

## Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Syrian Refugees: A Metaphor Analysis

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### **Abstract**

*A phenomenological approach was used in this study designed to identify teacher candidates' perceptions of Syrian refugees through metaphors. Participants were 264 teacher education students at a university in Turkey. Each teacher candidate was asked to complete the following sentence during data collection: "A Syrian is like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." Analysis and interpretation of the metaphors occurred in five stages: (a) naming, (b) sorting (clarifying and eliminating), (c) compiling and categorizing, (d) establishing interrater reliability, and (e) analyzing the data quantitatively. Results show teacher candidates had mostly negative thoughts about Syrian refugees and immigrants. The teacher candidates' negative perceptions extended to their opinions about Turkey and its relationship with refugees. In fact, many teacher candidates were worried about the future of Turkey and its local people; furthermore, some teacher candidates felt pity for the refugees.*

**Keywords:** *Metaphor; perception; Syrian refugees; teacher candidates*

The aim of this study was to discover perceptions of teacher candidates about Syrian refugees through metaphors. In recent decades communities around the world have faced significant fluctuations in population due to the refugee diaspora. According to the annual Global Trends report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of refugees across the globe was 79.5 million in 2019 (Hosokawa, 2021). The largest migration wave occurred after the crisis in Syria in 2011, when many Syrian people migrated to safer countries in large numbers around the world. Because of their shared border Turkey accepted refugees from Syria. Since 2012 Syrian refugees have posed a growing issue for Turkey, one not only affecting social life and politics but also education and the economy. Providing refugees with accommodations and integrating them into the society has affected the state and society. Thus, for all components of the country, the adaptation and integration of refugees have become important issues. This article opens with an introduction of the basic issues involved in refugee numbers and policies in Turkey, followed by comments on the importance of education as the key to adaptation and integration of refugees into a new society. "It would not be wrong to say that education is the first and most important step to facilitate the adaptation of refugees to Turkey and Turkish culture" (Boylu, 2020). Next, the problems faced by refugee children in Turkish schools are discussed. A close look at existing literature indicated that teachers' opinions and negative perceptions of refugees have an effect on refugee children's adaptation and education. Thus, to discover teacher candidates' perceptions about Syrian refugees in general, not in specific, a phenomenological method was used

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because “this methodology allows for the unearthing of phenomena from the perspective of how people interpret and attribute meaning to their existence” (Frechette et al., 2020, p. 1). To fulfill the aim of this study, I used metaphors to examine perceptions because metaphors help to uncover the shared perceptions of the public on matters of daily life. Metaphors also explain what a specific thing is like, communicate what people think or how they feel about an issue, and deliver a meaning in a creative and interesting way (Knowles & Moon, 2006).

The aim of this article, mainly interpretive in nature, was to analyze new data gathered from teacher candidates; however, the situation of Syrian refugees and the importance of their children’s education must be understood before interpreting any data.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Term “Refugee”**

The United Nations has defined “refugee” as

a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951)

To clarify, the term “migrant” also refers to a person outside the territory of which she or he is a citizen; but the terms “migrant” and “refugee” differ: The refugee requires protection, whereas the migrant does not.

### **Refugees in Turkey**

Even though Turkey has accepted immigrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and other Turkic Republics, as of 2011 Turkey has been the recipient of mass migration, especially from Syria. The number of Syrian refugees suffering the negative effects of war is higher than the number from all emigrating countries. According to data from the Turkish Immigration Authority, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey was 3,561,707 on March 22, 2018; moreover, a new generation has been born there. According to the 2018 data, approximately 340,000 refugee children have been born in Turkey. Thus, as Turkey has faced an intensive wave of migration from 2011, educational, sociological, economic, and political results of migration have emerged as well.

