

METAPHORS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING HELD BY  
YOUNG MALAYSIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
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METAPHORS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING HELD BY  
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# **METAPHORS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING HELD BY YOUNG MALAYSIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore metaphors and their entailments generated by Year 6 (12 year old) pupils from Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, that describe the process of learning the English language. To elicit these participants' metaphors, the students were requested to fill in the gaps in the sentence "Learning English is like...because..." The metaphors and the entailments were classified using the thematic analysis. Furthermore, the entailments were analysed to determine whether they aligned with Martinez et al.'s (2001) influential theoretical framework. It was found that the metaphors aligned with the framework. Also, the metaphors were analysed to find out the attitude embedded in them. It was found that both the Higher Proficiency Group and Lower Proficiency Group showed positive attitude towards learning English through metaphors. Knowing the metaphors in learning English could enhance pedagogical practice.

**Keywords:** Metaphors, English language learning, English language teaching,  
young language learners

# METAFORA TENTANG PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA OLEH PELAJAR BAHASA INGGERIS

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka metafora dan kegunaan mereka yang dihasilkan oleh murid Tahun 6 (12 tahun) dari Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, yang menggambarkan proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Untuk mendapatkan metafora peserta ini, para pelajar diminta untuk mengisi jurang dalam kalimat "Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris seperti ... kerana ..." Metafora dan kegunaan yang dikelaskan menggunakan analisis tematik. Tambahan pula, kajian telah dianalisis untuk menentukan sama ada mereka selaras dengan rangka teori Martinez et al. (2001) yang berpengaruh. Ia didapati bahawa metafora sejajar dengan rangka kerja. Juga, metafora dianalisis untuk mengetahui sikap yang tertanam di dalamnya. Telah didapati bahawa kedua-dua Kumpulan Kecekapan Tinggi dan Kumpulan Profesional Rendah menunjukkan sikap positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris melalui metafora. Mengetahui metafora dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris boleh meningkatkan amalan pedagogi.

**Kata kunci :** Metafora, pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris, pengajaran bahasa Inggeris, pelajar bahasa muda

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

LP	:	Lembaga Peperiksaan
PSAT	:	Primary School Achievement Test
UPSR	:	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah
TL	:	Target Language
L1	:	Mother Tongue
L2	:	Second Language
YLL	:	Young Language Learner
EFL	:	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	:	English as a Second Language
SLA	:	Second Language Acquisition
AM	:	Acquisition Metaphor
PM	:	Participation Metaphor
HP	:	High Proficiency
LP	:	Lower Proficiency
RQ	:	Research Question

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The word “teaching” provokes in mind the image of the teacher while ‘learning’ is mostly considered a student-centred activity mainly depending upon the beliefs, attitudes and motivation of the learner. Thus, in order to create a successful English language learning environment, it is important to know the learners’ perceptions of how they feel about learning the English language. The perception of the language learners have been under investigation by many researchers since the beginning of the new Millennium (Berry, 2004; Fortune, 2005; Liao, 2006) to essentially be able to find out the sources of challenges or failure and relevant solutions likely to lead to the creation of a more effective foreign language learning atmosphere.

Teachers and learners often hold strong perception about a language and the process of language learning (Mariani, 2010). Effective language learning can potentially take place when the needs of the language learners are understood and succinctly met by the teachers through the different classroom approaches employed. Thus, uncovering learners’ strong perceptions about the way language is learnt became one of the means to understand the language learning experience. Different steps have been taken to understand the thoughts and perceptions of language learners through several ways such as questionnaires on perceptions and observations. As rightly argued by Saban (2004), one can gain insights into learners’ cognition and reveal their learning problems, the causes of the problems and their classroom experiences by investigating their perception, which in turn is expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of their learning in general. Similarly, many researchers in the field of foreign language learning and teaching underlined the need to uncover learners’ beliefs about learning the language because they believe that these beliefs affect their learning (Aragao, 2011).

One way of revealing beliefs related to learning the language is through metaphors defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as expressions reflecting our perceptions and actions. It is also argued that metaphors are the guides of our perceptions (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen & Phillips, 2008) and our perceptions affect our language learning performance (Gardner, 1985). Moving on from the traditional methods, researchers have now explored the beliefs of language learners through the lens of metaphors. This shift of embracing the metaphor analysis in English Language education is a significant tool in listening to the personal 'voice' of the learners (Block, 1999; Cameron & Low, 1999a, 1999b; Oxford, Tomlinson, Barcelos & Harrington, 1998).

Metaphors are not just figures of speech, but constitute an essential mechanism of the mind. Arguing against positions which treat metaphors as trivial products of thinking, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) have emphasized that a major part of our conceptual system is structured by metaphorical relations. By these metaphors we become aware of essential similarities between entities which otherwise might appear disparate.

Pertaining to the use of metaphors in linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) highlighted long ago that metaphors reveal deeper perceptions of people on different concepts. In recent studies, it is also underlined that metaphors are powerful mental instruments that can be used to express high level, abstract, complex and theoretical concepts and issues (Yob, 2003). Therefore, in order to develop a better understanding of learners' views about language learning, metaphors have been widely used in the field of foreign language education (Kesen, 2010), and the effectiveness of metaphors as a research tool has been proven in qualitative research studies carried out in various countries (Capan, 2010; Cochran, 2002; Goldstein, 2005; Onen & Kocak, 2011). Investigating young English as a Second Language (ESL) learners metaphorical perceptions of the English learning process in various countries, this study has the main

objective to shed some light on their conceptualization of English learning, whether the metaphors align with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al. (2001) and to find out the attitudes embedded in the metaphors whether the majority of them hold positive or negative attitudes. After the presentation of scholarly literature about metaphors as a data collection tool, the method and the results of the current study are explained. At the end of this study, some recommendations are made for the improvement of teaching ESL for young language learners.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

As Hamm (2003, p. 9) has noted, “educational language is replete with metaphors”. Over the last few decades, metaphors about education and learning have attracted a considerable interest of researchers and there is considerable number of studies on educational metaphors. As Kramsch (2003) observed, metaphors about learning and education in general assist in revealing the techniques teachers and learners “compose representations of themselves and their encounter” (p.125). The studies on teachers’ metaphors have enabled educational researchers and educators to articulate and evaluate the existing assumptions, beliefs and perspective on education as general and also on some particular features of the teaching and learning process (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2011).

In relation to language teaching and learning, metaphors generated by language learners are a reflection of how they conceptualize the language learning process and language learning context (Oxford et al., 1998). Importantly, these metaphorical representations of the classroom reality may influence the language learners’ attitudes and learning behaviour (Fisher, 2012).

According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) in their study on Metaphor Analysis, “metaphors provide ‘windows’ for examining the cognitions and feelings of learners. Since they are usually employed without consciousness on the part of the learners, they are less subject to false-representation than learners’ direct responses about learning” (p.313). The second language (L2) learners’ metaphorical responses on comparing their own language learning to another notion would carry less subjective probability to false-representations as metaphors are often fashioned indirectly with less consciousness in contrary to learners’ direct comments elicited on language learning through closed-items questionnaires. Metaphor analysis allows researchers to uncover the learners’ cognitive and affective aspects of learning a language, which may otherwise be left unexpressed in other traditional methods of eliciting responses such as closed-item belief questionnaires (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

Metaphors generated by learners are a reflection of how they conceptualize the language they are learning. This was supported by Lakoff and Turner (1989), who presumed that basic metaphors were ‘conceptually indispensable’ and ‘often concerns the thought’. It generally functioned as a main source of allowing humans to make meaning of the social world around them. In addition, metaphors serve as an aid to language teachers, learners and even researchers in organizing their conceptualizations and beliefs as they reflect upon their different roles in the classroom.

### **1.2.1 Individual learner differences and their perceptions**

According to Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013), second language learners refer to young learners and adult learners who embark on the learning of an additional language after acquiring their first language. The context of language learning can occur formally in school or colleges, universities or informally ‘picking it up’ while playing in the playground, socializing in the Internet or workplace. Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013)

proposed three main sets of priorities among second language learner researchers concerning the domain of the learner: (i) linguistic and psycholinguistic perspective which deal with modelling language structures and processes within the mind, (ii) socio-psychological perspective which is concerned with modelling learners' individual differences and their implications for learning successes, and (iii) socio-cultural perspective which is concerned with learners as social beings belonging to social networking. In this study, the metaphors fall under the second domain which concerns the learners' attitude towards learning the English language through metaphor elicitation.

### **1.2.2 The roles of metaphor analysis in perception studies**

Metaphor analysis, stems largely from the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in which they explored the role that metaphor plays in human cognition. The premise behind this methodology is that by examining the metaphors that human beings use in describing their experiences and perceptions, people can begin to uncover meanings beneath those directly and consciously, which are set forth by the writer or the speaker.

Since language is fundamentally metaphorical, people's conceptual system, which governs their everyday talk, thought and even action, is also fundamentally metaphorical. Metaphor is regarded as a way of thinking about or conceptualizing the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 232-233) suggested that a large part of self-understanding is the "search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives... The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself".

Moser (2000) argued that metaphor analysis is useful for accessing tacit knowledge and exploring "social and cultural processes of understanding" (p. 5). While Bullough and Gitlin (1995) stressed the power of metaphor analysis to provide insight into assumptions that both "characterize a concept and drive action" (Bullough, 1991, p. 51).

The study of metaphor has gained acceptance as a legitimate alternative to conservative and conventional perspectives in exploring how participants think.

Against such a background, it might be of utmost importance to capture and understand the thoughts and perceptions of language learners and teachers to ensure that a successful teaching-learning process takes place. To sum up, “Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our conceptual system, of how we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.3). Metaphors form a large part of the learners’ belief system in language learning. Therefore, an awareness of these learners’ metaphorical conceptions towards language learning can add substantial values to teachers in dealing with language learning problems and their possible drawbacks.

### **1.3 The Education System in Malaysia**

For a better understanding of the context where the data for the present study were collected, there is a need to present concisely the basics of the education system. The education system in Malaysia has gone through tremendous changes and transformation. The National Education system was implemented after the Education Act 1966 was passed by parliament. The government was able to use education as a tool to foster unity and nation building through a common syllabus and curriculum.

The Malaysian education system encompasses education beginning from pre-school to university. Primary schooling is mandatory for all children between the ages of 7 (Primary 1) and 12 (Primary 6). Students sit for common public examinations at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. The medium of instruction in national schools is Bahasa Malaysia (the national language) with English as a compulsory subject (taught as a second language).



The Examination Syndicate or Lembaga Peperiksaan (LP) conducts several national examinations. At the end of the six years of primary schooling, pupils are required to sit for a common public examination called the Primary School Achievement Test / Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (PSAT / UPSR). The subjects tested in UPSR include Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mathematics, and Science. Primary education aims to provide the child with a firm foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as emphasizing thinking skills and values across the curriculum. English language is taught as a second language in all schools.

Education plays an important role for Malaysia in building a resilient nation, encouraging the creation of a just society, and maintaining sustainable economic growth. It is also through education that a country can develop global competitiveness, build a K-economy, and maintain sustainable environmental development.

Under the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the education system will focus on making changes to structural elements that are in line with international best practices of high-performing education systems. In preparing students for the demands of the future, structural adjustments across each phase of education will be made and resources maximised to provide the very best to Malaysians of all levels.

#### **1.4 The Problem Statement**

Despite the rich scholarly literature on metaphors about language teaching and learning, insufficient research has been carried out on metaphors held by the language learners (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2011). Moreover, a search of literature has revealed a scarcity of studies on metaphorical perceptions of young students, be they a second or foreign language learners. In research on educational metaphors done within the Malaysian educational context, the situation is similar. It is important for Malaysian

teachers and educators to be familiar with the young language learners' perceptions of language learning because this knowledge will contribute to a more effective classroom communication and more responsive teaching.

The Malaysian education system has recently undergone a gradual change of objective with the shift of emphasis towards 'competencies' as an important skill to be acquired by learners. This objective of competence development among learners constitutes an ambitious perspective as it drives the learners and teachers beyond the basic assimilation of knowledge or skills, but also involves a third higher dimension of knowledge application. Learners have to make sense of the acquired knowledge and to be better equipped to use them in other relevant contexts beyond the school setting. Thus, individual differences such as learners' beliefs and attitudes would leave a contributing factor to ensure that the application of knowledge competencies can be achieved. It is a compelling reason for teachers to understand the beliefs and attitudes of learners as a central component of achieving language competence successfully. This is in response to previous researchers which clearly depicted the powerful impact of how conflicting beliefs and attitudes between teachers and learners affect the effectiveness of teaching objectives, methodologies and approaches employed (Horwitz, 1988; Cotterall, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Peacock, 1998).

Cameroon (2003) states that there is surprisingly little interest in the ontogenetic development of conceptual metaphor. Cognitive theory seems to posit individual minds as ready-formed adult thinkers, rather than as individuals whose minds develop through social interaction in particular sociocultural contexts. Given the focus on embodied experience as generative of metaphorical thinking (Lakoff and Turner 1989; Gibbs 1999a), the neglect of childhood experience in conceptual development is more surprising.

Since very little is known about young Malaysian language learners' metaphors about learning English the present study will address this gap in the existing literature. It will explore metaphors about learning the English language held by 12-year old primary school children in Malaysia. The research site for this study will be *Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar*, Kuala Lumpur.

### **1.5. Research Aim and Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to extend the research on educational metaphors to school context in Malaysia and to young Malaysian language learners. Specific objectives are, firstly, to examine young Malaysian English Language learners' metaphors about the process and context of learning English, secondly, to assess whether the metaphors produced by these learners would align with the main conceptual frameworks on educational metaphors developed by Martinez et al. (2001) and finally to explore the attitudes that are embedded in the learners' metaphors.

Due to the nature of the device, there would be multiple angles of responses describing different orientations of views with some describing the process of learning English, some about the language itself while others would describe the reasons for learning English. However, it is the deliberate intentional nature of the researcher to employ such device to draw authentic responses which cover as wide scope of information as possible from the participants.

The present study is different from most previous studies which have delved on the teachers' perceptions and not the learners, particularly young learners. Besides, this study explored the young learners' metaphorical perceptions on English language learning as well as their attitude towards learning the language.

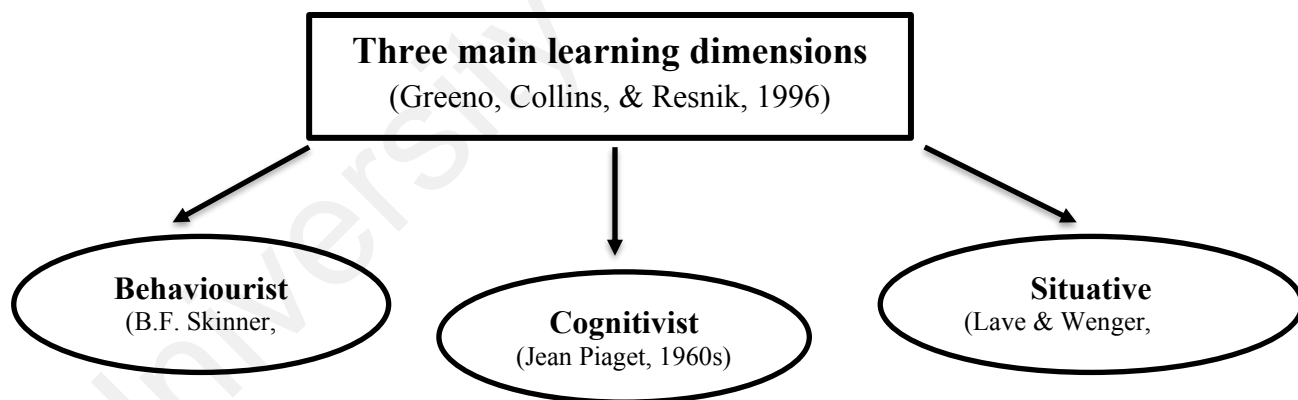
## 1.6 Research Questions

There are three research questions in this dissertation:

1. What metaphors do young Malaysian learners of English as a second language have about learning the target language?
2. How do these metaphors align with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al. (2001)?
3. What attitudes are embedded in the students' metaphors?

## 1.7 Analytical Frameworks

The theoretical framework for the proposed study is Martinez et al.'s (2001) conceptual mapping of educational metaphors, based on the three major paradigms of learning dimensions namely Behaviourist, Cognitivist or Situative perspectives.



