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Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors: A study on conceptual socialization

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Abstract

This study investigated Turkish EFL learners' conceptual socialization in terms of their interpretation of English metaphors in three categories; a) conceptually and linguistically similar, b) conceptually similar, linguistically different, and c) conceptually and linguistically different metaphors. Data were collected through sentence level and situation-based tests. Learners' responses were analyzed by comparing them to the native English speakers' (NESs). Findings indicated that Turkish EFL learners could only benefit from the situational information when the metaphors were either conceptually or linguistically similar, and their performance differed very much from NESs in terms of correct interpretation of the metaphors. These results underline EFL learners' lack of exposure to target culture and interaction with native speakers and thus the importance of non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) in EFL contexts as the most valuable source of the target language conceptual system.

Keywords: Conceptual socialization; Metaphors; L2 metaphors; Metaphor interpretation

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1 Introduction

Communicating in another language requires both pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics knowledge in the target language (TL) as knowing the forms of a language does not guarantee successful communication. Metaphors, which are culturally bounded tools (Lowery, 2013), are one significant component of pragmatic competence. Metaphors are used to express abstract concepts, which can only be explained figuratively, by comparing the abstract concepts to concrete terms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Littlemore, 2001). Since all cultures use a remarkable amount of metaphors (Kimmel, 2004; Lowery, 2013), learners need to have background knowledge of the TL culture to interpret and use metaphors appropriately (Charteris-Black, 2001; Littlemore & Low, 2006). Language socialization which involves becoming "competent members of social groups" through and to use the language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986: 167) plays a key role in this process.

As in first language (L1) socialization, while learning a second language (L2), L2 learners not only acquire the linguistic rules of the TL, but they learn about the pragmatic functions of the TL culture as well (Ros i Sole, 2007). However, learners do not simply acquire the L2 culture; instead, they convert their conceptual system based on the functional needs of the TL, a process called conceptual socialization (Author, 2012; Kecskes, 2002).

Linguistic similarities between learners' L1 and L2 and presenting situational information are two factors influencing L2 learners' interpretation of TL metaphors (Alsadi, 2016; Charteris-Black, 2002; Littlemore 2003; Türker, 2016). However, no study has explored the differences between learners' L1-dominated conceptual systems and L2-emerging conceptualizations. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the conceptual socialization of Turkish EFL learners in terms of their interpretation of English metaphors. Given that the participants were advanced level learners studying English for more than ten years, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature in terms of highlighting the importance of conceptual socialization through authentic input and interaction in developing language learners' ability to interpret metaphorical knowledge.

2 Literature review

2.1 *Metaphors*

Development of pragmatic competence is crucial for language learners as they need to acquire pragmatic ability in order to interact with L2 users. Pragmatic ability is concerned with "the

1 choices [L2 users] make, constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and
2 the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal,
3 1997: 301). Researchers agree that having a high level of grammatical competence does not
4 guarantee a high level of pragmatic competence (Arnaud & Savignon, 1997; Charteris-Black,
5 2004; Cieslicka, 2006; Johnson, 1996; Kecskes, 2000; Author, 2012; Taguchi, 2012). This is
6 mostly because the former is about having knowledge of the grammar rules, lexicon,
7 morphology, syntax, semantics and phonetics of a particular language, while the latter is
8 concerned with the appropriate use of these components in various socio-cultural contexts.
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15 Metaphors, as “insight-poetic, conceptual, and cultural” tools, are important for
16 language learners since, "without acquiring knowledge about them, nonnative English-speaking
17 students will always be cultural and language outsiders, despite advanced language and
18 cognitive skills" (Dong, 2004: 30). Metaphors play a crucial role in developing language
19 learners’ pragmatic competence as they also heavily rely on the intertwined nature of language
20 and culture (Charteris-Black, 2004; Deignan, Gabrys & Solska, 1997; Dong, 2004; Erdmann,
21 2016; Littlemore, 2001; Littlemore & Low, 2006; Low, 1988; Lowery, 2013; Nam, 2010;
22 Radić- Bojanić, 2013; Saygın 2001; Türker, 2016). As Charteris-Black (2004) states, not only
23 speakers select metaphors to achieve their interactional aims in certain contexts but also their
24 choice and comprehension of metaphors necessitate an understanding of that particular context.
25 In other words, in order to interpret and use a metaphor correctly, language learners should
26 acquire knowledge of the TL socio-cultural contexts and norms since metaphors are shaped
27 around cultural concepts and gain their meaning in the context they are formed.
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have also suggested that presenting metaphors with situational information may also facilitate language learners' interpretation of metaphors (Littlemore, 2003; Peleg, Giora & Fein, 2001).