Until the end of 2013, Turkey had implemented an open-door policy for Syrian refugees, who were hosted in camps funded and managed by the Turkish state and several NGOs. In 2014, however, because of the shrinking capacity of the camps and changes in the Turkish policy response, the vast majority of Syrian refugees ended up living in towns and cities, creating economic difficulties and social tensions between Syrian refugees and their host communities (İçduygu, 2015). The difficulties of making a life in Turkey ran through the stories of the Syrians who had moved on for what might typically be understood as economic reasons: They were running out of money, found it impossible to secure employment, or were working long hours for very little pay (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). A lack of work authorization forced Syrian refugees to find employment in the informal economy, where working conditions were



often unacceptable and wages extremely low (İçduygu, 2015). Although Syrians living in Turkey were entitled to access work permits at the time of this writing as part of the EU–Turkey agreement intended to prevent them from moving on into Europe, work permits remained difficult to secure; and without them most Syrians continued to be absorbed in the informal sector and low-skill jobs (World Bank, 2015).

Apart from the difficulties associated with obtaining a work permit, a lack of Turkish language skills also presented an obstacle to securing employment. Most of the respondents in one study planned to migrate onward because of poor living conditions and a lack of legal status (Koser & Kuschminder, 2016). In addition to working conditions, economic burdens, and a lack of protection, access to education is another problem Syrian refugees faced in Turkey. Access to the education of children is important to be able to adapt to the host country.

### **Importance of Refugee Children’s Education**

If refugee children discontinue education, they can find themselves relegated to unskilled labor and growing up uneducated. If remaining distant from education and unprepared for the future, children can be open to the abuse of elders in the workplace and regarded as cheap labor. The economic problems of Syrian families can also expose them to the risk of labor exploitation of children (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Nonschooling or school withdrawal can lead Syrian refugee children to marginalization, membership in radical groups, risky travel, and fatal journeys (Watkins & Zycks, 2014). In addition to children who are excluded from education or drop out of school for various reasons, those who attend school but cannot effectively benefit from education are also at high risk of joining marginalized groups, being abused or attending abusive events, and engaging in aggressiveness at school (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Children who cannot benefit from educational opportunities suffer the depletion of hope for the future; furthermore, poverty is replicated in successive generations, leading to permanent social instability and the disappearance of any expectation of the reconstruction of their lives in the receiving society (Watkins & Zycks, 2014).

According to the 2017 monitoring report by the Ministry of National Education, during the 2016–2017 academic year 59% (492,544) of the 833,039 school-age refugee children were enrolled in a school. This rate rose to 65% during the 2017–2018 academic year; however, these rates reflected only what was reported and may not have included unrecorded children or newborn refugee children. In short, not all refugee children are schooled; furthermore, schooled refugee children also have attendance problems. In addition to enrollment and attendance at school, refugee children experience numerous other problems: (a) language problems, (b) bureaucratic obstacles due to a lack of substitutive documents stating the children’s educational levels, (c) lack of educational coordination of refugees due to a scarcity of qualified education in the public schools and temporary training centers, (d) lack of physical substructure caused by public schools blindsided by the need to serve refugee children, (e) lack of knowledge of teachers about working with refugee children, and (f) deficiency and lack of curriculum and teaching materials (Coşkun et al., 2017; Emin, 2016; Erdoğan, 2014; Kirişçi, 2014; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Özer et al., 2016; Seydi, 2014; Uğurlu, 2018; Yılmaz, 2015).

Together with the educational problems of refugee and asylum-seeking students noted above, other problems for refugee children are caused in general by cultural, economic, and other factors directly affecting their education. In addition to the above, according to the results of studies done with refugee children, problems experienced by those who are Syrian include (a)

negative perception, (b) perception as cheap labor, (c) child labor among very young children due to economic hardship, (d) early marriage of girls due to socioeconomics and culture (Harunoğulları, 2016; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; Uğurlu, 2018; UNHCR, 2014; Watkins & Zycks, 2014):

Problems arising from cultural, economic, and psychological factors prevent refugee children from taking full advantage of educational opportunities. For those who had to migrate because of war or an oppressive environment, however, education is not only a right recognized in international agreements for their growth and development. It is also a part of the normalization process, where education is both beneficial for the children individually and useful for the country of asylum because it helps fit them into society and helps reconstruct the country and society during any subsequent turnaround. Some researchers in particular have shown the importance of refugee education in terms of human resources: If permanent residency occurs, one can expect that education given to the refugees contributes to their social integration and cultural adaptation (OECD, 2015).

