UNRAVELING PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This research aims to analyze parents' perceptions towards the learning of English and the ways they help their children deal with English and language assessment.

Methodology: This qualitative study addresses 74 Chilean parents' perceptions of English teaching and learning. A semi-structured interview was conducted to capture the participants' perceptions. The data were categorized using content and frequency analysis and the principles of metaphoric analysis.

Main findings: The findings suggest that parents hold a positive perception of the English language and believe it is useful for their children's lives even though they might find the learning of the language difficult.

Social implications/Originality: Participants can produce metaphors that regard English as an ability and metaphors that focus on the process of learning the language. The findings of this research are useful for university stakeholders, teachers, preservice teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality of this study: In this study parents, stakeholders who have usually left aside from the language teaching and learning process, are interviewed to unfold their perceptions of what they see and believe when their children learn English.

Keywords: English, Parents, Perceptions, Students, Teaching, Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The Chilean language curriculum mandates that English must be taught as a foreign language from fifth grade onwards in public education. This implies that school students have three hours of English a week until 12th grade. There is also an optional English curriculum from first to fourth grade for those schools that want to enforce English learning at an early stage. The foreign language learning goal from the Ministry of Education is that students must achieve a B1 level by 12th grade. In this scenario, parents are aware that their children must work hard on the learning of a foreign language that is not spoken widely in the Chilean society even though the well-known benefits of speaking English when graduates have to look for a job.

The teaching approach that is promoted from the language curriculum is the development of the four language skills supported by the learning of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Schools are provided with language textbooks and teaching materials and resources that aim at enforcing the mentioned approach. Several studies have shown though that teacher tend to teach English using a great deal of the mother tongue, Spanish (Alarcón, Díaz, Tagle, Ramos & Quintana, 2014); therefore, school students do not get enough exposure to the foreign language and they fail to see the importance of language learning in their academic life.

The Chilean Ministry of Education has, in turn, enforced several policies that aim at offering teachers of English several professional training opportunities so that they can employ more innovative and student-centered methodologies and assessment practices. It is still unclear whether or not those training opportunities improve what language teachers do in the classroom and the direct impact of professional development on students' learning.

Public discourse aims at making Chileans fully aware of the importance of learning a foreign language to connect with the world (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). However, in 2014 a total of 154,097 11th graders (77% of the enrollment) were assessed on listening and reading comprehension skills and only 25% achieved an A2 level (Agencia de la Calidad de Educación, 2014). It is then a hard task for parents to try to help their children learn a foreign language that everybody claims it is important to learn, but very few succeed at learning it (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Torres, 2016). The Chilean educational system is still distant from parents' active participation in their children's learning processes so they are mostly involved in just what schools determine it is necessary to do so. Parents are not usually seen as a key factor that can contribute to support their children's language learning because their English mastery tends not to be strong enough. Besides, the Chilean educational system emphasizes core subject-matters like Math and Spanish because they would be of relevance

for learners' university admission in the future. This implies that English may be frequently regarded as a less important subject in the curriculum and as a discipline parents do not know how to approach to help their children learn the foreign language. This paper then analyzes 74 parents' perceptions of English language learning. These parents had their children enrolled in public schools and were interviewed to find out about their views.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Regarding the role of parents, previous investigations have claimed that there is a strong connection between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement (Hayes, 2012; Shute, Hansen, Underwood, & Razzouk, 2011). Research has also demonstrated that parental involvement can be a great contributor to student achievement and that an effective school-family partnership can be beneficial for parents as it may help them to perceive their children's school more positively and increase their sense of efficiency as parents together with changing their perceptions of their children as learners (Ávila-Daza & Garavito, 2009; Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, & Al-Maamari, 2016). There is often a substantial difference between the school's expectations of the parents' role in children's education and the parents' expectations (Calzada, Huang, Hernandez, Soriano, Acra, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2015). Gokturk, & Dinckal (2018) and Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff(2015) state that the parental role is a mixture of the beliefs that parents have when it comes to their children's education and the different patterns that their cultural context has assigned to them. Many parents bring to their schools a completely different notion of what their responsibilities are in education, as this notion is derived from their cultural thinking, behaviors and social interactions (Anderson, & Minke, 2007; Medina, Guzmán, & Wong-Ratcliff, 2015).

