

## Metaphors of Academics in Turkey for Distance Education

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### Abstract

Metaphors are important ways to show how people perceive the world and life around them. By creating metaphors, people show how they position themselves life, and that of other people, their environment, and situations in their minds and what the phenomenon, for which they create a metaphor, means to them in today's world. This has been affected by COVID-19, as conducting education on a distance basis has revealed the need to examine the perceptions of people about distance education. The perceptions of academicians about distance education are also highly important, as they directly affect the learning success and performance of students. In this study, metaphors were addressed in order to determine the perceptions of academicians in Turkey about distance education. In this study, metaphors were collected from 520 academicians working at different universities. The metaphors created by the academicians about distance education were subjected to content analysis and the data were analyzed. As a result of the study, it was determined that the academicians created positive, negative, and neutral metaphors about distance education; however, they mostly used negative metaphors.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, Distance Education, Academicians, COVID-19.

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## INTRODUCTION

A metaphor, which is realized by conveying the meaning of one thing to another (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008, p. 194), can be defined as the explanation of a conceptual expression with another conceptual expression (Kövecses, 2002). Metaphors, which are a means of reflecting thoughts, also have the ability to shape thoughts and direct human behavior (Strenski, 1989). According to Saban (2004), metaphors are the most powerful mental tools that structure, direct, and control ideas. Shuell (1990) also emphasized the effectiveness and importance of metaphors in human life by stating that a drawing is worth a thousand words, while a metaphor is worth a thousand drawings. Metaphors are important because they mobilize the creative powers that people have, driving them to think and dream. Therefore, they help people to attribute meaning to life. According to Lowery (2013), there are metaphors in all languages and people use these metaphors to reveal their thoughts.

Metaphors, which are used as a tool to know and introduce the world (Zhang, 2009), can be used as effective tools to reveal the perceptions of academicians about distance education and direct the educational activities to be performed, because the metaphors that people use and the way they use them show how they perceive their environment (Lowery, 2013). Also, metaphors are important in influencing people's perceptions (Thibodeau, 2016). Being at the center of both communication and thinking (Potts & Semino, 2019), and reflecting values and beliefs, metaphors affect the behaviors of educators and the practices that they use in teaching (McEwan, 2007). During the COVID-19 pandemic process, it would not be wrong to say that the perceptions of academicians, one of the keystones of education, about distance education will directly affect the education process, due to the transition to distance education all over the world.

### Distance Education

The educational needs of people have increased with the rapid development of technology, and traditional educational activities in institutions have become unsatisfactory for the needs and expectations of individuals (Khoshemehr, 2013). In line with these developments, it has been attempted to be created different alternatives to support traditional education, and distant education activities have become a part of people's lives. Distance education, which is conducted in a planned learning-teaching environment, where students and lecturers are located at different places and times, is the method in which content is introduced to students in different ways, such as in print, electronic, or online (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Today, the basis of distance education activities using mostly internet technology dates back to letter education (Holmberg, 1995). This process, which started with letters, then continued with radio, television, computer, and multimedia. These activities have been continued by using internet and mobile technology since the 2000s (Simonson et al., 2012). Furthermore, with the aid of internet and mobile technologies, virtual reality, augmented reality, digital books, and digital applications are also used in distance education today.

Today, in addition to classical education activities, learning environments have been transformed into web-based learning environments and the importance of providing learning activities in an online manner have been focused on due to its facilities (Cappel & Hayen, 2004). People benefit greatly from distance education services, especially because they do not limit space and time, and they provide easy access to different types of information through the use of technology, offer the opportunity to learn according to an individual's own pace, and use different methods and techniques to structure the information in mind (Woodard, 2003), and everyone can benefit from educational activities under equal conditions.

Distance education activities, which have been left to the preference of the individual since the beginning, have ceased to be a preference and have become a necessity with the COVID-19 virus that emerged in 2019 and has affected the whole world. Many countries have started to take a series of measures to minimize the likelihood of people in society contracting the virus. One of these measures was to suspend or cease face-to-face education activities. According to the data of the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020), education activities were suspended until 24 April 2020 in 166 countries. However, whether it was postponed or stopped, alternative methods have begun to be used due to education being one of the most basic needs. Therefore, in many countries, it was decided to continue education activities through distance education (Zhang et al., 2020).

Distance education was also adopted in Turkey as a result of these developments and the efforts to decrease the speed at which the virus spreads around the world. Distance education using internet technologies began in all educational institutions at the preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school, and university levels. Despite the convenience that it provides, the unpreparedness of the institutions, the teaching staff, and the students caused some problems with the distance education activities in the beginning, but in the following processes, the problems were eliminated and the activities continued.