2.2 *Conceptual socialization*

Language socialization refers to the process of becoming "socialized through language and socialized to use language in culturally specific ways" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986:163). According to Lam (2004:44), learning a second language "involves a process of assimilation into the linguistic conventions and cultural practices of the L2 discourse communities". The framework of language socialization, thus, has been incorporated into L2 research as well (e.g., Author, 2012; Duff, 2007; Kanagy, 1999; Li, 2000; Matsumura, 2001; Nguyen & Kellog, 2010; Ohta, 1999; Poole, 1992; Wang, 2010; Willet, 1995). L2 socialization is about how L2 learners socialize into the TL and its culture (Leung, 2001) by acquiring its linguistic and cultural knowledge (Lam, 2004) through exposure to the sociocultural aspects of the TL culture and interaction with native speakers (Matsumura, 2001). On the other hand, Kecskes (2002) claims that L2 learners do not simply attain the L2 culture but transform their existing L1 conceptual system to meet the functional needs of the TL. According to Kecskes (2015), multilinguals develop one shared system of pragmatic competence that is accessible for all languages and this system of pragmatic competence continuously changes according to the learners' experience in various languages and cultures. Therefore, what distinguishes conceptual socialization from L2 socialization is that L2 learners adjust their L1 conceptual knowledge based on the TL knowledge by interacting with members of the TL social community instead of simply assimilating into the TL functions and norms (Kecskes, 2002). Studies on conceptual socialization, however, are quite limited. In a longitudinal study, Author (2012) investigated how conceptual socialization affected Turkish international students' use of formulaic language as they interacted with speakers from the TL community. The results of the study showed that language socialization is a life-long process and participating in interaction with native speakers in various contexts served as a source of adequate input for the participants to improve their use of L2 formulaic language. In a more recent study, Author (2019) found in their study examining Turkish EFL learners' conceptual socialization in terms of their speech act realization that the learners were less polite and formal compared to native speakers of English. This finding indicated that Turkish EFL learners' conceptual socialization might have been affected by their L1 socialization and instruction-based language learning in EFL context.

3 Methodology

The present study investigates the conceptual socialization of Turkish EFL learners in terms of their interpretation of English metaphors. The research questions are:

1. To what extent does the availability of situational information facilitate Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors?
2. To what extent does the conceptual and linguistic similarities between L1 and L2 affect Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors?
3. What similarities/differences do Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors share with native English speakers'?

3.1 *Setting and participants*

The participants of this study included two groups: a focal group and a baseline group. The focal group consisted of 38 Turkish EFL learners with an age range of 18 to 20, studying at English Language Teaching department of a public university in Ankara, Turkey. This particular group of learners were selected for the following reasons:

- 1- To be able to study in this BA program, they need to have a minimum advanced level of English per Turkish Higher Education Council requirements.
- 2- They have been studying English formally for at least ten years.
- 3- As part of their teacher education curriculum, they are still required to take language classes such as reading and writing to improve and fine-tune their language skills.