Parents must also deal with the prejudices that teachers might have if their children are underachievers and come from a different social or cultural background. The Cultural Deficit Theory explains that students' social, cultural or economic environment may be the cause of the child's inability to achieve properly in school (Ávila-Daza & Garavito, 2009; Castillo, & Camelo, 2013; Pakter, & Chen, 2013). This, of course, lessens the schools' and teachers' perceived accountability for students' performance (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, & Yarahmadi, 2015). This idea may subconsciously affect parents' willingness to participate in their children's school activities. Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff (2015) explain in their research that there are certain characteristics that parents possess when it comes to involvement in their children's education and that differs drastically from the idea that teachers have of parental involvement (Liu & Shi, 2007; Sehee, & Hsiu-zu, (2005)).

Parents often provide moral and emotional support to their children, which translates into choosing appropriate schools for their children, offering a place to study, and being a model of hard work for them (Medina, Guzmán, & Wong-Ratcliff, 2015; Wati, 2016). Orozco (2008, cited in Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff, 2015) has explained that some parents limit their role to the home only, ensuring that their children are fed and dressed and are supported to pursue higher education (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Hasan, 2015; Mahmoud, 2018). Often, parents limit their involvement outside the home because they believe that being involved in the school is a sign of disrespect towards the teachers, while others believe that their low level of education makes them incapable of assisting their children; thus, they tend to have low confidence when dealing with teachers and believe that it is the schools' responsibility to teach their children (Medina, Guzmán, & Wong-Ratcliff, 2015; Shute, Hansen, Underwood & Razzouk, 2011).

When it comes to learning a second or foreign language, these excuses and lack of confidence increase in parents. Pino & Rodriguez (2007) and Aljure et al. (2010) conducted different research studies in Portugal and Colombia about parental involvement when it comes to students learning English. Their research showed that parents hold learning English in high esteem and that they expect their children to start learning it at an early age because it can be beneficial for the children's future (Czura, 2017; Pino-Juste & Rodríguez-Lopéz, 2007; Supriyanti, 2012). Parents also express that it can help to aid their children in developing their thinking processes and they refer to the positive outcomes it may have on their academic performance (Aljure, Arciniegas, Camacho, Castillo, Mejía, & Rueda, 2010; Hayes, 2012; Kalayci, & Öz, 2018; Niehaus, & Adelson, 2014). This study also explains why parents do not participate or help much when it comes to English, finding that most parents believe that they lack education when it comes to second or foreign languages and does not want to give the wrong answers to their children. Some parents expressed that the level of English used in the classroom is not worth the effort put forth by their children because they thought the language would not be useful for their lives. Parents also stated that teachers do not give enough opportunities for parents to participate in their children's learning, and the most used excuse of all was that parents do not have time to participate or help their children and that it is the teachers' job to teach and not the parents' (Erdener, & Knoeppel, 2018; Pino-Juste& Rodríguez-Lopéz, 2007).

METHODS

Type of study

This qualitative study employs a case study methodology whose focus is parents' perceptions towards the English language

expressed through the contents of their responses during the interviews. The research aim was to analyze parents' perceptions towards the learning of English and the ways they help their children deal with English and language assessment.

Participants

Seventy-four parents voluntarily participated in the study and their ages ranged from 25 to 55. The participants were parents of students from Kindergarten to 12ᵗʰ grade in different Chilean public schools coming from both rural and urban contexts. They were asked to read and sign a written consent that stated they were willing to participate in this project. The English program considers three compulsory hours either a week from 5ᵗʰ to 12th grade or three optional hours a week from first to fourth grade. Most of the participants had completed their secondary education and some of them are in the process of earning a university degree. Of the total of 74 parents that participated in this research, 60 were female and 14 were male.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview was applied to parents. It contained three questions. Question number one seeks to obtain their views on having a child learning English as a foreign language and the use they see in learning it. Question number two addresses the ways parents help their children to prepare themselves for tests, group work, and other assessments. Question number three asks parents to create a metaphor for English learning. The interviews were carried out in Spanish and lasted approximately 5 minutes each. They were recorded and later transcribed for data analysis purposes.

Procedure

The semi-structured interview was carried out on 74 parents to discover their opinion on learning English as a subject, its significance as an object of learning, its usefulness and how they helped their children study it. For this, English teachers, principals, and school administrators were of great help to provide the schedules to interview parents in a safe space for them to talk freely.

Data analysis

Three techniques were used to analyze the data: Content analysis, Frequency analysis, and Conceptual metaphor analysis. Cavanagh (1997) mentions that content analysis is a method of collecting data systematically and objectively that can lead to the creation of inferences. The data was categorized through the software QDA Miner, a program created to assist researchers in managing, coding and analyzing qualitative data, the results were then placed in bar and pie charts in Microsoft Excel. Questions one and two from the interview were analyzed using content analysis.

