



# **Metaphors of Pre-school Teacher Candidates and Pre-school Teachers about the Concept of Play and Toy**

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## **Abstract**

*Play and toys have important roles in children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Plays and toys support child's development in all aspects. This view is widely shared by scientific and media publications. The aim of this study is finding out, with the metaphor technique, the impressions and images of preschool teachers and teacher candidates about "play" and "toy". The study group consists of 100 preschool teacher candidates who are currently undergraduate students in the Department of Preschool Education Program in Ahi Evran University and 100 preschool teachers who work in central districts of Kırşehir during 2014-2015 academic years. The data obtained were analyzed in accordance with the qualitative research model "phenomenology". The data analyzed made up 11 categories reflecting the images of the teachers regarding "play" and 10 categories about "toy". The most commonly used metaphors for "play" are "the power of child's creativity and supporting his/her Imaginary" and "learning tool". The most commonly used metaphor for "toy" is "a basic and an essential material for child (cognitive and educational) development" and "Discovering imaginaries and creativeness". Both preschool teachers and preschool teacher candidates used positive metaphors about play and toys.*

**Keywords:** Preschool teacher, preschool teacher candidate, metaphors, play, toy

## **Introduction**

Play and toys which are the most important factors in order to get experiences of children during their childhood, are affective children's cognitive and social development. That's why, play and toys should be presented to children whenever and as frequently as possible. Play and toys which are specified according to children's gender, interest and skills support child cognitive and educational development. Play and toy are not evaluated differently from each other and they have overlapping functions. Jackson (2001) evaluates as follows:

1. Imitates adults; toy makes easy children in order to play a part in whichever role.
2. Reflecting the reality from another reality; a child who plays house, disciplining her baby with executive audio tone as both protector and powerful figure give information about family systems and behavior styles.
3. Satisfying to lay claim to something: All children need to tell "this belongs to me" for the thing hold in their hands (for the thing they have in their hands).
4. Reflecting development.
5. Preparation of social roles.
6. Support intellectual, mental and physical development.

The relationship between the children's social development, plays and toys is considered from two points of views: 1) Prosocial or aggressive behavior; 2) The development of sexual roles. In the first, the influence of war toys and aggressive games on the social behavior of children is among the subject attracting most curiosity (Onur, Çelen, Çok, Artar, Şener-Demir, 1997). Play and toy along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, are vital to develop the potential of all children. Play is communication and expression, combining thought and action; it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achievement. It is instinctive, voluntary, spontaneous and helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally, socially.

Play is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time. Play is part of education. As a matter of course toy is also a material which is designed for nurturing

creativity in preschool children as a part of educational gains. They provide opportunities for initiative, interaction, creativity and socialization through play and toy in formal education systems and include studies of the importance of play and the means of play provision in the training of all professionals working with and for children. Play is fun, children enjoy the activity or get some kind of fulfillment from play-based process; it is a voluntary activity, children cannot be forced to play; play is characterized by the presence of rules, children apply these rules freely during play, and play has no external goal for the player. The play gives children the opportunity to explore, discover and learn in a meaningful context. Playful activities prepare them for academic learning (Aalsvoort, Bette Prakke, Howard, König, Parkkinen, 2015). Play is one of the most effective tools describing the child's wishes, goals, obtaining them requests and preparing them for life. Children learn spontaneously in the play knowledge and skills, behaviors necessary for living. It can be considered from several points of view. First, it was determined that the play has a positive effect on child cognitive, social, language, motor development. Secondly, when it comes to parenting, preschool teachers, they think play is significant on child development. Third, the play is an effective method that can be used in special education (Saracho, 2003, Kaytez & Durualp, 2014).

Toys and plays are very important factors with which children gain real experiences of their real and future lives. These factors, which have an important role in all stages of child development, support and empower children's skills. Thanks to play and toy, children complete their whole development via guided in order to get new experiences, knowledge and in order to have an awareness about themselves and the world, since they were born. In that scope, children are required to be provide a rich and stimulating environment where there are toys and plays (Demirdaliç, 2004, Tuğrul, 2010).

