings indicating that when social skills are increased, acquisitions of several cognitive skills and values increase, too; as well as tendencies to problem behaviors and violence decrease (Ayyıldız, 2011; Kurtulan, 2015; Tanrıverdi and Erarslan, 2015; Vahedi, Farrokhi and Farajian, 2012). It was determined that there is a correlation between the play behaviors and social skills of preschool children, and children with higher social skills achieve better school maturity (Kılınç and Ceylan, 2017; Tunçeli and Akman, 2014). In line with the opinions of some of the preschool teachers in the study group, it was once more revealed that social skills are the skills that ensure acquisition of different skills and positive behaviors and that help eliminate some undesired situations. According to Harrison and Oakland (2010), social skills are the behaviors that are necessary for interaction and harmony and that are used to establish successful relationships. Gresham and Elliot (1990) explained social skills as the socially acceptable behaviors that ensure individuals to establish effective communications with others and that allow individuals to avoid unacceptable reactions at the same time, which summarizes certain contributions of social skills.

One of the teachers likened social skills to *root*, and it was emphasized by this teacher that social skills act as a source of raising qualified individuals in many terms, stating, “*The stronger a root is, the stronger and robust a tree is; if we give the child social skills, strong, robust, and good results can be achieved like a root wrapping all around.*” One of the teachers likened social skills to *clown*, and materialized the function of social skills in learning, stating, “*children love clowns so much and they can learn a lot thanks to clowns; they learn many other things thanks to social skills, too.*” At this point, McClelland and Morrison (2003) emphasized that social skills related to learning are important for early school success. McGuire and Priestley (1981) emphasized that social skills are the skills that allow establishing healthy communications with others, based on face-to-face communication. At this point, it is suggested that social skills are the skills that are shaped based on the ability of an individual. It is a must to operate social skills properly in order to contribute to the life of a child as expected.

In addition to these, some of the preschool teachers expressing their opinions under this category stressed that social skills ensure children to be joyful/happy/peaceful. In the examples at this point, the contributions of social skills regarding giving joy and peace were expressed, with a similar statement as “*they give happiness like a dessert gives when eaten or give peace like a cup full of coffee*”. In a study conducted on the perception of happiness, it was concluded that variables such as age, educational status, income status, and marital status could change the perception of happiness (Bülbül and Giray, 2011). The result of a study conducted on preschool children showed that the level of happiness changed based on the variables such as sex, age, the number of siblings, and temperaments. As an interesting finding, it was also revealed that there is a positive correlation between the level of happiness and the friendliness, patience, and rhythmicity dimensions of temperament of children, while there is a negative correlation between their level of happiness and the dimension of reactivity (Demiriz and Uluş, 2016). In the study in which the happiness perceptions of preschool children in Turkey and Afghanistan were compared (Ünivar, et.al, 2015), it was asserted that children in Turkey explained happiness mostly with play and fun, while children in Afghanistan explained happiness with safety-protection. Social skills contain the skills such as coping with

unfavorable situations or overcoming situations that cause sadness/anger. In this regard, it can be possible that an individual encounters less sad situations solving problems by means of the social skills s/he has, while it can also be possible that s/he gets less overwhelmed by unhappiness against potential incidents by means of the actions such as being aware of the feelings s/he has and referring to the situations that can relieve him/her. Argyle and Lu (1990) mentioned a mutual correlation between social skills and happiness. In this regard, it was also found that social skills are the skills that serve as a source for meeting certain needs acting as a restful agent, according to the opinions of the teachers. A statement by another teacher in the study, suggesting, “*Food feeds a child and social skills feed character*”, revealed the contribution of social skills to character development, according to the opinions of the preschool teachers. In today’s educational processes, the steps for developing social skills and character education are supported by educational legislations. The lesson named Character and Values Education was included in the scope of field knowledge lesson, and the lesson named Social Skills Education for Children was included in the scope of optional courses in the Council of Higher Education Undergraduate Program of Preschool Teaching (CoHE; Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 2018) that was recently updated, which can be thought as an expression of the fact that it is considered necessary to raise teachers at this point.