### **Aim of the Study**

Increasing levels of migration from Syria to Turkey and Syria's continuous stream of emigrants have caused a range of problems between the two countries. The development of a solution to the cultural issues they experience as a result of migration is essential. The need for these two nations to live in harmony has produced some specific social problems that may not have yet been fully realized, but stereotypes and negative attitudes have indeed produced consequences. To solve the problems, governmental policies are needed; however, even these will be inadequate if local people do not interiorize such policies.

At this point raising children with empathy and positive attitudes toward people without marginalizing others may prevent problems in the future. Thus, the Turkish people's perceptions about Syrian refugees are of particular interest. First, Turkish perceptions of Syrian refugees must be determined and then any negative or incorrect perspectives should be eliminated. Local people often hold negative attitudes toward refugees (Küçükkaraca, 2001), but in one study even social sciences teacher candidates were found to have some negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees (Topkaya & Akdağ, 2016). When local people have negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees, social problems within the society may arise; however, when teachers have negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees, any resultant problems are more serious because the influence of education and educators has considerable effect in society.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teacher candidates about Syrian refugees through an analysis of metaphors. The metaphor can serve as a model mechanism for understanding and structuring individuals' inner worlds (Arslan & Bayrakçı, 2006). The effectiveness of metaphors, in terms of science, is noteworthy for their capacity to express what cannot often be expressed simply (Draaisma, 2007). Metaphors provide scientifically complex phrases in simple but creative ways (Aubusson, 2002; Girmen, 2007). Another benefit of metaphors is their capacity to guide educators and learners (Sternberg, 2008). Phrases that are difficult to understand can be illuminated in learning environments by connecting them to more easily accessible concepts (Geçit & Gencer, 2011).



Thus, the aim of the study was to examine the perceptions of teacher candidates toward Syrian refugees through metaphor analysis. The research questions were as follows:

1. What metaphors do teacher candidates use to explain their perceptions of Syrian refugees?
2. What themes emerged among the metaphors produced by teacher candidates regarding Syrian refugees?

## Methodology

In this study, I examined perceptions of Syrian refugees held by teacher candidates studying in various departments and preparing to teach in a range of grade levels at a university in Turkey. The methodology I used was based in phenomenology (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994), the science of phenomena. In my qualitative study, the data I collected comprised metaphors that I analyzed (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Saban, 2006). I used a qualitative research design, a method falling under the phenomenological approach, because it was the most appropriate to study individuals' perceptions as shown in metaphors. The purpose of phenomenological research is to elucidate people's perceptions and opinions of a phenomenon or issue and the meanings ascribed to them (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In determining individuals' perceptions, data collection methods typically include surveys, scales, and interviews; but metaphors can also serve as a source of data. When comparing metaphor analysis with other data collection methods, its strength lies in its capacity to reveal implicit structures in individuals' minds through connotation. Preference for using metaphor analysis in this study derived from my desire to acquire an accurate understanding of the perceptions of participants. If interviews had been used, participants may not have given accurate information about their perceptions of Syrian refugees.

## Using Metaphors in Studies

Metaphors have been used in numerous studies to understand issues that cannot be directly explicated. Researchers have defined metaphor in various ways. Eraslan (2011), for example, stated that the construction of a metaphor involves an individual's seeing and understanding according to a label, meaning, or conceptual expression created by a concept. A metaphor is a "more important and powerful mental production than the individuals' simple explanation of one concept with another concept because it expresses the depth and experiences of the relevant concept" (Eraslan, 2011, p. 1).

From another perspective, a metaphor involves "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Facilitating the discovery of shared perceptions of matters in daily life, a metaphor is also a way to explain what a specific thing is like, to communicate what people think or how they feel about an issue, and to deliver a meaning in a creative and interesting way (Knowles & Moon, 2006). In addition, a metaphor entails "the description of one phenomenon in terms of another: a condensed and implicit comparison" (Conboy, 2007, p. 40).

In simplest terms, a metaphor is a representation of something by a different thing (Littlemore, 2004). It is "an individual's expressing a concept or a phenomenon through perceptions or imagery" (Aydm, 2010, p. 58). Metaphors are tools used by people attempting to explain perceptions of life, environment, events, and objects through imagery (Cerit, 2008).