The baseline group included seven NESs who were all academics (four American and three British) with an age range of 24 to 55. The NESs data served two purposes. First, with the data collected through the familiarity scale (FAMscale), those metaphors which the NESs were most familiar with were included in sentence level test (SLT) and situation-based test (SBT) developed for data collection purposes. Second, responses of NESs' to SLT and SBT were used as a baseline for the correct figurative meaning of metaphors to compare EFL participants' responses to.

3.2 *Data collection*

In this mixed-methods study, data were collected using three instruments: a familiarity scale (FAMscale), and two metaphor tests: SLT and SBT. Metaphor tests consisted of three categories of metaphors: a) conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors, b) conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, and c) conceptually and linguistically different

metaphors. The classification of the metaphors was validated by two other experts who speak both Turkish and English.

Conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors (Category I; CAT I) have both linguistic and conceptual counterparts in Turkish and English. To illustrate, in relation to metaphor of LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the metaphorical expression "love is electricity between two people" is associated with the source domain of *electricity* and the target domain of *love* in English like in "I could feel the *electricity* between us." This metaphorical expression shares both direct translation and common conceptual features with the Turkish equivalent of "iki kişi arasındaki elektrik" (i.e., electricity between two people) as in "aramızda bir elektrik var" (i.e., There is electricity between us).

Conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors (Category II; CAT II) have different linguistic properties in Turkish and English whereas they rely on the same metaphorical concept. For instance, in relation to the metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) whose source domain is *food* and target domain is *ideas*, the metaphorical expression "His idea was *half-baked*," is conceptually similar to the Turkish expression "Fikri olgunlaşmamış." However, it is linguistically different as the Turkish one does not include any reference to *baking*, but uses a different word as the source domain (i.e. olgunlaşmak= to ripe).

Conceptually and linguistically different metaphors (Category III; CAT III) are the ones that exist in English, but do not have conceptual and linguistic correspondence in Turkish. In other words, these metaphors are not available in Turkish linguistic or conceptual system. For example, regarding the metaphor of COMMUNICATION IS FEEDING (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980) whose source domain is *feeding* and target domain is *communication*, the metaphorical expression "a live feed" like in "We have a live *feed* from London" is not used in Turkish.

3.2.1 Familiarity Scale (FAMscale)

The FAMscale was administered to NESs to choose the metaphors with which they were familiar the most so that they can be used in the metaphor tests developed in the later stages. It included 30 items from each category of metaphors, 90 metaphors in total, and required participants to specify how often they have heard or seen the items in the list on a 5 point-scale (1: heard or seen it *many times* before; 5: *never* heard or seen it before). According to the descriptive statistics of the FAMscale results, ten metaphors from each category that were stated as the most familiar were selected for SLT and SBT.

3.2.2 Sentence Level Test (SLT)

SLT included 30 metaphorical expressions (10 items for each three category), which were presented in a sentence. In this test, NESs were asked to write their interpretation in English while Turkish EFL learners completed the task in Turkish. Here is a sample item:

Item # 12

Please write what you understand from the sentences below in Turkish / English

1. *She got her eyes from her father*

_____.

In this example, the participants were asked to write their understanding of "She got her eyes from her father" which included the metaphorical expression '*to get a property from someone*' in relation to the metaphor PROPERTIES ARE POSSESSIONS.

3.2.3 Situation-Based Test (SBT)

In SBT, the same 30 metaphorical expressions in SLT were presented this time with some information about the situation in which the conversation takes place. Here is a sample item:

Item # 12

Please rewrite the sentences in *italics* in English:

1. Situation: Two friends in a beauty salon having a conversation about hair care.
 - A: Your hair is so beautiful, especially the color.
 - B: Thank you, *I got it from my mother.*

_____.

As seen in this example, the metaphorical expressions in SBT were presented in italics. Although they completed SLT in Turkish, EFL participants were asked to complete the SBT in English to see if there was any transfer from their L1 and also to see to see if their conceptual fluency differs in Turkish and English.

