# ANALYSIS OF METAPHORICAL PERCEPTION OF THE WORD 'FITNESS' BY GIRESUN UNIVERSITY SPORTS SCIENCES FACULTY STUDENTS AND KEŞAP VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this study is to identify and compare metaphorical perceptions of 'fitness' concept by university students majoring in two different departments. In spite of its qualitative nature, the study exhibits a phenomenological pattern. A total of 50 students from Giresun University Sports Sciences Faculty and Keşap Vocational High School participated in the study. Data was collected by open-ended question method. The participants were asked to fill in the questions in the form of "Fitness is like_____because_____" in their own handwriting for metaphor analysis. Data was evaluated by content analysis and a total of 29 metaphors were elicited under 2 main themes. The most-frequently used metaphors were 'tree, balloon and life' respectively.

**Keywords:** metaphorical, fitness, sports

## 1. Introduction

Sports, which dates back to the beginning of life history, is now considered to be an indispensable part of society. Advancement of technology, industrialization, the concept of leisure time, which bears importance for people, daily work intensity and stress have raised awareness in people. The resulting health concerns incurred by people have also driven them to sports. Deemed as a social activity by the society with varying personal preference, sports increasingly gained a place in life, growing as various branches periodically. Today each individual is engaged in sports activities for at least once either on their educational path from the primary school to university or with the help of motivation of the media.

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In today's world, sports is one of the easiest ways to develop individuals physically, emotionally and socially, facilitate group work, promote mutual solidarity and gain social membership. Sports refers to a concept that helps an individual to socialize as it provides a feeling of personal and social identity and group membership as well as being a set of physical activities (Küçük and Koç, 2004).

It should be acknowledged that sports is effective not only in terms of physical development but also helps individuals attain psychological strength, adapt to social life, learn stress management and use mental abilities. The following saying of Atatürk proves this in the best manner: "*Sports does not merely mean superiority of body capacity. Appreciation and morality also contributes to it. The strong ones with weak appreciation and morality cannot cope with the less strong ones with high appreciation and intelligence.*"

Exposed to many stimulants in daily life, human organisms should have the physical fitness to complete their activities energetically between getting up and going to sleep. The World Health Organization describes physical fitness as "*the state of social, mental and physical wellness*". Given the fact that many people in the society do not know that the word fitness refers to physical fitness, it is a composition of actions done to pursue a healthy life and remain active and it increases muscle and joint strength and flexibility, improving the appearance. Fitness, which societies commonly confuse with bodybuilding, can also be achieved by weightlifting as in bodybuilding, but unlike bodybuilding, its main purpose is not to boost muscle volume.

Showing and gaining a place for itself 20-25 years ago in Turkey, fitness has become trendy through the media and risen awareness in recent years. Social facilities, which were founded by the municipalities in metropolitans at the outset, have caught attention of private enterprises and easily-accessible gyms have grown in number. According to Cengiz and Taşmektepligil (2016), two of the most significant reasons for people to prefer gyms are to have an aesthetic appearance and taking care of health.

Metaphor is defined as description of a concept, phenomenon and event by likening it to another concept, phenomenon or event by Oxford et al. (1998). Therefore, metaphor is done by explicitly or implicitly pointing out that X resembles Y. In this context, metaphors provide an opportunity for educators to point out the similarities between two things, comparing two things or describing something by replacing it with something else (Aktaran; Şaban, 2004). Metaphors are found in many idioms, aphorisms and figures of speech that we use unconsciously in our daily lives. However, it should be underlined that this concept does not mean 'like' as 'like' suggests resemblance. On the other hand, metaphor is a figurative expression. It is envisioning of a word used showing individual differences. For example, one may envision Pilates images in his/her mind when (s)he hears 'sports' while another may envision skiing branch.