A metaphor also yields an explanation of a concept, phenomenon or event in which similarities with other concepts, phenomena, or events are stated (Oxford et al., 1998). Metaphors are alternatives for nouns, verbs, or objects in daily language; they are accepted as symbolic language structures connecting two ideas or phenomena to make a comparison or transition from one situation to another (Palmquist, 2001). Metaphors, which play an important role in structuring and understanding reality (Wittink, 2011), convey an individual's perception. A metaphor provides a person's thinking about relationships among concepts while contributing a presentation of various features belonging to that concept, which are ambiguous (Rundgren et al., 2009).

People express their own perceptions of the world with metaphors (Mete & Ayrancı Bağcı, 2016). Thus, via emotions and thought, metaphors reflect the elements of the universe. In fact, using metaphors also has considerable value in education environments for both learners and teachers.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were 264 university students enrolled in the teacher education program at a university in Turkey. In all, 270 university students began the study; however, the answers of six of them were invalid. A total of 183 were women, and 81 were men, and they represented all levels, first year through fourth year, and came from every department of teacher education.

## **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

In the data collection process, participants' perceptions were gathered via the following sentence: "XXX is like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_" (Akkaya, 2013; Boylu & Işık, 2017, 2020; Erol & Kaya, 2020; Göçen, 2019; Göçer, 2013; Saban, 2004, 2008). The sentence "A Syrian is like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_" was given to teacher candidates to complete during the data collection process. In order to acquire the demographic information of the participants, I created and used a demographic information form.

According to the literature, analysis and interpretation of the metaphor process occurs in five stages: (a) naming, (b) sorting (clarifying and eliminating), (c) compiling and categorizing sample metaphors, (d) establishing interrater reliability, and (e) analyzing the data quantitatively (Saban et al., 2006). Each stage is summarized below.

### **Naming**

Determining whether the participants generated metaphors or not is the first stage of data analysis. Six of the 296 teacher candidates wrote nothing on the paper given to them; thus, the writing of 290 participants was considered and examined in the study. The metaphors generated by the teacher candidates were transferred to a Microsoft Word document as a list of phrases. After recording the phrases on the Word document during the naming stage, the sorting (clarification and elimination) phase commenced.

### **Sorting (Clarifying and Eliminating)**

Two experts have helped the researcher about identifying and analyzing metaphors. The metaphors produced by 290 participants were discussed by an expert and me and classified in the context of the aim of the study. Twenty-six responses (e.g., Syrian, I don't know, nothing,



and a picture), which had no meaning in relation to the aim of the study, were deemed invalid, leaving 264 metaphors for consideration. Next, the sample metaphor compilation and categorization phase began.

### **Compiling and Categorizing**

The metaphors produced by the participants were examined by considering the common features among them. The 264 metaphors were grouped under four categories according to the area they conceptualized (similarity of metaphors according to their meaning). The opinions of two experts who worked in the field were obtained to determine the accuracy of the metaphors and the emergence of the categories. Thus, the transition was made to the final phase: establishing the interrater reliability.

### **Establishing Interrater Reliability**

During this stage an alphabetized list of 264 sample metaphor images was given to an expert along with the names of four categories. The expert was asked to enter the metaphor images on a list and then categorize each under four categories on a second list. Twelve subcategories were discussed by the experts and the researcher. Thus, the reliability of the research was calculated using a formula developed by Miles and Huberman (1994):  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{dissent}} \times 100$  (Saban, 2008). In this case, the reliability was calculated thus:  $\frac{264}{264 + 12} \times 100 = 95.65\%$ . Researchers have stated that the desired reliability can be achieved when the harmony between experts and researcher evaluations is 90% and above (Saban, 2008). The reliability of this study was calculated as 95.65%; thus, validity and reliability were present in the analysis of the generated metaphors.

### **Analyzing the Data Quantitatively**

In the final stage of data analysis, all the metaphors and conceptual categories were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, where percentages and frequency values were calculated.

