



PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF AN EFL TEACHER

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine pre-service Turkish EFL teachers' conceptualizations of an EFL teacher through metaphors. To this end, a total of 59 senior pre-service EFL teachers, who are majoring in ELT at Gazi University, a state university in Ankara took part in this study. Of these participants who are aged between 20 and 24, 53 were female and 6 were male. The data for the study were collected via a metaphor elicitation task in which the participants were asked to fill in the prompt "An English teacher is like..... because....." in Turkish. Before eliciting the metaphors of pre-service teachers, a 15- minute workshop was held to explain what metaphor is and how it is utilized to reflect individuals' thoughts and actions in daily life. Qualitative research method was used in the present study and content analysis was carried out to analyze the data accordingly. The results of the study showed that senior pre-service EFL teachers conceptualize an EFL teacher mostly through roles that are not peculiar to an EFL teacher, but a teacher in general. Furthermore, the results suggest that senior pre-service teachers tend to adopt traditional teacher roles like provider of knowledge in their conceptualizations of an EFL teacher.

Keywords: metaphors, teacher roles, teacher characteristics, an EFL teacher, pre-service teacher education

1. Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that metaphors are widely used as figures of speech in literature for the sake of poetic or ornamental effect. Yet "*metaphors are not just figures of*

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speech" (Martinez, Sauleda & Huber, 2001, p. 965); they are about "*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 5) in its essence. In other words, people generally express an unfamiliar or complex thing with a familiar one through metaphors (Oxford et al., 1998; Saban, 2006), thereby simplifying their experiences (Farrel, 2006, p. 38).

Metaphors are currently viewed as a way of thinking- not merely as a way of using language (Guerrerro & Villamil, 2000). They often reflect and shape both our thoughts and actions (Guerrerro & Villamil, 2000; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). By emphasizing the pervasiveness of the use of metaphors in our daily life, Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p. 4) suggest that our conceptual system, the way we think and act, is "*fundamentally metaphorical in nature*" although we may not be aware of it in our everyday activities. That is to say, as Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil and Ölçü (2009) claim, metaphors are "*windows*" that help us explain how individuals understand the world and reality (p. 324).

In addition to being used as a cognitive tool, metaphors serve many other functions (Saban, 2006). In recent years, educational researchers have become increasingly interested in the use of metaphors as a research tool in the field of teacher education (Saban, Koçbeker, & Saban, 2007) because metaphors are found to be very helpful in understanding prospective teachers' "*professional thinking*" of teaching and learning (Saban, Koçbeker & Saban, 2007, p. 509). This interest has been also aroused in the territory of pre-service language teacher education (Cephe, 2009; Farrel, 2006; Hamilton, 2016; Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil & Ölçü, 2009, Zapata & Lacorte, 2007) recently. Few of the studies conducted within this context focused on the pre-service or in-service English teachers' perceptions of language teacher or language teaching. For example, Wan, Low, and Li (2011), with the aim of eliciting the metaphors about English teacher, distributed a questionnaire to 33 English language teacher trainers and 70 first or third grade prospective English teachers, and interviewed with the 32 trainers about their students' metaphors. As the result of this study, it was found that there were "*mismatches regarding the interpretations of the teachers' roles both between students and teachers and between student groups at different levels of English proficiency*" (Wan et al., 2011, p. 403). In another research study, Seferoğlu et al. (2009) collected metaphors about "*teacher*" from 70 in-service English teachers and 58 junior year and 92 senior year pre-service teacher trainees. This study revealed that all three groups have the inclination of conceptualizing teacher with the "*guide*" metaphor (Seferoğlu et al., 2009). In Farrell's (2006) case study, three prospective English teachers wrote one journal entry before starting to teaching practice and six journal entries while going on it, and were interviewed in a focus group about the metaphors in their journals. As a result of this research, it was found that at the end of six weeks of teaching practice one participant changed his initial metaphor while the metaphors of the other two participants remained the same. Although these studies have yielded valuable results, more research is needed to get a clearer understanding of pre-service EFL teachers' conceptualizations regarding EFL teacher roles in Turkish pre-service education context.