**Figure 1.1: Framework of analysis for learning dimensions (Martinez et. al., 2001)**

The categorisation of learners' metaphorical data in this study were based on the three main learning paradigms above (Figure 1.1). The Behaviourist dimension perceives knowledge as a result of stimulus-response (S-R) connections and experiences. It is a learning theory that primarily highlights observable behaviours objectively and disregards other mental activities. In other words, the Behaviourist defines learning as the

acquisition of change in the intended behaviour. The mind is metaphorically perceived as a clean slate by which experiences are gradually engraved and painted over time. This perspectives embraced the learners as passive 'agent', a reversible role played by a Cognitivist learner. Examples of metaphors from this traditional Behaviourist view of learning included "Learning English is like a traveller, a video camera, a sponge or writing into a new notebook" (Martinez et al., 2001)

On the contrary, the Cognitivist perspective views formation of knowledge as a result built on interrelated schemata (previous knowledge). It is a learning paradigm that is founded on the premise that by reflecting on one's own experiences, one constructs their own understanding of reality. Learners inductively and actively develop new schemata based on their daily experiences and encounters, thus making learning a continuous process of schemata construction. This involves gestalt psychology, a psychological perspective that the human consciousness cannot be deciphered in broken pieces, but rather as a 'whole'. The Cognitivist propose that the mind is constantly pro-active, that it seeks to find solutions and that it is interperative. These views explain the active construction of meanings by changing old knowledge into new ones or building new knowledge from past experiences. Some examples of learning metaphors which fall under this perspective are "Learning is like being a detective, learning is like setting the bricks of a house; the learner is like a silkworm" (Martinez et al., 2001).

The third learning dimension in Martinez et al.'s (2001) framework is the Situative perspective which operates on the basis of authentic involvement in a community of practitioners, bringing in the element of culture which indirectly informs the mind (Bruner, 1996). The 'situated learning concept is rooted within the socio-historic perspective which "views knowledge as distributed among people and their environments, including the objects, artifacts, tools, books, and the communities of which

they are a part” (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). As knowledge is not confined and limited in the minds of an individual, learning is essentially social, and is tied to the individual context or situation. It is during the learning process that the individuals and community acquire knowledge and skills. Examples of Situative learning metaphors are “Learning is a joint work like the ants do when they collaborate to achieve a result, teaching is like a tourist guide who negotiates a route with the tourists” (Martinez et al., 2001).

### **1.8 Scope and Limitations of Study**

This study involved a group of 60 young Malaysian learners aged 12 years old from two different groups of proficiency (High and Lower Proficiency groups). The group consisted of 30 male and 30 female Malay students from Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar. In regard to providing a platform for young learners’ “voice” to be heard, this study is set within the parameters of only the learners’ perceptions on learning English. The young learners were given the opportunity to “voice out” their opinions and beliefs about learning the English language. Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar was chosen as the context of this study because very few studies have been done on young learners and the researcher was able to access the school to collect data.

As this is a qualitative study with a relatively small sample of 60 participants, all of who were Malay students the findings derived from this study are to be generalized to the greater population of young learners in Malaysia.

### **1.9 Definition of Terminology**

The following definitions of term are provided to facilitate the understanding of the intended meanings of certain expressions or phrases used by the researcher with reference to the context of this study. The use of appropriate abbreviations may be used by the

researcher where applicable in the study. The key terms used in this study is defined as follows:

**Young language learners** are usually defined as pupils aged from six to twelve years old. In the current study the term refers to students aged 12 years old.

**Metaphor** is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

**Learners' perceptions** on language learning is referred to as the pre-conceived ideas, attitudes and knowledge that students bring into the classroom that may influence the language learning process and their ultimate success (Breen, 2001)

**Elicited Metaphor** is used to describe a particular type of metaphorical linguistic expression, where a participant is required to complete a metaphor, "Learning English is like....."

**Metaphorical entailments**, refers to the explanation given by participants for their reasons of demonstrating the correspondence between the source and the targets in their metaphors (Kramsch, 2003).

## **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

Letter of consent from the parents were obtained; letter of approval from the school principal has been obtained (see Appendix B & C).

## **1.11 Chapter Summary**

This study sets out to answer three main research questions which delve deeper into capturing the thoughts and perceptions of young language learners on learning the English Language. The introductory chapter outlined the background of the study as well as

provided the statement of the problem. In addition, the research objectives along with the research questions were explained. Finally, the significance of the study was discussed. The following chapters are as follow: Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature on language learning attitudes as well as learner perceptions. This is followed by Chapter Three which presents a discussion on the methodology used in this study. The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter Four while the final chapter, Chapter Five, summarises the key findings of the study and their implications as well as recommendations for future research.

University of Malaya



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review begins with a discussion of metaphors, which could be viewed as a cognitive means for people to filter reality through their own mental images of real world phenomena. This chapter highlights the fact that there is a lack of empirical studies looking at young learners' perceptions of English language learning using metaphors expressed by the learners themselves. This study further explores the metaphors produced by the young language learners and their alignment with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al. (2001). The researcher also looked at another similar framework by Anna Sfard (1998). The objective of this study thus seek to further explore this research gap.

### 2.2 The Concept of Metaphor: Definitions and Developments

The word "metaphor" originated out of the Greek word *metapherein* ("to shift"), whereby *meta* means "among" and *pherein* means "to bear, to carry" (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008, p. 194). Originally, metaphor served as a rhetoric tool. Currently, metaphor is recognized as an indispensable tool of cognition that allows people to comprehend and encounter, "one kind of concept or phenomenon in position of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In other words, metaphor allow the mapping of "two often contradictory domains into each other" (Kramsch, 2003, p.125).

To paint a clearer picture of what a metaphor entails, the researcher thus provides the scope for the parameter of a 'metaphor' as used in this study. When people generally think of a metaphor, they visualise a linguistic or literary device that associates one idea to another. In other words, metaphors used in this study are defined as understanding the concept of learning a language (target) in terms of another conceptual domain (source).

The understanding of a metaphor as a resemblance of thoughts instead of metaphor as a pure literary device (Moser, 2000; Slingerland, 2004), reflects the Cognitivist premise that individuals normally understand the unknown (new) in terms of the known (old). In short, metaphors are recognized for their capability to capture complex mental constructs and consciousness.

The review of literature including the use of metaphor as a research technique in the field of foreign language education has revealed that there is sufficient amount of studies focusing on the English teachers' roles in various contexts of the world. For example, Nikitina and Furouka (2008) focused on the metaphors developed by a group of Malaysian adult learners regarding the teachers' role in the classroom. They concluded that among various metaphors their participants often considered their English teachers as "givers" and "caretakers". In another study, Torghabeh, Elahi and Khanalipour (2009) obtained metaphors from Iranian students and categorized the metaphors under conceptual metaphors such as "organizer", "spiritual leader", "parent", "innovator", "provider of knowledge", "entertainer", "nurturer", "counselor" and "friend". In a similar vein, De Guerrero and Villamil (2002) collected metaphors of English teachers in Puerto Rico and came up with categories like "provider of tools", "nurturer", "innovator", "agent of change", "teacher as cooperative leader" and "gym instructor". In China, students and EFL teachers' metaphors were investigated and categorized by Wan, Low and Li (2011) under the following categories: "interest arouser", "co-worker", "culture transmitter", "provider", "devotee", "instructor", "nurturer" and "authority".

Importantly, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observed that human conceptual system is metaphorically structured. In other words, several conceptual metaphors shape our understanding of reality, including such abstract concepts as learning and education. The

following section further discusses the Cognitive approach which views metaphor not just as a matter of language but as a matter of thought.

### **2.3 Cognitive Theories of Metaphor**

The foundations of the cognitive theory of metaphor were laid down by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their influential work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Their key argument is that the metaphor forms an inherent part of our conceptual system. In their own words, “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” ( p.3). Although the cognitive theory of metaphor tends to be described as radically new, the cognitive dimension of metaphor had been recognized by previous scholars. For example, the interaction theory viewed metaphor as a mental process, and even before that a number of philosophers, including John Locke, Giambattista Vico, and Immanuel Kant, had discussed the cognitive implications of metaphor (Semino, 2008). There are three main features which characterize the cognitive theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Gibbs, 1994; Dobrovolskij and Piirainen, 2005; Kövecses, 2010).

Firstly, the cognitive approach views metaphor not just as a matter of language use, but as a matter of thought as well. Cognitive theorists argue that the metaphor is an important tool by means of which we conceptualize reality. This then has an impact on the way we behave and act. Next, in contrast to the substitution and the comparison theories that view metaphor as extraordinary and ornamental, the cognitive theory emphasizes that metaphor is a matter of ordinary, everyday language. A set of conventional metaphorical concepts is realized in the language that we use every day to speak about our experience, including abstract concepts, such as love and time. Moreover, metaphor is defined as a mapping of structure from one conceptual domain, the source domain, to another conceptual domain, the target domain. This mapping is not based on

similarity between the two concepts, as believed by the comparison theory of metaphor, but rather on the correlation of our experience in these two domains and our ability to structure one concept in terms of the other. Cognitive theorists (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010) argue that language serves as an evidence for the existence of conceptual metaphors since it is through everyday linguistic expressions that conceptual metaphors are realized. Thus, by analyzing discourse, we can arrive at metaphors by which we conceptualize aspects of discussed reality.

An important aspect of metaphor is its multifunctionality. As stated by Gibbs (1994, p.124), traditionally three functions of metaphor were recognized. The first one is the ability of metaphor to delineate ideas that would be very difficult, even impossible to express using literal language – the inexpressibility hypothesis. The second function of metaphor is to provide a compact and condensed way of communication – the compactness hypothesis, and the third function is to convey information in a vivid way – the vividness hypothesis. Drawing upon the cognitive theory, another function of metaphor is that it enables us to comprehend complex and abstract aspects of reality in terms that are more concrete, familiar and easily imaginable (El Refaie, 2001; Semino, 2008). Furthermore, the metaphor fulfills a number of social functions, mainly to persuade, entertain and establish intimacy between the speaker and the hearer (Semino, 2008). It also works as an effective ideological weapon due to the fact that by mapping structure from a source domain to a target domain, the metaphor necessarily foregrounds some aspects of the concept while hiding others

#### **2.4 Second Language (L2) Learner**

Since birth, people learn their first language or L1, or their mother tongue. When people learn an additional language, this language is called L2, i.e. the second language. A second language can also be called a target language (TL), the language people aim to

learn, and once they have learnt it, it is no longer a target language (Saville-Troike, 2006;3-4). The term L2 is typically used about languages that people learn in a natural environment, either because they want to be able to cope with everything in a new country to which they have moved, or because they think they will do better if they learn the language of, for example, the most powerful minority in the country or region in which they happen to live. To learn these languages in a formal setting is less typical, and to learn languages for fun or because it is part of the curriculum is even less typical. However, even in these settings, it is still a second language. In other words, a second language is typically an official or societally dominant language needed for education, employment, and other basic purposes. It is often acquired by minority group members or immigrants who speak another language as a mother tongue. An obvious counter-example is the case of students learning various languages in school, languages that may not be particularly usable in the countries in which they live (Saville-Troike, 2006;4).

Educational research in second language refers to learners who pursue the learning of another additional language a few years after the acquisition of the first language. From such a view point, the 'second language learners' may include young learners or adults, learning the target language either formally in school or college, or acquiring it informally, outside the classroom. Mastering of another highly used language might enable the young learners to adapt better into a local speech community.

## **2.5 Young Language Learners (YLL)**

According to Ellis, (2014), young learners are children aged 6-18 years old, and they go through different life stages as they pass from pre-school, to primary school and to secondary school. It is said that this is the most vital age in a child's development. Young language learners learn English as a second language after they have already developed their mother tongue (L1).

On the question of an optimal age of language acquisition, scholars can be categorised into two main groups: those who support the ‘earlier the better’ hypothesis (Johnson & Newport, 1989) and those who favour postponing the learning of a new language until the young learners have become older and more cognitively mature (e.g. Lightbown, 2000). Studies of an early start have shown that motivation and positive attitudes to a second language (L2) can readily be fostered in young children (Blondin et al., 1998; Donato et al., 2000). In one study, Cenoz (2003) compared Spanish, Basque L1 learners who had started EFL instruction (English as a third language) at the ages of 4, 8 and 11. The youngest learners scored the highest in attitude and motivation. Another argument for an early start is that it will ultimately lead to higher proficiency levels (Singleton, 2003). In contrast to an early start, some studies have shown that older learners acquire a foreign language at a faster rate than younger learners (e.g. Marinova-Todd et al., 2000) and that older learners can reach levels of proficiency in morphology and syntax that approximate native speakers (Juffs & Harrington, 1995).

### **2.5.1 Young Language Learners’ developmental and social characteristics**

From a developmental perspective, Young Language Learners are in a state of change. They are developing cognitively, building up their first language skills, and are in the process of acquiring social and conversational skills from the world around them (Piaget, 1929; Loyd, 1990; Wood, 1998; Berk, 2005).

Young children are continuously learning about the world through social interaction. From their life experiences before school, children have developed appropriate communicational skills for familiar contexts; however, the classroom environment and the teacher should enable them to develop new skills through interaction with other adults and peers (Vygotsky, 1978). As their cognitive skills are growing and expanding, at the beginning of their school experience young learners’ attention span tends to be very short,

around fifteen minutes, and they are prone to be easily distracted (McKay, 2006). Later, as they are in contact with some stimuli, young children tend to adapt and are able to focus their attention for a longer period of time, organising and classifying the information they receive (Pinter, 2011; Wood, 1998).

Young children are still developing their mother tongue skills and knowledge. Therefore, they give the impression of not being able to reflect on or compare their own language with a new one. Furthermore, at the beginning, they seem to be still discovering the school classroom context, and the interactional-conversational skills it requires (Clark, 1990; McKay, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Additionally, it has been suggested that the strategies children tend to use to discover and decode their first language could be useful for learning a foreign language, if they are guided to the new language through a focus on meaning and engagement (Wood, 1998; Pinter, 2006).

The above description about young language learners' features has been validated by scholars through research in EFL or ESL (e.g. Cameron, 2001; Moon, 2005a). From a developmental perspective, children follow a set of stages of incomplete competence until adulthood. Therefore, they are more likely to be considered passive objects in social interactions, leaving little room for taking into account their perspectives on their own learning and life experiences (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008; Pinter, 2014).

### **2.5.2 Young Language Learners as social actors**

The New Sociology of Childhood, defines children as social actors, who are able to contribute to portraying their everyday life and understandings (James et al., 1998). Supporters of this approach argue that children are capable of providing useful and reliable insights into their own lives, as well as being resourceful and knowledgeable,

especially concerning their own experiences (Christensen & James, 2008; Christensen & Prout, 2002; Mayall, 2008)

Some points relevant to the current research can be drawn from this review of literature. Firstly, this approach should be considered as a standpoint which complements developmental perspectives. According to Woodhead and Faulkner (2008), considering children as social actors and active participants does not mean that their developmental features should be ignored. Secondly, it is necessary to create instruments that allow researchers to involve children. In this study of seeking young language learners' voices in language learning, Roberts (2003) argued that mechanisms need to be devised in order to be able to learn from successful experiences, and effectively involve children and young people in the language learning process.

### **2.5.3 Young Language Learners' voice in L2 research**

In language learning research or L2 research, there are very few studies to date that have acknowledged children as active participants in the learning process (Pinter, 2014). According to Pinter (2014), incorporating children as agents in research is beneficial for all parties involved, as it challenges the adult-centred knowledge structure, and may contribute new questions and perspectives about the language learning process.

Considering this, appropriate ways to data collection in studies that involve children have been developed. Group interviews, focus group (Pinter & Zandian, 2012; Pinter & Zandian, 2014; Sayer & Ban, 2014; Yanez & Coyle, 2011) and surveys (Yildirim & Dogan, 2010) are frequently used in researching with children. The data collection processes have focused on challenging the power gap in adult-child interaction. In their article about a group interview with children carried out in Cameroon, Kuchah & Pinter (2012), it was shown that, by breaking the traditional power relations between children



and the adult, young language learners were able to challenge the adults' perspective on the features of "good teaching" (Kuchah & Pinter, 2012).

Metaphor analysis has also been successfully used for revealing some overlooked aspects of language learning. In their work on learning motivation among Chinese primary learners aged 7 to 9, Jin et al. (2014, p. 291), used metaphor elicitation by "using some games with picture cards, coloured cards, or role playing to encourage the children's imagination for metaphor creation". During the group or individual conversations, children were prompted with examples from their family life and encouraged to say whatever they wanted. According to Jin et al., "this method appears to be more revealing than a standard interview format" for providing access to information regarding underlying attitudes and motivational drives. Besser and Chik (2014) explored the identity narratives of Hong Kong primary school children (aged 10–12) through photo-elicitation. Children used disposable cameras to take photos of opportunities for learning English. The photos collected were discussed in groups thus "giving insights into the participants' English identities" and bringing the relevance of cultural values into young language learners' English language learning experiences.

In a study carried out by Turek (2013), the participatory role of young language learners' contributed to the design of a research instrument. A drawing task was designed by the researcher to be presented to children. Young Language Learners' contributions and comments on the instructions made these tasks "child-friendly", validating the data collection instrument and making findings more reliable. The findings presented here could not have been unveiled through traditional method.

## 2.6 Problems and Methods in studies on young language learners' metaphors

Young children as early as four or five years old can spontaneously produce novel expressions that highlight similarities between objects (Billow, 1981; Chukovsky, 1968; Elbers, 1988; Winner, 1979), such as calling a half-peeled banana *a flower*, or describing a ship sailing in the distance as *taking a bath*. Moreover, children of this age can choose the appropriate match for a similarity mapping from a set of alternatives in an experimental setting (e.g. *a river is like a snake*; Billow, 1975; Epstein & Gamlin, 1994; Mendelsohn, Robinson, Gardner & Winner, 1984; Vosniadou & Ortony, 1983; Winner, McCarthy & Gardner, 1980). Young learner's performance in L1 improves by age five, at which time they can produce similarity-based explanations when asked about expressions that involve comparisons between objects (e.g., *a cloud is like a sponge* means *both clouds and sponges are round and fluffy*) (Gardner, Kircher, Winner & Perkins, 1975; Gentner, 1988; Malgady, 1977).