However, there are some concerns about metaphor analysis method. Metaphor analysis procedures for uncovering participant conceptualizations have been well established in qualitative research settings since the early 1980s; however, one common criticism of metaphor analysis is the trustworthiness of the findings (Armstrong, Davis & Paulson, 2011). Scholars have noted the difficulties in making use of reports of research involving metaphor analysis procedures that do not include discussion of how the findings were triangulated or confirmed (Ritchie, 2003; Schmitt, 2005; Semino, Haywood, & Short, 2004; Todd & Harrison, 2008). To eliminate this concern, two separate methods that can be developed

during the research design process and implemented during data collection to ensure that

metaphorical data are triangulated and systematically analyzed carefully and thoughtfully. The first method, which we call metaphor checking, can be likened to ethnographic member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as it provides an opportunity for the researcher and participants to thoroughly discuss and examine the MLEs observed during data collection in order to establish a shared understanding of the underlying conceptualizations. The second method, useful in settings when interaction with individual participants is limited and metaphor checking cannot be as easily implemented, combines thematic analysis of extensive field-based observations with the metaphor analysis for purposes of triangulation.

Similar to member checking in ethnographic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), metaphor

checking is a technique that can be used to help ensure the accuracy and reliability of a metaphor researcher's interpretation. Metaphor checking involves systematically checking researcher interpretations directly with the participants to ensure a common understanding (Armstrong, Davis & Paulson, 2011). In this research, metaphor checking was applied as a deliberate and recurring process throughout the study, both within individual interview sessions and across interview sessions for metaphor-checking purposes.

### **Credibility of the Study and Validity and Reliability**

In qualitative studies one of the ways to improve the credibility of research involves the researcher's experiences in related areas (Bashir et al., 2008). I have done numerous theoretical and practical studies on refugees and also have experience with teacher candidates. To ensure the content validity of the metaphors used during data analysis, the experts, who have experience with metaphor analysis, offered opinions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). To provide validity, a participation strategy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) was adopted, and data were gathered from 264 teacher candidates, aiming to reach saturation on given answers. To improve the validity and cogency of findings, metaphors emerging from data collection were given directly as shown below.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study**

This study is one of the first in the existing literature aimed at examining perceptions of Syrian refugees; only a limited number of studies on refugees appears in national and international literature. Thus, this study may inspire future studies. Despite its strengths, some weaknesses are present. The perceptions I gathered from teacher candidates may have been affected by the media, which often broadcasts negative news about refugees. In addition, data were gathered in class settings; thus, participants might have affected one another. One final point is that I might have misunderstood the metaphors.

### **Results**

Valid metaphors produced by the teacher candidates and emerging from the data analysis are presented below.

#### **Findings from Question 1**

I asked the following in Question 1: What metaphors do teacher candidates use to explain their perceptions of Syrian refugees? Their responses appear in Table 1.





**Table 1***Participants' Metaphors for Syrian Refugees*

NO	METAPHOR	NUMBER OF REPETITIONS	NO	METAPHOR	NUMBER OF REPETITIONS
1	Ungrateful	(6)	22	Poverty	(5)
2	Selfish	(5)	23	Orphan	(5)
3	Invader	(6)	24	Social Reaction	(7)
4	Opportunist	(2)	25	Problematic Guest	(3)
5	Uncivilized	(3)	26	Arab Hatred	(3)
6	Illiterate People	(7)	27	Economic crises	(8)
7	Harasser	(7)	28	Adaptation Problems	(5)
8	Person I should be careful about	(2)	29	Chaos	(6)
9	Disgusting person	(7)	30	Distrust	(4)
10	Coward	(15)	31	Unfair Discrimination	(13)
11	Escaped from the war	(20)	32	Sense of entitlement	(9)
12	Traitor	(5)	33	Financial Help	(5)
13	Polygamist	(2)	34	Ethnic	(2)
14	Multichild family	(23)	35	Nation	(4)
15	Men smoking narghiles (hookahs) at the seaside	(7)	36	Middle Eastern Arab	(1)
16	Woman carrying a child	(4)	37	Immigrant	(11)
17	Itinerant children	(3)	38	Refugee	(18)
18	Committed to leaving their own country	(8)	39	Stranger	(4)
19	Children as victims	(5)	40	Human	(6)
20	Victim of war	(5)			
21	Construction workers, cheap labor	(3)		TOTAL	(264)