For question number three, Soriano's (2012) Conceptual Metaphor analysis was used to analyze the metaphors given by the interviewees. Conceptual metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon in which a semantic area is represented conceptually by another term, usually one that corresponds to physical experience and is named the Source domain, to explain a more abstract structure named the Target domain. The data was manually categorized by using Alarcón et al. (2014) guidelines. The findings were then set in tables in Microsoft Word.

RESULTS

The main idea of qualitative research is to understand social phenomena in its natural setting. Its main focus is on the reasons why certain social phenomena occur. Qualitative research relies on human experiences to obtain responses to a specific inquiry. As this research will both characterize the parents' conceptions of their children learning English and interpret their perceptions towards it, it can be described as having both a descriptive and an interpretive focus.

The first question that parents were asked was "What do you think about your child having English as a subject in school? What is the usefulness of the subject?" To analyze the data collected, the responses were organized into dimensions and sub-dimensions. From question one, two dimensions were obtained (See Figure 1).
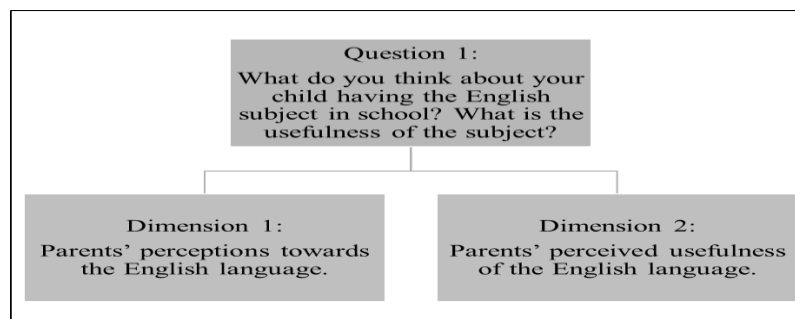

Figure 1: Dimensions for Question Number One.

For Dimension one, two sub-dimensions were identified: (1) Positive perception towards the English language and Ambivalent perception towards the English language.
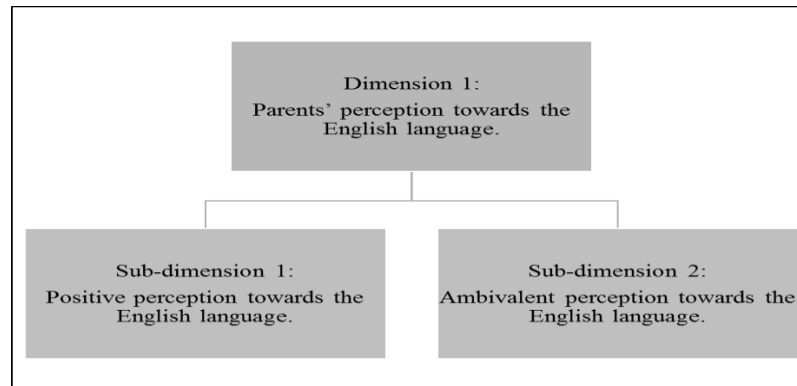

Figure 2: Sub-dimensions for Dimension One

97% (72) of the interviewees had a positive perception towards both their children learning English and the language itself. Some of their responses were:

- [I love it, I think that they need more hours weekly, I would like more workshops or more classroom hours weekly because I think that two hours per week is not enough](Participant N°6).

- [Really good, I think it is very important] (Participant N°10).

Others explained that they liked the fact that their children are learning English at an early age. On the other hand, 3% (2) of the interviewees had an ambivalent perception stating that learning a foreign language was not that important for them. As parents, they did like their children learning English but did not believe that it would be useful for them in the future, for example:

- [My son has Down syndrome, I mean I like that he learns English, I don't know what they are supposed to teach him, he likes English so…] (Participant N°7).

- [Ideal for them to learn the language, I mean not for work, more like for them to learn something new, to learn some English] (Participant N°12).

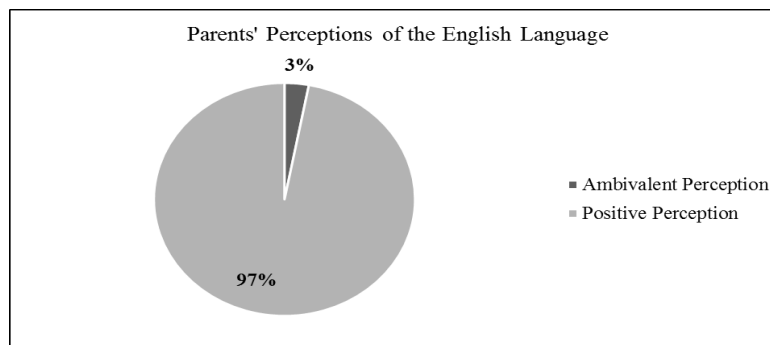The complete breakdown of the parents' perceptions of the English language can be found below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Parents' Perception of the English Language