Becoming an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher is a complex process during which prospective language teachers are expected to adopt various teacher roles in various contextual or situational settings. Therefore, it is crucial to uncover prospective language teachers' conceptualizations regarding EFL teachers and their roles so that they can be guided accordingly if necessary by their teacher educators in their pre-service education. In this regard, this study aims to reveal the senior pre-service language teachers' conceptualizations regarding an EFL teacher through metaphors. Based on the framework of "*cognitive theory of metaphor*" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), this study seeks to extend the growing body of research by investigating pre-service Turkish EFL language teachers' conceptualizations of EFL teachers via metaphors. With this aim in mind, the following research questions are posed.

2. Research Questions

1. How do the senior pre-service EFL teachers conceptualize an EFL teacher through metaphors?
2. What are the percentages of emerging teacher roles that are conceptualized through metaphors produced by the senior pre-service EFL teachers?

3. Methodology

In this descriptive study, qualitative research method was adopted with the aim of answering the main research question. Merriam (2009) explains the qualitative research as an inquiry that "*focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data*" (p. 2).

3.1 Context of the Study

The context in which this study was conducted is the English Language Teaching (ELT) department at Gazi University, a state university in Turkey. This department offers a four-year pre-service teacher education program that adopts a constructivist view of education and reflective approach (Özmen, 2012). The first year of the program consists of courses related to advanced grammar and language skills such as Contextual Grammar, and Advanced Reading and Writing Course. The second year of the program includes courses focusing on applied linguistics, techniques and principles in language teaching, and English literature. The third year of the program starts to provide opportunities for micro teaching and offers more practice oriented courses as teaching foreign language to children, teaching language skills, special teaching methods, teaching language and literature. The last year of the program goes on with courses that focus on micro teaching in courses such as teaching integrated language skills, yet what is special about the last year of this program is the one-year practicum in which pre-service teachers get an opportunity to observe real teachers and practice teaching with real students.

3.2 Participants

Purposeful sampling in which “*sample elements judged to be typical, or representative are chosen from the population*” was used in selecting the sampling group of the present study (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 156). Accordingly, the participants of this study consisted of 59 senior pre-service language teachers, who are majoring in ELT at Gazi University, a state university in Ankara. The choice of this sample is based on the assumption that the senior pre-service teachers have more insights about being an EFL teacher than junior pre-service teachers. Of these participants, whose ages range between 20 and 24, 53 were female and 6 were male.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

A metaphor elicitation task comprised the research instrument of the study. In this task, pre-service language teachers were asked to fill in the prompt “*An English teacher is like..... because.....*” which was given in Turkish so as to elicit more creative similes and eliminate the possible restrictive effect of foreign language proficiency on the participants’ metaphorical expressions. Moreover, the participants were expected to explain the reason for choosing their similes and they were encouraged to produce more than one metaphor if they wished so. However, we should acknowledge the limitations of metaphors as a research tool as they present one-sided perspective (Morgan, 1986 as cited in Inbar, 1996). To compensate for this limitation we intended to hold a focus-group interview with a group of the participants, but only one participant volunteered. Therefore, the interview was not carried out. Furthermore, it is at this point critical to note that we treated the similes produced by the participants as metaphors in the present study. Therefore, it should be understood that the concept of ‘metaphor’ henceforth refers to the similes obtained within the scope of this research study.

3.4 Procedure

Before eliciting the metaphors of pre-service teachers, a 15-minute workshop was held to explain what metaphor is and how it is utilized to reflect individuals’ thoughts and actions in daily life. After a brief theoretical explanation, the workshop included a pair work activity in which the participants were asked to describe their friends by using a simile. One example produced by a student during this activity was a goat metaphor for describing her friend’s stubbornness. Another participant compared her friend to an angel as she thought that her friend was good-hearted. After the workshop, the metaphor elicitation task was distributed to the student teachers so that they could create their metaphors regarding EFL teachers. When the data collection process ended, the metaphors and the explanations produced in Turkish were translated into English by two of the researchers. Finally, content analysis was carried out to analyze the qualitative data collected through the prompt.

3.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis, which “is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings”, was carried out in the procedure of data analysis of this study (Patton, 2002, p. 453). The data collected through the metaphor elicitation task were analyzed inductively. Firstly, all the metaphors and their explanations were listed by considering the number previously given to each participant. Secondly, the data were coded by two of the researchers independently. During this coding process, the metaphors were categorized based on the similarities found among the entailments of each metaphor provided by the participants. Each category was named according to the common features of the metaphors in it and the most representative metaphor included in that category. After the coders completed their coding processes, the disagreements between the coders regarding the categories were discussed until they reached a consensus. To make the coding process more reliable, the opinions of two experts (one professor doctor and one associate professor) were taken on the appropriateness of the categories. Finally, necessary changes were made on the categories.