3.3 Data analysis

In this mixed-methods study, quantitative data were analyzed through statistical analyses and qualitative data were analyzed through the content analyses of the EFL participants' responses. In the first phase of the analysis, Turkish EFL learners' responses to the metaphor tests were scored by the two researchers by taking the NESs' correct responses as the baseline. Each correct interpretation was assigned three points, somewhat correct two and incorrect interpretation one. For example, the correct interpretation of the metaphor "we have to

1 *regurgitate* everything we learned in the final” was “we have to reproduce everything we
 2 learned exactly the way we learned” according to NESs’ responses. Therefore, a response along
 3 the lines of “remembering everything we learned” was assigned three points (i.e. correct
 4 response), “studying everything we learned” was assigned two points (i.e. somewhat correct
 5 response), and “they are bored of the exam” was given one point (i.e. incorrect answer).
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9 The second analytic phase included analyses of inter-rater reliability and inter-item
 10 reliability. To ensure the reliability of the scoring, an expert in the field was asked to rate the
 11 responses of randomly selected four participants (i.e., equal to ten percent of the whole data).
 12 Scores coming from the expert and the researchers were compared and discrepancies between
 13 the scorings were evaluated. Each item which had two points of discrepancy was discussed and
 14 changes were made in the scoring accordingly. To further the reliability analysis, the expert was
 15 given another set of data from four other participants and the same procedure of discussion was
 16 followed. As a follow up analysis, inter-rater reliability was calculated using SPSS. The values
 17 of Cronbach’s alpha were checked following the criteria of 1) seven and above; high, 2) four-
 18 seven; moderate and 3) four and less; low. High inter-rater reliability was found for all eight
 19 participants in both tests; average $r = .957$, maximum $r = .999$, minimum $r = .853$ in SLT and
 20 average $r = .929$, maximum $r = .999$, minimum $r = .787$ in SBT. Next, the consistency between
 21 the items in the two metaphor tests was analyzed by running an inter-item reliability analyses.
 22 Based on results, moderate inter-item reliability was found for both tests as $r = .527$ for SLT and
 23 $r = .532$ for SBT.
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37 In the third analytic phase, the analyses for each research question were conducted in
 38 three sub-steps: 1) a paired-samples t-test to examine the role of presenting situational
 39 information in facilitating metaphor interpretation, 2) content analyses of Turkish EFL learners’
 40 responses in both tests to see the role of conceptual and linguistic similarities between Turkish
 41 and English in metaphor interpretation, and 3) a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test to compare
 42 the results of EFL learners’ overall performance to NESs.
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49 **4 Results and discussion**

50 **4.1 *The role of presenting situational information in interpretation of metaphors***

51 In the present study, the role of presenting situational information was controlled as a variable
 52 by designing two metaphor tests. Before comparing the results of the two tests, a normality test
 53 was run for each test separately. Since the data showed normal distribution, a parametric paired-
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sample *t*-test was conducted to compare Turkish EFL learners' performance in SLT and SBT (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 *The role of presenting situational information in interpretation of metaphors*

Metaphor Tests	<i>t</i> -test				
	\bar{x}	SD	df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
SLT	68.32	9.328	36	-1.929	.062
SBT	70.84	7.474			

Note. SLT: Sentence level test, SBT: Situation-based test

As seen in Table 1, there is no statistically significant difference between the Turkish EFL learners' performance in SLT ($\bar{x} = 68.32$, $SD = 9.328$) and SBT ($\bar{x} = 70.84$, $SD = 7.474$). This result implies that presenting the metaphors with situational information may not facilitate their interpretation of metaphors ($t(36) = -1.929$, $p > .05$). This finding is consistent with Türker's (2016) study since her Korean L2 learners' correct understanding of the metaphors decreased as the detail of situation provided in expressions increased. This finding seems counterintuitive since context is believed to help language learners guess the meaning of unknown words. However, L2 learners' cultural backgrounds may affect how they use the context to understand a metaphor as they might tend to notice only the contextual information that is similar to their cultural backgrounds (Littlemore, 2003). Thus, the cultural differences between Turkish and English might have prevented the participants from benefiting from the situational information.