The metaphors generated by the preschool teachers under the category of “*social skills in terms of acquisition processes*” included the metaphors repeated as *play dough* and *dough*, while they included the metaphors such as *lego*, *cake*, *recorder*, *safety belt*, *drinking glass*, *Rubik’s cube*, *living model*, *puppet*, and *soil*, as well. Evaluating these metaphors in terms of their justifications, it was found the teachers emphasized that social skills are mainly configurable skills, in other words, they mentioned that social skills are shaped based on the content of the intervention applied to them. At this point, it is explained as “*we shape social skills in a child and if the social skills are negative, we can turn them into positive*”. This finding stresses the fact that negative social skills can be transformed into positive through proper guidance. In another statement, social skills are described through the metaphor of *dough*, and the following opinion was revealed: “*you shape dough and the shape you give to dough will come into view; each ingredient you include in dough will determine the taste and consistency to occur*”. Further, it was explained for social skills that they are like a *cake*, stating, “*They take the shape of the mold, and the ingredients we use make it what it is once it is baked, the taste will be different depending on the ingredients used*”. These explain that social skills are guided towards the desired direction by means of activities with convenient contents, and social skills start to be acquired depending on the content of the training provided. Reviewing the literature studies, it is seen that social skills can be supported by different processes. For example; it was detected that certain social skills of preschool children can be developed by practicing self-regulation skills training program (Liman, 2017), mother values education program (Neslitürk, 2013), creative drama program based values training (İbiş, 2017), mother assisted training program (Uysal and Kaya Balkan, 2015), father involvement training program (Özgündüz, 2015), life skills program (Kaya, 2016), resilience program (Ünsal, 2016), project-based training program (Kurt, 2007), play-based training program (Reynolds, Stagnitti and Kidd, 2011). It was determined that the teachers in this group were aware of the need for social skills training to shape social skills.

It was seen that a statement such as “wearing safety belt requires self-discipline, it sometimes indicates development, and sometimes requires an effort; in the end, it saves lives” was expressed under the second category by one of the teachers through the metaphor of safety belt. These emphasize that some certain factors are necessary for developing social skills, remarking the factors such as readiness, being eager to learn, and social environment, which are important for acquiring social skills. It was emphasized that when these conditions are met, social skills have some roles just as the lifesaving role of a safety belt. This highlights that social skill acquisition is a multi-dimensional process and shows that it is necessary in the life of an individual. Nevertheless, creative drama based social skills training has been crucially contributive to the children’s skills of overcoming with peer pressure, ability of self-expression, listening, and completing tasks (Kıvanç Öztuğ and Çiner, 2018). A positive change occurred particularly in the communications and prosocial behaviors dimensions of social skills by means of the story based social skills training, and particularly in the self-control and assertiveness dimensions of social skills by means of play based social skills training (Aksoy, 2014). It was remarked in another study on activity based social skills training program that peer relationships

of children developed positively (Özdemir Topaloğlu, 2013) and a progress was made in the social skills of children in the withdrawnness and accommodation dimensions by means of father involvement training program (Özgündüz, 2015). It was also found that the preschool music education delivered via the Orff approach is effective on the development of social skills of children such as interpersonal communication, accommodation to changes, controlling anger behaviors, establishing a purpose, and completing tasks (Öziskender and Güdek, 2013). The results of many similar researches emphasize that the social skills education provided is important for the development of targeted skills, in parallel with the opinions of the preschool teachers suggested in this study. According to Michelson, Sugai, Wood, and Kazdin (1983), these results are supported by the fact that social skills are basically verbal and nonverbal skills that are acquired by means of learning.