Thus, young learners can both understand and spontaneously produce a variety of expressions based on similarity, an achievement that is considered to be the earliest form of metaphorical ability in young children (Billow, 1981; Vosniadou, 1987a; Winner, 1979). What matters for successful metaphor comprehension is not just how well the individual words in a metaphor are known, but how well the young learner understands a metaphor as a whole. To understand the whole metaphor, young learners need both lexicalised knowledge about words and phrases and reasoning skills. Depending on the type of metaphor, the relevance of these different skills will vary (Hessel & Murphy, 2017). Metaphors chosen to be investigated were systematically combined words and ideas, such as *time flies*, and novel adaptations thereof, what are often called 'conceptual metaphors'. Conceptual metaphors systematically map a concrete domain, such as space, onto an abstract domain, such as time (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

A related and important methodological issue considered in scholarly literature is how best to assess metaphor comprehension. Just as in traditional vocabulary tests that often combine subtests of receptive or productive knowledge, for example, different facets of metaphor comprehension can also be measured through different tasks. For instance, Ozcaliskan (2007) used the following task combination: metaphors were presented orally to children embedded in six to twelve short stories scaffolded by matching pictures. Metaphor comprehension was measured through two or three tasks, where young learners first recalled the stories, answered a multiple-choice question posed by two puppets, and finally justified their responses. Each task measures metaphor comprehension at different levels: recall requires only the memory of the phrase and the ability to reproduce it. The multiple-choice questions and the reasoning tasks required the young learners to make sense of the metaphor in the story context. These two tasks thus involved making linking inferences and comprehending metaphors at a higher level (Oakhill, Cain & Nesi, 2016). The advantage of using several tasks is that the metaphor comprehension can be measured at different difficulty levels.

The age of a child is also an important element in metaphor comprehension. A number of studies have investigated developing metaphor understanding in primary school children to see at which age children begin to comprehend metaphors (Gardner, Kircher, Winner & Perkins, 1975; Ozcaliskan, 2007). There is converging evidence that metaphor comprehension remains challenging throughout the first years in primary school (Strand et al., 2015).

## **2.7 Significance of using Metaphor Analysis in Learner Perceptions Studies**

As Burke (1995) noted, “Metaphor is an analogy device used to perceive something in terms of another”. The definition above vividly spells out that two distinct ideas are involved and one idea (usually concrete) is used to better express understanding of the

other (usually abstract). With these ‘seeing...in terms of process engaged, metaphors possess three unique qualities as a research instrument namely expressibility, compactness, and vividness qualities. Describing a student’s learning experience as “*climbing a mountain*”, conveys an image of the learners’ hardship and constantly gripping in fear of failure while at the same time relating the importance of persevering and proceeding steadily towards the summit or successful outcome in learning the language.

Metaphors make it possible to help people relate or express their difficult, emotionally intense or uncommon experiences through a comparison of two dissimilar notions. Human cognitions and language evolve greatly around the use of metaphors as researchers examined their everyday thoughts and language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). By capturing and closely examining learners’ mental thoughts and ideas through metaphors, researchers can get access into their minds (Saban, 2004; Tobin & Tippins, 1996). In other words, metaphors do not merely function as a rhetorical device, but an indication of every individual’s internal mental thought which is largely metaphorically bound, as reflected by the way we think and what we do. Metaphors are highly reflective of individual personal interpretations of phenomena.

According to Shuell (1990) cited in Saban et. al., (2007), “If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures! For a picture provides only a static image while a metaphor provides a conceptual framework for thinking about something”. This passage aptly captures the core of Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) cognitive theory of metaphor. The writers proposed that not only as a mere literary device (substitution theory) or a condensed simile (comparison theory), metaphors form our minds, ideas and actions.

To sum up, the use of metaphor as a research tool allows researchers to investigate analogies, notice similarities and perceive a situation that could be inaccessible otherwise. In such studies metaphor functions as a lens, or a filter through which an object is examined.

## **2.8 Metaphor as a Tool for Exploring Attitude**

A student's attitude toward learning English is one of the leading predictors of success in the process of language learning. So, teachers and educators should take motivation and attitude factors into consideration when designing English language training and instruction (Hall, 2009). Attitude is recognised as an important concept to understand human behavior and it refers to a mental state that includes beliefs and feelings (Latchanna & Dagneu, 2009). Beliefs are among the essential points that have a relation with learning (Ajzen, 1988). Students' beliefs can be an obstacle to achieving success if they believe that they cannot learn the new language successfully (Lennartsson, 2008). Negative attitude can impede learning a language (Ellis, 1994). However, a student's negative attitudes can be changed and turned into positive ones and facilitate getting a positive result (Lennartsson, 2008). Having positive attitude towards learning a language is a good starting point to learn a language. As Kramsch (2006) pointed out, "language learners are not only communicators and problem-solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities".

Metaphor aids in bringing together two potentially incongruous ideas and the resulting linguistic expression encourages some meaningful transfer of sense in interpretation (Cameron & Low, 1999). Three main schools of metaphor theory can be identified in research literature: traditional, cognitive and Aristotelian. The field of metaphor research is rather complicated due to the lack of a single paradigm and set methods for empirical investigation (Cameron, 2003). A number of explanatory methods fall under Cameron's

heading of 'traditional' theory including substitution theory, comparison theory and interaction theory. Of these, interaction theory is one of the most prominent (Littlemore and Low, 2006). According to interaction theory, we have to find links between the metaphor's target domain (the topic) and the source domain (the vehicle) and therefore must interact with the idea since they are linked by common ground (Black, 1962; Richards, 1936).

Lakoff and Turner (1989) contend that people use metaphor to make sense of the world around them since they store metaphorical mappings as mental schemata, which they draw on automatically when constructing reality. Indeed Lakoff states that neutral theory can help explain "how a small number of metaphors can organise a whole system of thought and become the principles on which one lives one's life" (2008, p.36).

Majority of research on attitudes about learning and teaching were traditionally dependent on cognitive analogies with predetermined ideas and closed-item questionnaire or semi structured interviews. (Horwitz, 1985; Williams & Burden, 1999, as cited in Wan et al., 2011). An alternative approach or the use of thought-elicitation device by completing a prompt in the questionnaire with a metaphor about learning the English Language is justified through the validity of the survey and the reliability of the data elicitation. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), when participants' opinions are sought are approached through indirect means of metaphors, the responses are more forthcoming, authentic, and higher in trustworthiness and credible information. In the past, metaphor was only perceived as a unique type of literary expression often used in the art of poetry which usually incorporates the element of 'fancy language'. It was by the end of the seventies that researchers Lakoff and Johnson (1980), strongly opined that metaphors are not just functional to language but also reflects the cognitive attitudinal aspect of the human mind and the affective beings of the language learners.

## 2.9 Attitudes of Young Learners towards Learning English

Attitude basically refers to “a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event” (Ajzen, 1988, p. 4). Language attitudes incorporate the positive or negative feelings toward a language. Language attitude and language learning motivation are among the main predictors of success and failure in language acquisition (Gardner, 1985).

The findings of attitude and motivation related studies showed significant differences depending on the context and the participants. In general, the factors affecting learners’ attitudes were age, gender, and language proficiency level whereas the young learners mostly adopted attitudes of their teachers, parents or friends. Therefore, factors affecting young learners’ attitudes are the teacher, favourable teaching conditions, and early start in second language learning. Young learners’ motivation to learn a second language varied according to the factors of parental influence, positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher, and impact of learning conditions.

The age of onset for the language learning is one of the important factors determining the attitude, motivation, and language learning success of the learners. Though researchers remain debating about the proposition of ‘the earlier, the better’, there are some counter arguments as well. In this respect, Snow (1983) comparing adults and children found out superiority of older learners of second languages to the younger ones. However, the critical period hypothesis still receives empirical support from several research studies in psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines. This hypothesis claims a negative correlation between the ages of the learners and the success of the acquisition of foreign language.

Apart from the age of learners, obviously there are some other factors affecting young learners’ success, such as environmental factors and teachers’ way of teaching. Researchers already proved that game-like activities work well with the young learners

(Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011). Although researchers attempted to understand the factors affecting young learners' attitude to learn a second language the literature on young learners' attitude to learn English all over the world is still scarce.

Among the limited number of studies, Nikolov (1999), who investigated attitudes of Hungarian young learners in a longitudinal study, found out that children's attitude to learn English was based on several factors, such as classroom experience, the teacher, external reasons, and utilitarian reasons. The extrinsic motives, such as rewards, grades, and approval were very important for the young learners. A study conducted in Slovenian context, the researcher investigated students aged 6-8 found out that students developed positive attitudes towards language learning and they preferred activities involving games to classic reading and writing activities. In another study presenting an overview of young learners' attitude in learning English, the changing nature and instability was the main conclusion of the study.

Mavis and Bedir (2014) investigated the opinions of teachers and second year students (aged 7-8) concerning English program. The data gathered from the students' diaries showed that students' love of their English teacher, learning new things, the possibility of communicating with foreign people, and entertaining atmosphere of English classes were the reasons why they liked English language classrooms. Students mostly developed positive attitudes towards English classes and they also wanted to continue learning English. To fill the gap in this field especially in the context of Malaysian young learners, the current study attempted to find out the attitudes, of young learners towards learning English. Therefore, it is expected that the findings will shed light to the research questions that have been constructed for this study.

Ellis (1994; p.197-201) claims that learners' attitudes have been identified as one set of variables of major importance. The attitudes are shaped by the social factors, which in turn, influence learning outcome. There are both negative and positive attitudes



towards the L2 being learnt. The positive attitudes are typically connected to the speakers of the language in question and the culture represented by its speakers. Such positive attitudes can be expected to enhance learning, since learners can be expected to want to be able to communicate with native speakers of the language they are learning. In other words, if students are interested in the countries where the languages are spoken, they may be more motivated to learn the language (Noels et al., 2003, p.36)

Negative attitudes, on the other hand, can impede language learning, since you usually get those attitudes when you are not interested or have difficulties with the teacher (Ellis, 1994, p.197-201). Those attitudes usually have a negative effect on learners, but this is not always the case. Negative attitudes may also have a positive effect on L2 learning, if the learners have the interest to learn a language. Sometimes students who are struggling with their attitudes are true fighters. They work so hard in the end because they want a good grade and they have a strong will to learn.

Furthermore, students' attitudes can change. They may have negative attitudes at the beginning of learning a language but then they realise what a good advantage it is to know this language and their attitudes change.

## **2.10 Social Factors that may Affect Second Language Acquisition**

The three major research areas which incorporated the use of metaphor analysis in SLA are the researchers' concepts, the teachers' perspectives, and the L2 learners' perceptions of their own learning (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Several prominent studies which employed metaphors to examine and describe prevalent perspectives on education included Cook-Sather (2003), which proposed two dominant metaphors in the education system in the United States with "education as production" and "education as cure" and Ellis (2002) who explored six beginner learners' beliefs of German as an L2. The findings

included five themes which emerged as “Learning as a journey, struggle, puzzle, suffering and work”.

Saville-Troike (2006) claims that the question of why some learners are more successful than others leads to the examination of differences in the learners themselves, such as social factors. According to Ellis (1994) there are four specific social factors that tend to be of importance for the degree of success in learning/acquiring a second language, namely age, gender, social class and ethnic identity. As this study sets the focus on young learners, the age factor will be discussed separately in the following subsection.

### **2.10.1 Age**

Ellis (1994) argued that most people and most linguists/experts think that children are more successful L2 learners. For instance, children are much better than adults at ‘natural second language acquisition’ i.e. to learn the language used in the environment that they find themselves in. Many linguists claim that children learn/acquire more up to a certain age (i.e. young children acquire L2 much like L1, but they lose this ability later on. Saville-Troike (2006) claimed that younger learners and older learners have different advantages. For example, children are not as analytical, while older learners have the ability to be analytical. Older learners have a greater (meta) knowledge of their L1 compared to young children. Saville-Troike (2006) argued that older learners normally have greater analytic ability than children, since they tend to understand grammatical rules better. A benefit children can have is that they are more likely to get input from others, for example that immigrant children tend to interact more than their parents with the people in the country to which they have moved. Statistically and empirically it will seem as if immigrant children are better language learners than their parents, even though what they are really better at is facilitating language acquisition by creating and placing themselves in good language acquisition contexts.

Towell and Hawkins (1994) claimed that people are able to learn second languages throughout their lives and that they can use those second languages for effective communication. However, it seems that beyond the age of around seven, learners are not going to be as successful as the seven-year-olds at acquiring all grammatical properties of their L2. Furthermore, once children have learnt how to speak the language there are so much more to learn. “For example, the child needs to learn what nouns and verbs are and what synonyms and antonyms are. Such activities require the child to separate language from the context of actual experience and to learn to deal with abstract meanings” (Mc Laughlin, 1992).

### **2.11 How Metaphors Reflect Perceptions**

People can use metaphors in their daily lives to show how they perceive the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). People can also use metaphor as a cognitive tool to understand the real world (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). In investigating metaphors, researchers usually analyse either the naturally produced metaphors by teachers and learners in uncontrolled contexts or the elicited metaphors by participants completing the sentence frame “Learning (English) is like.....(because .....)”.

Studies reported in Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Ellis (2001) and Oxford et al. (1998) employed the former procedure, while studies reported in Guerrero and Villamil (2002) and Wan, Low and Li (2011) are examples of the latter procedure. In the study of Sykes (2011), it was found the elicited metaphor generated by the participants were representatives of their implicit held beliefs.

### **2.12 Metaphor as Method**

“The more a metaphor is creative and unique, the more it reflects the active thought processes of the person who produced it, including thoughts that the speaker may not

have been able to express explicitly” (Littlewood, 2012, p.33). People’s thoughts and perceptions become more vivid and interesting when they use metaphor. This is why metaphors have been used as a research tool in a considerable number of studies (Kesen, 2013), such as in teacher education and in second language acquisition. Researchers have also studied the motivation of learners through the metaphor analysis (Jin et al., 2014). Wan, Low, and Li (2011) used students’ and teachers’ metaphors to explore how they perceived aspects of learning and teaching and found that metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool in gaining insights into students’ and teachers’ beliefs.

Schmitt (2005) considered metaphor as an important data collection tool in qualitative research. Metaphors present a holistic framework of perception because they provide an understanding of experience related to the subject of the metaphor (Wormeli, 2009). Metaphors allow us to replace a concept or an idea with another one to better explain the original idea with another. There is an interpretation and a relative similarity in question (Ortony, 1993). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that metaphor attempts to explain what is unknown with something else. Metaphors are not just a means of expressing perceptions of people regarding something; rather, they are also thinking and interpretation tools used continuously and unintentionally in the process of analysis (Martinez et al., 2001).

### **2.13 Sfard’s Conceptual Metaphors of Education**

Sfard has identified metaphors about education, are “acquisition metaphor” (AM) and “participation metaphor” (PM) (See Table 2.1)

**Table 2.1: The Metaphorical Mappings**

Acquisition metaphor		Participation metaphor
Individual enrichment	Goal of learning	Community building
Acquisition of something	Learning	Becoming a participant
Recipient (consumer), (re-)constructor	Student	Peripheral participant, apprentice
Provider, facilitator, mediator	Teacher	Expert participant, preserver of practice/discourse
Property, possession, commodity (individual, public)	Knowledge, concept	Aspect of practice/discourse/activity
Having, possessing	Knowing	Belonging, participating, communicating

Sfard (1998) discusses learning theory through the lens of two metaphors: the acquisition metaphor (AM) and the participation metaphor (PM). Learning within the acquisition metaphor involves the accumulation of a body of facts or items of knowledge that are abstracted and generalised. The process may involve either reception or development by construction, but the focus is on ‘gaining ownership’ (Sfard, 1998, p.5) or possession of something. Within the participation metaphor, learning involves participating within a community of more knowledgeable others to construct understanding. Participation takes place in the context of culture through social mediation. The focus within this metaphor is not on possession but on participation in various kinds of activities characteristic of a learning area as the learner gradually becomes a member of the subject community. Sfard highlights that ‘each (metaphor) has something to offer that the other cannot provide’ (Sfard, 1998, p.10).

### **2.13.1 Acquisition Metaphor (AM)**

In Sfard’s (1998) taxonomy, the Acquisition Metaphor (AM) describes learning as the acquisition and aggregation of knowledge. Key terms within the AM are *transmission*, *internalisation*, and *appropriation*. Sfard (1998) indicates that the “acquisition” metaphor is extremely entrenched in our cumulative conscience. For instance, it is customary to distinguish learning in terms of “accumulation”, “transmission”, “transfer”, “retention”, “reception” and so forth (Sfard, 1998, p.5). In addition, the “acquisition” metaphor sets

individual improvement as the objective of learning; the ability of learning becomes “gaining control over some commodity” and perception is undefined from “having” or “possessing”.