Dimension 2 is labeled as Parents' perceived usefulness of the English language, in which parents identified ten factors about the usefulness they believed learning English as a foreign language would have for their children (See Figure 4).
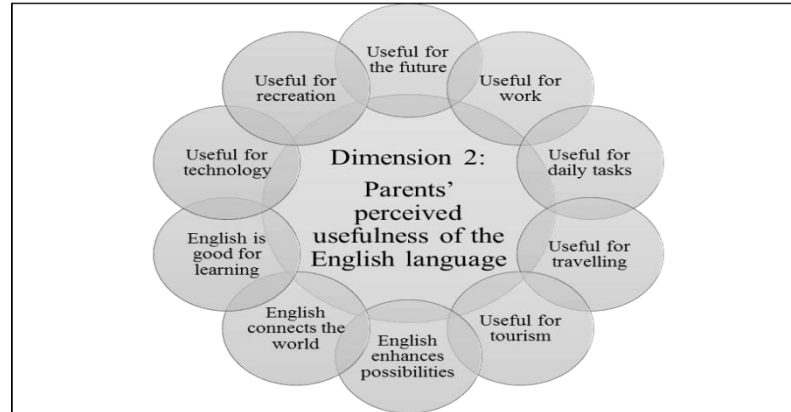
Figure 4: Factors of Dimension 2

The most common response was that the English language was useful because it was important to keep the world connected and communicate with other people. Another idea was that their children needed the language to stay in touch with the everyday events that occur in the world. This factor included 60% (44) of the responses and examples such as:

- [Really important, because it is a universal language like Spanish, so if you go abroad and you may encounter people from different places, they may need to use English] (Participant N°6).

- [Its usefulness is that nowadays everything is related to English, for the most part, English is necessary] (Participant N°1).

- [Nowadays English is a base that you must have, I mean you are not part of the world if you do not know English] (Participant N°9).

- [I think it's okay because they can use it to talk with other people who speak English and for work, it's also important nowadays] (Participant N°17).

- [I think it is very important because the language is used a lot these days] (Participant N°23).

The second most common answer (26%) obtained from parents was that it was important for their children to learn English because it would be useful for work-related activities. Another response that was present was that English is a job requirement nowadays. These ideas are represented in the following examples:

- [Good, I see that now for any kind of job they ask you to know English, it is essential. In general, I find it useful] (Participant N°11).

- [Good, because it helps him get along in the workplace] (Participant N°20).

- [I think it is okay because for any job they can require you to know English] (Participant N°30).

- [English is important in every process in the workplace, at a cultural level, at a social level, I think it is fundamental] (Participant N°48).

- [English is very important; you may have more chances of getting a job in the workplace] (Participant N°50).

The types of responses that parents gave the least were related to the idea of traveling and tourism (13%, 9 responses), the use of technology (10%, 7 responses), English for learning purposes (10%, 7 responses) and recreational purposes (3%, 2 responses). All the above results are presented in Figure 5.

These results do not vary from what Pino-Juste & Rodriguez-Lopéz (2007) and Aljure et al. (2010) collected in their research in Colombia and Portugal, respectively, about parents' involvement when it comes to students learning English. Their results also showed that parents hold learning English in high esteem, that they expect their children to start learning it at an early age and express how it can be beneficial for the children's future (Pino-Juste& Rodríguez-Lopéz, 2007). They also expressed that English can be helpful to develop their thinking process and described the positive outcomes it may have on their academic performance (Aljure, et al., 2010). This is also represented in this current research by 10% (7 responses) stating that learning English can be helpful for their children's learning process.
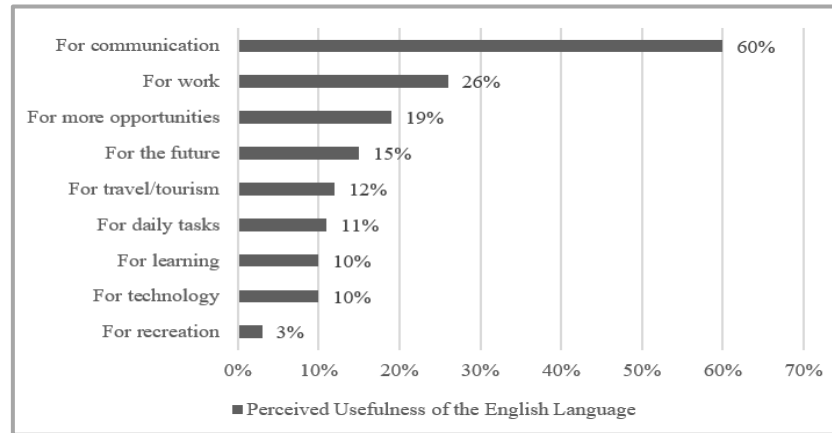
Figure 5: Percentages of the Perceived Usefulness of the English Language.