Table 1 shows the 40 metaphors produced by the 264 participants as well as the number of times each was repeated. The responses repeated most frequently were as follows: multichild family (23); escaped from the war (20); refugee (18); coward (15); unfair discrimination (13); immigrant (11); sense of entitlement (9); economic crises (8); committed to leaving their own country (8); men smoking narghiles at the seaside, disgusting person, harasser, illiterate person, and social reaction (7); ungrateful, chaos, and human (6). Some metaphors such as the following were infrequently repeated: children as victims, victim of war, money help, traitor, adaptation problems, poverty, orphan, and selfish, (5); stranger, nation, woman carrying a child, and distrust (4); construction worker, cheap labor, itinerant children, uncivilized, problematic guest, and Arab hatred (3); polygamist, ethnic, person I should be careful about, and opportunist (2).

### Findings from Question 2

I asked the following in Question 2: What themes emerged among the metaphors produced by teacher candidates regarding Syrian refugees?

When similar metaphors among those produced by the teacher candidates were grouped, four themes emerged. Table 2 shows the distribution of the themes and metaphors.

**Table 2***Thematic Distribution of the Metaphors Students Developed for Syrian Refugees***Negative Thoughts (117)**

Theme (Total metaphors)	Self-orientation (19)	Uneducated (10)	Harasser (7)	Disrupter (9)	Coward, escaping from war (40)	Crowded families (25)	Narghile smokers (7)
Metaphors (Total)	Ungrateful (6) Selfish (5) Invader (6) Opportunist (2)	Uncivilized (3) Illiterate People (7)	Harasser (7)	Person I should be careful about (2) Disgusting person (7)	Coward (15) Escaped from the war (20) Traitor (5)	Polygamist (2) Multichild family (23)	Men smoking narghiles at seaside (7)

**Pity (38)**

Theme (Total metaphors)	Beggar (7)	Victim (18)	Cheap labor (3)	Desperation (10)
Metaphors (Total)	Woman carrying child (4) Itinerant children (3)	People committed to leaving their own country (8) Children as victims (5) Victim of War (5)	Construction workers, cheap labor (3)	Poverty (5) Orphan (5)

**Effect on Turkey (63)**

Theme (Total metaphors)	Refugee problem (10)	Harmful to the country (16)	Distrust within the country (10)	Wrong politics (27)
Metaphors	Social reaction (7) Problematic guest (3)	Arab hatred (3) Economic crises (8) Adaptation problems (5)	Chaos (6) Distrust (4)	Unfair discrimination (13) Sense of entitlement (9) Financial help (5)

**Neutral Thoughts (46)**

Theme (Total metaphors)	Arab (7)	Human (6)	Refugee (33)
Metaphors	Ethnic (2) Nation (4) Middle Eastern Arab (1)		Immigrant (11) Refugee (18) Stranger (4)

After carefully reading and analyzing, the metaphors were recoded and categorized under 17 main themes. These themes were self-orientation (19); uneducated (10); harasser (7); disrupter (9); coward escaping from war (40); crowded families (25); narghiles (7); beggar (7); victim



(18); cheap labor (3); desperation (10); refugee problem (10); harming country (16); distrust within the country (10); wrong politics (27); Arab (7); human (6); and refugee (33). These 17 main categories were placed under four themes. When considering the table above, the reader can see that metaphors for Syrian produced by teacher candidates fell under four themes: negative thoughts, neutral thoughts, pity, and effect on Turkey. The percentage of metaphors by themes appears in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Percentage of Distribution of Metaphors by Theme*

	Negative Thoughts	Effect on Turkey	Neutral Thoughts	Pity
Total	117	63	46	38
Percentage	44.32%	23.86 %	17.42%	14.39%

Table 3 shows that 117 generated metaphors for Syrians fell under the theme of negative thoughts; 63, under effect on Turkey; 46, under neutral thoughts; and 38, under pity. Thus, teacher candidates mostly understood the term “Syrian” as negative, related to effect on Turkey, neutral, and pitiable.

