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Abstract

Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory, I investigated the school transition experience of an English as a foreign language (EFL) learner. In this narrative case study, the participant’s emotion labor was followed throughout his first semester at a high school in Turkey. Exploring narrative journals, conceptual metaphors, and interviews, I examined his dynamic emotional states. The findings revealed that school transition may entail inhibiting emotion labor for high school freshman EFL learners. Moreover, it was also shown that these emotions may force adolescent learners to reconceptualize foreign language learning with a negative perspective and develop surviving learner’s strategies that may support them in terms of getting satisfactory grades in a summative assessment culture but may jeopardize language learning in the long run.

Keywords

conceptual metaphor, EFL learning, emotion labor, school transition

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From “Robot” to “Rejuvenating Warrior”: An EFL Learner’s Conceptual Metaphors During School Transition

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Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory, I investigated the school transition experience of an English as a foreign language (EFL) learner. In this narrative case study, the participant’s emotion labor was followed throughout his first semester at a high school in Turkey. Exploring narrative journals, conceptual metaphors, and interviews, I examined his dynamic emotional states. The findings revealed that school transition may entail inhibiting emotion labor for high school freshman EFL learners. Moreover, it was also shown that these emotions may force adolescent learners to reconceptualize foreign language learning with a negative perspective and develop surviving learner’s strategies that may support them in terms of getting satisfactory grades in a summative assessment culture but may jeopardize language learning in the long run.

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Introduction

The life of a K-12 student includes many milestones that may have a considerable effect on their school environment and experience. The transition from primary to secondary school is only one example of these milestones, which are critical changes in students’ learning environments (Chambers, 2016). The new environment after a school transition may result in several challenges that may be associated with learning outcomes. Some of these challenges were reported in the prior studies such as different goal-orientations of school cycles (Midgley et al., 1995), different student-teacher relationships and interaction patterns (Alspaugh, 1998), and increased stress due to the adaptation process (Goldstein et al., 2015). Furthermore, increased stress also predicts higher school anxiety and lower school bonding as well as reduced academic achievement in the transition to high school contexts (Goldstein et al., 2015). Therefore, school transition can turn out to be a challenging situation for K-12 students due to major changes coming with it.

The major changes that emerge during the school transition are perceived differently by every individual. Relatedly, it is unrealistic to offer a list of generalizable emotions and thoughts that are relevant to every student; however, it is also very important to understand and explain these emotional experiences. Accordingly, emotions are indicated as major factors affecting language learning, and emotions influence learners’ psychological well-being, achievement, and involvement (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014). On the other hand, emotions are closely related to individual experiences which cannot be seen isolated from institutional and social realities surrounding the language learners and language learning (Benesch, 2012).

Surprisingly, little research (e.g., Graham et al., 2016) has been conducted concerning foreign language learners’ emotion labor¹ during school transition. The current study was

¹ Following Benesch’s (2020) conceptualization, I used the term “emotion labor” instead of emotional labor in this study because I intend to highlight the social aspects surrounding the individual’s emotions and their values (instead of a negative perception towards being “emotional”) in an educational context while also emphasizing

conducted to address this gap by focusing on an individual student's experiences and narratives in regard to EFL class in the first semester of high school (9th grade) in the Turkish context. Drawing on the qualitative data collected throughout the semester, I investigated the dynamic and fluid emotion labor of an EFL learner based on conceptual metaphorical representations he provided. By doing so, I intended to understand the affordances and constraints that his emotion labor creates regarding his EFL learning experience. Accordingly, the research questions of the current study were:

- How does a typical high school freshman EFL learner describe their school transition experience in terms of their emotions?
- How does this experience influence his conceptualization of EFL learning?

Literature Review

School transition has been reported as a critical period in the literature and has been investigated in various cases across the K-12 contexts. Relatedly, there have been several studies focused on achievement (Alspaugh, 1998; Goldstein et al., 2015; Pearson et al., 2017) and self-esteem (West et al., 2010). More specifically, Alspaugh (1998) investigated 48 school districts and found a significant achievement-loss during the school transition from the middle to high school. Similarly, Goldstein et al. (2015) reported achievement-loss and poor school bonding during school transition as significantly common events in the K-12 context. The authors associated this result with debilitating emotion labor such as high stress that emerged during school transition.