For the second question, which was "In what way do you help your child study for the assessment tasks in the English subject", only one dimension was identified as: Parents' way of supporting their children in the English language.
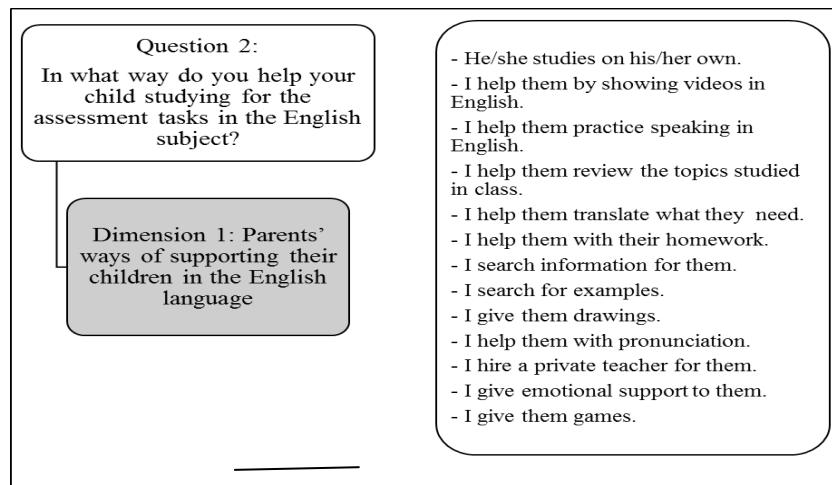

Figure 6: Dimension for Question 2 and its Factors.

Thirteen different ways of supporting children with their English studies were identified as shown in Figure 6. The most common response by 46% of parents (34 responses), is the acknowledgment that their children study by themselves and they do not intervene in this process. This is not because they do not want to, but because, in the words of one interviewee: [To be honest, I don't know a lot of English]. However, most of them cited external help that they sought when their children needed it, such as a tutor or they simply said that their child worked better on his/her own. The following most common responses were that parents acknowledged helping their children to search for information on the Internet or in books by 22% (16 responses). They also helped their children review the contents seen in a class by looking at their children's notes and their English books by 18% (13 responses).

Another factor mentioned in several responses was that of parents' helping their children by practicing speaking in English. One parent said that [when she has a speaking test, we practice together when she needs it].

The factors that follow, from most to least coded responses, are the following: Helping the student by providing and correcting their pronunciation in English (12%, 9 participants), Helping with their homework and providing emotional support in their studying process (11%, 8 participants), Helping by showing them videos in English (10%, 7 participants), Searching for examples of the target language structure (8%, 6 participants), Helping by translating from English to Spanish and vice versa (7%, 5 participants), Hiring a private teacher (5%, 4 participants), Giving them drawings to color (3%, 2 participants) and finally, Playing games with them (1%, 1 participant) (See Figure 7).
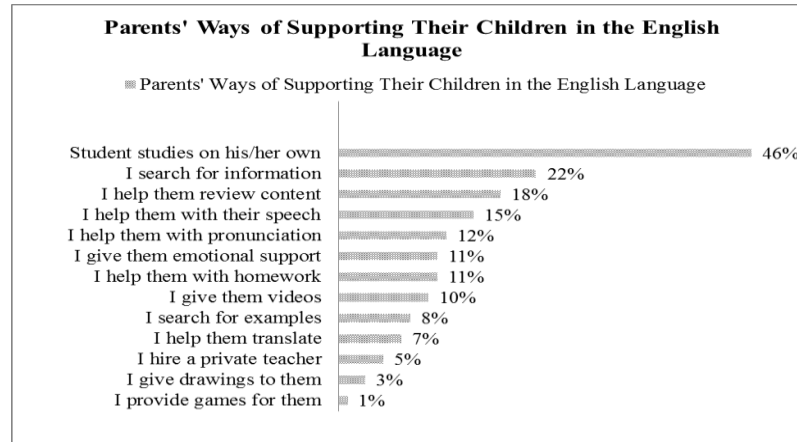
Parents' Ways of Supporting Their Children in the English Language