Human learning is often conceived of as an acquisition of something. The growth of knowledge in the process of learning has been analysed in terms of concept development since the time of Piaget and Vygotski (1960). Concepts are to be understood as basic units of knowledge that can be accumulated, gradually refined, and combined to form ever richer cognitive structures.

### **2.13.2 Participation Metaphor (PM)**

Recently, the “participation” metaphor has been re-stated in educational discourse. Its impact transpires through related terms as the “cooperative learning” and “learning community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Sfard observed (1998), even though the “participation” metaphor may seem promising for structuring future discourse on educational procedure, educators should not depend on a single metaphor. Instead, metaphors should assist as a device for “local sense-making” (p.12) which helps educators to secure the classroom reality.

### **2.14 Oxford et al.’s Philosophical Perspectives on Educational Metaphors.**

Apart from Sfard’s (1998) taxonomy, Oxford et al. (1998) proposed a four-part conceptual framework for research on education metaphor, particularly in language education and learning. The researchers identified four main metaphors that structure educational discourse, namely, education as “social order”, as “social reform”, as “cultural transmission”, and as “learner-centred growth”. These metaphors reflect a society’s inception of education in various epochs.

Oxford (2001) who studied personal narratives of 473 foreign language learners, she identified prominent metaphors used to describe approaches to teaching and learning the language. Among the metaphors which were recorded under former included the 'autocratic teaching approach' such as 'teacher as manufacturer', 'teacher as tyrant' and 'teacher as judge'. Different metaphors such as 'teacher as a mother' were found to reflect the 'democratic teaching approach' while metaphors which depict certain dysfunctional aspects of the 'laissez-faire teaching approach' were recorded as 'teacher as blind eye'. Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) elicited students' metaphors about their language teachers and further examined the dimensional ground in which they are aligned to. The students' metaphors were analysed and categorized into the four aspects identified by Oxford et al., namely, Social Order, Cultural Transmission, Learner-Centred Growth, and Social Reform (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). Majority of the students described their language teachers under the Learner-Centered Growth.

Notably, the metaphors about education and learning, including language learning, determine the main aim of curriculum development and the pedagogical practice valued by a society. Oxford et al. (1998) proposed that each of the four educational philosophies are related with the perceptions and targets pervasive inside a society at a certain epoch. Therefore, it would be interesting to employ this framework for a Malaysian language learning context.

Oxford et al. (1998) have done a comprehensive and detailed study on language teaching and learning with the use of metaphor analysis. The researchers developed a typology of metaphors which explored different perspectives on the concept of what a language teacher entails through personal narratives elicited from students in written or verbal forms, teachers as well as former students. From this study, 14 discrete metaphors used for teachers were identified with teacher as 'manufacturer', 'conduit', 'nurturer',

‘acceptor’, ‘entertainer’ and ‘learning partner’. The metaphors were then categorized into the four philosophical perspectives of education.

As this brief review of literature shows, metaphors have been essential for formulating educational philosophies and discourses. However, very scarce input has been obtained from the language learners, especially young learners of an additional language. The proposed study addresses this research gap.

### **2.15 Martinez et al.’s Framework**

Martinez et al. (2000), though largely agree with Sfar’s (1998) theoretical underpinnings, propose a more nuanced approach to metaphors about learning. Thus, Sfar rooted the “acquisition” metaphors in the behaviouristic and constructivist concepts of learning while the “participation” metaphor was rooted in the concepts of situated learning to the second. Martinez et al. (2000) provide a more clear division of the metaphors into (1) behaviourist/empiricist perspective which considers knowledge as an accumulation; (2) cognitive point of view which sees knowledge as building interrelated schemata, and (3) situative or socio-historic perspective where knowledge is a community-rooted process.

#### **2.15.1 Behaviourist Learning Perspective**

Behaviourism is a theory about learning that focuses on the behaviour depicted by the learners for the purpose of identifying its determinants. In other words, Behaviourism focuses on mechanism as the central unit of analysis which assumes behaviour as depicted by a finite set of physical laws. This learning dimension applies the stimulus and response metaphor to interpret the learners’ physical behaviours.



The concept of ‘classical conditioning’ was pioneered by a Russian psychologist, Ivan Pavlov (1849 – 1936) with the type of learning based on the association of two stimuli repeatedly experienced together. For instance, if a student constantly experiences unpleasant situations in an English lesson such as difficult tasks, authoritative teachers, failures in the examination, the student may gradually dislike the subject.

Operant or instrumental conditioning is one way of learning, often defined as “Behaviour that brings about a satisfying effect (reinforcement) tends to be performed again, whereas behaviour that brings negative effect (punishment) is apt to be suppressed” (Morris & Maisto, 2001). In short, reinforcement often enhances a behaviour while punishment weakens it.

### **2.15.2 Cognitivist Learning Perspective**

The Cognitivist paradigm was a response to Behaviourism, the predominant school in experimental psychology in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The proponents of this learning dimension are Ivan Pavlov, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, and other physiologists who argued that psychology is best studied objectively with the condition that it is done through an individual’s overt behaviour. Since the cognitive realms are not overtly observable, behaviourist psychologists avoided the individual’s mental processes details. Cognitivism also attempted to go beyond Behaviourism to explain how people think, understand, and know. This learning dimension also attempts to explain how learners reason, make decisions, and remember. They emphasize on discovering how individuals make sense and define the world within themselves. The way our minds construe the world around us also would impact our behaviour indirectly.

The Cognitivist approaches learning from the angle of a change in learners’ mental structures, enabling them to change their behaviour. Among some of the internal

processes are thinking, awareness, remembrance and encoding. According to Martinez et al., (2001), the mind is constantly active and informational with examples of metaphors as Learning is like 'setting the bricks of a house' and 'learning to walk'. Different forms of assistance offered are crucial in the process of acquiring how to walk until the learner can gain confidence and reach independence stage.

### **2.15.3 Situative Learning Perspective**

According to the Situative learning perspectives, learners should be able to interact with the physical world. Situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) emphasises the idea that much of what is learnt is specific to the situation whereby learning takes place. This learning paradigm proposes the idea that learning is situated in the activity as sums up by the concept 'Learning is doing'. Meaningful episodes of learning only occur when they are embedded in a situation (Brown, et. al, 1989; Oliver, 2000). In short, situated learning happens in authentic tasks that involve real-life setting (Winn, 1993).

The metaphors under this category ought to reflect the view that learning is situated in the context used. For instance, the teacher is seen as the 'North Star' guiding the explorer (learner) to find their way during their journey of learning. In other words, teachers and learners perform a joint job like ants, working collaboratively or like a tourist guide negotiating the route with the tourist (students) (Martinez et al., 2001).

There were quite a number of studies done on teachers' educational metaphors and images on language learning. Martinez et al. (2001) investigated teachers' metaphorical conceptions on their perceptions of learning. Most of the metaphors gathered fall under the 'Behaviourist and Empiricist' category which interprets the mind as an empty slate onto which our past experiences in the world is accumulated into knowledge. In the local Malaysian and setting specific studies, Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) elicited metaphors

produced by students about their perceptions on language teachers and further examined the teacher categorization they are each aligned to. These studies are meant to help teachers identify and construct their own images as well as their teaching knowledge to promote an authentic self-awareness of the practices of the teaching profession. Ellis (2002), on the other hand, explored the metaphors generated by beginner L2 German learners' thoughts kept in their diaries for a duration of six months.

## **2.16 Past Studies on Metaphorical Perceptions involving Young Learners**

The review of literature involving the use of metaphor as a research technique in the field of second language education indicates that there have been a number of studies focusing on the use among young learners' in different contexts of the world.

In one study, Torghabeh, Elahi and Khanalipour (2009) obtained metaphors from Iranian students and categorized the metaphors under conceptual metaphors such as organizer, spiritual leader, parent, innovator provider of knowledge, entertainer, nurturer, counselor and friend. In a similar vein, in China, students and EFL teachers' metaphors were investigated and categorized by Wan, Low and Li (2011) under the following categories: interest arouser, co-worker, culture transmitter, teacher as provider, devotee, instructor, nurturer and authority.

Similarly, Caballero (2006) found that the journey metaphor was highly used by his participants. In another study by Jin et al. (2014), the English learning motivation of Chinese primary school learners was analysed by the means of the metaphors they produced. They found that the learners were very positive about learning English and felt happy and excited to learn the language; in addition, learners believed in the merits of interactive methods and learning through play. It was also revealed in their study that

some young learners were aware of the difficulties of learning English, but were confident to achieve their English learning targets despite these challenges.

In another study, Çap and Acat (2012) collected metaphors from secondary school learners about how they feel about their English learning process. The categories they distinguished at the end of their analysis revealed significant differences caused by the participants' class level and gender. In her study, Aktekin (2013) mainly explored learners' metaphorical perceptions about their language learning process. She concluded that most of the learners created metaphors that can be categorized under "Activity which requires practice and/or patience." She justified this category by giving the metaphorical example "driving a car". Aktekin concluded that metaphors are valuable as they give an idea pertaining to the foreign language learning process.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, although there have recently been a number of local and international studies focusing on the young learners' metaphorical language about the learning process, studies aiming to reveal young Language learners' metaphorical perceptions related to the English learning process is very scarce in Malaysia. Therefore, the current research paper mainly aims to uncover the metaphors young language learners produce about learning the English language and to reveal their justification of these metaphors. There is a need for such a study because as rightly argued by Gizem Arikan (2015), there is a lack of empirical research studies in Malaysia dealing with young English Language learners. It is also believed that revealing the metaphors of young learners actively involved in the learning process can contribute to a positive change in educational beliefs and practices (Cameron, 2003), this is because necessary actions can be taken to cope with the negative metaphors and to turn these metaphors into positive ones. It is believed that the metaphors held by young learners about the nature of learning English can give valuable insights to the English teachers (Ellis & Barkhuizen,

2005) and to other relevant stakeholders such as ESL curriculum designers, materials developers and the decision-makers (e.g., National Ministry of Education) about ways of overcoming problems encountered by young learners in the English learning process.

### **2.17 Research on Educational Metaphors in the Malaysian Context**

A search of literature was able to locate a limited number of published studies on educational metaphors done in the Malaysian educational context. Ho-Abdullah (2008) conducted a semantic analysis of metaphorical conceptualization of teaching and learning in the Malay language. Regarding the metaphors about language teaching and learning, some studies focused on university students' metaphorical conceptualizations of learning a foreign (Russian) language (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008, 2011).

To the best of our knowledge, there are no available studies done particularly on young Malaysian language learners. The proposed study will address this gap by exploring metaphorical conceptualizations of learning English by Malaysian schoolchildren.

### **2.18 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the main concepts of learners' metaphor production and language attitudes embedded in this metaphors. The literature review indicated that numerous past studies were done using on the elicited metaphors. On the contrary, studies which delve deeper on the metaphorical production of young learners' attitudes towards language learning and the complications encountered throughout the process are still relatively limited (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Saban, Kocbeker & Saban, 2007; Oxford et al., 1998). It is with this in mind that the researcher aspired to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with explanation of the research design. It proceeds to the explanation of the selected participants for this study. Following this, the researcher described the data collection procedure. The chapter also describes the instrumentation used to collect the data. Finally, it describes the data analysis procedures.

### 3.2 Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory qualitative research design to examine young language learners' metaphors about learning English. This qualitative study adopted an exploratory design whereby the researcher aligned the metaphors gathered with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al (2001). The researcher further explored the attitudes embedded in the students' metaphors. The exploratory stance is deemed appropriate because young learners' metaphors is still currently an under-explored area of study. The researcher attempted to seek an in-depth understanding of the young learner's usage of Metaphors and the attitudes towards the target language embedded in these metaphors.

### 3.3 Participants

This study employed convenience sampling procedure. In convenience sampling the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to be studied. However, the sample can provide useful information for answering questions and hypotheses. (Creswell, 2008, p.163) In this study this method was chosen by the researcher because the participants were easily available.

The participants for this study were 12-year-old primary school students learning English at *Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar*, Kuala Lumpur. Sixty students from two

different levels took part in this study. Thirty students were from the high proficiency group and the other thirty were from the lower proficiency group. The proficiency level was determined based on their mid term exam results. Table 3.1 provides details of the participants.

**Table 3.1: Participants.**

Criteria	High Proficiency Group	Lower Proficiency Group
Males	15 students	15 students
Females	15 students	15 students

All the participants were Malay.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

The data was collected using procedures described by Jin et al. (2011) and Low (2015). Adopting this procedure assisted at a later stage of this study in validating the data collected from the participants (Low, 2015). The researcher carried out the data collection procedure during the English lesson in the respective classrooms. The participants could follow the instructions given by the researcher. Both the High Proficiency Group and the Lower Proficiency Group answered the questionnaires based on the researcher's instructions. Therefore the data collection procedure went on smoothly without any glitches.

### **3.5 Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study consisted of an open-ended metaphor-elicitation questionnaire. This study explored elicited metaphors about language learning. As Low (2015) explained, "elicited" metaphors are generated when "the respondent is prompted (linguistically or visually) by a researcher to produce a metaphorical expression or proposition" (p.17). In other words, the respondents are aware that they are expected to produce a metaphorical expression and often an entailment to explain their metaphors.

This questionnaire comprised 3 sections: Part I contained the metaphorical prompts on the participants' perceptions of learning the English Language and the English Language classroom. It included the prompt "*Learning English is like ..... because .....*". Students were required to provide their metaphor after the word 'like' and their metaphorical expression after the word 'because' by writing the entailment.

Part II of the questionnaire aimed to gather the participants' attitude towards learning English. Three choices were given for the participants to do their selection: Happy, Ok or Not Happy. The students were required to complete the second part of the questionnaire which required them to choose the icon which matched their attitude towards learning English.

Part III sought the participants demographic profile. (See Appendix D)

The demographic questions comprised information such as: Name, Gender, Age and Class. As the participants were young learners this amount of demographic information was sufficient.

The participants completed the sentence prompt "Learning English is like..... because ....." by using a metaphorical expression (a word or a phrase) which best described and reflected their perceptions on English language learning and a language classroom. This technique was favourable as it neither contaminated nor distorted the learners' authentic views through their metaphorical expressions (Cameron & Low, 1999).

The entailment gives the underlying meaning of the metaphor which goes beyond the basic mapping between the metaphor and the target domain as 'metaphors often have clusters of related entailments and entailments may differ across cultures' (Jin et al, 18). The entailments helped the metaphor production and clarified the underlying meanings



enabling researchers to understand learners' emotions, learning journeys, reasons, and dreams for learning. The analysis focuses on the metaphors and entailments produced by participants in order to identify underlying patterns and themes of targeted perceptions.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedures**

First of all, *in vivo* open coding was used to analyse the metaphors and their entailments (Creswell, 2008). Basically, the researcher need to read through the data several times and then start to create tentative labels for the chunks of data. This may not be based on existing theories – just on the meaning that emerges from the data. The researcher also records examples of participants' words and establish properties of each code.

In the second stage, after the initial coding was completed, a second round of data analysis compares the labels and the researcher groups the metaphors into similar themes (Braun and Clark, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Thematic analysis was adopted. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as 'it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis' (p.78). A further advantage, particularly from the perspective of learning and teaching, is that it is a method rather than a methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). This means that, unlike many qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective. This makes it a very flexible method, a considerable advantage given the diversity of work in learning and teaching. The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This is much more than simply summarising the data; a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Finally, these themes were aligned according to the Martinez et al.'s (2001) conceptual framework. The metaphors and entailments were explored and interpreted based on the three major paradigms of learning dimensions namely Behaviourist, Cognitivist or Situative perspectives.

The researcher employed the data transformation method in further segmenting and analysing the data of phrases or sentences given in the entailments. It involved creating codes and themes by highlighting the keywords or main recurring ideas as emerged in the qualitative text found in the data. For instance, the response learning English is like 'a shining star' because I like to speak English is highlighted as underlined to further emphasise the notion of 'Interest' under the theme 'Astronomy'. The participants' metaphorical responses and their entailments from the metaphor-elicited task were first tabulated with the list of metaphors and their entailments to allow a deeper understanding and insights into their perceptions.

### **3.6.1 Stages of Data Analysis Procedure**

The explanations below further illustrated the stages of each data analysis procedure taken in this study:

#### ***(a) Naming / Labelling Stage***

The researcher identified and tabulated all the metaphors and their entailments provided by the participants from both groups (High Proficiency group and Lower Proficiency group), in tables 3.2 as an example.

**Table 3.2 : Sample identification of learners’ metaphors and its entailments**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>because.....(entailments)</b>
H1	Magic	it is very wonderful
L1	a school	teacher is sporting

**Note:** H denotes High proficiency student and L denotes Lower proficiency student

1 denoted the number assigned to the Respondents

**(b) *Sorting (Clarification and elimination) stage***

The researcher went through the data again and classified each metaphor into an appropriate theme. For example, the metaphor “a shining star” was categorized under the theme Astronomy. This step was meant to further break down all the metaphor into analysable chunks of data. This also allowed the researcher to look for salient features or common elements among the metaphors.