Specifically in foreign language learning in the K-12 context, Chambers (2016) investigated German EFL learners in terms of their transition experiences from primary school to secondary. Examining the learners' perceptions and experiences of school transition, the author asserted that learners were able to familiarize themselves with the new instructional setting thanks to the orientation programs held in the school. However, the transition was emotionally challenging for language learners whose previous language experiences were ignored in the new instructional context.

As reported in the prior research, school transition is closely associated with emotion labor that is critical for K-12 students. However, it is important to better understand what emotions mean when it comes to language learning. Language learner emotions have been repeatedly discussed in the prior studies in terms of its implications on EFL education; emotions have traditionally been considered as crucial factors underlying the psychological and social dimensions of L2 education. A major and early highlight of affective factors in second language acquisition was made by Krashen (1982) in his Affective Filters Hypothesis. As a part of his Monitor Model, this hypothesis asserts that L2 learners' level of affective filters vary, and when the level of affective filters is higher than optimal, this can inhibit acquisition.

Anxiety as a negative emotion was reported by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), in terms of the communicative anxiety of L2 speakers in second language settings and by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), in terms of the anxiety experienced in EFL settings. Alternatively, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) discussed the concept of positive psychology in EFL education and suggested positive emotions support L2 learners to be more aware of the language input. Similarly, Mercer and MacIntyre (2014) suggested once the positive emotions are built, more learner engagement and appreciation of life could be achieved. Furthermore, Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) investigated the dynamic relationship between foreign language

the relationship between emotions, social relations, and power "rather than qualifying the labor as emotional" (p. 39).

enjoyment as a positive emotion and foreign language anxiety as a negative emotion. They found the dynamic nature of the factors causing positive and negative emotions, and the factors may change over time. However, even though some studies investigated the reasons and results of positive and negative emotions in EFL education, prior research has not concentrated on the emotional factors affecting L2 learners' EFL experiences during the school transition period.

The emotion labor that emerges during school transition and the fluid and dynamic nature of learner emotions are of critical importance to the K-12 education context. However, no study has attempted to investigate the emotional trajectory of an EFL learner in the school transition. Benesch (2012) underlines that emotions cannot be understood solely by cognitive or sociocultural approaches in language education but a critical, multidisciplinary approach is needed to better understand "the struggle" (p. 36) in the language classes. Therefore, adopting multiple lenses in investigating emotions is of critical importance. In tandem with this, I utilized conceptual metaphors as indicators of abstract experiences and concepts in a more concrete domain.

Conceptual Metaphors

Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), I analyzed an EFL learner's use of metaphors to explain his narratives regarding the EFL class during the school transition period. Originally, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) regarded conceptual thought as understanding and explaining one kind of thing in terms of another. A conceptual metaphor is defined as the understanding of one domain of abstract experience in terms of another that is typically concrete (Kövecses, 2018). Similarly, Ritchie (2007) argued that CMT is based on the premise that the conceptual metaphors structure our experience of abstract concepts and ultimately shape our behavior as in the metaphorical example of "argument is war." It infers that arguments are to win, to lose, or to attack somebody's way of thinking or as in "argument is journey," that can be interpreted as making progress or leading to some point (Ritchie, 2007; Worden-Chambers, 2020).

In addition to these properties underlining their subjective representational functions of *personae*, conceptual metaphors also represent individuals' social cognition and experience implicitly (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and they are often interpreted in multiple ways (Kövecses, 2018; Worden-Chambers, 2020). Similarly, CMT claims conceptual arguments have the potential to govern our everyday functioning, the way we perceive the world, or to adapt to it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, there is a close relationship between our experiences (and how we perceive them) and conceptual metaphorical arguments we use to represent these experiences.

Given the association between conceptual metaphors and emotional experiences (Kövecses, 2018), I utilized the conceptual metaphors provided by the participant concerning his school transition year to understand how his perception of the EFL course is affected and transformed. Following Benesch's call (2012) for adopting multiple lenses while investigating the fluid nature of language learners' emotion labor, I use the narrative data from reflective diaries and interviews as sources of the conceptual metaphors.

To conclude, emotions tend to jeopardize the life quality and success of K-12 students, and it is even more problematic in foreign or second language classes due to the personal and social struggles of language learning. However, notwithstanding the strong background on learner emotions in EFL education research, the literature does not provide a study on the emotional effects of school transition in formal EFL learning settings. To add, the literature does not provide any case study giving a particularistic point of view to the phenomenon of EFL learner emotions during a school transition. Instead, they focus on big "samples" of learning. I believe this is a mismatching situation considering my theoretical framework;

metaphors are unique and individual representations of events and conceptual understanding of these events (Worden-Chambers, 2020); however, school transition has not been regarded as an individual phenomenon.