▦ Parents' Ways of Supporting Their Children in the English Language

Category	Percentage
Student studies on his/her own	46%
I search for information	22%
I help them review content	18%
I help them with their speech	15%
I help them with pronunciation	12%
I give them emotional support	11%
I help them with homework	11%
I give them videos	10%
I search for examples	8%
I help them translate	7%
I hire a private teacher	5%
I give drawings to them	3%
I provide games for them	1%

Figure 7: Percentages of Parents' Ways of Helping their Children with English

This data shows that the majority of parents (54%) help their children in one way or another to study for the English subject or do their assignments. This aligns with the data provided by Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff (2015) who affirm that parents of Latin-American background tend to provide some form of moral and emotional support, be it by helping them with their assignments, finding an appropriate school for them or simply by being a good role model for their children. However, an important number of parents (46%) do not provide help to their children. These results help to confirm the ideas by Aljure, et al. (2010), who state that parents refrain from helping their children because they lack a good foreign language education and are afraid of providing them with the wrong information.

This section of the analysis focuses on the third question of the interview applied to parents in which interviewees were expected to complete a metaphor using the model "X is like Y, because…", X being the Target domain, a conceptual domain that is understood using another domain, and Y the Source domain, a conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn to understand another conceptual domain (Kövecses, 2010; Soriano, 2012).

To analyze the metaphors given by the interviewees, the following steps were employed: (1) Pre-Analysis, (2) Labeling, (3) Sorting (Clarification and Elimination), (4) Categorizing and (5) Peer Review (Alarcón et al., 2014). During the Pre-analysis, the steps by which the data would be analyzed were defined. In the next step, Labeling, a preliminary list of metaphors was proposed using Microsoft Word by coding the name of the Source domain for each metaphor. If no response was given, it was coded as Omission.

The Sorting step, the third step on our list, was composed of two individual phases, the clarification, and elimination phases. In the Clarification phase, the data was re-analyzed, and the different components of each metaphor were identified: The Target domain, the Source domain and the relations established between the two hereinafter referred to as correspondences. We intended to establish the most prominent characteristics of each metaphor and any common element among them to categorize them. During the Elimination phase, omissions, non-metaphorical responses, poorly constructed metaphors and responses where the justification did not align coherently with the Source domain given, were removed from the analysis.

The next step was categorizing, in which metaphors were organized and classified. The metaphors were categorized by semantic criteria, or by how close their meanings were. This way, after validating the metaphors among three judges, the data was analyzed again to identify their most prominent characteristics. After that, a list containing the characteristics that each metaphor had was created and the metaphors were grouped in categories that shared those characteristics. In an Excel spreadsheet, each answer was coded with the categories established. Eight (8) categories were arrived at in this part of the analysis and were organized into two groups.

Finally, during the peer review step, to ensure the quality of the results, the previously established categorizations were subjected to group discussions where the results were re-evaluated. The categories are presented in Table 1. A number between parentheses was used to determine the number of times a specific metaphor was mentioned.

Table 1: Categories for Metaphors

Dimension		Category	Source Domain
Ability Oriented Metaphors	1	Unlocker of Opportunities	Key (5), Door (4), Master Key (1), River (1), Global Connection System (1), Window to Knowledge (1)
	2	Unifier	Plane (4), Bridge (2), Internet (1), Window to the World (1), Ship (1), Vehicle (1)
	3	Instrument	Tool (3), Cellphone (1), Neuron (1)

	4	Weakness	Little Thorn (1), Eating Lemon (1)
Learning Oriented Metaphors	5	Positive but Difficult	Chewing gum (2), Nettle (1), Road with many Holes (1), Dish of Spaghetti (1), Sky (1), Jigsaw Puzzle (1)
	6	An Essential Object	Bread (1), House (1)
	7	A Pricey Object	Lobster (1)
	8	Process	Learning to Walk (1), Plant (1)

Eleven interviewees did not provide an answer to the question and fourteen of them provided metaphors that either described English literally or their answer did not correspond with the Target domain. Just forty-nine metaphors were finally analyzed. Responses tended to focus on either English as an ability that is learned and opens new and different possibilities in life, or as the process of learning the language and the difficulties that it brings about. Some of the metaphors gathered are similar to what was found by Alarcón et al. (2014) in the sense that some of the parents who were interviewed gave the idea that a door or a key can give access to new opportunities.

Metaphors that implicate English as the ability

For the metaphors that focused on English as the ability the following categories were identified:

Unlocker of opportunities (key, door, master key, river, global connection system, window to knowledge)

The majority of metaphors (12) were part of this category. Parents see English as an ability that, when mastered, helps to create job opportunities, to travel to other parts of the world and to access new knowledge. For example:

- [English is like a master key because it allows us to open many doors in the workplace and throughout life] (Participant N°35).