### **Metaphor and Distance Education**

The perceptions and opinions of students and lecturers, who are among the keystones of educational activities, about education systems have an important place in teaching studies. Specifically, the perceptions of academicians about distance education significantly affect student learning outcomes and success (Offir et al., 2003; Zhang & Fulford, 1994). It would not be wrong to say that, based on these data, both the continuity of educational activities and ensuring an effective learning process for students depend on the perceptions of academicians about distance education. This is because the determination of the needs of the students and the direction of the educational activities in line with these needs are provided by the academicians. In this context, providing communication and feedback, which is one of the basic needs of students in distance education, is one of the main duties of academicians (Richardson et al., 2015). According to Moore and Kearsley (2011), the transactional distance perception, which causes possible misunderstandings between academicians and students in different places by creating a psychological and communicative gap, has an important place in communication. It is again the duty of academicians to overcome this transactional distance that occurs in distance education by using different methods and techniques (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

The content to be presented, together with the communication and interaction dimensions in distance education activities, and the way to present this content, will directly affect the quality of education provided. Appropriate content creation and presentation by academicians to students through different methods and techniques will also play an important role in increasing success. However, achieving all of these points and increasing the efficiency of distance education depends on the perceptions of the academicians about distance education. Academicians who have a positive perception about distance education will make an effort to increase the quality of education. However, if academicians have negative perceptions about distance education, they will avoid making an effort (Offir, Barth, Lev & Shteinbok, 2003; Zhang & Fulford, 1994). For these reasons, the perceptions of academicians about distance education can be revealed through their metaphors. In this way, the perceptions of academicians about distance education can be determined, and it can be ensured that academicians gain the knowledge, skills, and teaching tools that are necessary to better meet the needs of students (O'Neil, 2006).

In the literature, it is possible to encounter studies conducted in order to collect the opinions of academicians about distance education. Alpaslan (2020) examined the opinions of academicians on the use of distance education to educate gifted students; Aras and Karakaya (2020) examined the opinions of academicians working in sports education institutions about distance education; Cabı (2018) examined the opinions of academicians about distance education and computer literacy; Gürer et al. (2016) examined the opinions of academicians teaching in online courses; Kaya et al. (2017) examined the opinions of academicians about the use of distance education in postgraduate education; Kesim and Altınpulluk (2014) examined the opinions of academicians on online courses; Özgöl et al. (2017) examined the opinions of academicians and students on online education. Furthermore, there are also

studies in the literature where metaphors for online education were examined. Ligorio et al. (2016) examined the metaphors used by teacher candidates for distance education; Quinn et al. (2018) examined metaphors for online teacher training; Reinhardt (2020) examined the metaphors for online language teaching; Kaleli Yılmaz and Güven (2015) tried to determine the metaphors of teacher candidates for online education. Although there are studies that have examined both the opinions of academicians about distance education and the metaphors used by students about distance education, there have been no studies examining the metaphors used by academicians for distance education. In this respect, it was thought that the current study would contribute to the literature.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of academicians working at universities in Turkey about distance education through their metaphors. In order to realize this general purpose, the answers to following questions were sought.

- What are the positive metaphors of academicians about distance education?
- What are the negative metaphors of academicians about distance education?
- What are neutral metaphors of academicians about distance education?

### **METHOD**

In this study metaphor analysis, which is one of the qualitative research method, was employed. Metaphors are the means of understanding nature and the environment, giving meaning to life and experience (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). "In the social sciences, metaphor analysis is a semantictext analysis technique con-cerned with latent meaning rather than a thematictechnique concerned with the manifest meaning of text." (Ignatow & Mihalcea, 2017, p. 99). According to Morgan (1986), metaphors can be used in research in two ways: describing a situation and improving a process. Qualitative data collection through metaphor is mostly for illustrative purposes. When metaphors are used to illustrate, a situation or phenomenon is described as it is. By asking one or more questions through metaphors, very rich information is obtained on the subject under investigation. The most important point to be considered in this method is to ask the "because" question, which will explain why they liken the given concept to another concept while asking them to be likened to another concept (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2016). It is very important to get the answer to this question because individuals give different meanings to different concepts. Thus, metaphors will be used as tools for the creation of reality. Because the metaphors reflect the subconscious of the society or the individual. In this study, metaphors were used to describe and the metaphors of academicians about online education were tried to be determined. The academicians were asked what online education looked like, and the reason for this was asked. Thus, it was tried to determine the perceptions of academicians towards online education.