Methods

Researcher's Reflexivity

My own experiences in Turkey were similar to those of the focal participant of the current study. I personally experienced two major school transitions between three school cycles that included EFL education. All transitions were emotionally challenging and thus resulted in different attitudes towards foreign language learning. In primary school, the EFL class was one of my favorites, and in middle school, it was the lesson with the lowest grade in the report card. Relatedly, I had negative feelings about language learning. And in high school, I loved the class once again and decided to continue my higher education at an undergraduate program of English language teaching. Naturally, this might have had various reasons, and my own situation would be a fruitful case for further autoethnographic work. Later in my professional life as an EFL teacher, I also had dynamic emotion labor about my work acknowledging the “struggles” of language teaching (Benesch, 2020). As a language learner with a very fluid experience when it comes to learning (and teaching) EFL at different schools, I am personally invested in researching the “emotional roller-coaster” (Gkonou et al., 2020, p. 1) I experienced both as a language learner and a teacher. I acknowledge my subjectivity as the author of the current study, and I invite readers of the Qualitative Report with similar school transition and language learning experiences to get reflexive while reading the study

Research Design

As suggested by Duff (2014), a case study is a well-established qualitative research design used to explain phenomena related to L2 learners and learning in particular settings. Additionally, case studies with a critical approach demonstrate that an in-depth investigation of focal cases provides a rich understanding of issues regarding language learning (e.g., De Costa, 2015a).

Given this potential, I adopted a case study design with a narrative approach (Barkhuizen, 2013). I relied on narratives which are fundamental sources to make sense of the experiences and the world around them. Drawing on Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) particularistic approach to case and case study, I focused on a particular participant during a particular event (Yazan, 2015). Accordingly, the current study is based on two premises. First, narratives reveal the changing conditions of lives and the impact these new conditions can have overtime on an individual's experiences related to language learning (Barkhuizen, 2013, 2014). Second, conceptual metaphors reveal epistemic representations of abstract thoughts that are salient with more concrete semantic domains as in verbal representations of lived (and perceived) experiences (Ritchie, 2007).

The Participant

This case study's focal participant was a 9th grader, Can (pseudonym – pronounced as /'dʒʌn/; 15-year-old boy), who just experienced a school transition after his middle school period. Throughout the middle school in a northwestern and relatively small city of Turkey, Can participated in several performance and placement exams. As a result of these exams, he was able to enroll in a state high school with a focus on science in a much bigger and more

metropolitan city. Can was particularly chosen for the current study due to the school transition experience he was about to have, his and his family's voluntary participation and consent, and his representation as an overall EFL learner of his age at his school; being from a middle-class family, had no prior experience of learning English outside of the foreign language learning context as a part of his formal education (i.e., he had not lived, traveled, or studied abroad, living in a monolingual house).

Research Context

The research was carried out in a metropolitan city of Turkey. Given that kindergarten is not compulsory in Turkey, K-12 is composed of two school transitions under normal circumstances. Compulsory education includes three phases over 12 years. After kindergarten, the cycle of the initial four years, which includes 7 to 10-year-olds is called primary school. The second cycle is called the middle school and includes the 5th to 8th grades. The last cycle of compulsory education is high school, which includes 9th grade to 12th grade.

I explained the aim of the study and the data collection process to Can's parents and ensured Can's, his teacher's, and the school's anonymity and confidentiality in the research. Despite family and administrative consent, the teacher declined to participate in the study. Respecting his/her decision, I was unable to collect data from the teacher or in the class. I decided so to protect Can against any possible teacher bias that may emerge during or after the research project. However, as the study focuses on Can's metaphorical representations of critical incidents regarding the new EFL learning environment, I argue that this situation is certainly a limitation but does not jeopardize the credibility of the study given that multiple data sources were used. What I focused on was how Can made sense of his doxa related to EFL learning in his new school through metaphors he created.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data with three methods in Can's mother tongue. First, a narrative journal was kept by the participant every week throughout his first semester at the high school period. I asked him to reflect on his experiences in the EFL class and related feelings and thoughts each week in an unstructured way. Second, in addition to the unstructured part, an open-ended question was answered in regards to the state of mind throughout each week to stimulate conceptual metaphor generation in the journal with a narrative frame (Barkhuizen, 2014). The participant was asked to write down a concrete manifestation contextualizing his abstract feeling in each week following his weekly journal entry. Last, two semi-structured narrative interviews (Prior, 2018) were conducted in his mother tongue. The first interview had been conducted before the semester began. The purpose of this interview was to understand the participant's attitudes towards EFL learning in general and to determine his background experience about EFL learning. The second interview was made at the end of the semester after the journal and weekly conceptual metaphors had been analyzed. The interview protocol included stimulating questions based on this early analysis to reflect on the data and to get clear about the metaphors and critical incidents in it. A sample question from the protocol was as follows: "You remarked in your journal that you felt 'as if dynamite' in the second week's class. Can you go back to the class and tell me more about what you meant?"