- [English is like a door because it pushes you towards new knowledge, new learning opportunities and sometimes it closes doors when it gets difficult] (Participant N°5).

Unifier (Plane, Internet, Window to the world, Ship, Bridge, Vehicle)

The second group of metaphors (10) focused on how, after having learned English, suddenly the barriers that separate the world are not so high. Metaphors in this category highlighted English status as lingua franca, as a language that is used almost everywhere in the world. For example:

- [English is like the internet because, without it, we are no one, you need it to be up to date and get to know the rest of the world and their realities] (Participant N°33).

- [English is like a boat because it sails throughout the world, joining people from different places and cultures, but through the language, they can communicate perfectly] (Participant N°34).

Instrument (Tool, Cellphone, Neuron)

Some metaphors (5) focused on English as a tool, as an instrument that can be used to complete certain tasks and achieve aims in our day-to-day. For example:

- [English is like a tool because it helps with daily life and work] (Participant N°19).

- [English is like a neuron because it is the main tool to fulfill your dreams] (Participant N°29).

Weakness (Little thorn, Eating lemon)

The fourth category belonging to the group that considers English as ability only has two metaphors. The interviewees focused on how their learning of English was not the best and, consequently, the language is a weakness, such as Achilles' heel, in the words of one participant.

- [English is like a little thorn because for me it is too difficult to learn it, I don't know if I wasn't born with the skill, because there are people who can learn the language easily. I didn't have a good school (..) it's my suffering] (Participant N°10).

- [English is like eating a lemon because it is so difficult for me] (Participant N°44).

Metaphors that regard English as a learning process

For the metaphors that focused on the process of learning English, the following categories were identified:

Positive but Difficult Process (Chewing gum, Nettle, Road with many holes, Dish of spaghetti, Sky, Jigsaw puzzle)

This category includes seven metaphors, interviewees portrayed English in a positive light while still highlighting that it was a difficult task to learn it and that it required a lot of effort to do so. For example:

- [English is like chewing gum because it is nice to talk and to have it, but suddenly it gets stuck, your tongue gets twisted and after a while you get bored and you want to spit it] (Participant N°14).

- [English is like a dish of spaghetti because it's good but it's a little twisted] (Participant N°8).

An Essential Object (Bread, House)

Only one parent compared English to something that is considered as basic and vital as bread, despite this metaphor being determined as an underestimated object in the study by Alarcón et al. (2014). This parent gave English a completely different meaning and assigned value to the object. This participant also mentioned that some children have a gap in their education if they do not learn English.

- [I find it as necessary as, for example, bread, because I think in many jobs, as I said, it is essential. It is like a gap that children have if they don't learn it] (Participant N°11).

A pricey Object (Lobster)

Only one parent compared English to something that could be considered as pricey or expensive, using a lobster to exemplify her metaphor, expressing how expensive it can be to learn English appropriately in Chile even though it is something that might be considered important or useful.

- [It is like a lobster. I like having it but is expensive, it is difficult to have it, because to learn English you have to pay, and it is expensive] (Participant N°12).

Process (Learning to walk, Plant)

Two parents described English as a process, one is the process of learning how to walk, and saying how once you have begun to learn a language, the road ahead becomes easier to travel. The other one explained the growth process of a plant, explaining that if you practice, your knowledge grows.

- [English is like learning how to walk because when they learn the basics, they have what is needed to move on. I feel it is like that. If they learn it properly from the beginning, it just gets easier] (Participant N°3).

- [English is like a plant because if you take care of it, it grows] (Participant N°6).

DISCUSSION

Firstly, the results of each of the questions asked to the parents in the semi-structured interview, and what was expected from these will be discussed, and, then, the results from the metaphors that parents created during the interview will be reviewed.

Parents' perception of the English language

Hoover-Dempsey (2005, cited in Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff, 2015) claimed that there is a strong connection between parents' cultural patterns and their beliefs of what their children's education should be. In this regard, one of the many characteristics of Latino parents is that they tend to hold the learning of English as a second or foreign language in high esteem. They expect their children to learn it at an early age due to the benefits that it may have for their future (Pino-Juste& Rodríguez-Lopéz, 2007), features that were also found in the Chilean parents that were interviewed. 97% of them believed that English was beneficial for their children.

Even though a positive view of the English language was expected, it was unexpected that the response would unanimously lean towards how positive and useful English was for their children. Several parents even explained that they wished they had learned English while they were themselves, students. 3% had an ambivalent view of the English language, as they believed that what their children learned at school was not going to cause an impact in their lives because the English taught in the school is just elementary and not enough to be relevant for their children's future.