4. Findings

The present study was conducted to reveal senior pre-service EFL teachers' metaphorical conceptualizations regarding an EFL teacher. For this purpose, content analysis was carried out and two broad themes emerged from the analysis: (1) teacher roles, (2) teacher characteristics. Teacher roles were divided into two sub-themes (ELT teacher roles and Non-ELT teacher roles) based on the distinction of teacher roles in terms of their peculiarity to the ELT profession or not. While the theme of ELT teacher roles consisted of three categories as *provider/source of knowledge*, *the culture carrier/transmitter*, and *culture/language integrator*, the theme of Non-ELT teacher roles included eight categories called *provider or source of knowledge*, *guide*, *actress*, *inspirer*, *entertainer*, *self-sacrificer*, *friend*, and *other*. On the other hand, the theme of teacher characteristics consisted of three categories as *versatility*, *flexibility* and, *other*.

4.1 Teacher Roles

It should be noted that there is no clear-cut distinction between ELT teacher roles and non-ELT teacher roles. We distinguished metaphors that pointed to aspects that seemed peculiar mostly to foreign language or foreign language teaching process than those that did not. To clarify, the metaphors mentioning components of the foreign language, cultural aspects and the skills involved in teaching a foreign language comprised the sub-theme of ELT teacher roles under the broader theme of teacher roles.

4.1.1 ELT Teacher Roles

It is again worth noting that in the following categories under the sub-theme *ELT teacher roles*, metaphors produced by the participants generally referred to aspects peculiar to

foreign language (English) teacher not a teacher in general. The categories under the sub-theme of ELT teacher roles and the corresponding metaphors are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories and Number of ELT Related Metaphors

Category	Number of the Metaphor	Metaphors
The culture carrier/transmitter	6	Window (P4), bridge (P13, P28), light (P21), carnival (P39), compass (P40)
Provider or source of knowledge	4	The ocean (P16), dictionary (P29), mother or father (P47.1), the sun (P53),
Culture integrator	3	Rainbow (P43, P48), Picture (P46.2)

4.1.1.1 The Culture Carrier/Transmitter

The teacher in the category of the culture carrier/transmitter is regarded as a teacher (1) who has the knowledge of target culture and transmits this cultural knowledge to the students. This category differs from the category of provider/source of knowledge in terms of its focus on the culture of the target language, which is clear in the examples below.

“An EFL teacher is like a bridge because s/he teaches the culture and values of that language while teaching the language. Therefore, s/he can introduce students to new cultures, life-styles. In language teaching, learning new things becomes permanent with culture. And this can be provided by the English teacher.” (P28)

“An EFL teacher is like a carnival because s/he needs to know both the target culture and other related cultures as she or he teaches the language of a culture. There are unlimited number of interesting, enjoyable, strange elements in every culture.” (P39)

4.1.1.2 Provider or Source of Knowledge

Teacher in this category can be characterized as the one who has knowledge about different aspects (like vocabulary, grammar etc.) of the relevant foreign language and the skills involved in teaching this language. Moreover, s/he presents his or her knowledge to the foreign language learners. The following metaphor and its explanation is a typical example:

“An EFL teacher is like a walking dictionary because whatever you ask, which word you ask, s/he will tell us.” (P29)

4.1.1.3 Culture or Language Integrator

Teacher in this category is regarded as a teacher that helps constructing an “interlanguage” (Selinker, 1972) or intercultural wholeness by blending and integrating the L1 culture and L2 culture or the relevant languages. While the first metaphor given

below is an example for teachers' roles as culture integrator, the second one touches upon blending learners' native language with the target language.