Based on CMT, weekly conceptual metaphors were associated with the incidents to understand the emotion labor of Can in EFL class. In tandem with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) case study analysis framework, a recursive and dynamic data collection and analysis process were conducted. To search for categorical aggregations and patterns in the qualitative data, a narrative analysis (Barkhuizen, 2013) was adopted. I utilized an external audit trail to

increase the trustworthiness of my work (Yazan, 2015). Accordingly, another researcher, who holds a Ph.D. in English Language Teaching and is an experienced qualitative researcher, was included in the data analysis process and for the back-and-forth translation of the excerpts reported in the current study. We conducted our analyses on different worksheets. After getting familiar with the data as a whole, the data were coded, and the initial categories were searched. These initial analyses of content provided a set of pre-determined categories for the second round of analysis. Then, we met and discussed the categories. Last, the report of the analysis was written. As for conceptual metaphors, Can's emotional state for each week in the EFL classes was represented by various source domains. Table 1 shows the sources of data used in the current study.

Table 1
Data Sources

Methods	Collection period: September-December 2016	Data
First interview	Beginning of the semester	Semi-structured interview, audio-recorded, 1 x 30 min.
Can's narrative journal	Throughout the semester for 14 weeks	12 weekly entries – 300 words each 12 metaphors of emotions – one per each week
Second interview	After the semester	Semi-structured interview, audio-recorded, 1 x 70 min.

Ethical Consideration

In my local research context, there is not an established and required institutional review board procedure for freelance research. Relatedly, I needed to be very cautious to ensure the ethical integrity of the current study. I was mindful of both macro and micro-ethical aspects of research in second language studies and applied linguistics (De Costa, 2015b). Macro-ethically, I received full consent from Can and Can's parents (as he was under 18) as elaborated earlier. I informed them about the beneficence and possible dangers of participating in this research and that Can could choose to opt any anytime without any penalty. Micro-ethically, I anonymized my report so to secure Can, Can's teacher, and school so the current study would not distort the power relations among these individual and institutional entities. I let my participant and parents edit, add, or omit any part of the data before I use it in my report. I shared both Turkish and English versions of the data excerpts. They offered external assistance about the translation-check, but they did not require such help. My experience demonstrated that such research requires constant reflexivity and mentorship (especially when institutional review board mechanism is not an established academic norm). Thus, I was also mentored by my external expert throughout the study in regard to the ethical concerns.

Findings

The data revealed a close interface between the conceptual metaphors of each week and Can's journal. Two sets of data support one another in terms of content related to the emotion labor of the week. Table 2 illustrates conceptual metaphors provided by Can along with weekly reflections in his journal:

Table 2
Can's Conceptual Metaphors

Week	Conceptual metaphor	Further elaboration in the journal (if any provided)
1	I was like a robot	A robot that speaks Turkish but not English; a machine only understands Turkish
2	I felt as if I was dynamite	Powder in me was the stress due to not understanding English.
3	I saw myself as a lucky lion	I was about to die but my luck helped and I found an easy prey
4	I was still water	
5	I felt like a charging battery	I was empty at the beginning of the week but I had fun later.
6	I acted like a Matrix movie actor	There were many bullets coming towards me. The activities and exercises were very difficult but I somehow escaped.
7 – 8	Midterms	No metaphor was given by Can
9	I was the actor in the movie <i>Divergent</i>	I wasn't able to do what every other person was.
10	I felt like a relieved patient	I finally found the right medicine
11	I was like a frog trapped in a well	Despite my effort, I had a difficult time listening to activities. Whenever I attempted to jump out of the well, I fell back.
12	A sick but happy person	I was in my bed but I was happy as I saw many people around the bed.
13	I felt like nullity	There was no opportunity for me to participate in the class. I hardly said a thing in the whole week.
14	A rejuvenating warrior	I know I am fine but I cannot show it. Maybe I will.