Play and toy materials are all types of equipment and kit which provide children having fun, learning some social roles. It is unequivocally agreed that Preschool teachers have very important roles in constructing playing process and using toys in the preschool classroom for students. Preschool teachers who buy and choose toys for their classrooms and organize qualified learning direct children in using toys physically and functionally. Besides they have the opportunity to use toys pedagogically and for educational outcomes. If they have self-efficacy how to integrate play and toy in their teaching process and they take positive attitudes, they will plan play-based activities and organize indoor and outdoor (inside and outside the) classroom in order to make plays and toys eligible. The aim of this research is to determine the impressions and images of preschool teachers and teacher candidates about "play" and "toy". Specifically, the following questions guided the study:

1. What metaphors do prospective teachers use to describe the concept of "teacher"?
2. What conceptual themes can be derived from these metaphorical images?

## **Method**

The data obtained were analyzed in accordance with the qualitative research model "phenomenology".

### *Study Group*

This research was conducted with the participation of 100 preschool teacher candidates from the Ahi Evran University Department of Early Childhood Education, Kirsehir and 100 preschool teachers who participated from different local and urban preschools from Kirsehir in 2014-2015 academic year spring semester. Participants were comprised of

voluntary basis and agreeing to contribute to the research. Participants' personal information in Table 1 is as below:

Table 1. *Participants' personal information*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teacher</b>		<b>Teacher Candidate</b>	
	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	81	81	72	72
Male	19	19	28	28
Total	100	100	100	100

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected during the 2015-2016 academic year by using the prompt "A play is like. . . Because. . . or A toy is like . . . Because. . .",. Participants were provided a blank piece of paper with this prompts on top of the page and were asked-to complete it by focusing on only one metaphor. Gender information was requested for demographic data comparison purposes. Participants were given nearly 20 minutes to write about a metaphorical image that seemed apt for their professional thinking. The participant was made noticed that more interested in their instant reactions to the "play" and "toy" phenomenon rather than their exhaustive essays on the topic. In general, the resemblance between the metaphor topic and the metaphor vehicle could be made more explicit through the use of "like". In this study, the similarity was clarified further through the use of "because". By including this word in the prompt, main intention was to encourage participants to give reasons for their personal metaphors. As a whole, that was aimed at eliciting their implicit beliefs about play and toy.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed with the content analysis technique. Main target in content analysis is to get into the concepts and to find out relations that will explain the collected data. The interpreted data within descriptive analysis was taken deeply in content analysis and by doing this; new themes and concepts that could not be found by descriptive analysis can be discovered. The main process in content analysis is to bring the similar data together within some certain concepts and themes and to organize and interpret them so that the reader can understand them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992;Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Analysis of data in the following stages defined by Saban (2009) were taken as a basis for data analysis: The Stage of Elimination: It was determined as to which data would be used. The Stage of Compiling Sample Metaphors: The metaphors defined by the study group were listed. The data were coded by two different coders in the data analyzing process. Themes which entered by coders, were evaluated and decided common and frequently used themes. Besides they were also grouped whether positive or not. They were indicated frequencies and percentages. Development of Categories: the data analysis processes identified by Kuş (2006) such as "classification", "correlation" and "establishing relations" were taken into consideration.

### **Findings**

The data analyzed in 11 categories reflecting the images of the teachers regarding "play" and 10 categories about "toy". The most commonly used metaphor categories for preschool teachers for "play" is "the power of child's creativeness". Most commonly used metaphor for "toy" is "a basic and essential material for child development".

Table 2. *Preschool Teachers Metaphors about “Play”*

<b>Category of Metaphors</b>	<b>f</b>
Power of child’s creativity and Supporting Imaginary	17
Having a big role on child development	2
Inner world of a child	2
All things about life and experiences	11
Necessity for kids, human	3
Child’s freedom	2
Relaxing, satisfying and amusing	5
Learning tool	31
Child occupation	14
Persistent and active learning	3
Addictive	10
Total	100

The metaphors used or developed by preschool teachers related to the concept of “play” were classified under 11 categories depending on their features in common. Table 2 explains that a large number preschool teachers associated ‘learning tool’ (31) metaphor. In addition to that, preschool teachers respectively regard “play” as “Power of child’s creativity and Supporting Imaginary” (17), “Child occupation” (14), “All things about life and life itself” (11), “Addictive” (10). Few teachers also associated with “Having a big role on child development” (2), “Inner world of a child” (2), “Child’s expandium freely” (2). Preschool teachers’ metaphors in order to draw analogy about “play” and their analogy reasons are formed as follows.