## Conclusion

The latest figures have shown that the number of refugees around the world has surpassed three billion. If the length of stay in the country to which refugees migrated extends further, problems will occur in succeeding years, increasing day by day. Only education in educational environments can prevent these problems. Refugee children’s educational problems and lack of adaptation to their new society can pose a security problem for receiving countries in the long term (Eren, 2019). Most existing studies have focused on the importance of examining local people’s opinions about refugees and immigrants; however, the more important issue is to assess the mentality of those in the actual educational environments because education leads society. Educators’ perceptions are more essential to the issues than those of the local people. Taking this into consideration, I aimed to gain access to teacher candidates’ perceptions of Syrian refugees and immigrants. Toward this aim, teacher candidates’ opinions of Syrian refugees and immigrants were examined through metaphors. The production and conception of a successful metaphor is vital to understanding one asset in terms of another (Littlemore & Low, 2006).

When the results of studies in the literature and those obtained from this study coincide, one can conclude that this study supports previous studies. A primary result of this study is that teacher candidates have primarily negative thoughts (117) about Syrian refugees and immigrants. Teacher candidates’ next most frequently expressed negative thoughts involved refugees’ effect on Turkey and its condition with increased numbers of refugees. In fact, these teacher candidates (63 of them) worried about the future of Turkey and its local people. Some of the participants thought that refugees and immigrants should return to their country; in other words, refugees were perceived as “guests” expected to go home at some point. Yılmaz and Günay (2022) also found that approximately one third of local people in their study believed that refugees should return home; furthermore, new refugees should be rejected. If new refugees ultimately arrived in Turkey, they should be isolated in camps. My findings aligned with theirs. As an extension of the war, refugees do not often return to their home countries, but even if some do, more refugees will eventually come to Turkey through irregular

migration, continually increasing refugee numbers and causing concern among the local people. This situation has emerged as a threat risk in most of the studies done in the field (Bayır & Aksu, 2020; Çalışkan, 2019; Süleymanov, 2017; Taş & Tekkanat, 2018). The results of my study are similar to these studies because teacher candidates expressed worry about Turkey and its people and saw refugees as a threat to the country. Küçükkaraca (2001) also found that if Syrian refugees were too numerous in a particular place, local people developed negative opinions about them.

Another result of this study is that some of the teacher candidates (38 of them) pitied the refugees. Numerous studies have shown that from the first days of Syrian arrival, some local people felt pity for them, cared for them, and believed that they should receive humanitarian aid. By contrast, my participants stated that many local people some came to believe that the refugees wanted to become householders despite their guest status in Turkey. Thus, pity gave way to negative thoughts in both teacher candidates and Turkish locals. Despite differences among studies and in the thoughts of the Turkish people, in general they are willing to accept Syrian refugees (Gülerce & Çorlu, 2021; Kaypak & Bimay, 2016), similar to the results of this study.

Restrained approaches toward refugees developed, and social common sense has prevailed from Day 1; yet when the results are considered, both my results and those of other academic studies have shown a reduction in the tolerance of local people toward Syrian refugees who are under temporary protection.

Yılmaz and Günay (2022) showed that local people have conflicted feelings about Syrian refugees. They do not know exactly how they should feel about them. They want to feel pity and care; however, they cannot resist thinking about how long they will stay and how many more rights they will seek. In Kavlak's (2011) study more participants agreed than disagreed with the following: "Turkish citizens are in need of many things, [so] helping refugee and immigrant people disturbs me."

In conclusion, in this study the number of participants who had negative about Syrian refugees exceeded the number who pitied them. Refugees and immigrants were perceived as detrimental to Turkey. Neutral thoughts represented 24% of the responses (Kavlak, 2011). In short, the teacher candidates who participated in this study and the local people who participated in other studies had mostly negative views. This situation could cause or trigger ethnocentrism. Evaluating the circumstances that people face with a major influx of refugees today can help them gain foresight about making provisions for serious negative situations that may emerge in the future. This study has provided perceptions of Syrian refugees held by teacher candidates. Such insights can help the reader understand the role of teacher attitudes in the shaping of the attitudes of local people. Additionally, if teacher candidates are against refugees and refugee kids, there is a huge problem in the society. There will be no easy answers to solving it either, not with the numbers of refugees that we are getting in Turkey. So, this is a really important dilemma. This study will try to figure out the perceptions of teacher candidates since it is important to see the problem we are facing with in the first place.



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