**(c) *Categorization stage***

The researcher first coded the metaphors and the entailments given by the participants from both groups, and categorised them based on the coding schemes of Martinez et al.’s (2001) learning dimensions. See table 3.3 as an example.

**Table 3.3 : Sample categorization of learners’ metaphors for learning dimensions**

<b>Students</b>	<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>Entailments</b>	<b>Category</b>
H10	a robot	we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours.	Situative
L16	cleaning house	learning English very hard	Behaviourist

**Note:** H denotes High proficiency learners and L denotes Lower proficiency learners

Categories were based on Martinez et al. (2001).

*(d) Analyzing Stage*

During the analysis stage, the researcher carried out a comparison of the types of metaphors produced by both the High Proficiency Group and the Lower Proficiency Group based on Martinez et al.'s (2001) framework.

Some of the metaphors and their entailments given by the participants allowed straight forward conclusions, as they pointed to a clear learning dimension. For instance, the metaphor "a permanent pen" and the entailment 'we will remember what we have learnt' (H8) reflected the Cognitivist learning dimension.

Some of the metaphors given by the participants revealed repetition of the same metaphor especially from the lower proficiency group.

As for the interrater analysis, the researcher employed 2 coders, i.e. the first coder was the Supervisor to the researcher herself, Dr Larisa Nikitina from the Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University Malaya and the second coder is the researcher's course mate for the Master's programme. (see Appendix)

### **3.7 Framework of Analysis**

In relation to the first angle of this study, the young language learners' metaphors were explored and interpreted based on the three paradigms of learning dimensions - Behaviourist, Cognitivist or Situative perspectives. The coding schemes for this interpretation and categorization were adopted from Martinez et.al. (2001) who looked at metaphors as blueprints of thinking about learning the English language. This framework of analysis allowed the researcher to view the learners' metaphors from a comprehensive approach, as both cognitive and social phenomenon (Cameron, 1999).

### 3.8 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study among a group of students from Sekolah Kebangsaan Bangsar, KL. The group consist of twenty Primary Five students (11 years old). Ten students were at high proficiency level and another ten at low proficiency level. The students' proficiency levels were identified based on the school's term exam and streaming system. The reason why Year 5 students were chosen for the pilot study was that this age group was considered to be mature enough to develop a perception of "Learning English" and close in age to the actual intended participants of the main study.

The participants for this pilot study were all Malaysians and by their ethnic group, the majority students of this school are Malays. The participants are from middle and low income background.

First of all, the participants in this pilot study were given a training session involving them in verbal participation in order to understand what a metaphor is. The training session was based on the procedure described by Jin et al. (2011), whereby a total of 128 children (65 in Year 1; 63 in Year 3) generated 362 metaphors in Chinese.

The researcher introduced the metaphors to the participants by showing them a video clip on you tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3dj0ejUa38> (Metaphors for young learners)

Being young learners this interested the participants. The Researcher explained to the participants the use of "like" and "as" in Metaphors. As these are young learners, the word "like" will be able to help them to understand the metaphors.

Next, the Researcher put up some sample metaphors using power point slides.

For example, the sample metaphors that were used during this session were “The school is like a greenhouse because it is full of ideas”, “My teacher is like a candle because the teacher consumes itself to light the way for others”, and “My father is like an encyclopedia because he knows all the answers to my questions / he is intelligent”.

After being trained through the verbal participation to generate a metaphor, the learners were asked to produce metaphors with entailments. The following prompts were given:

1. My mother is like a rose because.....
2. My school is like ..... because .....

The high proficiency students were able to come up with suitable metaphors but the lower proficiency students needed to be prompted by the researcher as they lacked confidence. After been given some time the lower proficiency students were able to come up with appropriate metaphors and the relevant entailment.

Next, the students were given questionnaires that elicited metaphors and entailments about learning the English language (Questionnaire is given in Appendix D )

The pilot study took about 1 hour. The students were given ample time to come up with the appropriate metaphor and the entailment.

This pilot study was designed to train the participants to responded to metaphors elicitation questionnaire. Participants’ responses revealed their understanding of the required tasks in providing the information needed in the questionnaire. The students could provide their own metaphors without any problems and the researcher proceeded to conduct the data for the actual study.

The preliminary findings from the pilot study allowed the researcher to analyse and ensure rigour in the methods of interpreting the metaphors and entailments provided by each student. The researcher collected the participants' responses and tabulated their metaphors and entailments as described in the pilot analysis below.

**Table 3.4 :Sample data of students' metaphors on language learning  
(Pilot Study)**

Students	Metaphors	Entailments
H1	puzzle piece	it is easy
H2	dictionary	I can read and have many ideas
H3	Novel	I can improve my vocabulary
H4	Magical	the knowledge will go to our mind
H5	a lemon and ice cream	some that is easy and some that is hard
H6	flower petal	I bloom with knowledge
H7	sweet and sour	sometime it become boring and some time exciting
H8	Google	it has much knowledge
H9	a flowering curtain	it has many types of sentences
H10	Maths	it is difficult at first but become easy later
L11	Rainbow	it has many games
L12	Tree	the tree grow like my mind
L13	Book	can read
L14	Book	is interesting
L15	teks book	it is full of words
L16	Poster	is beautiful
L17	Book	is interesting
L18	Rainbow	it is colourful
L19	Library	it interesting
L20	Movie	I learn a lot

**Note:** H refers to High proficiency and L refers to Lower Proficiency. Numericals indicate the participants number.

As to Research Question "When I learn English I am....., participants' response on their attitude towards learning English was collected and analysed.

**Table 3.5 : Sample data of students' responses on their attitude towards learning English  
(Pilot Study)**

HP Students	Response	LP Students	Response
1	Happy	11	Ok
2	Happy	12	Ok
3	Happy	13	Not Happy
4	Ok	14	Ok
5	Happy	15	Ok
6	Ok	16	Ok
7	Happy	17	Not Happy
8	Ok	18	Ok

9	Happy	19	Ok
10	Ok	20	Ok

**Note:** HP refers to High Proficiency and LP refers to Lower Proficiency

After a careful consideration of the preliminary findings from the pilot study, the researcher concluded that there were no problems with the metaphor production. The pilot study proceeded well, the students understood the task well and were able to produce quality metaphors.

Based on the findings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Research Questions, the researcher could see a vast difference in the attitude of the two group of students. The good students were either “happy” or “ok” in learning English whereas the weaker students were mostly “ok” or “unhappy” with learning the language. The actual study will consist of sixty Year 6 (12 years old) students. This would be an ideal time to carry out this research on them as they have just completed their UPSR exam. An exam required in the fulfilment of the Malaysian Education System before the students go on to the secondary school. The students are in a more relaxed atmosphere as the stress of having to sit for a major exam is over.

### **3.9 Ethical Procedures and Considerations**

Ethical procedures were taken into consideration as an integral part of this study right from its inception to its culmination.

First of all, the researcher sought ethical written permission (refer to Appendix A ) from the school headmaster to conduct this research in the school among the young participants, by disseminating the questionnaires to sixty students. With the approval granted, the researcher was provided with the list of students’ names and class. As the participants were young learners the parents’/guardian’s consent was also obtained through consent forms (refer to Appendix B ) given to the young learners to be signed by



their parents / guardians, whereby the parents indicated their voluntary agreement for their child to participate in this research. In addition to the participants' consent, their privacy and confidentiality were taken care of as they were given pseudonyms in the data analysis and discussion.

### **3.9.1 Validity and Trustworthiness**

Throughout this study, the researcher considered various possible factors which could potentially affect the validity of the results by looking into the four crucial elements underlying the process of establishing and ensuring trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). According to Maxwell (1996), validity is seen as “the correctness or credibility of description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p.87). Researcher bias is another factor that could potentially threaten validity. Thus, with all these potential factors in mind, the researcher strategized means to ensure trustworthiness of the findings and implications of this study as a whole. Thus, a re-iterative approach to the data analysis was employed. The researcher carried out the process repeatedly, typically for emphasis and clarity.

### **3.9.2 Reliability**

The researcher employed a ‘peer-coding’ session which involved the opinions of two peers in the similar field of linguistics study was conducted to cross-check the researcher’s own categorizations of the data. The relevant coding schemes were provided to both the peer coders during the peer-review session. This was to avoid any inaccuracy or researcher biasness in interpreting the data. Upon conducting the peer-coding session, any discrepancy of interpretations between the researcher and the two peer-coders were further confirmed through a discussion between the researcher and the two coders.

The final step of checking the categorization and emerging themes of the metaphorical data involved the validation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Coder who is an expert in the field of metaphor analysis in language learning. The expert is a lecturer who has been teaching English and Research Methodology for a number of years in the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and has published papers in the area of metaphors.

Reliability check for the data analysis was done using the interrater check technique. Simple percentage agreement was calculated after the two coders had done their coding.

According to the analysis done on the collected data, 60 metaphors of language learning perceptions were classified first by the researcher and then validated by two peer coders. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that the final inter-coder agreement rate in qualitative data analysis should approach or exceed the rating of 90% to be accepted as of reliable findings while Storch (2001) indicated that the level of agreement in discourse studies is often in the vicinity of 80% of the data coded. In this study, the researcher adopted the latter. Inter-coder reliability between the researcher and the coders were reached at 91.7%.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the entire methodology of this study. It explained the Research Design, number of participants, instrumentation to collect data and finally the data analysis procedures in this study. A brief explanation was given on the framework of analysis. The researcher explained about the Pilot Study carried out before the actual study was done.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study which aimed to tap into the perceptions of the young learners' perceptions about English Language learning through the use of metaphors. A discussion of the emerging metaphors and its entailments produced by two groups of young learners is also provided.

The entailments (reasons) for each of the metaphors given depicted a broader view of the learners' intended meaning encapsulated through the metaphors. In answering Research Questions 1 and 2, the researcher's interpretations of the metaphors and entailments were aligned with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors by Martinez et al. (2001). The emerging themes for each of the metaphors were further discussed in relation to each of the categorization. Findings concerning Research Question 3 helped to uncover the attitudes embedded in the metaphors produced by the participants from the High Proficiency and Lower Proficiency groups.

### **4.2 Themes from Young Learners' Metaphors and Entailments on Learning English**

The metaphor analysis findings are based on the written data by the young learners, which was then categorised by naturally occurring themes. The types of metaphors were identified in relation to learning English. These reflected the perceptions of the participating learners. The patterns of young learners' reasons for learning English were analysed through their entailments, following the metaphors created by them. The framework used to analyse the data was Martinez et al.

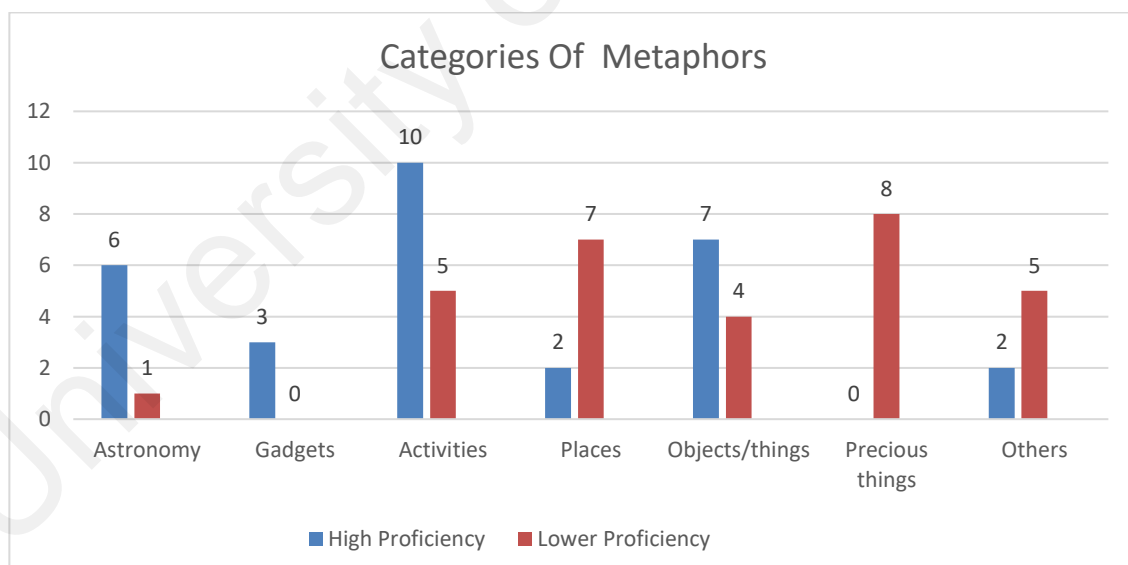
#### 4.2.1 Research Question 1 : What metaphors do young Malaysian learners of English as a second language have about learning the target language?

This section explores the learners' metaphors and entailments about learning the English language given as answers to the prompt.

“Learning English is like ..... (metaphor) because .....(reason)”

The researcher separated the metaphors according to the High (H) and Lower (L) proficiency students. The findings for Research Question 1 are as follows:

The types of the metaphors given by the pupils were grouped according to the superordinate category of the metaphors. There were mainly seven types of metaphors, namely Astronomy, Gadgets, Activities, Places, Objects/things, Precious things and Others. Figure 1 shows the numbers of metaphors for each type.



**Figure 4.1 Numbers of metaphors for each type**

Reliability of the findings was checked using interrater reliability technique. Simple percentage agreement between the raters was calculated. The interrater reliability for the categories of metaphors was 91.7%.

Metaphors created by this young learners were classified into several themes. All these themes and their contents are described in the following sections:

#### 4.2.1.1 Astronomy

Astronomy is the scientific study of all objects beyond earth, using physical laws to explain the origins of the universe and the objects it contains. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008) Learners who perceived learning English as Astronomy produced the following metaphors, the sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, gas, galaxies, gas, dust and other non-Earthly bodies and phenomena

Six metaphors given by the High Proficiency (HP) level students and one metaphor given by the Lower Proficiency (LP) level student referred to “Astronomy” often related to their preference for learning English. They also related to knowledge and usefulness and indicated the need for skills and effort for learning English. Table 1 provides some examples of metaphors from this category.

**Table 4.1: Astronomy metaphors**

Respondents	Metaphor	Entailment	Respondents	Metaphor	Entailment
H2	a shining star	i like to speak English	L22	Rainbow	my teacher is nice
H7	space	i learn everything that surrounds me			
H10	a robot	we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours.			
H13	Being an astronaut	it has many stages			
H15	a rainbow	i can improve myself in many ways			
H17	a planet	it is a language used to travel around the world			

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students. Numericals are the numbers assigned to each participants

#### 4.2.1.2 Gadgets

Gadgets are electronically simplified applications that make work easy. (Cambridge Online Dictionary,2008) Learners who perceived learning English as gadgets considered learning English as a small tool such as a machine that has a particular function. They also thought of it as a novelty. Gadgets are electronically simplified applications that make work easy (Cambridge Online Dictionary,2008).

**Table 4.2: Gadgets metaphors**

Participants	Metaphor	Entailment	Participants	Metaphor	Entailment
H5	a smart phone	it is full of knowledge			
H27	a computer	i can get new ideas everyday			
H28	a camera	i have many beautiful memories with my teacher			

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students

There were three gadget related metaphors produced only by the High Proficiency level students and none from the Lower Proficiency level students. (See Table 4.2)

#### 4.2.1.3 Activities

Activities as an energetic action, or something done especially for relaxation (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008). Learners who perceived learning English as an activity perceived learning English as the condition in which things are happening or being done.

**Table 4.3: Activities metaphors**

Participants	Metaphor	Entailment	Participants	Metaphor	Entailment
H9	eating groundnuts	it is very easy to learn the language	L16	cleaning house	learning English very hard
H11	riding a bicycle	we have to learn how to stable it until we are successful	L21	in the garden	it is beautiful
H16	singing a song	it is easy to remember	L24	being in America	we can learn English
H20	finding treasure	i can find and learn new words and phrases	L27	In the playground	i speak English
H21	eating chocolates	it is interesting to learn new sentences	L30	in the garden	i try speak English
H22	playing golf	it is very challenging			
H24	a routine	we learn and use it everyday			
H26	reading a novel	we learn something new every time we read and we gain more knowledge			
H29	travelling	we can explore and get a lot of knowledge			
H30	a theme park	we can do many activities with our friends and teacher			

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students

This group consisted of ten students from the High Proficiency level and five from the Lower Proficiency level. The students referred to various kinds of activities such as playing, treasure hunt etc. (See Table 4.3)

#### 4.2.1.4 Places

Places is a particular position, point, or area in space; a location, a portion of space designated or available for or being used by someone, a building or area that is used for a particular purpose (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008). Learners who perceived learning English as a place see it as a particular space designated or being used for a specific purpose.

**Table 4.4: Places metaphors**

Participants	Metaphor	Entailment	Participants	Metaphor	Entailment
H3	library	we can improve our English by reading books.	L1	a school	teacher is sporting
H14	a stadium	it has many new things that we can learn	L8	an art studio	teacher very amazing
			L10	music room	my teacher is sporting
			L11	crazy city	i not know learning English
			L14	a library	my teacher is kind
			L18	heaven	teacher is good
			L19	a library	teacher is very good

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students.