Furthermore, these are also supported by the metaphor of play dough, and it was further remarked through the statement of “social skills are just like play dough; the more we make efforts to teach these skills, the more successful child will be; for this, we can have the required material, provide a proper environment, and we can give whatever shape we would like to do; in order for a child to acquire social skills, we can give the desired shape to him/her at early ages, and ensure him/her to practice these skills in his/her daily life” that any desired social skills can be acquired by providing the required materials and establishing the proper environment. It was also remarked through the statements in the same metaphor that trying to give the desired shape to children at early ages would be effective. Within this scope, it was stated through the metaphor of Rubik’s cube that it is required to determine the proper method for social skill acquisition. Besides, a metaphor of tree that was generated emphasized that it is necessary to ensure the required care and proper environment to acquire social skills, ensuring to highlight that the children would acquire the social skills when sufficient conditions are met. The relevant studies conducted on social skills mention also about the effects of different variables on social skills. For example, significant differences were found in terms of child’s school type, number of siblings, parent educational status (Canbolat, 2017), the location where child lives, socio-economic level of family (Hansa Bilek, 2011), and age and sex of child (Kapıkıran, İvrendi, and Adak, 2006). Besides income level of family, preschool education duration of child, and attitudes of parents towards child, even daily time of using tablet can affect social skills (Dülger, 2016). Social skills can also differentiate based on attachment styles (Yılmaz, 2018) and empathy level (Findlay, Girardi, and Coplan, 2006). Hence, it is suggested that it is necessary to take into consideration the factors that can cause differences in social skill acquisition processes. Sargent (1998) argues that social skills are the observable behaviors of social competence, which is a factor remarking the behavioral dimension of social skills. These findings suggest that preschool teachers focus on different characteristics of social skills and have knowledge of social skills in general.

In addition to these, it was stressed through the metaphors of *living model* and *recorder* that social skills are learned by taking models. It was also seen that another preschool teacher highlighted through the metaphor of *soil* that social skills are acquired by doing/experiencing them, and accordingly, social skills are reinforced by means of practices. Within the framework of the social learning theory asserted by Bandura, it is emphasized that social skills are shaped as a result of promotion of modelled behaviors, and by structuring and repeating them, as well. Theoreticians such as Dewey, Erickson, and Vygotsky assert that the social interaction processes established with children are important for acquisition of attitudes and behaviors. Taylor and Machida (1994) detected that acquisition of preschool children with social skills is affected by whether parents give their children guidance and exhibit behaviors that would be models for children. Lavasani, Afzali, and Afzali (2011) also argued that cooperative learning method is quite effective in teaching social skills compared to the traditional methods. Remarkably, it was determined in the study by Fantuzzo et. al. (2005) that peer interaction levels and accommodation skills of preschool children would increase by means of peer mediated support environments. In a study conducted in Turkey, the correlation between social skills of children and adult interaction in their immediate environment was revealed (Özyürek, Begde, and Yavuz, 2014). According to McClelland and Morrison (2003), social skills become permanent in time when the child repeats them at school and other environments. The remarks suggested in this study are in parallel with the findings, which indicate that acquisition of social skills contains the processes of modelling and learning by doing/experiencing.

It is suggested by the metaphor of *Rubik's cube* generated by one of the teachers that it is necessary to find the convenient method to develop social skills, which emphasizes the necessity of choosing the convenient method in social skill education, as well. Seevers and Jones-Blank (2008) emphasized the importance of the techniques such as being a model, playing a role, receiving positive reinforcement, rehearsing, and coaching in social skills education. It was observed that preschool teachers used certain methods such as encouraging children to bring toys to classroom and share them with their friends; reminding them to respond to when someone greets them; encouraging them to solve the problems on their own; when they expressed their wishes by crying, guiding them to express their problem calmly by saying "I cannot understand you"; and practicing introductory plays (Özyürek and Ceylan, 2014/1). If social skills education is to be applied for special needs children, it is possible to apply methods such as practicing interactive learning processes (Leaf, Dotson, Oppeneheim, Sheldon, and Sherman, 2010). The results of the empirical study conducted on preschool children assert that social skills education to be provided by means of the methods such as cooperative learning (Avcioğlu, 2004), family involvement (Ekinçi Vural, 2006), story and play (Aksoy, 2014), family involved play activities (Boz, Uludağ, and Tokuç, 2018), and creative drama (Kıvanç Öztuğ and Çiner, 2018) is effective on teaching targeted social skills. Evaluating the findings of the study under the category of "*social skills in terms of acquisition processes*" in general, it can be said that the preschool teachers suggested that processes such as ensuring the readiness of children, making them ready for learning, organizing social factors, providing required materials, establishing a proper environment, starting education at early ages, making the conditions sufficient, having proper models, creating chances for learning by doing/experiencing, and determining the convenient method are necessary for the acquisition of social skills. These results clearly show that social skills are acquirable/learnable skills and acquisition of social skills consists of processes that should be addressed with the dimensions of method, technique, material, and environment, basing on the opinions of the preschool teachers.