The interest in sports branches changes periodically. People may continuously alter popularity and shift attention by talking among themselves. A branch of sports, which had been trendy until two years ago may leave its place to different kinds in a

stroke. Metaphors created in these fields are also vast in number because of suitability of sports environment. For example, yellow canary represents Fenerbahçe while crocodile represents Bursaspor or people use war terms when they want to represent the strong one. The same applies to gyms where I have spent a great deal of time. People who have acquired the habit of working out make it fun by giving the name of their idols to some of the exercises. Offstein and Neck, (2003) stated that sports metaphors may simplify learning processes of difficult terms, render communication processes enjoyable and are of great value in education processes due to their ability to catch the interest of readers. (Conveyed by Argan et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to compare and analyse the responses to fitness metaphor of students of Giresun University Sports Sciences Faculty, who are already athletes and Keşap Vocational High School students, who have never done sports in their lives.

## 2. Method

Qualitative research method was used in this study. According to Glaser (1978), qualitative research is an approach that brings analysing and understanding social phenomena within the environment they are affiliated to with a mentality that takes theorising as basis. In this definition, theorizing refers to a modelling study that explains some results which were not know on the basis of their correlation acting on data gathered (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 1999). Metaphors may be used as means of both description and comparison in understanding of social concepts (Silman and Şimşek, 2006; Örücü, 2012). In this scope, our study was conducted by using a qualitative research method, phenomenological pattern. Individual experiences constitute the basis of this approach. Here, the researcher is interested in personal (subjective) experiences of the participant and analyses perceptions of the individual as well as the meanings ascribed to events (Baş and Akturan, 2008; Ayyıldız, 2016). According to philosophy discipline that contributes largely to qualitative studies, we first need to understand how people perceive realities if we wish to surface and understand the truth (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 1999). Within the scope of the study, metaphorical perceptions of university students with different majors were analysed with the data collected using metaphor technique. Open-ended metaphor perception technique was applied to the study sample, a total of 50 students from Giresun University Sports Sciences Faculty teaching department and health management department of Keşap Vocational High School, 5 of which were not included in the evaluation.

### 2.1 Collection and Analysis of Data
A semi-structured metaphor form was applied to each student participating in the study in 2018 so as to elicit their perceptions of fitness concept. There are two gap filling questions in the interview form:

*"Fitness is like_____ "*
*"Because fitness resembles _____."*

In this study, open-ended questions were asked to individuals for them to answer these questions in their own handwriting to identify the perceptions regarding any concept or subject through metaphors. They were asked to give their answers in such a way as to answer the question word 'why' in order to be able to find out the reason why they used the concept they used for the real strength of metaphor lies in the questions about these 'adjectives.' Each individual may ascribe different meanings to the same metaphor. The purpose of using these metaphors or these different meanings ascribed can only be elicited with the answer to the question: 'why' (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013; Ayyıldız, 2016). Data obtained in the research was subjected to content analysis method and the resulting themes were interpreted within conceptual framework. Metaphors used by students of different schools participating in the study were later analysed through comparison and their approach towards fitness concept was identified. The data collected in content analysis is coded and classified according to these codes. Then themes which can explain the data at general level and organize the codes into certain categories are found. First codes are gathered and then their common aspects are tried to be discovered in order to find themes. This is, in a sense, the process of thematic coding and categorization of collected data via codes. If a high number of themes are created after codes are put together, classification may be performed for the next upper theme based on common relations of these themes. Attention should be paid to effective representation of various sections of the data set in accordance with the themes created. At this stage, it would be beneficial if an external researcher analyses whether the themes created reflect sufficient level of data set and data are organized effectively in line with these themes and make suggestions for the researcher (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2013).

Reliability of findings was calculated by the agreement percentage suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Formed Agreed on}}{\text{Total number of forms}} \times 100$$

As a result of the formula calculation Reliability = 45/50x 100= 90 was found.

## 3. Findings

Metaphors used by students of both schools are shown in table 1. 18 different metaphors were elicited regarding fitness from Sports Sciences Faculty compared to 21 different ones from Vocational High School. 15 metaphors out of the ones used are active metaphors in linguistic terms i.e. they can be directly related to the concept of

comparison. The remaining 14 ones are passive metaphors, which mean relation with the concept can be established only via examples.