4.2 *The role of linguistic and conceptual similarities in interpretation of metaphors*

4.2.1 *Analysis of the Sentence Level Test (SLT)*

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the role of linguistic and conceptual similarities between Turkish and English on EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors in SLT in conditions of 1) conceptually and linguistically similar, 2) conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, and 3) conceptually and linguistically different in English (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 *Comparison of interpretation of metaphors in three categories in SLT*

Source	df	SS	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2	3321.21	1660.60	91.36	.000***
Within Groups	111	2017.39	18.17		
Total	113	5338.60			

*** $p < .001$

As shown in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference between the Turkish EFL learners' responses to three categories of metaphors ($F(2, 111) = 91.36, p < .001$). A Tukey's post-hoc test was run in order to find out where the differences stemmed from (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 Comparison of scores in each category in SLT

(I) categories*	(J) categories	Mean difference (I-J)	SE	p	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
CAT 1	CAT 2	1.13	.978	.481	-1.19	3.45
	CAT 3	11.97	.978	.000***	9.65	14.30
CAT 2	CAT 1	-1.13	.978	.481	-3.45	1.19
	CAT 3	10.84	.978	.000***	8.52	13.17
CAT 3	CAT 1	-11.97	.978	.000***	-14.30	-9.65
	CAT 2	-10.84	.978	.000***	-13.7	-8.52

* CAT 1: conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors, CAT 2: conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

*** $p < .001$

As displayed in Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference between Turkish EFL learners' performance in CAT 1 and CAT 3 ($p < .001$) (\bar{x} CAT 1= 27.13, \bar{x} CAT 3= 15.16). and in CAT 2 and CAT 3 ($p < .001$) (\bar{x} CAT 2= 26.00, \bar{x} CAT 3= 15.16). A content analysis was conducted to examine if there was any transfer from Turkish to English while interpreting the metaphors. In this analysis, transfer errors mainly refer to the literal translation of items into Turkish which might have been caused by applying Turkish conceptual system to interpret English metaphors and interlanguage errors are the ones which might have been derived from the participants' deficiencies in language use in English (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 Total numbers and percentages of errors in each category in SLT

Category*	Number of incorrect responses	Number of correct responses	Number of total responses
CAT 1	11 (2.98 %)	357 (97.01 %)	368
CAT 2	26 (7.20 %)	335 (92.79 %)	361
CAT 3	111 (38.14 %)	180 (61.85 %)	291
TOTAL	148 (14.5 %)	872 (85.49 %)	1020

* CAT 1: conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors, CAT 2: conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

As Table 4 shows, Turkish EFL learners made the highest number of errors in CAT 3 in SLT with 111 incorrect responses out of total 291 responses while there were 26 incorrect responses out of 361 in CAT 2 and 11 out of 368 in CAT 1.

The items which were interpreted incorrectly the most in SLT were identified as well (see Table 5).

TABLE 5 *Items with the highest number of errors in SLT*

Category*	Item	Expression	Number of incorrect responses	Number of correct responses	Number of total responses	Sample incorrect response
CAT 3	21	What he said <i>left a bad taste in my mouth</i>	17 (47.22 %)	19 (52.77 %)	36	Çürük tadı verdi (It gave me a rotten taste)
CAT 3	29	That is a <i>budding theory</i> .	15 (55.55 %)	12 (44.44 %)	27	Saçma (Nonsense)
CAT 3	25	The teacher <i>spoon-fed</i> them the information.	15 (51.72 %)	14 (48.27 %)	29	Zorla öğretti (He taught unwillingly)

* CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

As seen in table 5, Turkish EFL learners made the highest number of errors with items in CAT 3. This finding is followed by the highest number of transfer errors in CAT 3 with 32 transfer errors out of total 111 incorrect responses. Furthermore, the least number of transfer errors were observed in CAT 1 with only one transfer error, meaning Turkish EFL learners applied transfer the most when the conceptual and linguistic differences between Turkish and English were the most too.