Since I intend to have a deeper understanding of an EFL learner during his first semester at high school, I present the results in a chronological order to have a sense of the trajectory of Can's emotion labor. Below, I present my findings under three categorizations that align with the chronological order of Can's first semester in high school.

The Familiar Vs. The Unfamiliar: Initial Encounters

Week 1 was full of surprises and unfamiliar experiences for Can. Given that it was a completely new language learning environment, this is arguably natural. However, a lack of orientation gave Can a hard time for various reasons. Can explained his first encounter with his EFL teacher in the following excerpt from his journal:

Excerpt 1. New teacher:

He (the teacher) started the lesson in Turkish, but he had this thick accent, an accent from (another part of Turkey) I suppose. I didn't understand much. It was the first time for me when a teacher was speaking with such an accent. Maybe I have a hearing problem; I can't understand much when people speak with an accent.

He later explained how hard it became when the course began, and the teacher started to speak mostly in the target language. Then, the first journal entry suggests the real challenge began even during the first week.

Excerpt 2. New cognitive load:

The teacher made us watch a video. I didn't understand a thing as there were no subtitles. Later, he switched on the subtitles and it was a bit more understandable for me. When I was answering the questions, he said something in English. I didn't understand anything as I was dealing with the questions.

Can noted that this additional cognitive load and speed were very unfamiliar for him and made him feel "concerned" as he put it in the interview. The amount of target language use also constituted an unfamiliarity for him. He also added the fast way the teacher spoke with this unfamiliar accent which was very disturbing for him. By the first week, he started to compare his situation and the classes with his middle school experience.

Excerpt 3. The first mention of the middle school:

It was not like this in middle school. The lessons were both in English and in Turkish, and they were not that fast. This made me concerned. As the lesson went on, the way he (the teacher) speaks, the accent, and the speed made it very difficult for me. The way he spoke did not sound like English as his Turkish. Plus, there is this constant echo in this class. I didn't understand at all.

Can's experiences in the first week gave a physical conceptual metaphor of himself. He commented that he was like a "robot" (for conceptual metaphors, see Table 2) during the first week. He further elaborated that he was like a machine functioning only in Turkish. With all-new demands at the high school such as videos without subtitles or speed of the lesson and contextual difficulties such as teacher and echo in the classroom, Can used the word "robot" as a source domain for his first conceptual metaphor. He was struggling to process the new tasks as a machine. His target domain was himself, which was in salience and needs to be explained. In the second interview, he asserted that he, like a robot, felt as if he was "broken," when he encounters a code in English. The following was another excerpt from the interview in which Can elaborates on his diminishing self-confidence in the EFL classroom due to the new course material and instruction he was unfamiliar with.

Excerpt 4. Self-confidence gone:

I used to understand everything in English class until [the high school]. I used to study with self-confidence. When the videos came and I started not to understand, I felt a kind of fear. The voice of the smartboard does not feel like earphones or like the actual voice of people. But still, I have to understand,

don't I? Subtitles help. I can have an idea when I see the words. Without subtitles, it is like a person who is dubbed by someone else, someone different.

At the beginning of the semester, the conceptual metaphors he provided suggest a roller-coaster of feelings for him in his new language learning environment. It was obvious that the materials used in the high school context made Can compare middle school and high school. These findings refer to a constant clash between the “familiar” and the “unfamiliar” experiences concerning instruction, materials, and the teaching/learning styles in the EFL class.

Stress and Boredom: Emotion Labor Getting Harder to Manage

Can encountered a smartboard the first time in his life in an EFL education setting. As for Can, the case was utterly new, and the distortion of the speakers' voice created negative emotions such as stress and confusion. Moreover, throughout the first half of the semester, this feeling of confusion seemed to escalate the stress and created a sense of annoyance as in the metaphor of “dynamite.” Can elaborated on this as in the following excerpt from the interview:

Excerpt 5. Stress was like gunpowder:

I felt like I was about to explode because I was doing great back in middle school. Now here I am like mute, sitting there all the time in the class, wasn't able to do a thing. This makes me feel so sad and very stressed. The stress of not understanding was like gunpowder in me. I was afraid as I have always been the best. It is like being busted by the better-performing people.

Apparently, Can was having another problem with a video comprehension exercise and when the teacher refused to turn subtitles on, Can decided to cheat and copied answers from his friend. He further commented: “I felt desperate and completed the task with some help from here and some from there.”