Preschool teachers used the following statements to define the metaphors in the category of “Learning tool”. The teachers emphasized that they use “play” as a learning material in classroom activities. They associated “play” with “teacher, mental box, first awareness, etc.” They think that the play has an effective way to construct children cognitive skills. The following statements define the metaphors as below:

*“Play is like a teacher because it supports and empowers child development (mental, emotional, and social) and education.” (Teacher 32, Female)*

*“Play is like a mental box because it is an integral part of child development and education; it is also a natural learning tool and environment.” (Teacher 1, Male)*

*“Play is like the first awareness for a child because he/she discovers and learns the world.” (Teacher 26, female)*

A significant part of preschool teachers associated “play” with “endless”, “limitless”, “wind”, “mirror”, “cooking”. They expressed that play strengthens child’s brain, his/her creative skills and thinking. The following statements define the metaphors are as below:

*“Play is like a wind because it drags us in a creative world.” (Teacher 17, Female)*

*“Play is like the mirror because it reflects the child and childhood in order to travel creativity.” (Teacher 7, Male)*

*“Play is like cooking because we need to have certain ingredients for cooking, like this play is needed to have some products come from our dream world.” (Teacher 12, Female)*

*“Play is like an endless because play derives from a different creative play. So It is creative” (Teacher 14, Female)*

Significant numbers of teachers use metaphors about “play” in order to identify “All things about life and experiences”. They pointed out that play reflects life and presents sections of life. Thus, children act the real life and have experiences of playing. Some following statements about “All things about life and experiences” class of metaphors are as follows:

*“Play is like a life. Because we are doing what we have seen.” (Teacher 27, Female)*

*“Play is like the life because we are doing what we see in the play.” (Teacher 41, Female)*

*“Play is like the children’s experience because he/she gets persistent and effective experiences by playing.”*

*“Play is like child’s life because it covers her/his life entirely.” (Teacher 12, Female)*

Some of preschool teachers emphasized that play makes children addictive. They used “a busy hour”, “ginmill”, “chocolate”, “tribune”. They expressed an opinion that children play more than necessary and play is time consuming. Teachers’ following statements are as follows:

*“Play is like a busy hour because losing track of time...” (Teacher 42, Female)*

*“Play is like a ginmill because it makes addiction like alcohol. So much time consuming” (Teacher 13, Male)*

*“Play is like chocolate because it is flavoring and becoming addicted.” (Teacher 46, Female)*

*“Play is like a tribune because when you have experienced before, you cannot give up” (Teacher 38, Female)*

Few teachers used to liken “play” to “kite”, “blue” for “child’s freedom” and “betraying child’s emotion” for “inner world of a child”. They expressed positive opinions about play with these associated metaphors. The views of two participants related to these metaphors categories are given below:

*“The play is like betraying child’s emotion because he/she experiences everything with it.” (Teacher 41, Female)*

*“The play is like the blue because it calls the freedom for a child. He/she expresses his/ her ideas\feeling comfortable.” (Teacher 27, Female)*

In general, preschool teachers’ ideas can be looked from some points of view associated with metaphors which are likening to. First, they think that play is regarded as a learning material in the classroom and in this context student learns by playing. A major proportion of teachers expressed that play support child’s imaginary and creativity and they also have a consensus about children gain experiences and reflect their lives into the playing process. Besides, they expressed negatively that play makes children addictive and it caused time consuming by they cannot stand playing.

Table 3. *Pre-school Teachers' Metaphors about "Toy"*

<b>Category of Metaphors</b>	<b>f</b>
A basic and essential material for child development	30
Slice of life	6
Discovering imaginaries and creativeness	5
Learning tool	6
Having Fun and Amusement	4
A tool to play	17
Meaning attribution	7
Source of Communication	2
Therapy for Peace and Relaxing	20
Addictive	3
Total	100

The metaphors used or developed by pre-school teachers related to the concept of "toy" were classified under 10 categories depending on their (common) features. Table 3 explains that teachers associated "toy" with "A basic and essential material for child development" (30), "Therapy for Peace and Relaxing" (20), "A tool to play" (17) metaphors. Besides, teachers slightly associated "toy" with "Having Fun and Amusement" (4), "Addictive" (3), "Source of Communication" (2).