### **Participants**

Participants of the study consisted of academicians teaching at universities in Turkey during the 2019–2020 academic year. Web sites of universities were scanned and e-mail addresses of academicians were collected. Within the scope of this research, e-mails were sent to 9769 academicians to collect their metaphors, and of those, 680 academicians replied to the e-mails. The data of 120 academicians were eliminated, as they were had not replied with metaphors and the responses of 520 academicians were evaluated. Therefore, 520 academicians, who worked at 59 different universities and 21 different faculties in Turkey, constituted the participants of the study. Of these participants, 228 were female and 292 were male. Participants consisted of with the titles of Prof. Dr. (73), Assoc. Prof. Dr. (122), Assistant Professor Dr. (164), lecturer (83) and research assistant (78).

## Data Collection

In order to reveal the metaphors of the participants about distance education, each was asked to complete the sentence "Distance education is like... because...". The question was asked in Turkish and the answers were received in Turkish. For this purpose, a form was created via Google Forms and the link for the page was sent to the academicians by e-mail. Academicians were asked to concentrate on a single metaphor and include its justification. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, credibility instead of internal validity in quantitative studies, transferability instead of external validity, consistency instead of internal reliability, and confirmability criteria instead of external reliability were used. The steps taken to ensure validity and reliability are explained in the data analysis section.

## Data Analysis

In the study, content analysis was used. In content analysis, the voluminous qualitative material is taken, and data reduction and sense-making effort is found, which is intended for determining the core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002). The metaphors created by academicians were analyzed using the four stages determined by Saban (2008, pp. 464-467). These stages were as follows: 1) coding and sorting, 2) sample metaphor image compilation, 3) category development, and 4) validity and reliability.

In the coding and sorting stage, first, preliminary draft of metaphores by academicians was created. For this purpose, whether the academicians created metaphors and expressed them clearly was examined. Answers that did not include metaphors were removed. Thus, 160 answers were eliminated and the next step was transitioned.

After removing the weakly structured metaphor images of the academicians, a total of 75 metaphors were found. Then, the sample metaphor image compilation stage was begun. In this stage, the metaphors were sorted alphabetically once more. After that, sample metaphors representing each metaphor were selected. Thus, both the reference source for collecting the metaphors under certain categories, and the validity of the data analysis process and interpretations were ensured.

Next, the category development stage was begun and in this stage, how the academicians metaphorized the phenomenon of online education was examined. For this purpose, 75 metaphors were examined in terms of their subject and source, and relationship between the subject and the source of the metaphor (Saban, 2008). As a result of this examination, the metaphors of the academicians were classified under three themes: positive metaphors, negative metaphors, and neutral metaphors. Positive metaphors were divided into 3 categories, negative metaphors into 6 categories, and neutral metaphors into 2 categories. The determined themes and categories were discussed with two expert academicians (Turkish education specialist) and the final versions were presented.

Then the validity and reliability phase were passed. In the study, credibility instead of internal validity in quantitative studies, transferability instead of external validity, consistency instead of internal reliability, and confirmability criteria instead of external reliability were used.

*Credibility:* Credibility, which is called internal validity in quantitative research; is defined as a reflection of the reality of the data obtained by data collection tools (Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The data collection and analysis process are explained in detail to provide the credibility criterion in the research.