4.2.2 Analysis of Situation-based Test (SBT)

To analyze the role of L1 conceptual and linguistic knowledge in SBT, a one-way ANOVA was carried out by comparing the participants' total scores for each category (see Table 6).

TABLE 6 *Comparison of Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors in three categories in SBT*

Source	df	SS	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2	1134.00	567.00	47.392	.000***
Within Groups	108	1292.10	11.96		
Total	110	2426.10			

**p* < .001

As Table 6 shows, there was a statistically significant difference in performances of the Turkish EFL learners in three categories ($F(2, 108) = 47.39, p < .00$). A Tukey's post-hoc test was carried out in order to find out where the differences stemmed from (see Table 7).

TABLE 7 Comparison of the scores in each category

(I) categories*	(J) categories	Mean difference (I-J)	SE	p	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
CAT 1	CAT 2	-1.94	.804	.045*	-3.86	-.03
	CAT 3	5.59	.804	.000***	3.68	7.51
CAT 2	CAT 1	1.94	.804	.045*	.03	3.86
	CAT 3	7.54	.804	.000***	5.63	9.45
CAT 3	CAT 1	-5.59	.804	.000***	-7.51	-3.68
	CAT 2	-7.54	.804	.000***	-9.45	-5.63

* CAT 1: conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors, CAT 2: conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

* $p < .05$

*** $p < .001$

Table 7 displays that there was a statistically significant difference between Turkish EFL learners' performance in CAT 1 and CAT 2 ($p < .05$) (\bar{x} CAT 1= 24.84, \bar{x} CAT 2= 26.78), in CAT 1 and CAT 3 ($p < .001$) (\bar{x} CAT 1= 24.84, \bar{x} CAT 3= 19.24) as well as in CAT 2 and CAT 3 ($p < .001$) (\bar{x} CAT 2= 26.78, \bar{x} CAT 3= 19.24). These results concur with the ones coming from the SLT showing that conceptual and linguistic similarities did play a role in Turkish EFL learners' interpretation of metaphors. A content analysis was carried out to find out in which categories the errors were made the most (see Table 8).

TABLE 8 Total numbers of errors in each category in SBT

Category*	Number of incorrect responses	Number of correct responses	Number of total responses
CAT 1	21 (5.73 %)	345 (94.26 %)	366
CAT 2	23 (6.44 %)	334 (93.55 %)	357
CAT 3	37 (11.7 %)	279 (88.29 %)	316
TOTAL	81 (7.79 %)	958 (92.2 %)	1039

* CAT 1: conceptually and linguistically similar metaphors, CAT 2: conceptually similar, linguistically different metaphors, CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

As shown in Table 8, Turkish EFL learners made the highest number of errors in CAT 3 with 37 incorrect responses (11.70 %) out of total 316 responses and with two transfer errors, a result concurring with the SLT. CAT III was followed by 23 incorrect responses in CAT 2 (6.44 %)

out of 357 responses and 21 errors in CAT 1 (5.73 %) out of 366 responses. In CAT 1, except for one item, most of the items had only few incorrect responses and there was no transfer error. The most problematic items in SBT are presents in Table 9 below.

TABLE 9 *Items with the highest number of errors in SBT*

Category	Item	Situation and expression	Number of incorrect responses	Number of total responses	Sample incorrect response
CAT 3	24	Situation: A woman introducing her husband to his new colleagues from the hospital he works at. Her husband thinks that they didn't like him much. A: I think my friends liked you. B: I don't think so. Especially that guy, called Sam, <i>he gave me the cold shoulder.</i>	12	34	I didn't like him
CAT 3	27	Situation: A news reporter announcing that they will connect to a historian to ask about the demolition of an old historical building. A: Now, <i>we have a live satellite feed from Paris</i> and he will explain the importance of the building.	9	27	We have heard something about it

Note. CAT 3: conceptually and linguistically different metaphors

Table 9 shows that the items which had the highest number of incorrect interpretation were item # 24 in CAT 3, including 10 items, with 12 incorrect responses (35.29 %) out of 34 and item # 27 in CAT 3 with 9 incorrect responses (33.33 %) out of 27 responses.