Two metaphors were obtained from the Higher Proficiency level students and seven from the Lower Proficiency group. (See Table 4.4)

#### 4.2.1.5 Objects / Things

Objects/Things is used to refer to as an article, item, piece, device, gadget, etc. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008). Learners who perceived learning English as an object sees it as a material thing that can be seen and touched.



**Table 4.5: Objects/Things metaphors**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
H4	video pictures	we can see many magical words and pictures	L2	a flower	it is beautiful
H6	a candle	it can burn our confident	L5	a book	my teacher is always talking stories
H8	a permanent pen	we will remember what we have learnt	L20	a book	i don't know how to read English
H12	a dictionary	we can learn many new words that we don't know	L23	a book	she good to learning a book
H19	a flower	i can have a beautiful day with our teacher			
H23	a clock	i want to learn English anytime			
H25	an encyclopedia	we can find many new English words in it.			

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students.

Seven metaphors from Higher Proficiency group and four from the Lower Proficiency group showed pupils' benefit in learning the English language. The category of familiar items of objects and things may signify young learners' positive and negative feelings and attachment towards learning English, which reveal learners' affective attitude expressed through the fundamental and familiar category of objects and things. (See Table 4.5)

#### **4.2.1.6 Precious Things**

Precious things are used to refer to highly valued items. Something valuable and treasured can be called precious (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008). Learners who perceived learning English as precious things sees it as something of great value; not to be wasted or treated badly because of being rare expensive or important.

**Table 4.6: Precious Things metaphors**

Participants	Metaphor	Entailment
L3	diamond	my teacher is beautiful
L7	a jewel	our future very important
L9	crystal	i learning English
L12	diamond	the teacher is good
L13	diamond	is a beautiful
L15	a diamond	a diamond is beautiful
L25	diamond	collect all about English
L26	a gold	my teacher sporting

**Note:** L refers to Lower Proficiency Level Students.

None of the Higher proficiency students stated the above metaphor while eight students from the Lower Proficiency group gave the examples related to precious things. This group (L) perceived learning English as precious things and benefited from it. They described the beauty of the teacher and learning English. (See Table 4.6)

#### 4.2.1.7 Others

Learners who perceived learning English under this category see them in various other metaphors. Examples of the remaining types of metaphors with their entailments are given below.

**Table 4.7: Other metaphors**

Participants	Metaphor	Entailment	Participants	Metaphor	Entailment
H1	magic	it is very wonderful	L4	a queen	the teacher is great
H18	music	the words have many different sounds	L6	a monster	is not my favourite
			L17	a queen	my teacher so nice
			L28	a crazy monkey	a lot of words I did not know
			L29	an angel	i very like English subject

**Note:** H refers to High Proficiency and L refers to Lower proficiency level students

The High Proficiency and Lower Proficiency students came up with various metaphors in this section. (See Table 4.7)

#### 4.2.2 Research Question 2: How do these metaphors align with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al. (2001)?

Martinez et al. (2001) differentiated the metaphors based on the three main learning dimensions of Behaviourist, Cognitivist and Situative.

The learners' metaphors were discussed in relation to each learning dimension based on the keywords and overall intended meanings as depicted in the entailments. Relevant emerging themes deduced from the keywords were extracted and discussed with reference to the different learning categorization. Each theme described below had an accompanying description taken as verbatim quotes from the data.

**Table 4.8: Analysis of metaphors according to Martinez et al.'s (2001) (High Proficiency Group)**

Par	Metaphors	Entailments	Categories
H1	magic	it is very wonderful.	C
H2	a shining star	i like to speak English.	B
H3	library	we can improve our English by reading books.	B
H4	video pictures	we can see many magical words and pictures.	B
H5	a smart phone	it is full of knowledge.	B
H6	a candle	it can burn our confident.	B
H7	space	i learn everything that surrounds me.	B
H8	a permanent pen	we will remember what we have learnt.	C
H9	eating groundnuts	it is very easy to learn the language.	B
H10	a robot	we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours.	S
H11	riding a bicycle	we have to learn how to stable it until we are successful.	S
H12	a dictionary	we can learn many new words that we don't know.	S
H13	being an astronaut	it has many stages.	B
H14	a stadium	it has many new things that we can learn.	C
H15	a rainbow	i can improve myself in many ways.	C
H16	singing a song	it is easy to remember.	B
H17	a planet	it is a language used to travel around the world.	S

H18	music	the words have many different sounds.	S
H19	a flower	i can have a beautiful day with our teacher.	C
H20	finding treasure	i can find and learn new words and phrases.	B
H21	eating chocolates	it is interesting to learn new sentences.	B
H22	playing golf	it is very challenging.	B
H23	a clock	i want to learn English any time.	B
H24	a routine	we learn and use it everyday.	S
H25	an encyclopedia	we can find many new English words in it.	S
H26	reading a novel	we learn something new every time we read and we gain more knowledge.	S
H27	a computer	i can get new ideas everyday.	C
H28	a camera	i have many beautiful memories with my teacher.	C
H29	travelling	we can explore and get a lot of knowledge.	S
H30	a theme park	we can do many activities with our friends and teacher.	S

**Note:** B refers to Behaviourist, C refers to Cognitivist and S refers to Situative

\***Par**= Participants

Learning Dimensions	Percentage
*Behaviourist	43%
*Cognitivist	23%
*Situative	34%

The Behaviourist perspective interprets knowledge as an accumulation of associations resulting from experience, while it considers the process of learning as generating new connections between the units “sensory impressions” and “individual response”. From a cognitive point of view, knowledge consists of interrelated schemata, which are individually and actively constructed by transforming old schemata into new ones or by inductively developing new schemata from a series of varying experiences. Learning is the process of schema construction. The situative conceives of knowledge as distributed among individuals in a social community and their artefacts, such as books, computers, etc.

Of course, in such a study the researcher is interpreting rather than describing; what is presented should not be taken as the learners’ perceptions per se but the researcher’s construction and categorisation of their perception based on their representation through the methodological tool of metaphor elicitation. Littlemore and Low (2006) point out that

it can be difficult to find the ‘truth’ in a metaphor and also to understand when people are being literal and when not. Therefore in analysing and categorising the student responses, it was important to attempt to capture the perception that underpinned the response as faithfully as possible.

The researcher along with the 2 coders came up with the final findings based on the three learning dimensions of Behaviourist, Cognitivist and Situative perspectives (refer to Table 4.8). From the findings of this study, a majority of young learners from the High Proficiency Group depicted the features of the Cognitivist learners (53%) with the emphasis on individual, inner mental pursuit in learning English. This is followed by the Behaviourist (40%) who focused on the mechanism of skill-acquisition in learning English and interestingly only a small number (7%) belonged to the Situative learning dimension which acknowledged the importance of authentic participation of community in learning.

The Lower proficiency Group depicted the features of the Behaviourist learners (67%), followed by Cognitivist (30%) and only one student (3%) belonged to the Situative group. (Refer to Table 4.9)

**Table 4.9: Analysis of metaphors according to Martinez et al.’s (2001) (Lower Proficiency Group)**

LP	Metaphors	Entailments	Categories
L1	a school	teacher is sporting	C
L2	a flower	it is beautiful	C
L3	a diamond	my teacher is beautiful	C
L4	a queen	the teacher is great	C
L5	a book	my teacher is always talking stories	C
L6	a monster	is not my favourite	C
L7	a jewel	our future very important	S
L8	an art studio	teacher very amazing	C
L9	crystal	i learning English	B
L10	music room	my teacher is sporting	C
L11	crazy city	i not know learning English	B

L12	diamond	the teacher a good	C
L13	a diamond	is a beautiful	C
L14	a library	my teacher is kind	C
L15	a diamond	a diamond is beautiful	C
L16	cleaning house	learning English very hard	B
L17	a queen	my teacher so nice	C
L18	heaven	teacher is good	C
L19	a library	teacher is very good	C
L20	a book	i don't know how to read English	B
L21	in the garden	it is beautiful	C
L22	rainbow	my teacher is nice	C
L23	a book	she good to learning a book	B
L24	being in America	we can learn English	S
L25	diamond	collect all about English	C
L26	a gold	my teacher sporting	C
L27	in the playground	i speak English	B
L28	a crazy monkey	a lot of words I did not know	S
L29	an angel	i very like English subject	B
L30	in the garden	i try speak English	B

**Note:** B refers to Behaviourist, C refers to Cognitivist and S refers to Situative

Learning Dimensions	Percentage
*Behaviourist	27%
*Cognitivist	63%
*Situative	10%

Detailed discussion of the young learners' metaphors according to the learning paradigm and their emerging themes will be elaborated further in the following description.

#### **4.2.2.1 The Behaviourist perspective**

The young learners who perceived learning English as a Behaviourist perspective were both from the High Proficiency as well as the Low Proficiency Group. Twelve (n = 12 or 40%) young learners from the Higher Proficiency Group and eighteen (n = 18 or 60%) young learners from the Lower Proficiency Group in this study were inclined

towards the Behaviourist learning perspective with the emphasis on skill-acquisition process. Learning was viewed as a process of individual behavioural growth through acquisition of knowledge, generating new stimulus-response (S-R) connections (Martinez et al, 2001). The metaphors produced by the learners of this category seemed to be oriented around the six themes mentioned in this study.

**Table 4.10: Behaviourist learners' metaphors and entailments**

Themes	Metaphors	Entailments
Astronomy	H2 a shining star H10 a robot  L22 rainbow	I like to speak English. we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours. my teacher is nice.
Gadgets	None	
Activities	H9 eating groundnuts H16 singing a song H21 eating chocolates H22 playing golf H24 a routine L21 in the garden	it is very easy to learn the English. it is easy to remember. it is interesting to learn new sentences. it is very challenging. we learn and use it everyday. it is beautiful.
Places	L8 an art studio L10 music room L14 a library L18 heaven L19 a library	teacher very amazing. my teacher is sporting. my teacher is kind. teacher is good. teacher is very good.
Objects/Things	H 4 video pictures H6 a candle H23 a clock L2 a flower	we can see many magical words and pictures. it can burn our confident. I want to learn English anytime. it is beautiful.
Precious Things	L3 a diamond L7 a jewel L12 diamond L13 a diamond L15 a diamond L26 a gold	my teacher is beautiful. our future very important. the teacher is good. it is beautiful. a diamond is beautiful. my teacher sporting.
Others	H1 magic H18 music L4 a queen L6 a monster L17 a queen L29 an angel	it is very wonderful. the words have many different sounds. the teacher is great. is not my favourite. my teacher so nice. I very like English subject.

**(a) Astronomy**

The learning feature under this theme is often depicted as related to knowledge and usefulness and indicated the need for skills and effort for learning English. The metaphors under this category were “*a shining star*” (H2), “*a robot*” (H10) and “*rainbow*” (L22). Learning English is like “*a shining star*” because “*I like to speak English*” (H2). This analogy presumed that the young learner enjoyed speaking the language. The metaphor and entailment depicted a positive notion so did the second metaphor ‘*a robot*’ (H10) also connoted a positive notion. “*Learning English is like a robot*” because “*we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours*” (H10). This idea refers to a determined attempt and effort required in learning the language. The third metaphor for this theme is from the young learner of the Lower Proficiency Group. The young learner expressed a positive notion of learning English with the entailment “*my teacher is nice*”(L22). The teacher played an important role in the young learner’s interest in learning the language.

**(b) Gadgets**

The learning feature under this theme revealed learners’ affective reasons and preferences for learning English. Unfortunately, none of the young learners from both the groups produced any metaphor that depicted this theme under the Behaviourist perspective.

**(c) Activities**

The metaphors and entailments in this theme carried positive notion except one which had a negative notion. Three young learners produced positive metaphors and entailments. They perceived learning English as an interesting activity and enjoyed the task. According to H9 who perceived learning English as carrying out an interesting activity, stated that “*Learning English is like eating groundnuts*” because “*it is very easy to learn the English*”. H16 on the other hand stated that “*Learning English is like singing*



*a song*” because “*it is easy to remember*”. H21 was in the same circle of interest and stated that “*Learning English is like eating chocolates*” because “*it is interesting to learn new sentences*”.

The idea of learning as a ‘routine’ reflected a sequence of actions regularly followed by the learner as a means of acquiring the language skills. H24 stated that “*Learning English is like a routine*” because “*we learn and use it everyday*”. This analogy presumed language learning to be a continuous process that never ends. The metaphor and entailment depicted a positive notion.

One young learner from the Lower Proficiency Group, L21 who perceived learning English, realised that language is something aesthetically beautiful to be pursued and appreciated. L21 stated that “*Learning English is like in the garden*” because “*it is beautiful*”. The young learner acknowledged the figurative purpose of language through the lens of its beauty, thus depicting that English language served more than just the literal purpose of communication, it is also beauty personified.

On the other hand, one young learner, H22 perceived learning English in a negative notion. H22 stated that “*Learning English is like playing golf*” because “*it is very challenging*”. This young learner perceived learning English as hard work, and recognised the element of persevering through the hardships of learning English.

#### **(d) Places**

Five students produced metaphors which were aligned with this theme. All the five metaphors were produced in a positive notion. The metaphors “*an art studio*” (L8), “*music room*” (L10), “*a library*” (L14), “*heaven*” (L18) and “*a library*” (L19), all were derived from the Lower Proficiency Group. Two learners fabricated the same metaphor “*a library*” (L14 and L19). The entailments produced by the five young learners perceived

the influence of the teacher as the most important reason for their interest in learning the language. L8 stated that *“Learning English is like an art studio” because “teacher very amazing”*. L10 on the other hand stated that *“Learning English is like music room” because “my teacher is sporting”*. On the other hand, L18 expressed that *“Learning English is like heaven” because “teacher is good”*. Two young learners who came up with the same metaphor *“library”* but had different entailments. L14 perceived that *“Learning English is like a library” because “my teacher is kind”* and L19 differed by stating that *“Learning English is like a library” because “teacher is very good”*. Based on the data collected for this theme, it is clear that the young learners regarded their teacher as the source of their interest in learning the English language. It also reflected the teacher’s role as an initiator in the learning process. The language teacher is like a gift looked forward to by the young learners, by providing them with an access to the power of knowledge.

**(e) Objects / Things**

Learning the English language was described under this theme based on the metaphors *“video picture”* (H4), *“a candle”* (H6), *“a clock”* (H23) and *“a flower”* (L2). Three entailments produced by the young learners described the entailments in a positive conception whereas one entailment described learning English in a negative notion. H4 stated that *“Learning English is like video pictures” because “we can see many magical words and pictures”*. Whereas, H23 expressed the interest in learning English anytime by the entailment *“Learning English is like a clock” because “I want to learn English anytime”*. L2 further stated that *“Learning English is like a flower” because “it is beautiful”*. In other words, one needs to internalise and appreciate the beauty of English just like a flower in the process of learning it. Based on the entailment, the young learner was able to see and appreciate the underlying beauty of learning the English language.

On the other hand, H6 produced a negative entailment, “*Learning English is like a candle*” because “*it can burn our confident*”. The language learning process was found to be challenging and led to a lack of confidence in the young learner.

**(f) Precious Things**

On the contrary, young learners who perceived learning English as precious things, things of great value and should be greatly loved and treasured came up with six metaphors for this section. All the six young learners were from the Lower Proficiency Group who perceived learning English as “*diamonds*” (L3, L12, L13 and L15), “*jewel*” (L7) and “*gold*” (L26). They produced positive metaphors and described the beauty of learning the English language and the influence of the teacher’s role who was an important figure in the learning process. The metaphors and entailments produced by the young learners were as follows. L3 stated that “*Learning English is like a diamond*” because “*my teacher is beautiful*”.

The teacher is an important figure for the learner’s interest in learning the language. L12 came up with the same metaphor, “*Learning English is like a diamond*” because “*the teacher is good*”. Here, once again the teacher plays an important role in encouraging the learner to learn the English language. L13 further expressed that “*Learning English is like a diamond*” because “*it is beautiful*”. The entailment here is slightly vague as the beauty could possibly be for the language or the teacher. L15 on the other hand stated that “*Learning English is like a diamond*” because “*a diamond is beautiful*”. In this entailment, the beauty lies on the diamond and this shows that learning English is a precious thing.

On a different note, L7 described “*Learning English is like a jewel*” because “*our future very important*”. Based on the learner’s explanation, learning English is very

important for the learner's future. The learner has also compared learning English to a precious item. Therefore the learner perceives learning English as an important aspect in his/her lives.

Another learner, L26 also put together the metaphor and entailment for learning English, "*Learning English is like a gold*" because "*my teacher sporting*". Here once again, the teacher plays an important role in the learner's interest in learning the language. The learner's entailment represented the role of language teacher as a friend who could support or guide him/her in learning the language. Therefore the learner would perceive learning the language as dealing with a precious item.

**(g) Others**

The remaining types of metaphors with their entailments were placed under this section as they were not suitable to be placed under the other themes. They are six metaphors, with five positive and one negative metaphor. The positive metaphors were "*magic*"(H1), "*music*" (H18), "*a queen*" (L4 and L17) and "*an angel*" (L29). One young learner produced a negative metaphor "*a monster*" (L6) as he/she did not enjoy learning English and was not his/her favourite.