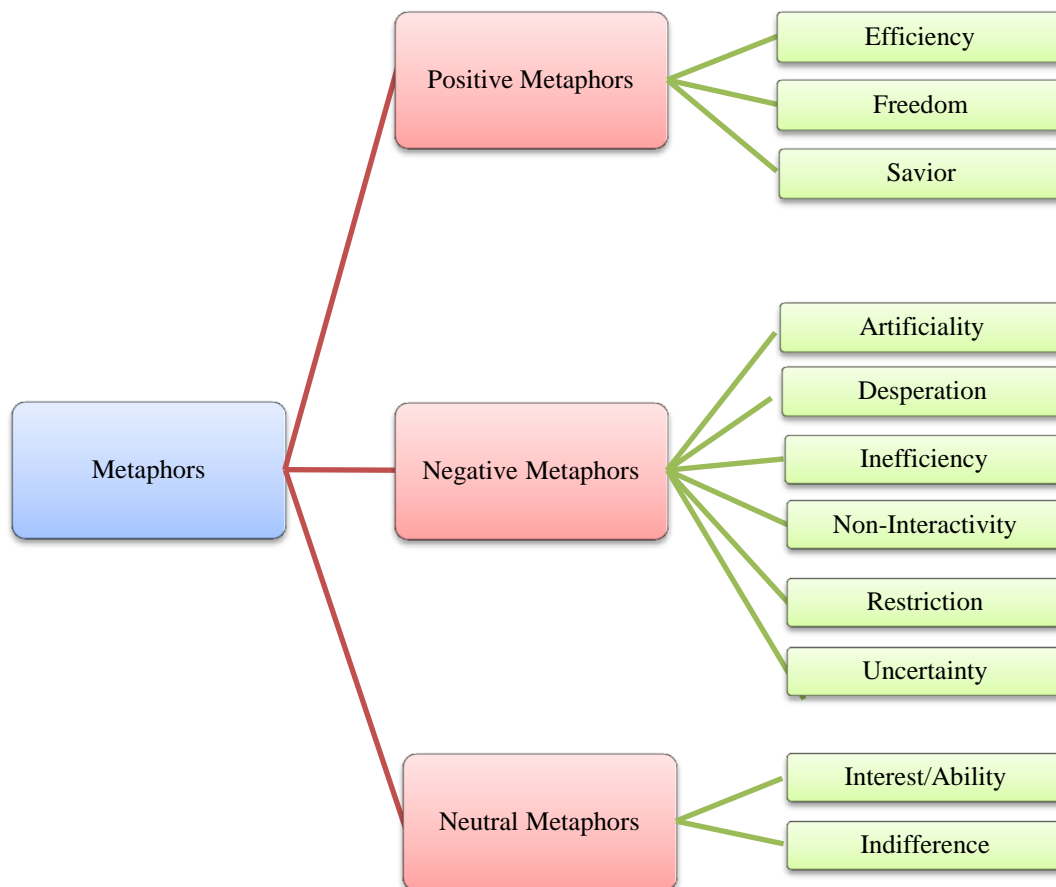
*Transferability:* For the transferability issue, the sample selection and the characteristics of the participants should be clearly stated (Sharts-Hopko, 2002). In the study, sample selection and characteristics of the participants were given and this criterion was met.

*Consistency:* It can be defined as accepting the events and facts as variable and reflecting this to the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 305). An expert (Turkish education specialist) was consulted to ensure consistency. The expert was given a list of metaphors and categories, and asked to match the metaphors with the categories. The matches made were then compared with the matches of the researcher and consistency was calculated using the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 64). The study was assumed to be reliable, as an agreement with 94% was reached as a result of the analysis. The metaphors that could not be agreed on were discussed and the necessary changes were made as a result.

*Verifiability:* The data obtained during the research process must be verifiable by the researcher and presented in a meaningful framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 306). In this context, opinions were taken from experts working in the field of Turkish education and educational sciences during the research process.

## FINDINGS

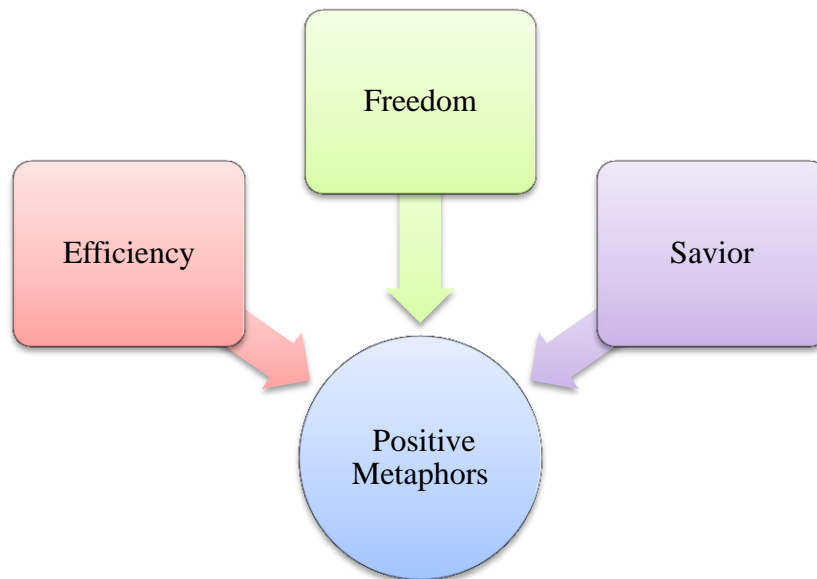
In this section, metaphors created by the academics were divided into themes and categories, and the themes, categories, and metaphors were given. Furthermore, samples representing the created metaphors were also presented.



**Figure 1. Themes and Categories of the Produced Metaphors**

### **Positive Metaphors of Academicians about Distance Education**

Findings for the first research question.