**Table 1:** Metaphors Elicited from Students on the Concept of Fitness

| Metaphors (N=29) | Sports Sciences Faculty | Vocational High School | f |
|---|---|---|---|
| Internet | 1 | | 1 |
| Tree | 3 | | 3 |
| Sea | 1 | | 1 |
| War | 1 | | 1 |
| Portage | 1 | | 1 |
| Oneself | 1 | | 1 |
| Child | 1 | | 1 |
| Swamp | 1 | | 1 |
| Fruit | 1 | | 1 |
| Love | 2 | | 2 |
| Cigarette | 1 | | 1 |
| Life | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Health | 1 | | 1 |
| Flower | 1 | | 1 |
| Happiness | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Power | 1 | | 1 |
| Soil | 1 | | 1 |
| Order | 1 | | 1 |
| School | | 1 | 1 |
| Friend | | 1 | 1 |
| Bodybuilding | | 2 | 2 |
| Life | | 1 | 1 |
| Balloon | | 2 | 2 |
| Entertainment and Hobby | | 1 | 1 |
| Crane | | 1 | 1 |
| Steel Robot | | 1 | 1 |
| Mental and Physical Harmony | | 1 | 1 |
| Fashion Design | | 1 | 1 |
| Training | | 2 | 2 |
| Spring | | 1 | 1 |
| Sports | | 1 | 1 |
| Dance | | 1 | 1 |
| Addiction | | 1 | 1 |
| Physical Fitness | | 1 | 1 |
| Physical Training | | 1 | 1 |
| Human-Like Organism | | 1 | 1 |
| Entertainment after a boring day | | 1 | 1 |

Table 1 shows the metaphors written by the participant students in the form of metaphor names, common usage among departments and frequency. As can be seen, a

total of 29 metaphors were elicited in relation to the concept of fitness from participant students. As can be seen, 29 metaphors were elicited in total from students participating in the study, among which the most frequently used ones by both schools' students were bodybuilding, life, balloon, training, love and tree.

**Table 2:** Metaphors Elicited from Students for Fitness Concept by Categories

| Categories | Number of Metaphors (F) |
|---|---|
| Within life of context | 13 |
| Within the context of outer environment | 16 |

Categorical analysis of metaphors elicited from students was stated in Table 2. Metaphors were categorized into "within life context" or "within the context of outer environment" accordingly.

**Table 3:** Metaphors Created by Students on Fitness Concept, their Categories and Reasons

| Metaphor Order | Metaphor Name | Category | Reason |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2,5,10,19 | Tree | Within the context of outer environment | It yields efficiency if looked after regularly. Its roots develop and gets stronger. The opposite if you fail to do so. |
| 3 | Sea | Within the context of outer environment | Images of wave-like muscle fibres in the body flash in my mind. |
| 4 | War | Within life of context | We lose if you give up. |
| 6 | Portage | Within life of context | You exert lots of effort but it goes for nothing when you stop doing it. |
| 8 | Child | Within the context of outer environment | It grows properly only if you look after it. |
| 9,22 | Swamp | Within the context of outer environment | When you get into it, you become addicted and get more curious. |
| 11,12,17 | Love-Cigarette | Within life of context | It causes addiction. |
| 13,14,16,4 | Life | Within life of context | Important for health. |
| 15 | Flower | Within the context of outer environment | It blossoms only if you look after it. |
| 16,18 | Happiness | Within life of context | It is fun. One saves time for him/herself and gets away from stress. |
| 18 | Power | Within the context of outer environment | It makes you stronger. |
| 21 | Order | Within the context of outer environment | It puts life in order. |
| 24,23,20 | Physical training | Within the context of outer environment | Contributes to healthy life. |
| 21 | Dance | Within the context of outer environment | It is based on movements and entertains people. |
| 19,6 | Balloon | Within the context of outer environment | The aim is to pump up and grow the muscles and look better |
| 17 | Spring | Within the context of outer environment | The spring gets more intense when you put a weight on it. Fitness does the same and tightens your body. |
| 12 | Fashion | Within life of | We achieve different results by using different materials all |