"An EFL teacher is like a rainbow because s/he has different characteristics like every color and should be able to have an impressive appearance by blending her/ his own culture with target culture so that they form a whole." (P43)

"An EFL teacher is like a picture because having a good mastery of the two languages, s/he blends them just like mixture of the colors in the pictures." (P46.2)

4.1.2 Non-ELT Teacher Roles

The metaphors comprising the sub-theme of non-ELT teacher roles are related to the roles that can be assigned to any teacher, not just an EFL teacher. The categories under the sub-theme of non-ELT teacher roles and the corresponding metaphors can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories and Number of Non-ELT Related Metaphors

Category	Number of the Metaphor	Metaphors
Provider of knowledge	11	Light (P6, P30.1), candle (P30.2), rainbow (P7), the sun (P10), newspaper (P15), course book (P23), the sea (P46.1), the cave of the forty thieves (P51), chief (P54), the ocean (P57)
Guide	8	Guide (P2, P33, P36, P50), compass (P11, P42), key (P18), candle (P47.3)
Actress	5	Actress (P27, P34, P41, P44), artist (P35)
Inspirer	4	Light (P5), a beautiful bird (P48), music (P56), Olympic champion (P59)
Friend	2	Friend (P14, P47.2)
Entertainer	2	Rollercoaster (P22), rainbow (P24)
Self-sacrificer	3	Candle (P12/P45), mother (P49)
Other	3	Painting palette (P1), door (P3), apple of my eye (P20)

4.1.2.1 Provider of Knowledge

Teacher as a provider or source of knowledge can be characterized as a teacher (1) who is the source of knowledge to transfer to the students, (2) who is the mere provider of knowledge, which is limitless in amount and is frequently updated, in the foreign language teaching process. This category is very similar to the category "teacher as provider of knowledge" encountered in Saban, Koçbeker and Saban' study that is concerned with prospective teachers' concept of teacher (2006, p. 515). The following metaphors and their explanations are typical examples that represent pre-service EFL teachers' conceptualizations of an EFL teacher as provider or source of knowledge:

"An EFL teacher is like the light because s/he illuminates the darkness with his or her knowledge." (P6)

"An EFL teacher is like the cave of forty thieves because he/she has knowledge and ideas as valuable as gold and silver." (P51).

4.1.2.2 Guide

Teacher in the category of guide is seen as a teacher who shows the way for students in their foreign language learning process. The typical metaphors that represent this category are given below:

"An EFL teacher is like a compass because s/he shows the way to the students." (P11)

"An EFL teacher is like a tour guide because they guide the students on their journey of life and help them communicate where they are." (P33)

4.1.2.3 Actress

Teacher in the category of actress can be characterized as a teacher (1) who sees foreign language teaching as artwork and (2) can play different roles to be able to teach the foreign language in a creative way. In this category, the teacher generally acts as an actress and accordingly sees the class as a stage and the students as the audience, which is very clear in the following example:

"An EFL teacher is like an actress because the class is his/her stage and s/he presents the lesson by making eye contact with his/her students and treating them as if they were the audience in a theater play in which s/he was playing his own stage." (P34)

"An EFL teacher is like an actress because s/he displays many characters to make the lesson more creative." (P41)

4.1.2.4 Inspirer

It can be stated that teacher in the category of inspirer appeals to the hearts or souls of the students, thus making life meaningful for students somehow. The metaphors that represent inspirer category best are given below:

"An EFL teacher is like music because s/he feeds the soul and makes life meaningful in every tone, every melody and in each rhythm." (P56)

"An EFL teacher is like a beautiful bird because s/he always inspires beauty and love for their students and provides a peaceful atmosphere. She/ he also takes their students under his/her wings, loves and protects them." (P48)

4.1.2.5 Friend

Teacher in the category of friend can be regarded as a teacher that sees foreign language teaching as a social event, thereby participating in classroom activities, which is very clear in the following metaphors and their explanations.

"An EFL teacher is like a friend because language teaching is a social event." (P14)

"An EFL teacher is like a friend because s/he joins the games, activities etc." (P47.2)

4.1.2.6 Entertainer

Teacher in the category of entertainer is defined as the teacher that (1) teaches the foreign language teaching in an enjoyable way and that (2) provides a positive classroom climate by evoking positive emotions like excitement, which is seen in the following example:

"An EFL teacher is like a rollercoaster because s/he gives excitement and a new view to look at our boring life. S/he changes our routines." (P22)

4.1.2.7 Self-sacrificer

A teacher in this category is a devotee that struggles hard and shares her knowledge for her/ his students and sacrifices herself or himself as it is implied in the following example.