**Figure 2. Positive Metaphors Created by the Academicians**

### **Metaphors for the Efficiency Category**

The other part of the positive metaphors that the academicians created for distance education was gathered under the theme of "Efficiency". It was determined that the academicians created "Turkish coffee/coffee (9), opportunity (8), book (6), private lesson (2), theater (2), tree (1), and sheep (1)" metaphors in this theme. According to the academicians, distance education was defined as an opportunity due to its ability to use technology, and more modern methods and techniques. It was defined as a book due to providing the opportunity to watch, listen, and study many times; defined as coffee due to opening the mind; and defined as tree and sheep due to offering us products that we can benefit from. The metaphors of some of the academicians were as follows:

*I think distance education is like an opportunity, because it allows us to do many activities that we cannot do in the classroom and be more efficient using different materials. (P25)*

*Distance education is like a book. We can get all the information we want and read (listen to) it whenever we want to. (P33)*

*Distance education is like Turkish coffee, because it is efficient. It keeps us comfortable and fit. (P110)*

*Distance education is like a private lesson, because it gives everyone the opportunity to listen to that lesson wherever they want. (P252)*

*Distance education is like a tree, because it has different features on each of its branches. (P403)*

*Distance education is like a sheep, because we can benefit from its meat, milk, and wool. Just as we benefit from everything from the sheep, we can also take advantage of the opportunities offered by online education. (P181)*

### **Metaphors for the Freedom Category**

Some of the metaphors created by the academicians were also associated with the theme of "Freedom". Academicians created "space travel (10), freedom (8) and bird (6)" metaphors in this theme. According to the academicians, distance education gives people the chance to act freely. Educational activities can be performed in a world without limits using these non-limitations. Some of the metaphors created in this category were as follows:

*I think distance education is like traveling through space, because we can act independently of time and space. We are tactually distant from everyone, but also very close audibly and visually. (P289)*

*Distance education is like freedom, because education can be conducted at home in our most comfortable clothes, using our own equipment, without waiting for anything from anyone. (P256)*

*I think distance education is like a bird. It has wider boundaries, both on earth and in the sky. (P385)*

### **Metaphors for the Savior Category**

When the positive metaphors of the academicians about distance education were examined, it was seen that some metaphors were placed in the "Savior" theme. According to the academicians, distance education has arrived as a savior in today's world, especially because the world is fighting against the COVID-19 virus, and it has ensured that education is not interrupted. In this theme, it was determined that the academicians created "spare wheel (19), first aid kit (7), hero (4), sun (3), bridge (2), light (1), medicine (1) and preserves (1)" metaphors for distance education. It was thought that being suitable for use at difficult times and coming to the rescue of people was effective in the production of these metaphors. Some of the opinions about the metaphors were as follows:

*Distance education is like a spare wheel, because the spare wheel essentially works the same as the original tire. But it only helps us reach the tire shop. It stays with us in difficult times. (P453)*

*Distance education is like a first aid kit, because, although not always used, it is ready to help when needed. (P160)*

*Distance education is like a hero, because it extends its hand and saves us at our most difficult times. (P504)*

*Distance education is like the sun. It rises and illuminates the darkness. (P244)*

*Distance education is like a bridge, because it allows us to pass through difficulties. (P491)*

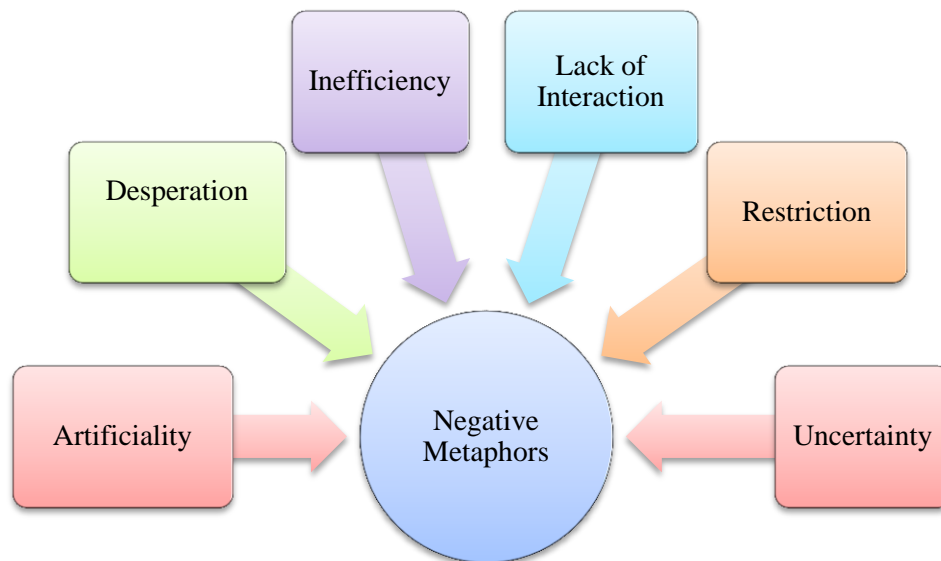
*Distance education is like medicine, because we do not usually take it, but when we get sick, we take our medicine and recover. (P376)*

When the metaphors created by the academicians for distance education were examined, it was found that some of these metaphors were negative. It was seen that both the number of themes created and the number of negative metaphors created by the academicians were more than those of the positive metaphors.