4.2.3 *Discussion of the role of linguistic and conceptual similarities*

There are several findings that can be drawn from these analyses. First, Turkish EFL learners performed the best in CAT 1 and the worst in CAT 3 in both SLT and SBT, and they made the least number of errors in CAT 1 in both tests. That is, conceptual and linguistic similarities seemed to have helped them interpret the metaphors correctly their performance was the worst in CAT 3. These findings are consistent with the studies by Türker (2016) and Deignan et al. (1997). In these studies, participants' performed the highest in interpreting those metaphors which are conceptually and linguistically similar in L1 and L2 while the most challenging group of metaphors was conceptually and linguistically different ones. Thus, conceptual and linguistic

1 similarities between two languages might make acquisition of culture specific items like
 2 metaphors easier (e.g., Lowery 2013). Moreover, it seems that conceptual and linguistic
 3 similarities interact with the contextual information since the EFL learners seemed to have
 4 needed both conceptual and linguistic similarities at the sentence level when no situation is
 5 provided. However, when situation is provided, conceptual similarities seem sufficient to
 6 compensate for the linguistic discrepancies. This is an important finding because providing
 7 context only seems to be helping when either conceptual or linguistic similarities exist between
 8 the two languages.
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 15 Second, the participants made the highest number of transfer errors in SLT when no
 16 situational information was presented whereas there were only two transfer errors in SBT.
 17 Saygın (2001) proposed that transfer errors occur more frequently when learners translate from
 18 L2 to L1, which was observed in the findings of the SLT when the participants performed in
 19 Turkish. In relation to that, it can be argued that Turkish EFL learners made less transfer errors
 20 in SBT as they wrote their interpretation of metaphors in English. Additionally, Nam (2010)
 21 suggested that when learners have conceptual fluency in the L2, they do not make literal
 22 translation of the linguistic items in the metaphors. In this regard, the fact that they had to
 23 respond in English might have prevented L1 transfer in their responses.
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31 **4.3 Comparison of Turkish EFL learners and NESs in terms of their performance in SLT** 32 **and SBT**

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 36 There were seven NESs in this study while 38 Turkish EFL learners completed SLT and this
 37 number was 37 for SBT. Due to this difference between the two sample sizes, a non-parametric
 38 Mann-Whitney test was run to compare Turkish EFL learners' total scores with the NESs' (see
 39 Table 10).
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 44 **TABLE 10 Comparison of Turkish EFL learners to NESs in terms of SLT and SBT scores**

47 Group*	48 N	49 Mean Rank	50 Sum of Ranks
51 SLT-NESs	52 7	53 42.00	54 294.00
55 SLT-EFL	56 38	57 19.50	58 741.00
59 SLT-Total	60 45	61 -	62 -
63 SBT-NESs	64 7	65 41.00	287.00
SBT-EFL	37	19.00	703.00
SBT-Total	44	-	-

* NESs: Native English speakers, EFL: Turkish EFL learners

U = .000

SBT-Z = -4.16, SLT-Z = -4.17

$p < .001$

As seen in Table 10, results of the Mann-Whitney tests showed that Turkish EFL learners' performance was significantly different from the NESs' performance in SLT ($U = .000$) with a mean difference of 22.5 (\bar{x} NESs= 42.00, \bar{x} EFL= 19.50) as well as in SBT ($U = .000$) with a mean difference of 22 (\bar{x} NESs= 41.00, \bar{x} EFL= 19.00). Although they were advanced level learners, Turkish EFL learners differed very much from NESs in terms of correct interpretation of metaphors, suggesting that Turkish EFL learners may not be sufficient exposed to the L2 conceptual system.