"An EFL teacher is like a candle because it illuminates others while it is burning itself." (P12)

4.1.2.8 Other

The category of other was formed as the metaphors comprising this category did not have common aspects with other categories or recurrent codes to be able to form a distinct category. Teacher in this category is treated like a tool, implied by the metaphor painting palette (P1), in the foreign language teaching process, and the teacher builds a relationship between the classroom setting and real life as the metaphor door (P3) suggests. Lastly, the third metaphor expressed as apple of my eye (P20) implies that it is challenging to be an EFL teacher in Turkish context.

With respect to the sub-research question, the following pie chart given in Figure 1 points to the percentages of categories of metaphors used to describe EFL teacher roles. Here, it should be noted that the distinction between ELT and non-ELT teacher roles was not considered in the calculation of percentages. Furthermore, the metaphors describing EFL teacher characteristics were not included in the chart below.

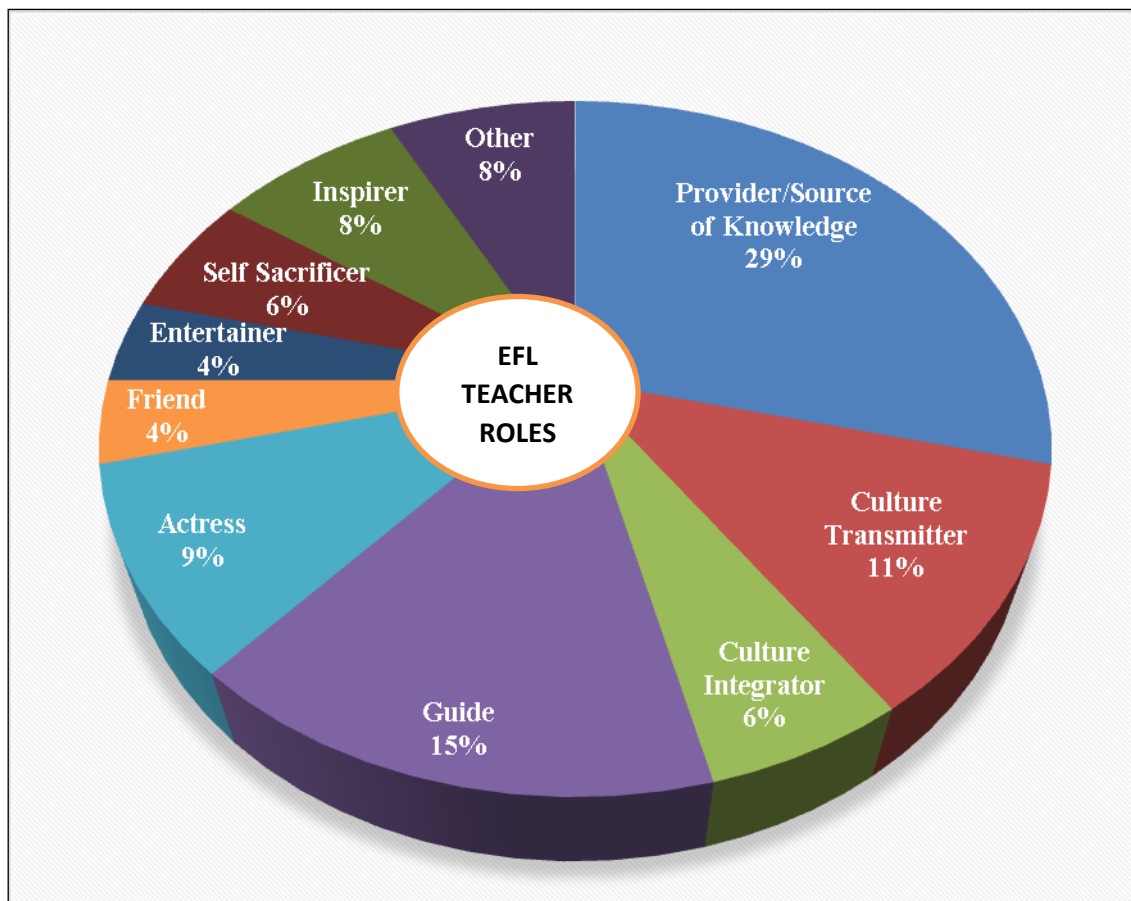


Figure 1: Percentages of metaphors used to describe EFL teacher roles

According to the percentages given in the figure above, the three most dominant categories are *provider or source of knowledge*, *guide*, and *culture transmitter*, respectively. On the other hand, the *entertainer* and *friend* categories have the lowest percentages in the distribution of the metaphors used to describe EFL teacher roles. Moreover, it can be seen from the figure that the *actress*, *inspirer*, and *other* category have a relatively big percentage in the distribution.