The positive metaphors and entailments produced by the young learners were, as stated by H1 "*Learning English is like magic*" because "*it is very wonderful*". H18 further expressed the interest in learning the language by producing the metaphor and entailment, "*Learning English is like music*" because "*the words have many different sounds*". Similarly, L29 produced a metaphor of interest towards learning the English language, "*Learning English is like an angel*" because "*I very like English subject*". Two similar metaphors were produced by two young learners (L4 and L17) that "*Learning English is like a queen*", and the entailments too carried the same meaning that is "*the teacher is*

great” and “my teacher so nice”. This two young learners favoured their English teacher, whereby they received guidance and assistance from the teacher in their English language learning process.

The negative metaphor was produced by L6 who stated that “*Learning English is like a monster*” because “*is not my favourite*”. This highlights that due to an unforeseen reason this particular learner does not like learning the English language as stated in the metaphor and entailment.

#### 4.2.2.2 The Cognitivist Learners’ Perspective

The young learners who perceived learning English from the Cognitivist perspective were both from the High Proficiency (HP) as well as the Low Proficiency (LP) Groups. Sixteen (n=16 or 53%) young learners from the HP Group and eleven (n=11 or 37%) young learners from the LP Group in this study were disposed by the Cognitivist learning perspective. These learners often displayed an active role in restructuring experiences, focused on inner mental processes, achieving understanding as an independent learner. The metaphors and entailments illustrating the seven themes will be further explained below.

**Table 4.11: Cognitivist learners’ metaphors and entailments**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Metaphors</b>	<b>Entailments</b>
Astronomy	H7 space H13 being an astronaut H15 a rainbow	I learn everything that surrounds me. It has many stages. I can improve myself in many ways.
Gadgets	H5 a smart phone H27 a computer H28 a camera	It is full of knowledge. I can get new ideas everyday. I have many beautiful memories with my teacher.
Activities	H11 riding a bicycle H20 finding treasure H26 reading novel	we have to learn how to stable it until we are successful. I can find and learn new words and phrases.

	H29 travelling L16 cleaning house L27 in the playground L30 in the garden	we learn something new every time we read and we gain more knowledge. we can explore and get a lot of knowledge. learning English very hard. I speak English. I try speak English.
Places	H3 library H14 a stadium L1 a school L11 crazy city	we can improve our English by reading books. It has many new things that we can learn. teacher is sporting. I not know learning English.
Objects/Things	H8 a permanent pen H12 a dictionary H19 a flower H25 an encyclopedia L5 a book L20 a book L23 a book	we will remember what we have learnt. we can learn many new words that we don't know. I can have a beautiful day with our teacher. we can find many new English words in it. my teacher is always talking stories. I don't know how to read English. she good to learning a book.
Precious Things	L9 crystal L25 diamond	I learning English. collect all about English.
Others	L28 a crazy monkey	a lot of words I did not know.

**(a) Astronomy**

Three young learners from the HP group, who perceived learning English as the Astronomy, realised the language is something necessary and can improve oneself in many ways. The language comes in many stages and ought to be pursued and appreciated. The metaphors that reflected this perception were “*Space*” (H7), “*being an astronaut*” (H13), and “*a rainbow*” (H15). All the three learners acknowledged the purpose of the language through the lens of its importance, thus depicting that English Language served more than just the literal purpose of communication.

According to H7 who perceived “*Learning English is like space*” because “*I learn everything that surrounds me*”. In other words, one needs to know the importance of the language and the entailment stressed the significance of the language. English language is something that need to be internalised and owned personally as a learner.

Besides that, H13 perceived “*Learning English is like being an astronaut*” because “*it has many stages*”. Ironically, the metaphor “astronaut” reflected the underlying positive power of English language as a route to undergo various stages in learning it. In short, the learner was aware of the different stages he/she has to go through in learning English to understand the complexity of the language. An important characteristic found here was the involvement of thinking, understanding and memory that occurred in the individual Cognitivist learner’s mind; a probing step which was usually absent in the mind of a Behaviourist learner.

On another interesting note, H15 expressed his/her understanding of “*Learning English is like a rainbow*” because “*I can improve myself in many ways*”. The learner painted an interesting metaphor which drew the researcher’s attention to the varieties of colours in a rainbow and its uniqueness. In other words, the learner’s perception of learning English was described as a unique personal experience and improvement in many ways.

#### **(b) Gadgets**

Another group of learners perceived learning English as useful as gadgets, portrayed in the metaphors ‘*a smart phone*’ (H5), ‘*a computer*’ (H27), and ‘*a camera*’ (H28). All the three metaphors and entailments were produced in a positive notion.

Interestingly, H5 viewed “*Learning English is like a smart phone*” because “*it is full of knowledge*”. Learning a second language which is widely spoken such as English was perhaps an avenue for this young learner to widen their perspectives. Instead of only being confined to her own mother tongue, learning English enabled the young learner to be opened to other possibilities in life. Another learner who produced a similar idea in the metaphor and entailment is H27 who stated that “*Learning English is like a computer*” because “*I can get new ideas everyday*”. This reflected the Cognitivist learning

perspective that was mentally driven and was able to think of the long-term benefits in his/her quest of learning the English language.

It is interesting to note how a young learner H28 conceptualised learning English as “a camera” because “*I have many beautiful memories with my teacher*”. In this case the young learner remarked that learning the language was beautiful with the help of the language teacher. Here, again the teacher played an important role in nurturing the learner’s interest in the language. She used the metaphor “camera” as a device to keep memories alive in one’s heart. All the metaphors under this theme were positive metaphors and entailments.

**(c) Activities**

Another group of learners, four from the HP group and three from the LP group, perceived learning English as an enjoyable experience, portrayed in the metaphors ‘*riding a bicycle*’(H11), ‘*finding treasure*’ (H20), ‘*reading novel*’ (H26), ‘*travelling*’ (H29), ‘*cleaning house*’ (L16), ‘*in the playground*’ (L27) and ‘*in the garden*’ (L30).

According to H11, “*Learning English is like riding a bicycle*” because “*we have to learn how to stable it until we are successful*”. Interestingly, the learner was aware that learning English required skills. The learner’s perception of learning English to ‘*riding a bicycle*’ might be beneficial to develop her language learning skills. Nonetheless, it was an activity or experience that the learner found pleasurable and associated the learning of English with stability until the learner becomes successful. This seemed to imply how the learner perceived English language learning process as an enjoyable experience done leisurely, driven by the learner’s own self-interest.

Another positive metaphor and entailment that was perceived was “*Learning English is like finding treasure*” because “*I can find and learn new words and phrases*” (H20).



It is interesting to note how learning English is associated to finding treasure which is perceived as valuable by the learner. It might be beneficial to develop the learner's skills in learning new words and phrases, with an increased repertoire of vocabulary but not much of his/her speaking and listening skills.

Along the similar line of experiencing enjoyment in learning English, another learner (H26) perceived learning English as '*reading novel*'. According to the learner, "*Learning English is like reading novel*" because "*we learn something new every time we read and we gain more knowledge*". The main idea of this metaphor and entailment reflected the similarity of a learner's independent self-discovery journey in learning English and the phenomenon of reading a novel. The young learner was expected to be independent, proactive and responsible in her own learning. This reflected the high level of cognitive maturity possessed by the learner to comprehend the reality of being resourceful and independent in learning the English Language. In addition, it is also an enjoyable experience that a young learner undergoes in discovering more about the English Language.

Interestingly, the next young learner who produced a positive metaphor and entailment under this theme was H29 with the metaphor '*travelling*' and the entailment '*we can explore and get a lot of knowledge*'. Similar to the earlier metaphors and entailments, this metaphor about travelling also speaks about exploring and gaining a lot of knowledge. The young learner associates learning English to travelling which is an enjoyable activity and gathering knowledge.

There were three young learners from the LP group who produced metaphors and entailments under the activities theme. Out of the three, one was a negative metaphor. The positive metaphors were '*in the playground*' (L27) and '*in the garden*' (L30) whereas the negative metaphor was produced by L16 "*cleaning the house*'. L16 stated that

*“Learning English is like cleaning the house”* because *“learning English very hard”*. The young learner perceived persistence and hard work as the essential ingredients in pursuing this goal. It is also interesting to highlight the learner’s entailment in this theme that connote a negative notion in the quest of learning English *“learning English very hard”*. The metaphor in this theme seemed to carry a negative notion whereby the learner recognise the element of persevering through the hardship of learning English.

The other two metaphors and entailments from the LP group carried positive notions *‘in the playground’* (L27) and *‘in the garden’* (L30). The entailments were also similar, *‘I speak English’* and *‘I try speak English’*. The learners attached the interest in trying to speak the language. These seem to point towards the element of positive notions throughout the language learning process.

#### ***(d) Places***

There were four metaphors and entailments under this theme, two from the HP group and the other two from the LP group. Here once again, a negative notion is present which was produced by the young learner from the LP group. Let us look at the positive notions first. The participant H3 came up with the metaphor *‘library’*, followed by H14 who produced the metaphor *‘a stadium’*. The learner L1 from the LP group produced the metaphor *‘a school’*. The entailment produced by the HP learners were *‘we can improve our English by reading books’* and *‘it has many new things that we can learn’*. These entailments that depicted the stages of improvement by a learner and also the steps taken to ensure a better learning outcome as perceived by respondents. There is always more new information to embrace and thus, there will never be an end to learning it. Every piece of new experience that a learner comes across is a learning opportunity as it stimulates knowing and understanding the concept.

The positive metaphor and entailment produced by L1 “*Learning English is like a school*” because “*teacher is sporting*” focuses on the teacher as the source of inspiration. The student acknowledges that the teacher plays an important role to nurture the students in learning the language. On the other hand, participant L11 stated that “*Learning English is like a crazy city*” because “*I not know learning English*”. The learner associated English Learning process with the metaphor ‘*a crazy city*’, as there were bound to be difficulties and obstacles and confusion in the pursuit.

**(e) Objects / Things**

Under this category, the learners produced six positive metaphors and one neutral metaphor. The high proficiency students produced positive metaphors were ‘*a permanent pen*’ (H8), ‘*a dictionary*’ (H12), ‘*a flower*’ (H19), and ‘*an encyclopedia*’ (H25), while the lower proficiency learners all produced the same metaphor ‘*a book*’ (L5, L20 and L23).

Participant H8 stated that “*Learning English is like a permanent pen*” because “*we will remember what we have learnt*”. This reflected the Cognitivist perspective where the learner was mentally driven and was able to think of the long term benefits in his/her quest of learning the English Language. Participant H12 in a similar way, wrote that “*Learning English is like a dictionary*” because “*we can learn many new words that we don’t know*”. Similarly, participant H25 enunciated that “*Learning English is like an encyclopedia*” because “*we can find many new English words in it*”. The three entailments in this theme encapsulated similar views about learning the English language. The learners’ perceptions of learning English was described as learning something which will be remembered, and learning new words while learning the language. Nonetheless, it was an activity or experience that the learner found enjoyable in and associated the learning of English words with gaining knowledge.

The three similar metaphors produced by the student from the LP group were ‘*a book*’. However, different entailments were supplied i.e, ‘*my teacher is always talking stories*’, ‘*I don’t know how to read English*’ and ‘*she good to learning English*’. In these entailments the learners described their nurturer who is the teacher and the teacher here takes on the metaphor of a book, whose role is to facilitate the learners’ interest in learning the language, moulding the thoughts of young minds. Perhaps due to the lack of vocabulary, the learners came up with similar metaphors.

**(f) Precious things**

Similar to the above analysis, this theme related to the role of learning the English language as precious things.

Only two young learners from the LP group came up with metaphors and entailments for this theme. One learner L9 stated that “*Learning English is like crystal*” because “*I learning English*”. Participant L25, on the other hand, formulated the metaphor and entailment as “*Learning English is like diamond*” because “*collect all about English*”. Both the metaphors and entailments showed positive beliefs. Both these metaphors were associated with precious things. Therefore, learning English to this young learners was valuable and similar to precious things.

**(g) Others**

One metaphor and entailment produced by participant L28 did not fall under any of the themes mentioned above. Therefore it was placed under the theme of “Others”. Student L28 stated that “*Learning English is like a crazy monkey*” because “*a lot of words I did not know*” This could be put under negative notions as the word ‘*crazy monkey*’ itself shows the attitude and of bewilderment and confusion in learning the

English language. The entailment confirmed the young learner's perception about the difficulty in learning the language due to a limited vocabulary.

#### 4.2.2.3 The Situative Learners' Perspectives

In the process of striving towards the desired goals (to use the language fluently, gain benefits in education and work), learners realised the importance of making progress in the learning of English. The young learners who perceived learning English from the Situative perspective emphasizes the context, in that the learning process is tied/linked directly to real life situations. The situative approach characterizes a student's development as a social learning experience and process which gradually acquires the desire to participate and the shared feelings of acceptance and belonging, be it school, society, or family.

In this study, only three young learners, two from the HP group and one from the LP group produced metaphors that fitted into this perspective. The two themes that were involved are Astronomy and Activities. (see table 4.11)

**Table 4.12:** Situative learners' metaphors and entailments

Themes	Metaphors	Entailments
Astronomy	H17 a planet	It is a language used to travel around the world.
Gadgets	None	
Activities	H30 a theme park L24 being in America	we can do many activities with our friends and teachers. we can learn English.
Places	None	
Objects/Things	None	
Precious Things	None	
Others	None	

**(a) Astronomy**

Participant H17 produced a metaphor and entailment under this theme which were, “*Learning English is like a planet because it is a language used to travel around the world*”. The idea of learning as a ‘*planet*’ reflected the importance and immediacy of learning the English language. In this positive metaphor the learner explained that the English language is important in our daily lives especially when travelling around the world. The metaphor above depicted the provision of new opportunities for successful English language learners. Mastering the global language was perceived to be the ticket to various opportunities in life which a learner may otherwise be deprived of without mastering the language.

**(b) Activities**

Learning English was also perceived as ‘Activities’. To put it differently, it was perceived as useful for a better future. Under this theme two positive metaphors and entailments were produced by each one young learner from the HP and LP group.

Participant H30 constructed the metaphor and entailment, “*Learning English is like a theme park because we can do many activities with our friends and teachers*”. The main idea of this metaphor and entailment reflected the learner’s interest and possible excitement in learning the language as it can be beneficial in carrying out activities with the teachers and friends. Nonetheless, it was an activity or experience that the learners found enjoyable and associated the learning of English language through playing.

In a similar vein, another learner from the LP group, participant L24 perceived learning English to ‘being in America’. According to the learner, “*Learning English is like being in America because we can learn English*”. Interestingly, the LP learner associated learning English as ‘being in America’ or a novel about enriching experience.

The main idea of this metaphor reflected the similarity of a learner's independent self-discovery journey in learning English.

To sum up, the metaphors and entailments aptly reflected the notion of perceiving learning English as an enjoyable activity or experience.

#### 4.2.3 Research Question 3: What attitudes are embedded in the students' metaphors?

The third Research Question in this study aimed to understand the young learners' attitudes and feelings about learning English through analyzing the metaphors the participants created.

In the process of coding, it was found that students show a wide range of views about English language learning through metaphors. The metaphors given by both high and low proficiency groups of students were classified according to the metaphors and entailments into positive, negative and neutral metaphors to indicate their attitudes towards learning English. By analysing the vehicles and grounds of students' metaphors and emojis it was found that the students had a clear attitude towards English learning, that may either be positive, neutral or negative. Ambivalent attitudes were not in evident in this study. (see Figure 4.2)

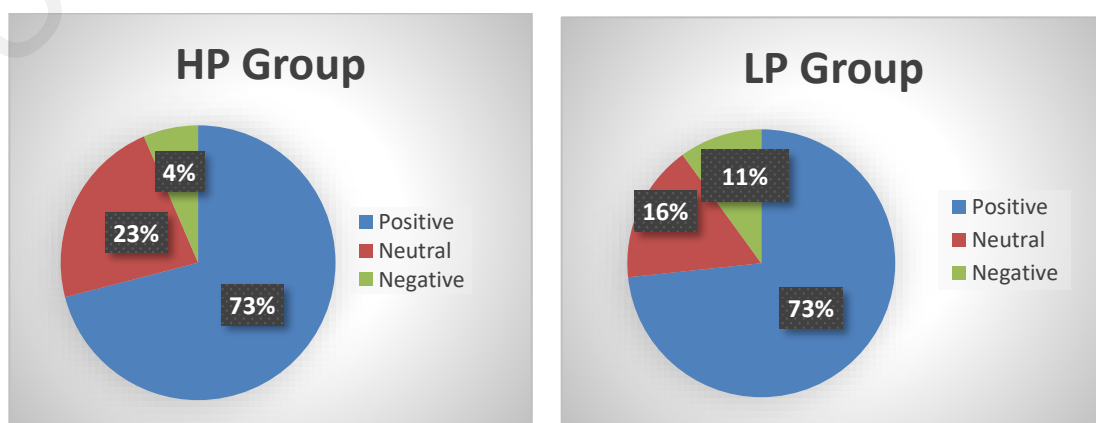


Figure 4.2 Pupils attitudes towards Learning English through metaphors.