5. Turkish EFL learners' conceptual socialization

To summarize the findings above, Turkish EFL learners could only benefit from the situational information when the metaphors were either conceptually or linguistically similar, and their performance differed very much from NESs in terms of correct interpretation of the metaphors. These findings may suggest that their conceptual socialization in English is not at a level similar to NESs, at least when it comes to interpreting metaphors. This conclusion can be explained by the three idiosyncratic features of EFL contexts (Danesi, 1995; Li, 2000; Matsumura, 2001; Author, 2012; Author, 2019): heavy reliance on instruction, Turkish teachers of English as the source of input, and lack of access to the TL culture (Author, 2012; Author, 2019). First, Turkish EFL participants might not have had enough exposure to sociocultural aspects of English language in Turkish EFL context since the Turkish ELT curriculum and instruction heavily relies on pacing and grammar instruction (Denkci-Akkaş & Coker, 2016). Coursebooks are usually based on forms and functions of the TL, however, most of the classroom time is allocated to grammar rather than sociocultural features and its conceptual system. Second, Turkish teachers might be inadequate as a source of input when it comes to the conceptual system of the TL since most of the Turkish teachers of English have also learned the English language in the EFL context (Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersin & Kaslıoğlu, 2009). Third, lack of access to the TL culture might have caused low level of conceptual socialization as well. Danesi (1995) claimed that L2 learners have conceptual fluency in their L1 and therefore they rely on their L1 conceptual knowledge while interpreting L2 figurative meaning even if they are good at using L2 grammatical structures. To acquire conceptual fluency in L2, learners adjust their L1 conceptual system based on L2 conceptual system to "fit the functional needs of the new language and culture" through the process of conceptual socialization (Kecskes, 2002: 157). For this reason, learners might apply their existing L1 conceptual knowledge to understand

1 these different metaphors and this might lead to transfer. Furthermore, understanding metaphors
2 depends on the knowledge of the TL culture and if learners lack the knowledge of these culture-
3 specific concepts, they might apply their L1 conceptual knowledge to interpret them (Author,
4 2012).
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7 **6. Conclusion**

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9 This study explored 38 Turkish EFL learners' conceptual socialization in terms of their
10 interpretation of English metaphors by comparing their responses to the metaphor tests to the
11 baseline of seven NESs. Findings indicated that Turkish EFL learners could only benefit from
12 the situational information when the metaphors were either conceptually or linguistically
13 similar, while their performance differed very much from NESs in terms of correct
14 interpretation of the metaphors. The findings of this study provide some for teaching metaphors
15 in EFL contexts. First of all, EFL learners should be made aware of the cultural differences
16 between the two languages in order to take advantage of situational clues in metaphorical
17 expressions since each linguistic system has its own metaphors that rely on its cultural elements.
18 Teaching EFL learners what *underlying concepts* metaphors rely on can assist their
19 comprehension and help them go beyond memorization (Nam, 2010). As Author (2012)
20 suggests, foreign language teachers should present the appropriate use of functional structures
21 in social contexts to contribute to their learners' L2 socialization.
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34 The present study had several limitations that can be taken into consideration for further
35 research. First, some of the metaphors in the tests belong to the academic context while some
36 are from the social context since there was no focus on which setting the metaphors are used in
37 while choosing them. Given that most of the EFL learners come across metaphors in academic
38 context, using metaphors belonging to the both academic and social settings might have affected
39 their interpretation of the metaphors. Therefore, another study can be conducted by choosing
40 metaphors from a particular domain. Moreover, the participants were not asked to think aloud
41 while answering the metaphor tests. Further research can carry out think aloud protocols and
42 retrospective interviews with the participants to gain insights into how language learners
43 actually interpret the metaphors in L2 in real time. Lastly, studies can also take learners' study
44 abroad experiences in an English speaking country to compare their conceptual socialization
45 with the ones in EFL contexts.
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