A major part of teachers associated with toy in order of "gold, rainbow, a sister, a breath for kid" for "a basic and essential material for child development" category of metaphor. They were in favor that toy has an important role in child development and that is necessary for a child. Some of the teachers' statements are as follows:

*"Toy is like gold because it is the most important item in a child's world."* (Teacher 36, Female)

*"Toy is like a rainbow because it is a colorful world of a child."* (Teacher 46, Female)

*"Toy is like getting pocket money from dad because it covers lots of necessities."* (Teacher 92, Female)

*"Toy is like a sister/brother because child shares her/his life with it while she/he is growing."* (Teacher 88, Female)

*"Toy is like a breath for a kid because he/she learns the life, all things with it."* (Teacher 41, Male)

A significant part of preschool teachers associated "toy" with "Therapy for peace and Relaxing". They considered toy as a tool for children in order to get rid of extra energy, rehabilitative and tranquillizer for disorders. Some of the teachers' statements follows:

*"Toy is like football because it is a tool to be happy and to relax."* (Teacher 23, Male)

*"Toy is like a medicine because children are treated by their toys."* (Teacher 54, Female)

*"Toy is like a beach because source of peace for kids."* (Teacher 48, Female)

A reasonable number of teachers associated toy with "A tool to play" category. They associated "toy" with "fish in the sea, the engine of a car, ingredient of the food etc." and it is inferred from these metaphors that a toy is supplement thing in order to construct play. Some of the teachers' statements are as follows:

*“Toy is like the fish in the sea because play is deficient without a toy.”  
(Teacher 46, Female)*

*“Toy is like the engine of a car because there is no play without a toy.”  
(Teacher 69, Female)*

*“Toy is like the ingredient of food because the more toy is the more play for kids. Toy enriches the playing process.” (Teacher 37, Female)*

Some of teachers liken “toy” to “a picnic basket, funfair, Disneyland etc.” in terms of “Having Fun and Amusement”. They expressed that toy is a material of amusement and is used for having fun. Some of the teachers’ statements are as below:

*“Toy is like a picnic basket because we can put and do everything in order to have a great time.” (Teacher 53, Female)*

*“Toy is like funfair because you have fun as you play.” (Teacher 100, Female)*

*“Toy is like Disneyland because it presents us every all kinds of amusement with playgrounds.” (Teacher 85, Female)*

Few teachers liken “toy” to “Wi-Fi, forgetting where you are, occupying in the life” in terms of “Addictive”. They think that children spend most of their time unwittingly when they focus on toys. Some of the teachers’ statements are as below:

*“Toy is like Wi-Fi because it catches kid’s attention everywhere and constant focus attention” (Teacher 77, Female)*

*“Toy is like forgetting where you are. Because you cannot interest anything.” (Teacher 55, Female)*

*“Toy is like occupying in the life because, as you focus on it, you cannot give up.” (Teacher 31, Male)*

Some of the teachers expressed that the way to communicate gain advantage from toy in “Source of Communication” category of metaphor. They liken to “hail fellow, psychologist”. Some of the teachers’ statements are as below:

*“Toy is like hail fellow because children can communicate via toy. It is a symbol as a form of communication with children.” (Teacher 22, Female)*

*Toy is like psychologist because it is possible to understand and to make comments on the inner world of children.”*

In general, pre-school teachers consider toy as a basic material for child development and education, having relax and discharging children extra energy, as a material for composing of play. A small part of teachers have opinions about toys have specific features on having fun and causing addiction, a tool for communication in order to understand children. From these findings on teachers’ views, it can be said that toy can be identified ‘versatile material’ for children are and served for different kind of purposes.