## Negative Metaphors of Academicians About Distance Education

Findings for the second research question.



**Figure 3. Negative Metaphors Created by the Academicians**

### Metaphors for the Artificiality/Apathy Category

Some of the academicians created metaphors by addressing the "Artificial/Apathy" aspect of distance education, based on the thoughts that both students and teachers did not behave naturally in distance education, that distance education tried to resemble face-to-face education, but could not achieve this, because it is not natural. The metaphors created by these academicians were as follows: "artificial flower (28), virtual world (9), Genetically modified food (8), ice (5), game (4), mask (3), virtual food (3), mechanic (3), stone (2), and mirror (2)." Some of the opinions were as follows:

*Distance education is like an artificial flower. Although the artificial flower visually resembles the real flower, it has no vitality, spirit, or scent. (P389)*

*Distance education is like a virtual world, because the participants are not physically present. (P76)*

*Distance education is like genetically modified food, because even though it looks smooth and more attractive from the outside, the efficiency and benefit obtained are close to zero. (P34)*

*Distance education is like ice, because it is cold and you cannot feel the warmth of the student. (P456)*

*Distance education is like a game. It is exciting, but it is virtual reality in the end. (P318)*

*Distance education is like a mask, because it hides the truth.*

*Distance education is like a virtual meal. Its appearance is quite beautiful, but it is not possible to taste and eat the food. (P272)*

*Distance education is like a stone, because it is cold and soulless. (P165)*

*Distance education is like a mirror, because it shows everything reflected in the glass, but there is no vitality. (P512)*

### **Metaphors Related to the Desperation Category**

Some of the academicians did in accordance with the theme of "Despair". According to the academicians who created these metaphors, distance education limits people and does not allow them to do something, even though they want it. The metaphors created in this theme can be given as follows: "prison (9), impossibility (6), swimming in a dry lake/pool (4), bird with a broken wing (2), nightmare (1), coach (1), and illness (1)." Some of these metaphors were as follows:

*Distance education is like a prison, because in distance education, you have to be constantly in a network coverage area determined by someone. Our limits are clear. (P125)*

*Distance education is like swimming in a dry lake, because there is no water but we try to swim. All of our efforts are futile. (P307)*

*Distance education is like impossibility, because no matter how good we try to conduct lessons, it is impossible to achieve it. (P265)*

*The distance education is like a bird with a broken wing, because we want to fly, but we cannot. It is difficult to perceive whether the student understands the subject without face-to-face interaction. (P449)*

*Distance education is like a nightmare, because we have complex feelings like expressing, being understood, and having no idea whether we are understood or not. (487)*

*Distance education is like a coach, because outside intervention is insufficient. We want to be there, tear our hair out, and intervene when the ball or a player approach. (P171)*

*Distance education is like a disease, because we want to stand up and do business, but it does not allow us. (P10)*

### **Metaphors for the Inefficiency/Dissatisfaction Category**

Some of the academicians also created negative metaphors on the grounds that distance education could not provide sufficient satisfaction, could not fulfill its duties, its procedures are inefficient and the required efficiency could not be obtained. It was observed that while these academicians created their metaphors, they did not think that distance education was a completely unnecessary tool, but rather an insufficient one. The metaphors created can be given as follows: "low-salt/cold meal (24), ready-made food (16), simulation (14) watching aquarium (12), museum trip (11), looking at a landscape painting (11), unfinished building (6), flat tire (6), salt water (4), barren soil (4), raw fruit (3), moonlight (3), electronic book (2), saving the day (2), unplanned meeting (2), wet towel (2), cheese sandwich (2), and a pen out of ink (1)." Some of the metaphors were as follows:

*Distance education is like eating a low-salt meal. It can feed us, but it has no flavor. (P519)*

*Distance education is like ready-made food, because it is practical and it satisfies our hunger, but is not healthy. (P350)*

*Distance education is like a simulation, because it is not possible to fully reflect the course content since there is no lesson in real environment. (P446)*

*Distance education is like watching an aquarium. It looks beautiful at first, but then it is bound to be boring. (P163)*

*Distance education is like a museum trip, because there is a great spatial distance between the educator and the audience while the educator shares the educational material prepared before, and this is similar to the temporal distance between the author of the work exhibited in the museum and its audience. (P223)*

*Distance education is like looking at a landscape painting, because we are not in the landscape, but the effect created by the painter can affect us. (P41)*