### 4.2.3.1 Positive Attitude

The positive metaphors produced indicated that the participants gained enjoyment from learning English; they considered the respondent's experience is pleasant and helpful. Seventy three percent (73%) of the students from the High proficiency group produced positive metaphors. (see table 4.13)

**Table 4.13: Example of Positive Metaphors (HP Group)**

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<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
a shining star	I like to speak English
a rainbow	I can improve myself in many ways
a planet	it is a language used to travel around the world
a smart phone	it is full of knowledge
a computer	I can get new ideas everyday
a camera	I have many beautiful memories with my teacher
eating groundnuts	it is very easy to learn the language
singing a song	it is easy to remember
finding treasure	I can find and learn new words and phrases
eating chocolates	it is interesting to learn new sentences
a routine	we learn and use it every day
reading a novel	we learn something new every time we read and we gain more knowledge
travelling	we can explore and get a lot of knowledge
a theme park	we can do many activities with our friends and teachers
library	we can improve our English by reading books
a stadium	it has many new things that we can learn
video pictures	we can see many magical words and pictures
a dictionary	we can learn many new words that we don't know
a flower	I can have a beautiful day with our teacher
a clock	I want to learn English anytime
an encyclopedia	we can find many new English words in it
magic	it is very wonderful

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As for the Lower Proficiency Group, the same number of students, 73% students produced positive metaphors. (see Table 4.14)

**Table 4.14: Example of Positive Metaphors (LP Group)**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
a rainbow	my teacher is nice
in the garden	it is beautiful
being in America	we can learn English
in the garden	I try speak English
a school	teacher is sporting
an art studio	teacher very amazing
music room	my teacher is sporting
a library	my teacher is kind
heaven	teacher is good
a library	teacher is very good
a flower	it is beautiful
a book	she good to learning a book
diamond	my teacher is beautiful
a jewel	our future very important
crystal	I learning English
diamond	the teacher is good
diamond	is a beautiful
a diamond	a diamond is beautiful
a gold	my teacher sporting
a queen	the teacher is great
a queen	my teacher is nice
an angel	I very like English subject

Both the groups had the same number of participants who came up with positive metaphors about learning English. This clearly shows that the participants enjoyed learning English. The difference in the use of words and sentence construction is obvious where the lower proficiency group came up with shorter entailments due to the limited vocabulary that they know.

In the process of coding, it is found that students show a wide range of views about English language learning through metaphors especially the Higher Performance group. For this category, young learners' beliefs regarding the importance of English, the benefits of learning English and the demands to master English are illustrated in the metaphors and its entailments. Example given by one student "*Learning English is like library because we can improve our English by reading books*". Another student stated

that “ *Learning English is like finding treasure because I can find and learn new words and phrases*”. As for the Lower Proficiency group, only a few found learning English important as most of them enjoyed learning English because they liked the teacher. Example: “*Learning English is like a school because teacher is sporting*”. This clearly showed the students’ attachment towards the teacher. Only one student stated the importance of English for the future, exp “*Learning English is like a jewel because our future very important*”.

#### 4.2.3.2 Negative Attitude

Negative metaphors reflected the learners’ dislike of English language learning. They felt it was unpleasant, depressing, or even harmful. In the high proficiency group one student (n=1 or 4%) produced negative metaphor. (see table 4.15)

**Table 4.15: Example of Negative Metaphor (HP Group)**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
a candle	it can burn our confident

In the Lower Proficiency group, n=3 or 11% of the students’ metaphors were negative. (see table 4.16)

**Table 4.16: Examples of Negative Metaphor (LP Group)**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
cleaning house	learning English very hard
a book	I don’t know how to read English
a monster	is not my favourite

The students’ metaphors also indicated their dislike of the English learning process. Specifically, it was mentioned in their metaphors the difficulty of learning English, their feelings of confusion to learn English and their lack of enjoyment to learn it. It should be mentioned that only a small number from both groups disliked learning English. Only one student from the High Proficiency Group and 3 from the Lower proficiency group,

produced these metaphors, for example: “Learning English is like a candle because it can burn our confident”. This is due to the lack of confidence or enjoyment in learning English.

#### 4.2.3.3 Neutral Attitude

Twenty three percent of the students from the High Proficiency Group produced neutral metaphors. These metaphors are shown in table 4.17.

**Table 4.17: Example of Neutral Metaphors (HP Group)**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
space	I learn everything that surrounds me
a robot	we need to be disciplined if we want to pass with flying colours
being an astronaut	it has many stages
riding a bicycle	we have to learn how to stable it until we are successful
playing golf	it is very challenging
a permanent pen	we will remember what we have learnt
music	the words have many different sounds.

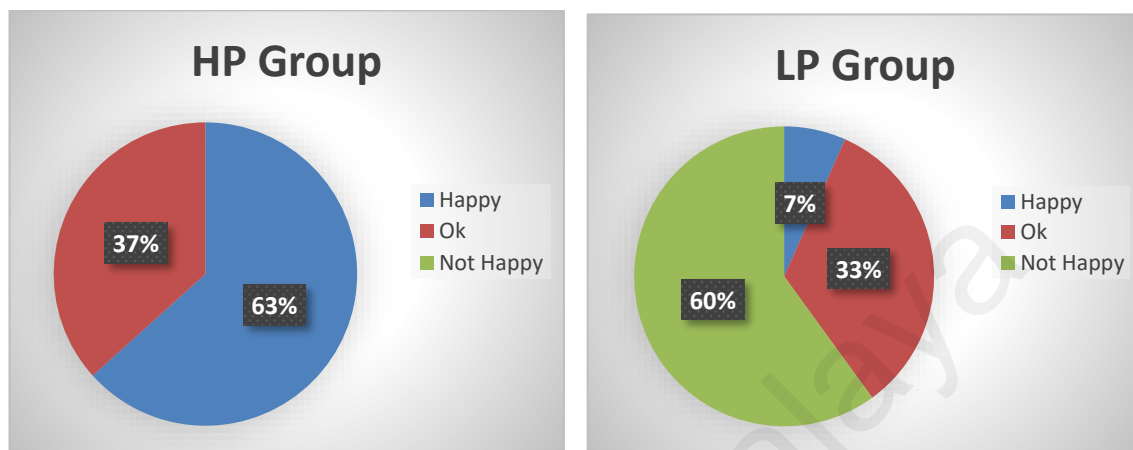
As for the Lower Proficiency group, sixteen percent of the students gave neutral response. These metaphors are shown in table 4.18

**Table 4.18: Examples of Neutral Metaphors (LP Group)**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Entailment</b>
In the playground	I speak English
crazy city	I not know learning English
a book	my teacher is always talking stories
diamond	collect all about English
a crazy monkey	a lot of words I did not know

This category may overlap, to some extent, with the previous two categories. This is always the case in qualitative research. The researcher included it to emphasize that the young learners could have neutral feelings about learning English. They have not specified their likes or dislikes towards learning the English Language.

Based on the findings to this research question, the positive metaphors and the young learners interest in learning the English language constituted the largest group. (see Figure 4.2)



**Figure 4.3: Pupils emotions and feeling when learning the English Language.**

In the second part of the questionnaire the young learners were required to indicate their emotions and feeling towards learning the English language. They were given three emojis and captions of “Happy”, “Ok” or “Not Happy”. (see Appendix D)

For the HP group 63% of the students were happy to learn the language while 37% stated they were ok learning it. On the other hand, the LP group showed a very small percentage (7%) of the participants who enjoyed learning English. Thirty three percent (33%) of the participants were ok with learning the language but the majority of participants (60%) were not happy to learn the English language in school.

### 4.3 Chapter Summary

To highlight the main findings from this study, both groups of the young learners were able to produce the metaphors and entailments. They were classified under seven different themes namely Astronomy, Gadgets, Activities, Places, Objects/Things, Precious Things and others. The data collected from both the groups aligned with the main conceptual framework on educational metaphors developed by Martinez et al. (2001). A majority of

the participants' metaphor were deemed to be derived from the Behaviourist Learning dimension (50%) and the Cognitivist Learning dimension (45%). There is a thin line between the findings of this two learning dimensions. On the other hand, only a handful of the respondents perceived the language learning process from the Situative learning dimension. (n=3 or 5%)

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## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a brief summary of the dissertation and overviews the main findings. The chapter proceeds to outline contributions and limitations of the study. It also gives recommendations for future research on metaphors about language learning. Finally, it discusses some pedagogical implications that can be drawn from this study.

### **5.2 Summary of the Study**

#### **5.2.1 Research Objectives and Questions**

This research was conducted with the aim to explore the perceptions of young language learners about English language learning through their metaphors. The researcher explored young learners' experience of learning English by asking them to complete the prompt "Learning English is like ....., because ....." To keep their originality, the researcher did not make any changes to the young learners' metaphors. The three research questions addressed in this qualitative study were:

1. What metaphors do young Malaysian learners of English as a second language have about learning the target language?
2. How do these metaphors align with an influential conceptual framework of educational metaphors proposed by Martinez et al. (2001)?
3. What attitudes are embedded in the students' metaphors?

#### **5.2.2 Methodology**

The researcher employed the questionnaires and a metaphor-elicitation method. Also, the questionnaire had emoji, that best described the students' emotions and feelings towards the learning of English as a second language. This questionnaire comprised 3

sections: Part I, contained a prompt seeking the participants' perceptions of learning the English language. In Part II, emojis sought the participants attitudes towards learning English. Three choices were given for the participants to do their selection: Happy, Ok or Not Happy. Part III contained questions of the participants demographic profile. (see Appendix D) A peer review session and validation of the questionnaire by an expert in the field of metaphor analysis were also conducted.

To answer the first research question, the researcher grouped the metaphors produced by the learners into seven different themes. The second research question, the researcher adapted the Martinez et al, (2001) framework for the analysis in an attempt to answer the three main learning dimensions - *Behaviourist*, *Cognitivist* or *Situative*. To answer the third research question, the students' metaphors and entailments were analysed and classified as being positive, neutral and negative.

### **5.2.3 Main Findings**

This study gives us an insight into how young learners in a primary school in Malaysia perceive their experience of learning English. This may help teachers who work in a similar contexts to understand the learners' perceptions and use them to facilitate and foster young learners' interest in learning.

The data analysis revealed that the learners were able to come up with metaphors and entailments regarding their experience in learning the English language. The themes were: (i) Astronomy, (ii) Gadgets, (iii) Activities, (iv) Places, (v) Objects / Things, (vi) Precious Things, and (vii) Others. Both the High Proficiency Group and Lower Proficiency Group learners were able to produce positive, neutral and negative metaphors and entailments.

For the second part of the study, the data revealed there was only a thin line between the Behaviourist and Cognitivist perspective in the learning. Both the learning dimensions were the young learners' choices. From the Behaviourist perspective, learning as a mechanical, skill-acquisition, repetitive process whereas the Cognitivist dimension perceives learning as a habitual and expected occurrence. Only a handful of young learners' metaphors reflected the views of a Situative learning perspective which focused on the participation of the learners in a learners' community. The majority of young learners from the High Proficiency (HP) Group (53%) formulated metaphors which could be placed on the Cognitivist learning paradigm. The remaining metaphors (40%) reflected the Behaviourist learning perspectives. Only a small percentage (7%) belonged to the Situative ideas of learning English.

In the Lower Proficiency (LP) Group on the other hand, the majority of learners (n=20 or 67%) formulated metaphors which were appropriate under the behaviourist learning paradigm. The remaining young learners (n=9 or 30%) produced metaphors that reflected the Cognitivist learning paradigm. Only a small group (n=1 or 3%) belonged to the Situative learning perspective.

In the third part of this study, young learners were required to choose the emoji to describe their opinion and attitude towards learning English. They were given three choices: "Happy", "Ok" or "Not Happy". It was found that for the High Proficiency group (n=19 or 63%) of the students were happy to learn the language while (n=11 or 37% were ok or had a neutral attitude learning it. On the other hand, the Lower Proficiency group showed a very small percentage (n=2 or 7%) of the participants who enjoyed learning English. The participants (n=10 or 33%) were ok or had a neutral attitude with learning the language but the majority of participants (n=18 or 60%) were not happy to learn the English Language in school.



Based on the findings for the first part of the study, the young learners were able to produce metaphors and entailments describing learning the English language. The young learners from both the High Proficiency and Lower Proficiency groups were able to come up with metaphors. The only set back was that the lower proficiency group had a limited vocabulary and, as a result came up with similar metaphors with their classmates. The entailments produced by the lower proficiency group was simple and had some grammatical errors, compared to the students from the high proficiency group. In short, the metaphors showed that the young learners have a good understanding of the English language learning. They believed in the importance of learning the language and improving oneself. The metaphors indicated that language learning enables them to widen their perspectives. For the most part, the students expressed their enjoyment in learning the language. They also expressed their feelings of being either happy, sad, ok or not happy while learning English.

### **5.3 Contributions and Implications**

Metaphors about English language learning can function as blueprints of thinking, to expand English language teachers' view of what it meant to learn from the learners' viewpoints. The knowledge of learners' metaphors enables primary school teachers to consider the learners' perspectives when choosing their teaching materials, pedagogical approaches in the classroom. In short, studies on learners' metaphors serve as a catalyst for the enhancement of more progressive and effective teaching.

The highlights of this study might be useful and enlightening for English language teachers, especially in light of related works on perceptions. Herrington and Curtis (2000), cited in Armstrong (2008), commented that language teachers need to consider young learners' multiple perspectives and design the curricula and classroom practices

accordingly. Metaphors may be used effectively as a tool to increase self-reflection and critical awareness as de Guerrero and Villamil, 2000 noted, for language learning.

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that metaphor analysis can be used as a means to elicit young learners' perceptions about learning English. As stated by Ellis (2008), one of the most effective ways of conducting metaphor analysis study is to experimentally elicit the metaphors from the young learners in order to understand their perceptions of the learning process. As an important tool for qualitative research methodology, metaphor analysis employed in this study helped the researcher to uncover hidden beliefs and analyse the students' attitudes embedded in them. The richness and sophistication of the images evoked by these young learners' metaphors would seem to support Ellis' (2008) contention that this 'indirect' approach is more useful in understanding the complexity of learners' beliefs than a simple question along the lines of "what do you think of learning English?".

On the other hand, the fact that someone uses a metaphoric expression does not prove that the underlying metaphor is actively used by them as a guide to thinking (Low 2008). It may be that the young learners simply chose a positive metaphor and then invented a supportive explanation as the entailment, but that it may not represent their beliefs accurately at all. In this study this problem was obvious as a majority of young learners came up with positive metaphors but in the second part of the questionnaire, a majority of young learners from the LP group stated that they were not happy to learn the English language.

Based on the results of this study, it would have been more straightforward if the learners taking part in the study chose the positive emojis to reflect their attitudes towards learning English. Learners' perceptions are very important in terms of the potential outcomes of the learning process. Positive attitudes would lead to a higher second

language proficiency. When learners develop positive attitudes towards learning English, they can more actively participate in classroom activities. It is recommended that young language learners of English should be trained at the beginning of each academic year through an orientation programme aiming to guide them to develop more positive attitudes toward English. Interesting language activities contributing to learners' motivation, and you-tube videos emphasizing the importance and ways of learning English can be integrated as components of such an orientation programme.

It is also suggested that English teachers are required to be well aware of the problems learners face during the language learning process and before starting to teach, they should explain to their students about the importance of learning English well. It also can be argued that the teachers' role in the success of the young learners in learning English cannot be denied. Teachers play an important role to make or break a child. It is imperative that the teachers create a positive learning environment by considering the specific characteristics of young English language learners. As claimed by Klein (2005), teaching young learners is different from teaching adults as the mood of the young learners might change any minute, and their levels of motivation, curiosity and enthusiasm are higher but also oscillate more frequently than that of the adults.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

This study has some limitations. As this is a qualitative study with a purposeful small sample of young learners, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to a wider population of young learners in other primary schools. It is assumed however, that the learners' perceptions gathered in this study are captured accurately in the metaphors as expressed by the learners themselves. Methodologically, the finding from this study support the suggestion that metaphor elicitation is a suitable approach for capturing the beliefs of young learners.

Based on the data collection method, there were limitations to experimentally elicited metaphors as compared to natural-occurring metaphors as found in oral narratives such as interviews. It would have been useful to include interviews with the students to get their opinion and in- depth research on the reason for their selected metaphor. Unfortunately, the limited scope of the study made this impossible. However, the researcher has taken proper steps of metaphor identification method in the data analysis stage and addressed these limitations to ensure the reliability of the findings.

### **5.5 Directions for Further Research**

It would be appropriate to end this dissertation with a call for more metaphor studies in different contexts with larger samplings of participants. This way the obstacles in the English language learning process can be better identified and treated. Metaphors produced by young learners provide English teachers in the school where the study was carried out, some useful insights as to how to effectively cope with the language learners' problems. The findings obtained through metaphors analysis could contribute not only to the professional development of the English language teachers , but also to other relevant stakeholders like curriculum and material developers. Above all, uncovering the metaphors of the most important stakeholders involved in the language learning process, the learners themselves could lead to positive changes in educational practices over time (Cameron, 2003). I would like to end the dissertation with a saying of Shuell (1990, p. 102):

“If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures!”

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