|     | Design | context | the time. Fitness and fashion design resembles in this sense. |
|-----|--------|---------|------------------------------------------|
| 10  | Steel Robot | Within the context of outer environment | A person improves his/her body and gets stronger when (s)he does fitness. |
| 9   | Entertainment | Within life of context | It is fun time that follows a boring day. The person feels good about him/herself. |
| 8   | Crane | Within the context of outer environment | It is based on lifting and putting down weights. |
| 2   | Friend | Within life of context | It is beside you at good or bad times as long as you want. |
| 1   | School | Within life of context | It is training your body. |

Total=45

## 4. Discussion

According to the conclusions reached as a result of the study, although majority of the metaphors elicited from students with regard to fitness are within the scope of outer environment, there is no considerable margin from the category of life context. When reasons for the metaphors are considered, positive sides of fitness were expressed such as the sports branch's integrity with life, its ability to get people rid of stress and make them feel good as well as contribution to empowerment and healthy life. On the other hand, some critical reasons were also expressed such as the facts that it requires constant effort, balanced diet and no improvement can be achieved if no importance is placed on sleep or that it is done only for the purpose of a more aesthetic appearance (big body lines). Several studies dealing with fitness are found in the literature.

In the study they conducted, Kaufman and Kirchheimer (1997) reached the conclusion that "*fitness should be a lifestyle, not going to the gym 3 days a week*" (Maguire, 2002). This agrees with the fact inferred from student metaphors that fitness requires effort and continuity.

According to Maguire (2002) "*fitness provides a solution for health, physical strengthening and aesthetic appearance concerns of people and is a multi-faceted mind-body training that ensures attaining the best version of oneself while spending leisure time pleasantly at the same time.*" This study conclusion is in parallel with the reasons elicited for power, steel robot, school, spring and balloon metaphors in our own study.

Ayar's study (2007) suggests: "*Short or long-term participation of individuals in workouts does not affect their motivation. In addition, individuals may have ceased participation in workouts as they may have attained the appearance they want to reach in a short time or will lose the motivation that will affect this aim in a long-term.*" This confirms the desire to achieve immediate results encountered today as covered in the introduction section of our study in addition to the 'portage' metaphor elicited from students because the reason for 'portage' metaphor was "*you exert a lot of energy but it goes for nothing when you stop.*"

## 5. Conclusion

Sine-qua-none of a healthy life is, first of all, balanced and sufficient nutrition, which should be accompanied by regular exercise. The exercises done may create a considerable and measureable effect if they are performed at sufficient intensity, volume and frequency (Cerit, 2016; Çavdar et al. 2018). What attracted our, trainers' attention in this study was deeming of fitness exercises the same as bodybuilding. In order to enable a clearer understanding of the striking difference, we chose participants from both students studying in sports sciences faculty and vocational high school students who have never been involved in a sports community or done any sports. When the results of open-ended surveys are considered, it is found that while students of sports sciences faculty opted for concepts that can e directly associated with fitness as metaphors, vocational high school students used indirect concepts that required extra explanations to be understood. This shows that fitness is commonly confused with bodybuilding by our society and it is highly likely that people involved in the discipline know the difference. Again, the reasons attributed to the metaphors show that although the concepts are confused, their life purpose is correct. Individuals are aware that exercise will get them away from stress, entertain them and provide a good physical appearance to them and they reckon that this exercise type is a process that requires intense effort. The reason that the two exercise types are confused but their functions are known may be because they are frequently used in daily language or physical appearance of individuals doing body building attracts more attention when we go to fitness-oriented gyms according to the logical conclusion we have reached in our study. Various media programmes may be developed in order to raise awareness about and ensure continuity in fitness exercises. The concept confusion may also be avoided if business managers change the daily language they use. Studies on fitness may be promoted as the literature does not contain a large quantity of studies.

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