### **Metaphors for the Lack of Interaction Category**

Some of the academicians who created metaphors highlighted the “Lack of Interaction” aspect of distance education, with the thoughts that distance education was one-sided, that healthy communication could not be ensured with students, that students remained passive during the course, and that the student-academician relationship could not be established in the course environment. The metaphors combined under the non-interactivity theme can be listed as “watching movies/videos (47), talking to oneself (33), online chat (19), radio (2), being a storyteller (maddah) (2), and letter (2).” The metaphors created by some of the academicians were as follows:

*Distance education is like talking to yourself, because it is not possible to make eye contact with the student and feel the other person. (P494)*

*I think distance education is like watching movies, because it is a process where the interaction is weak or not available, its boundaries are defined, and mostly proceed unilaterally. (P322)*

*Distance education is like online chat, because it is like trying to satisfy yourself through the screen without touching any skin. (P133)*

*Distance education is like a radio, because while we prepare for the lesson and we are trying to express ourselves in the best way, we do not know if the other person is listening to us or scrolling on Facebook on their mobile phone. (P38)*

### **Metaphors for the Restriction Category**

Some of the academicians developed their metaphors based on the idea that distance education created obstacles and these obstacles interfered with educational activities. The metaphors in this theme can be given as follows: “wall/curtain (17), fantasy (9), distant lover (7), loneliness (2), balloon (1), customs gate (1), and nutshell (1).” Some of the metaphors created were as follows:

*Distance education is like a curtain, because in online education, we cannot see things like gestures and facial expressions, and the reactions of the learners. The screen hides this like a curtain. (P444)*

*Distance education is like a dream. It is good to dream, but realizing our dreams is not easy. Distance education can also provide learning, but its application is a bit difficult. (P489)*

*Distance education is like a distant lover. Even if we love each other, distance prevents us from living that love. We cannot really understand if we even love each other. Distant relationships wear us out. (P154)*

*Distance education is like loneliness, because there are tasks that we have to do, but that feeling prevents us from doing them. (P153)*

### **Metaphors for the Uncertainty Category**

According to some of the academicians, educational activities performed with distance education cause uncertainty. It is not possible to predict exactly how much the students get, how much they can learn, or whether the education has reached its purpose. Therefore, these academicians created “walking in the dark (7), online shopping (6), puzzles (3), and drum sound (2)” metaphors. Some of the metaphors created were as follows:

*Distance education is like walking in the dark, because you don't know who, what, or how you will encounter something. (P292)*

*Distance education is like online shopping, because it is virtual. You buy without knowing what you will get. (P56)*

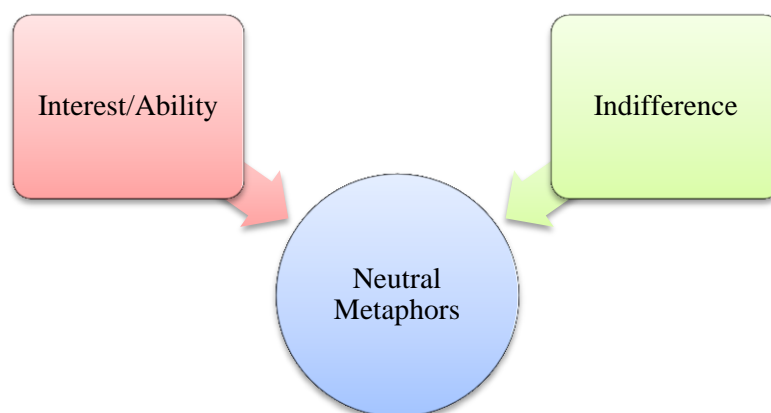
*Distance education is like the sound of a drum, because it sounds nice from a distance, but we cannot predict what kind of educational process it will be. (P1)*

*Distance education is like a puzzle. We know the answers to some questions and nobody knows the answers to the others. (P80)*

It was determined that the academicians had neutral metaphors in addition to positive and negative metaphors for distance education. It was seen that the academicians created neutral metaphors based on the idea that gaining efficiency in online education or face-to-face education was related to the individuals.

### **Neutral Metaphors**

Findings for the third research question.