4.2 Teacher Characteristics

Teacher characteristics are the attributes that are referred to in describing an EFL teacher. To put it simply, if teacher roles are related to what EFL teachers *do*, teacher characteristics are about who they *are* or what attributes they have. In the present study, teacher characteristics seem to focus on attributes related to a teacher's personality.

Table 3: Categories and Number of Teacher Characteristics Metaphors

Category	Number of the metaphor	Metaphors
Versatility	5	Polygon (P8), rainbow (P9, P38), octopus (P26), household appliance (P55)
Flexibility	2	Chameleon (P17, P52)
Other	4	Ship in unfamiliar waters (P19), flower field (P25), newly arrived student (P31), close friend (P32)

4.2.1 Versatility

The teacher in this category can be defined as a teacher who is versatile, that is to say, s/he has multiple characteristics and can do many tasks at the same time if necessary. It is clearly depicted in the following example:

"An EFL teacher is like a polygon because s/he should have knowledge on every subject, language is a social entity. An English language teacher also should be versatile." (P8)

4.2.2 Flexibility

Teacher in this category can be described as being flexible and adaptable to different conditions of foreign language teaching, as seen in the example below.

"An EFL teacher is like a chameleon because s/he should be able to adapt to every condition." (P17)

4.2.3 Other

The category of other was formed as the characteristics described in the metaphors comprising this category did not point to common or recurrent aspects. The metaphors indicate that an EFL teacher should be energetic and colorful (P25), and is generally very tolerant and open to new ideas (P32). Moreover, it can be claimed that an EFL teacher attracts attention as suggested by the metaphor *newly arrived student* (P31). Lastly, teacher is viewed as a patient and ambitious person who always tries to reach his or her goals as implied by *the ship in unfamiliar waters* (P19) metaphor.

5. Discussion

Pre-service teachers carry their prior beliefs, knowledge and experiences about teaching and learning to their teacher education programs, mostly stemming from previous educational experiences (Lortie, 1975, as cited in Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to reveal pre-service teachers' conceptualizations regarding teachers and teaching in order to *"promote a deeper understanding of the teaching profession"* (Saban, 2004, p. 634) and for this purpose, metaphors can be utilized because they function as *"a powerful research tool in gaining insight into prospective teachers' professional thinking about teaching and learning"* (Saban, Koçbeker & Saban, 2006, p. 509). Accordingly, this study set out with the aim of revealing senior pre-service EFL teachers' metaphorical conceptualizations regarding an EFL teacher and found that pre-service EFL teachers mostly describe an EFL teacher by utilizing more traditional teacher roles or teacher-centered roles despite the constructive view of education that is dominant in their pre-service education. To clarify, in this study, the *teacher role provider or source of knowledge* has the highest percentage (%29) of all the categories consisting of metaphors to describe teacher roles. These findings are in line with those of Guerrero and Villamil (2000) study in which they examined ESL teachers' metaphorical conceptualizations regarding an ESL teacher. According to Guerrero and Villamil (2000, p. 348), ESL

teachers still tend to depict themselves using traditional teaching roles like “leader”, “agent of change”, “nurturer”, and “provider of knowledge”. The results of our study are also in parallel with the findings of a very recent study carried out by Asmalı and Çelik (2017) in order to examine EFL teachers’ conceptualizations of their own roles through metaphors. Similarly, Asmalı and Çelik (2017) found that most of the EFL teachers conceptualized being an EFL teacher as being a knowledge provider. The reason for why teachers conceptualize being an EFL teacher by traditional teacher roles (despite the reflective focus of pre-service education) might be due to their previous beliefs or experiences that they formed as a student before they started their pre-service teacher education because these prior beliefs of pre-service teachers seem to “serve as filters through which they view and interpret the teaching performances of others” (Kagan, 1992, p. 76-77). Yet, they may also hinder change “by limiting the ideas that teacher education students are able and willing to entertain” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.1016). That is why, teacher educators need to be aware of how pre-service EFL teachers conceptualize being an EFL teacher and help them be aware of their own conceptualizations, as well.