But it was not all depressing incidents all over the semester. Information from the journal indicated that some lessons included explicit instruction covering grammar topics such as modal words and tenses. Can also thought these lessons were like a break from the feeling of confusion. This is why he described himself metaphorically as a “lucky lion,” finding easy prey or “still water” in a “plain” lesson.

But later, I saw that Can's first belief systems regarding the new EFL class start to emerge. He started to blame the way his teacher spoke, videos without subtitles, or the echo in the class. Then, Can seemed to start taking the EFL class less seriously.

Excerpt 6. Boring class:

The class was very boring. The way he [the teacher] speaks and all. It wasn't helping us to participate at all. I didn't understand anything; how can it [the EFL class] be not boring?

The transition from excitement to considering tasks in EFL class as the bullets to get rid of as in *Matrix* movies was significant. This transformation displayed how the emotion labor of the EFL class got harder and harder for Can to manage until the midterms.

Debilitating Emotion Labor and Self-Exclusion in the EFL Class

Exams played an important role in Can's perception of the EFL class. Now he had the exam results after the midterms, and he had some kind of proof for himself, stating that he scored better than some in the class.

After getting an exam score that was higher than the class average, Can found some strength to cope with the stress of the beginning of the semester. But still, he had a hard time keeping his spirit up due to his communicative performance in the EFL class. In the journal, he mentioned warm-up talks at the beginning of each class when the teacher asked general questions. Each lesson started with a conversation, and it was easier for some of his friends to be a part of these conversations. In the excerpt below, which was from the interview, Can emphasized his disappointment when he tried to be part of the classroom conversation but failed.

Excerpt 8. Feeling of nullity:

Researcher: You mentioned the feeling of disappointment in week 9 in your journal. Can you talk more about that?

Can: I was better than some people in the midterms. I knew I was better. Why is it not OK when it comes to speaking and listening? It is a feeling like you see something completely strange to you for the first time. As if the guy who invented the fire and experiment with it, it burns and all that. Weird feeling. I had to ask some friends in one conversation because they were all laughing about something, and I was there in the class with no idea. His accent doesn't help but the teacher tries his best to help me out, tries to include me, explains more but in English. All this makes me pessimistic. I mean I was an overachiever in middle school and now this. This is annoying. I am nullity in class.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Can: As if I do not exist. As long as I don't speak, as long as I don't take part in class conversations, my existence is not proven. I mean, you can write the number zero, so it is there and that is all. It represents nullity. This is a very disturbing feeling. Feeling of exclusion. Not being there at all.

This signaling excerpt from the second interview marked a critical case for Can. The feeling of exclusion was the result of what was going on throughout his first semester in the EFL class. Can claimed that the teacher and friends were not solely responsible for this feeling. Thus, it could be said that Can's understanding of himself in the new language learning environment had a role in this feeling of exclusion. I further inquired about this feeling of exclusion.

Excerpt 9. Feeling of exclusion:

Researcher: What is it that excludes you?

Can: I think it is English.

Researcher: How come?

Can: For example, in Turkish, you read as you write. I know how letters are read, and I can read anything. Let alone their meaning, in English, reading all these words is even problematic. I can't even read aloud what is written in front of me because I don't want to make a fool of myself in the class. I cannot even read, let alone understanding. All these things accumulate. This was exclusion.

I don't participate, I don't understand; I can't laugh or speak so I always hesitate. So, it is as if things were excluding me and I accept. Maybe I was excluding myself as a result. But I had nothing to do.

The conceptual metaphor Can provided was as the protagonist in the movie *Divergent*, in which the main character has problems fitting in a post-apocalyptic society. Can used this source domain to represent himself. Fitting-in problems were continued by other interesting incidents in the journal. Now that the final exams were approaching, he started to be afraid of them as both comprehension and production problems in the target language went on for him. Here, he also started to question his overall capacity of learning a foreign language:

Excerpt 10. Future engineer with no English:

It is my dream to be an engineer abroad, but I need to speak foreign languages for that. Maybe I repeat this a lot, but I am very afraid because this [not being able to speak English] is a big obstacle for working in an international company in the future. It is very bad that I cannot overcome this.