Table 4. *Preschool Teacher Candidates Metaphors about “Play”*

<b>Category of Metaphors</b>	<b>f</b>
Power of child’s creativity and supporting imaginary	32
Having a big role on child development	2
Inner world of a child	3
All things about life and experiences	3
Necessity for kids, human	3
Child’s freedom	17
Relaxing, satisfying and amusing	22
Learning tool	2
Child’s occupation	2
Persistent and active learning	12
Addictive	2
Total	100

When it comes to pre-school teacher candidates’ categories of metaphors about “play”, It is mostly stated that “Power of child’s creativity and supporting imaginary” (32), “Relaxing, satisfying and amusing” (22), “Child’s freedom” (17), “Persistent and active learning” (12) were explained as the meaning for play. Teacher candidates consider that “play” supports creative thinking and set in motion imaginary. That’s why; creative experiences and creative expressions come true during playing process. Some of the following statements are as below:

*“Play is like undertaking a journey because children discover their imaginary world (world of imagination).” (Teacher Candidate 31, Female)*

*“Play is like setting sail because it encourages children to (make) voyage by playing creatively.”*

*“Play is like magic lamp because the child brain reveals magic ideas in the playing process.” (Teacher Candidate 26, Male)*

*“Play is like a drama because we act in creative experiences.” (Teacher Candidate 47, Female)*

*“Play is like shadow because people enjoy being who they are in an imaginative and creative playing activity.” (Teacher Candidate 66, Male)*

*“Play is like a dream. Because it supports to have a dream to travel to another world and it does not draw lines to ideas.” (Teacher Candidate 64, Male)*

*“Play is like a mandarin because when we remove the skin of mandarin, we meet slices of mandarin. It is possible to derive from different plays.” (Teacher Candidate 78, Female)*

A major part of preschool teacher candidates likened toy to “therapy, massage chair, vitamin of spirit, eating etc.” in terms of “Relaxing, satisfying and amusing”. Teacher candidates stated that “play” can be used for making people having fun or relaxing by playing. It also supports children and adults relaxing. Some teacher candidates’ statements are follows:

*“Play is like a therapy because people during therapy, children have relaxing by playing.” (Teacher Candidate 36, Female)*

*“Play is like a massage chair because children have relaxing by discharging.” (Teacher Candidate 51, Female)*

*“Play is like vitamin of spirit because we feel satisfied with our spirits as we play.” (Teacher Candidate 7, Female)*

*“Play is like eating because it gives relaxing, satisfaction.” (Teacher Candidate 16, Male)*

*“Play is like an ice-cream cone because final point which is known finishing is even delighting.” (Teacher Candidate 22, Female)*

A significant part of pre-school teacher candidates associated “play” with “Child’s freedom”. In that sense, they liken to “the blues kite, small world etc.” in order to make sense of freedom. They think that children have high self-expression comfortably in the playing process. Some of the teacher candidates’ statements are as below:

*“Play is like the blue kite because children express themselves freely while they are playing. They direct themselves what they want.” (Teacher Candidate 43, Female)*

*“Play is like a small world because it is the most convenient environment for children in order to express themselves comfortably.” (Teacher Candidate 39, Female)*

A reasonable part of pre-school teacher candidates likened “play” to “checklist, sustainability for children, the best book which is written by ink” in terms of “Persistent and active learning”. According to the candidates, if they want to bring children rich and persistent experiences, they will use play for children’ life cycle. Some of the teacher candidates’ statements are as below:

*“Play is like checklist for kids because children can develop social and cognitive skills via using kinesthetic.” (Teacher Candidate 97, Male)*

*“Play is like sustainability for children because children learn in a natural setting.” (Teacher Candidate 26, Female)*

*“Play is like the best book which is written by ink because every concept which is learnt by children, is persistent in an active learning environment.” (Teacher Candidate 42, Female)*

Small part of the teacher candidates associated with “Necessity for kids, human”, “Having a big role on child development”, “Inner world of a child”, “All things about life and experiences”, “Addictive”. Teacher candidates’ metaphors samples and their reasons which they use are as follows:

*“Play is like food because it is an absolute must and it is a sense of self for a child.” (Teacher Candidate 49, Female)*

*“Play is like an actor/ actress because it acts effectively the whole development.” (Teacher Candidate 93, Male)*

*“Play is like mind because it is a reflection of the child’s feelings and ideas.” (Teacher Candidate 77, Female)*

*“Play is like the taste of life because we act as if and we feel included playing” (Teacher Candidate 42, Female)*

*“Play is like Nutella jam because we find ourselves playing without ceasing as time progressed.” (Teacher Candidate 87, Male)*

As it inferred from pre-school teacher candidates' metaphors about play that they focus on more versatile features of the play. They mostly think that "play" supports children's creativity and present having fun and relaxing. In addition, they usually have opinion in favor about "play" in terms of bringing children freedom and active learning outcomes.