Pre-service EFL teachers’ dominant conceptualizations of an EFL teacher as provider or source of knowledge points may have some implications for the structure of classroom interaction that will occur between them and their students when they start teaching. That is to say, it can be suggested that the teacher role provider or source of knowledge points to one- sided classroom interaction not a dynamic one. This claim is somehow supported by Nikitina and Furuoka’s (2008) study that carried out a factor analysis of students’ (learning Russian at a university in Malaysia) conceptions regarding language teachers. Two of the recurrent dimensions emerging in their study among others were “teacher as advisor” and “teacher as provider” which, according to them, underlined the “*unidirectional nature*” of interaction taking place between students and their teachers in the classroom (p. 177).

Another important result of this study is that pre-service EFL teachers mostly define an EFL teacher through teacher roles that are mostly common to any teacher, but not peculiar to an EFL teacher within the ELT profession. The ones that seem to distinguish between an EFL teacher and any teacher generally appear to focus on the importance of target culture in English language teaching and the cultural role that an EFL teacher has. Borg (2006, p. 3) claims that language teachers differ from other teachers in terms of “*the nature of the subject, the content of teaching, the teaching methodology, teacher–learner relationships, and contrasts between native and non-native speakers.*” However, the limited description of teacher roles specific to an EFL teacher in the present study may also be due to the small sampling of the present study that may not be sufficient to elicit teacher roles only related to ELT profession.

Another prominent result in this study is that the role culture transmitter has the third highest percentage. Therefore, it is possible to claim that pre-service EFL teachers seem to be aware of the importance of culture in foreign language teaching. This can be related to the English Literature, and Teaching Language and Literature courses that they took in their second and third year, respectively. Yet, the role culture transmitter

does not seem to go beyond the role provider or source of knowledge as being again "one-way flow of information, skills and values from the teacher as expert to learners as empty receptacles" in Oxford et al.'s (1998, p. 24) perspective of "The Cultural Transmission" (which is more comprehensive than our category of culture transmitter, though) assigning a more active role to teachers and much less active one to the students. Likewise, Zapata and Lacorte (2007, p. 533) highlighted "the prevalence of the Cultural Transmission Perspective" in pre-service and in-service instructors' metaphors regarding second language teacher.

The results of the study lastly suggest that pre-service EFL teachers tend to describe an EFL teacher by pointing to two teacher characteristics in particular, which are versatility and flexibility. These characteristics are desired teacher characteristics when we assume that teachers may come across learners with different learning styles (Reid, 1987) or different types of intelligence as there are multiple types of intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

6. Conclusion

This study reveals that senior prospective English language teachers overwhelmingly assign such conventional roles as *provider of knowledge*, *guide*, and *culture transmitter* to an EFL teacher. As for the conceptualization of the EFL teacher's characteristics, it was found that the metaphors of the teacher trainees fell under the categories of *versatility* and *flexibility*. In light of these results, it can be interpreted that the pre-service English language teachers hold the view that an EFL teacher plays an active role in foreign language classrooms while his or her students as receivers of knowledge about the language and culture are in a more passive position.

Taking into consideration the teacher trainees' conventional conceptualization of an English teacher's roles, we can make some suggestions for changing it. For example, teacher trainers can more emphasize the social aspects of language teaching and learning in their courses by paying much attention to such concepts as scaffolding and mediating (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the prospective English teachers may have the view that language teaching is a process in which both teacher and student play an active role. Moreover, some efforts can be made to enable the teacher trainees to acquire critical thinking skills, so they can reflect on or be aware of their own conceptualizations and make some necessary changes on them.

As in every research study, there are also some limitations of the present study. For instance, as the sample size is relatively small, generalizing the results to similar groups may be problematic. In addition, because of not being able to find enough number of participants for a focus-group interview on their metaphors as their schedule is very busy, just relying on the metaphor elicitation task on data collection constitutes another limitation for this research.

In consideration of the results and limitations of this research, further studies can be conducted with the participants of this study when they are employed as an English teacher. Also, it can be suggested that the effects of some changes on the teacher

training curriculum on the conceptualizations of the trainees can be investigated. Finally, longitudinal studies of metaphors can be useful to see the evolution of the pre-service EFL teachers' conceptualizations of English teacher.

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