**Figure 4. Neutral Metaphors Created by the Academicians**

According to some of the academicians who created metaphors for distance education, the success of distance education depends on the interests, efforts, and abilities of both the students and

the academicians. Success will be achieved if the necessary attention is paid and the effort is made. However, if this interest and effort is insufficient, no efficiency can be obtained. Some academicians further thought that distance education is no different from face-to-face education. In this respect, the metaphors of the academicians who had a neutral approach to distance education were gathered in the interest/ability and indifference categories. “Field/orchard (14), child (3), and open education (1)” metaphors were included in the interest/ability category and the “face-to-face education (33)” metaphor was included in the indifference category. Some of the metaphors created were as follows:

*Distance education is like a field, because we reap what we sow. Furthermore, if we take care of it, its efficiency will increase. (P394)*

*Distance education is like a child, because it has both new and lacking aspects. However, when raised well, it can be more effective than face-to-face training. (P201)*

*Distance education is like open education, because everything depends on the effort and ability of the student. (P483)*

*Distance education is like face-to-face education, because it offers all of the opportunities of face-to-face education (seeing each other, creating dialogue, etc.). (P17)*

## **DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 virus, which broke out in 2019 and devastated the whole world, affected many sectors, including the education sector. Many countries have begun to implement distance education activities based on the fact that educational activities should not be discontinued (Zhang et al., 2020). These implementations, conducted in all educational institutions, have also been adopted by universities. However, the distance education process, in which all segments of society were caught unprepared, brought some problems with it. Academicians, students, and institutions experienced adaptation problems at first, but these problems were significantly reduced in the following periods.

The studies conducted have shown that the perceptions of the academicians about distance education are important for the learning outcomes and success (Offir et al, 2003; Zhang & Fulford, 1994). Therefore, determining the perceptions of academicians about distance education has an important place in guiding the education process. With this study, which revealed the metaphors, it was aimed to determine the perceptions of academicians about distance education.

In line with this study, 520 answers were received from academicians and 75 metaphors were found by combining these answers. The metaphors found were divided into three themes, as positive, negative, and neutral metaphors. Positive metaphors were divided into three categories, negative metaphors into 6 categories, and neutral metaphors into 2 categories.

When the positive metaphors of the academicians about distance education were examined, it was seen that these metaphors were included in the categories of savior, freedom, and efficiency. It was determined that these metaphors were created due to the fact that distance education comes to the aid of people at difficult times, and provides academicians with a wide field of study and the opportunity to use technology. The results of some of the studies in the literature that have examined the opinions of academicians about distance education have shown that academicians had a positive attitude towards distance education. In the study conducted by Alpaslan (2020), the opinions of academicians on the use of distance education in the education of gifted students were collected, and it was revealed that the academicians generally had a positive perception about distance education. In the study conducted by Cabı (2018), the opinions of the academicians about a computer course being taught through distance education were collected, and it was found that the academicians had positive views about distance education. Kesim and Altınpulluk (2014) also observed, in their study, that

academicians regarded distance education positively due to reasons such as being independent of space and time, allowing interaction, and not having a quota limit. Similarly, Özgöl et al. (2017) found, in their study, that academicians had positive thoughts about distance education due to reasons such as providing ease of access and reducing the course load.

Negative metaphors created by academicians were grouped under the categories of non-interaction, uncertainty, despair, dissatisfaction/inefficiency, artificiality/apathy, and limitation. Here, it was understood that the academicians created these metaphors due to reasons such as the fact that distance education did not provide an effective communication environment, its end, and the resulting products were unclear, it left academicians in despair because it limited their areas of freedom, their learning outcomes were not sufficient, there was no natural learning environment, and their limits were clear. The results of some studies in the literature have also shown that academicians had a negative perception about distance education. In a study conducted by Aras and Karakaya (2020), some academicians stated that distance education would create problems and would not be beneficial, and that they did not want to teach their lessons through distance education. Gürer et al. (2016) and Kaya et al. (2017) also found, in their study, that academicians had negative opinions about distance education. Furthermore, reasons such as lowering success, not allowing communication, and increasing workload were other reasons why academicians had a negative attitude towards distance education (Özgöl et al., 2017). According to studies conducted, there is a negative relation between the experience of academicians on providing distance education and their perception about distance education (Alshangeeti et al., 2009; Lloyd et al., 2012; Manderbach et al., 2012). The fact that academicians started to teach through distance education without preparation and by necessity due to COVID-19, and they had no previous distance education experience, may explain their negative perception.

Some of the neutral metaphors revealed that academicians thought that distance education was no different than face-to-face education. Some academicians were found to create metaphors with the idea that success and failure were related to the studies performed and the effort spent. According to these academicians, if distance education is used well, it yields successful results. However, if it is not used well, it causes failure. According to Hotaman (2020), the success of distance education depends on the determination of learning deficiencies and their follow-up.

In this study, in which the metaphors of academicians with regards to distance education were collected, it was revealed that some of the academicians created positive metaphors and had positive perceptions about distance education, while others created negative metaphors and had negative perceptions about distance education. Furthermore, it was determined that some of the academicians did not distinguish between distance or face-to-face education, and they thought that success could only be achieved with effort.

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