Table 5. *Pre-school Teacher Candidates Metaphors about "Toy"*

<b>Category of Metaphors</b>	<b>f</b>
A basic and essential material for child development	12
Slice of life	3
Discovering imaginaries and creativeness	28
Learning tool	3
Having fun and amusement	19
A tool to play	8
Meaning attribution	14
A Source of communication	4
Therapy for peaceful and relaxing	4
Addictive	5
Total	100

Table 5 explains pre-school teacher candidates' category of metaphors. They associated with "Discovering imaginaries and creativeness" (28), "Having fun and amusement" (19), "Meaning attribution" (14), "A basic and essential material for child development" (12) for the concept of "toy". Small part of teacher candidates associated with "Slice of life", "Learning tool" for the concept of "toy". A great part of teacher candidates likens "toy" to "the frame of the mirror, imaginary, best tool of the amusement and imagine, dough, pencil, time, plane, ocean, a vehicle etc." in terms of "Discovering imaginaries and creativeness". Following teacher candidates' statements are as below:

*"Toy is like the frame of the mirror. Not necessarily, if it is in there, it will enrich the image from comes to mirror. (Teacher Candidate 7, Female)*

*"Toy is like imaginary because we think of what we want and imagine. We play with a toy and we design it whatever we want." (Teacher Candidate 11, Female)*

*"Toy is like the best tool of the amusement and imagine. Because it is a guide of creativity." (Teacher Candidate 18, Female)*

*"Toy is like the dough because each toy serves on different purposes. Whichever purpose you use for it, it switches their design and order." (Teacher Candidate 14, Female)*

*"Toy is like a pencil. Because it is simple, but it is designed in our dreams." (Teacher Candidate 21, Female)*

*"Toy is like time because it is possible to have a creative journey." (Teacher Candidate 88, Male)*

*"Toy is like a plane because it has got same function like a plane. Toy leads away us another world." (Teacher Candidate 94, Female)*

*"Toy is like an ocean because we can have a broad perspective, it comes about from several points of view." (Teacher Candidate 29, Female)*

*"Toy is like a vehicle because it takes you to your destination which you like and the play." (Teacher Candidate 47, Female)*

A significant part of pre-school teacher candidates likens "toy" to "gummy bears, discharge, a sign of social life, a life coach for kids, classroom etc." in terms of "Having Fun

and Amusement”. They think about toys that children have fun and create joyful environments for themselves via toys. Following teacher candidates’ statements are below:

*“Toy is like gummy bears, because children have pleasures while they are playing” (Teacher Candidate 82, Male)*

*“Toy is like discharge, because they are best amusement materials for kids while they are physically active.” (Teacher Candidate 42, Female)*

*“Toy is like a sign of social life because they make children adapted with their color and funny world.” (Teacher Candidate 37, Female)*

*“Toy is like a life coach for kids because children identify your roles and identity in the life.” (Teacher Candidate 39, Male)*

*“Toy is like a classroom because children get experiences which prepares for real life with toys.” (Teacher Candidate 22, Female)*

The other significant part of pre-school teacher candidates liken “toy” to “a word, a pawn, art, philosophy etc.” in terms of “Meaning Attribution”. They expressed that the toy can be illustrated conceptual approach in order to investigate children’ behaviors and childhood. Following teacher candidates’ statements are below:

*“Toy is like a word because children perform what they understand and feel with.” (Teacher Candidate 88, Female)*

*“Toy is like a pawn because child decides whether it is effective or not in his/her life.” (Teacher Candidate 36, Male)*

*“Toy is like art because children tell about themselves and their inner world with toys.” (Teacher Candidate 14, Female)*

*“Toy is like philosophy because when we are curious about the history of childhood about a child, it is enough to investigate his/her toys.” (Teacher Candidate 29, Female)*

A considerable part of pre-school teacher candidates liken “toy” to “vitamin, ingredient, food” in terms of “A basic and essential material for child development”. They intellectualized the toy in order to gain children skills which are in their development process. Some of the teacher candidates’ statements are below:

*“Toy is like vitamin because it is the best way to empower child development.” (Teacher Candidate 57, Female)*

*“Toy is like ingredient because it is very important and basic part of holistic child development.” (Teacher Candidate 67, Female)*

*“Toy is like food because toys feed children’s spirits and mental world.” (Teacher Candidate 55, Male)*

Some of pre-school teacher candidates associated with “Learning tool” for the concept of “toy”. They liken “toy” to “a pencil, map etc.” They pointed out that the toy has pragmatic and instructional reasons in order to take in a child’s life. Some of the teacher candidates’ statements are below:

*“Toy is like a pencil, because it can be basic but it is effective and natural learning tool.” (Teacher Candidate 100, Male)*

*“Toy is like a map because children learn flexible whichever they use/ like.” (Teacher Candidate 90, Female)*

*Few of pre-school teacher candidates liken "toy" to "soap opera, mirror, etc." in terms of "Slice of life". They especially emphasized the toy on behalf of composing real experiences. Some of their statements are as below:*

*"Toy is like a soap opera because purposes of toys' producing process come from real sections of life." (Teacher Candidate 71, Male)*

*"Toy is like mirror because they present real characters, materials from real life." (Teacher Candidate 25, Female)*

In general, pre-school teacher candidates have opinions in favor and they expressed their ideas with child-oriented approach. They mostly focus on child creativity and imaginary world, having a nice time with the toy, sense-making with the toy. In that sense, they give priority to children in order to get pleasure out of the toy rather than the educational attainments from the toy.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study has been prepared to investigate the metaphors relating to *the concepts of play and the toy* that the pre-school teachers and pre-school teacher candidates have and mostly expressed these metaphors under certain categories. The findings of this research draw attention to several important points. First, a large number of teachers stated that play is regarded as a learning material in the classroom and in this context student learn by playing. Besides, a major part of teachers expressed that play supports child's imaginary and creativity and they also have an agreement about children gain experiences and reflect their lives in the playing process. Contrary to these views, they expressed negatively that play makes children addictive and it caused time consuming by they cannot stand playing. When it comes to pre-school teacher candidates' perceptions about "play", it is inferred from the study that they focus on more versatile features of the play. They mostly think that "play" support children's creativity and present having fun and relaxing. In addition, they usually have opinion in favor about "play" in terms of bringing for children freedom and active learning outcomes. Erşan (2011) is also expressed that, free-play activity is thought as a activity that children play freely, and has no purpose. In learning centers, contribution of play on improvement of social skills are noticed meanwhile it's contribution on cognitive processes are not considered enough. On both sides, it can be evaluated that the teachers and the teacher candidates almost have the same opinions and same perceptions. The teachers just differ from the teacher candidates about using the play as a learning tool. They firstly focused on the play as a pragmatic activity in planning and teaching process.

The findings of certain studies conducted in the world and in Turkey do not coincide with the findings of this study. According to teachers, play is important for children and it has a vital role in children development, but schoolwork always important than all other things. If a student has something to do about the class, he/she does not need to play. The first thing must a student do is to study lessons. So if only a student finishes studying, he/she has right to play (Artar, 1999). Besides, there is unavailability which was not inferred from teacher and teacher candidates in the matter of systematic play policy and regulation in the kindergartens process. On that note, we cannot talk about a play policy in pre-schools in Ankara. The Ministry of Education in Turkey has a curriculum for pre-school institutions, both concerns private and public preschools. But the institutions and the teachers are following their own programs and making their own choices especially for play. These results show us that it is necessary to prepare a (detailed and well-supervised) play policy or to revise the current curriculum (Demir, 1999). It is fact accepted by every education experts and teachers that pre-school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2013) which was updated and revised in 2013

positive impacts and expressions about integrating play and toy to the preschool curriculum. However, the curriculum has not still got a particular play policy and well-organized play and toy based activities.

In relation to pedagogy, teachers in pre-school can use the memories appearing in this study to discuss children's play from their own experience, to make visible and discuss the conceptions that exist about play now and then. Above all it is important to discuss which child view is manifested in the notions of play and how adults view, for example, the increased influence of the media and commercialization which characterize play today and especially how they relate it. The sociocultural perspective on play and children is brought forth and cultural values are incorporated implicitly through the memories of children's play. The value of play is based on the individual's knowledge of play and thereby also the individual's definition of play (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008).