The metaphors generated under the category of "*social skills in terms of the characteristics they have*" are *traffic*, *heartbeat*, *roly-poly*, *car*, *grinder*, *plastic ball*, *octopus*, *tree*, and *spider web*, ranking number three in the study. Evaluating these metaphors with their justifications, it was found that the majority of the preschool teachers had a similar opinion on the fact that social skills are a developmental process and take the children forward in continuity, generating metaphors such as *grinder*, *plastic ball*, *bicycle*, *tree*, and *roly-poly*. The preschool teachers emphasized that through the metaphors they generated that social skills are a process that takes the children forward, which at the same time expresses that preschool teachers think social skills are positively effective on learning and development. Within this scope, it was found that the metaphor of *roly-poly* means social skills are learned but forgettable skills, as well; however, social skills are learned in some way if learning continues. At this point, while one of the preschool teachers emphasized that, the said social skills are the skills that are obtained by adding something over them continuously like a *grinder*; another preschool teacher explained through the metaphor of *plastic ball* that social skills proceed towards the desired direction. Supporting these suggestions, another preschool teacher explained social skills as having the characteristics of being continuous and always proceeding like a *bicycle* all together. It was explained through the metaphor of *tree* that development of social skills is a process, stating, "*like a tree completing its development from a seed and then to a sprout, in that spreading seeds to a field, they advance gradually and slowly, take a shape of a tree*".

It was seen part of the preschool teachers highlighted that social skills are repetitive behaviors, emphasizing particularly on the fact that social skills will exist in the form they are learned. It is explained that social skills will always continue existing in life, through the metaphor of *heartbeat* generated here, and social skills will accompany the individual wherever s/he goes, through the metaphor of *car*. Further, through the metaphor of *traffic* generated under this category, it was found that social skills are described to contain certain rules and to provide freedom to proper behaviors. This explains that social skills are a series of skills that are suitable in terms of social norms. At a rate similar to this, one of the preschool teachers suggested through the metaphor of *octopus* that social skills contain many different behaviors. It is stated here as the following: "*social skills contain more than one skill such as social solidarity, welfare, sharing, kindness words, values education, like tentacles of an octopus*". This situation is clearly seen in classifications for social skills. Calderalla

and Merrell (1997) grouped social skills under the peer-related skills, self-control skills, academic skills, accommodation skills, and assertiveness skills. According to Akkök (2006), social skills are comprised of the skills of starting and sustaining relationship, the skills of maintaining a task in a group, the skills related to emotions, the skills of overcoming offensive behaviors, the skills of overcoming stress situations, and the skills of planning-problem solving. Further, Aksoy (2014) addressed social skills as the behaviors consisting of the dimensions of communication, self-control, prosocial behaviors, and assertiveness. The Preschool Education Program of the Ministry of National Education (2013) remarks the need for acquisition of behaviors such as showing positive and negative emotions in proper ways, protecting one's own and others rights, fulfilling the responsibilities, respecting the differences, explaining different cultural features, following the rules in different environments, and solving problems with others. In this line, it is highlighted that social skills correspond to a range of skills that are varied from basic to advanced levels, exhibited verbally or nonverbally, and develop in different courses. Summarizing the findings of the study related to the category of "*social skills in terms of the characteristics they have*", it is asserted by the preschool teachers that social skills are a developmental process, take children forward in continuity, contain certain rules, recognize proper behaviors, and contain many different social behaviors. This result shows that part of the preschool teachers have the knowledge on the characteristics of social skills. One thing is certain that, the fact that preschool teachers, who act as the executors of the activities involving social skills education at educational institutions, are aware of such kind of characteristics will be contributive to observing, evaluating, and developing the social skills of children.