The findings revealed that Can lost his feeling of self-efficacy as an EFL learner. He attempted to find a way to overcome the emotion labor. However, he chose to be practical and started to develop strategies to minimize the debilitating effects of his emotions in the EFL class. As mentioned earlier, he started to get answers from his classmates to fulfill tasks and exercises. To add, he mentioned he got used to the echo in the classroom and started to get to know the main characters in the video materials so that he could better understand them. Given that he knew of the story and their character better, it became easier for him to deal with a comprehension problem.

At this juncture, the question is what was the result of this (transition) semester for Can as an EFL learner? Now that he developed his way to manage the situation, was he ready to go on? I would like to conclude the findings with his last conceptual metaphor. The following excerpt sounded like a happy ending for Can, but it also revealed the cost of this school transition, which was emotionally “bumpy” for Can.

Excerpt 11. Rejuvenating warrior:

After all that happened, I don't feel so desperate or helpless. I got used to this echo slowly. Now they [his friends] call me “echo” as I complain so much about it. My classroom in middle school was very small. Its size was reducing the echo, but this classroom was so big and not so full. It was not easy to get used to. Now, I also learned how to find answers using the text and subtitles. I am better at understanding the teacher's accent. The last weeks were not so bad after what happened over the last three months. This week, I felt like a rejuvenating warrior. I know I am fine, but I cannot show it. But I think it will be fine.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphors entail one's understanding of an abstract target domain through its representation with a concrete source domain. Relatedly, analyzing these metaphors offer an influential tool for researchers to comprehend how individuals perceive their experiences and beliefs. Recently, Worden-

Chambers (2020) used this technique to inquire about teachers' perceptions of their identity and activities. The author managed to shed further light on teachers' perceptions through the conceptual metaphors they constructed.

The findings of the current study supported the premise that conceptual metaphors are effective in understanding how Can perceived his school transition experience in terms of his emotions. Utilizing his metaphors and supported by the narrative data and interviews, I reached three aspects that constituted Can's emotional roller-coaster as an EFL learner during the school transition.

The Emotion Labor of School Transition

Conceptual metaphors and narratives in this study support West et al.'s article (2010); in that, Can's poor school transition experience made him associate negative emotions like stress and lack of self-esteem in the EFL class due to contextual reasons such as teacher, classroom (space), and course materials. Similar to West et al. (2010), this poor transition also led to lower peer attainment as in the feeling of exclusion. However, Can's debilitating emotions were not limited only to concerns about his academic achievement even though previous studies mainly focused on school transition's impact on achievement (e.g., Goldstein et al., 2015; West et al., 2010). This was probably because these studies included large cohorts of students in their samples, focused on quantitative data, and overlooked the actual emotional experiences of individual students.

Can's narratives also supported Dewaele and Dewaele (2017), who highlighted the dynamic relationship between negative and positive emotions. As his experiences were rather pendular, the positive attitude towards EFL learning was replaced by negative emotions he associated with EFL classes. Similarly, Can's case revealed a critical possibility of what may happen as a result of a high school EFL experience with a variety of materials after a relatively poorer EFL education in terms of the use of multimedia. For Can, this resulted in an increased affective state. Some types of negative emotions such as high classroom anxiety (Horwitz, 2010; Horwitz et al., 1986) as in the communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation in terms of "to make a fool of himself" was an example. The finding also supported De Costa (2015a) by demonstrating an evolving rather than static nature of L2 learners' emotional state as a result of experiences and interactions. However, Can's case was new in that no prior study reported school transition as a potent phenomenon that may entail EFL anxiety provokers such as fear of negative evaluation (e.g., Can's withdrawals from classroom conversations with the teacher), communication apprehension (e.g., Can's concerns about how his lack of speaking proficiency would affect his future career).

In his words, Can was "unchallenged" at middle school whereas he encountered "better-performing people" in high school. He had seen himself as the one helping others and one who participated the most in the middle school. But after the first semester, he could no longer be the overachiever. He wanted to include himself into conversational warm-ups of each lesson at first, but later we see an EFL learner with a feeling of exclusion. He even reached the idea that he was excluding himself in the classroom during the interview. In the light of West et al.'s (2010) findings, Can's experience of poor school transition also led to a lower engagement and peer attainment. However, unlike their findings, high self-esteem did not determine the quality of school transition, but the quality of school transition influenced Can's confidence.

Can showed us the dynamic and fluid nature of language learner emotions; Can's emotion labor in the EFL class reminded me of a rollercoaster of feelings (Gkonou et al., 2020). As suggested earlier, high self-esteem may make the school transition period smoother for students (West et al., 2010). But this idea perceives self-esteem as a static construct. The

impacts of these emotional challenges are dynamically created within the new social context. Therefore, personality traits should not be treated as stable for the K-12 period.