In general, pre-school teachers think about the toy as a basic material child development and education, having relax and discharging children extra energy, as a material for composing of play. A small part of teachers have opinions about toys have specific features on having fun and causing addiction, a tool for communication in order to understand children. From these findings of teachers' views, it can be said that the toy can be identified as a 'versatile material' for children are served for different kind of purposes. In addition to that, pre-school teacher candidates have opinions in favor and they expressed their ideas with child-oriented approach. They mostly focus on child creativity and imaginary world, having a nice time with the toy, sense-making with the toy. In that sense, they give priority to children in order to get pleasure out of the toy rather than the educational attainments from the toy. Teachers who are effective about toys and play preferences of children think that play and to present children positive experiences have important roles in child development and learning, making children amused, in order to bring children different kinds of skills and to develop them in preschool education (Adak-Özdemir & Ramazan, 2012). Teachers were firstly about its features related to 'development' and secondly about 'entertainment-learning-learning through entertainment'.

Educators who train future teachers share several concerns. The first one is the limited time available to teach students about pedagogical activities that are appropriate for young children; especially choosing activities that are suitable to young children's specific needs with regard to their developmental stage. Students have to learn to recognize play characteristics. Moreover, they need time to practice how to use pedagogically- suited hints or suggestions to elicit play. Between balancing hints as well as leaving the room for exploration also requires organisational skills to successfully meet several children in the classroom and not just the one. (Aalsvoort, Bette Prakke, Howard, König, Parkkinen, 2015). The pre-school teachers viewed improvisations of play materials in the absence of the standard ones as capable of causing confusion for the preschoolers. The Early Childhood Education, the need for teachers' knowledge of play materials during and after training and their use of children's development (Sopekan, 2013). Kadim (2012) also pointed out that teachers have low self-efficacy about preschool teachers' in some views on play activities of the self-efficacy according to serve kindergarten or preschool were differences. Of these differences for the elimination, equalization existing physical conditions and facilities, and the teachers in-service training is recommended.

Play and toys which serve as the key tools that provide the infant with the appropriate gender traits. Besides their psychological and pedagogical aspects, the sociological functions of play and toys can be analyzed in the cultural context in order to emphasize their importance in child development. Culture plays an important role in the assignment of gender-

appropriate traits to the infants and play and toys function as the key elements in the process (Emoulu,2014).

Play is inarguably an important childhood activity that provides children with opportunities to test out new roles and practice newly developing behaviors that they will transfer to their real lives (Pellegrini, 2009). Kindergarten children's play is a seminal occasion for the formation of gender identity (Wohlwend, 2012). Teachers' project onto their kindergarten students many of their own gender prejudices about play. Teachers' describing dramatic play in ways that viewed it as more appropriate for girls than boys, a theme that was further explored in interviews with kindergarten teachers. This examination was particularly interesting as all interviewed teachers described their classes as promoting gender equitable play between boys and girls (Lynch, 2015). These teachers reinforced gendered attitudes by encouraging the children, especially the boys, to play only with toys and in activities traditionally associated with their gender (Lynch, 2015). In this study, it is not obtained particular gender identity findings of formulating play and toy. Bothe teachers and teacher candidates produced metaphors and expressions about metaphors out of gender identity. It will be important to discuss about the redefinition of gender roles in a different study.

Teacher trainers who understand how teacher trainees make sense of play and understand the tensions that come with implementing play based learning opportunities will be better placed to inform their training in relation to theory and practice (Aalsvoort, Prakke, Howard, König, Parkkinen, 2015). Many factors can be effective about the reason why teacher and teacher candidates perceive play and toy in different ways and they do not have sufficient knowledge about the play and the toy concepts. Teacher qualifications, instructional programs, textbooks, social environment, the student's interest level, and visual and written media are some of these factors.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions made in this study, it is well-known fact that, play and toy are functional and important concept in early childhood education. The teacher and the other factors in a kindergarten can affect the curriculum and teaching-learning environment. It is necessary to prepare a play policy or to revise the current early childhood curriculum in order to have a sustainability development about play and toy for children and create a play-based and toy-supported classroom environment. The other need is to enhance teachers' self-efficiency, knowledge and skills.

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