It was found in the results of the study that the metaphors of *water*, *tree*, *needs of tree*, *basic needs*, *paper and pencil*, *bag*, and *spider web* were generated under the category of "*social skills in terms of their indispensability*". It was found that the metaphors of *water* and *tree* were the frequently generated ones under this category; highlighting that social skills are an important part of the life like water and oxygen. It was also found at this phase that social skills were likened to the materials such as *pencil-paper*, which are mandatory for education. Here, it was emphasized that social skills are undeniably necessary for the life through the statement, "*trees are indispensable for people since they are the source of oxygen; social skills are also indispensable for people*" and "*water is indispensable for our lives; it is impossible to think a life without water; social skills are an important part of our lives, too*". In addition to these, stating that, "*a spider shapes its life with the web it spins; it has to pass through the webs in order to get the future gains*", it was asserted that, "*people need to learn social skills in order to keep pace with the social environments and situations and to complete their own skills*". The relevant literature has findings showing that inadequacies in social skills will push an individual into loneliness and cause an individual to withdraw from making friends, and individuals who do not have any friends will pose a risk in terms of social accommodation (Jin and Park, 2012; Sebanc, Kearns, Hernandez, and Galvin, 2007). It is also inevitable that these processes will affect the academic success of the individuals (Elliott, Malecki, and Demaray, 2001).

In addition, it was highlighted through the metaphors of *needs of tree*, *basic needs*, and *tree* that social skills are necessary for existing in the society, are an important factor that makes a human a human, and must be learned by a child to have a place in the society. Here, it was stated through the metaphor of *basic needs* that, "*as a child needs to food, shelter, protection, etc., so s/he also needs social skills to exist in society, to be an individual aware of his/her responsibilities, and to learn sharing*" or through the metaphor of *tree* that, "*an individual deprived of social skills is like a tree with dried leaves and without fruits; as what makes a tree beautiful is its leaves and fruits, social skills are one of the important factors that makes a human a human*". In addition to these, it was emphasized that social skills take part in all moments of life, which means they are indispensable, through the metaphor of *bag*, stating that, "*we take our bags wherever we go, and similarly, we carry social skills with us throughout the life*".

Summarizing the findings obtained from the study, it can be said that the preschool teachers made statements about social skills generating metaphors on the characteristics, contributions, development, and importance of social skills. At this point, the fact that a group of preschool teachers encountered in the process of creating the study group did not have any idea on or were not sure about social skills is a risky situation for the social skills of preschool children. Besides these, it was detected

that the preschool teachers in the study group had positive perceptions on the concept of social skills, and it was found over their evaluations in different aspects that they had opinions on the subject of social skills. It was found that preschool teachers should have the knowledge of the content, importance, characteristics, and development of social skills; hence, the primary step is to give them information on social skills in all terms from theory to practice, starting from the undergraduate education process in order to ensure this. It is recommended that lessons such as Social Skills Education for Children should be included in the classes conducted at the Department of Preschool Teaching under the body of Faculties of Education at the Universities. Preschool teachers working in the field should be given the opportunity to participate in activities such as seminars, conferences, and workshops on the methods and techniques (drama, play, narration, Orff, project approach, cooperative learning, etc.) for social skills in preschool period in different provinces. It can be ensured to increase the awareness on social skills by means of the medium such as brochures, short films, and information letters. In the future studies, the effect of education processes with social skill contents on the perceptions of preschool teachers on social skills can be revealed by means of interregional comparisons. Perceptions of preschool teachers on social skills and the processes they follow for social skills in preschool education practices can be evaluated in another study. It should be remembered that it is only possible for social skills to make maximum contribution for preschool children if all the persons and institutions responsible for the development and education of children make contributions by establishing convenient environments in this sense.

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