The Social Aspects of School Transition Influencing the EFL Learner Emotions

The findings indicated several social aspects affecting EFL learner emotions that emerged as a result of the new school and language learning environment. New cultural experiences as in the new EFL teacher's accent was one factor for Can. Here, it is important to underline that teacher's accent was a linguistic diversity to which Can was not familiar. Can moved to a bigger city for his high school education and in this bigger city, he faced a situation in which he had to acknowledge this linguistic diversity and get used to it to perform better in the EFL classroom. This case showed school transitions also raise problems since teachers also change along with the schools. Additionally, multilingual diversity in the new language learning environment was an issue to consider to support learners throughout the process.

This finding partly aligns with the previous findings stating high school transition stress can influence students' bonding to the school (Goldstein et al., 2015). In Can's case, we see the damage was mostly done to the bonding to learn a foreign language rather than the school itself. Moreover, the divergence between his middle school EFL instruction and the one in the high school made his poor school transition experience even messier, which supports Chamber's earlier findings (2016). The author remarked that ignoring prior learning styles can lead to problems in the orientation process when learners move to another school.

At this juncture, it is important to discuss the social aspects of school transition in the light of the last metaphor, the rejuvenating warrior. The target domain, Can (as a first-semester high school student from another city living in a dormitory) needed to find ways to manage the emotion labor in the EFL class. His source domain, rejuvenating warrior implied that he had some damage and learned to become a warrior.

Developing Strategies of a Survivor Instead of Strategies of a Learner

As for the third category, I saw Can was able to cope with the debilitating emotions he experienced by developing certain strategies. These strategies varied from copying answers from classmates to complete the tasks to copying the texts either in reading materials or in subtitles to answer comprehension questions without comprehending them. Ellis (2008) explained second language learning strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used "to learn" an L2 (p. 705). However, I cannot argue that Can's strategies intended for successful EFL achievement but rather intended to deal with "what was on his plate" at a specific moment in the EFL classroom.

Instead of strategies of a "learner," the strategies that Can developed were those of a "survivor." Poor school transition results in achievement-loss (Alspaugh, 1998; Goldstein et al., 2015). Can had concerns regarding his grades which influenced his emotion labor; however, he was able to cope with them by himself at the end of the day. Can's conceptualization of his use of strategies was the generic scene in the movie *Matrix*. In the movie, the protagonist was somehow programmed to have the capacity to get away from the incoming bullets with acrobatic movements. But do teachers desire learners to perceive tests and assignments in EFL classes as bullets to avoid? Furthermore, a learner can develop strategies of a survivor to cope with assessment concerns, but these strategies are not necessarily supporting ones for EFL learning.

Several practical implications can be stated. In the K-12 process, there are typically two compulsory school transitions. Teachers need to be aware of the complications this phenomenon may result in. Especially when dealing with freshmen, EFL teachers need to be

careful about the emotion labor of language learning. On the other hand, the findings of current research showed that school administrators and curriculum developers are also responsible for an effective school transition period. When instructional expectations, course contents, materials, even the physical properties of classrooms differ, effective orientation periods should be planned and executed in the K-12 context.

This process showed how case studies can help educators have insights on language learners' micro-realities (Duff, 2014). This study was naturally limited to one learner with certain language learner background in a particular setting. Unpretentiously, this case study's findings are limited to its context; however, as put in my reflexivity statement, Can's experiences are not unique to him, and school transition's emotion labor in the context of language learning can have a negative impact on learners. Therefore, future studies can perceive school transition as identity work, and attempt to better understand one's identity development and dynamic emotional background catalyzed by this period.

Related to my reflexive stance to the content of the current study, I also call for self-studies of teacher education practices (S-STEP; Peercy & Sharkey, 2020) so that more teachers and teacher educators take into account the emotion labor of school transition. My experience with Can showed me that the school transition experience is emotionally very challenging, which might bear certain constraints. I want to finish with a conceptual metaphor to express my take from the current study: I think the school transition is like landing a jumbo jet; that is, the jumbo jet is a school, and passengers are students. By taking precautions such as better pilot training, more developed landing systems, and better coordination among operators, it can be a smooth landing. Otherwise, there is always a risk of harsh landing, which may jeopardize the passengers and damage the jet itself.

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