The fact that so many parents in this study have a positive perception of their children learning English as a foreign language can be beneficial towards the learning process. This shared point of view of parents could be used as a tool by teachers to create programs or workshops that could include both parents and students to enhance this positive perception and transfer it to the students (Kavanagh, Ziino, & Mesagno, 2016). This would certainly form a stronger bond between the three fundamental pillars of learning: teachers, parents, and students.

Parents' Perceived Usefulness of the English Language

In this research, the results for the question "What is the usefulness of the English subject?" were surprising in the sense that only 10% of the parents believed that learning English would be advantageous for their children's academic purposes, and just 15% of parents stated that it could improve their children's future. However, 60% of the parents believed that English would be useful for communicating with other people and keeping up with the rest of the world. This could mean that Chilean parents perceive English not as an academic subject, but rather as a tool that could be useful outside of an academic environment. This could be exploited by teachers by enforcing a communicative approach as the main classroom technique.

Parents' Ways of Supporting their Children's Learning Process

This data shows that a high number of parents interviewed (46%) do not provide help to their children when preparing for an assessment task, explaining that they do not know English or that their English education was incomplete or lacking. These results only confirm the theory provided by Aljure, et al. (2010) who state that parents refrain from helping their children because they lack a good foreign language education and are afraid of providing factually incorrect information to their kids.

Nonetheless, we cannot ignore that the majority of the parents (54%) do help their children in one way or another to study for the English subject or to do their assignments. From this percentage, we can see several parents provide emotional support rather than being directly involved with their children's studies. This fact aligns with the data provided by Medina, Guzmán & Wong-Ratcliff (2015) who affirmed that parents of Latin American background tend to provide some form of moral and emotional support, be it by helping them with their assignments, finding an appropriate school for them or simply by being a good role model to them, and how this behavior from Latino parents is based on cultural practices and beliefs.

These results can provide insight on the methods that Chilean parents have to help their children when it comes to learning English while They also contribute with ideas on how to integrate parents into their children's learning process by giving them techniques and assistance about how to help the children in their studies (Czura, 2017; Vavla & Gokaj, 2013).

Parents' Metaphors Related to the English Language

In this section, parents' perceptions of the English language through metaphors were explored in the understanding that the perceptions of parents are heavily affected by their cultural practices and beliefs.

The results from the metaphors that parents created share some similarities and contain some differences to those found by Alarcón et al. (2014). In some metaphors, our participants used the same Source domain to draw the same metaphorical expressions like those used by the participants in Alarcón et al.'s research, such as the idea of a door or a key being a gateway towards opportunities. However, in the case of the Source domain 'bread', the metaphorical expressions that were drawn by the participants in both research studies contrast very noticeably. In Alarcón et al.'s research, some participants saw the concept of 'bread' as an underestimated object, whereas in this research, one participant as an essential object regarded the same concept. This difference may be because the city where some of the participants came from was originally a textile city where a couple of centuries ago having bread in their homes was a priority to many families in the area. The most interesting of the discrepancies is that of the metaphorical expressions drawn from the Source domain 'window', which is repeated in this research but in two different categories. One participant used the concept meaning that windows can be opened to reach a new place; therefore, have access to new opportunities, while a different participant used it to express that windows connect to the rest of the world; thus, English is a language that connects people from all over the world.

It can be inferred from this that metaphors can be useful when trying to find the nuances in what participants truly believe when they try to express their perceptions towards a certain Target domain. While both studies were conducted in Chile (Alarcon et al. and the current research), the differences found in some of the metaphorical expressions exemplify how a difference in the environment in which a person was raised can change the way they view and describe the world.

CONCLUSION

One of the first assumptions that were at the start of this research study was that Chilean parents would have a negative perception of the way their children learn the English language and that their relationship with the English language would not be positive. It was eye-opening to find that the results indicated the exact opposite, as 97% of the parents interviewed had a positive perception of the English language. Moreover, all parents were in favor of the idea that their children would learn English, as a foreign language because of the possibilities it could open in their future and because of their beliefs that English is relevant for their children to keep up with the ever-changing world.

Regarding parents' perceptions of the learning of English as a foreign language, we believe it is of incredible importance for teachers to find a way of including parents or guardians in the students' learning process, as the bonding and support they can give them would be highly beneficial to the children's improvement of the learning of English as a foreign language and this can even encourage parents who do not know the language to learn it themselves.

Since parents volunteered to participate in this study, a limitation of this study was that gender equality could not be reached to find out whether or not there were differences in the perceptions of female and male parents. Further research can be conducted based on the findings of this study. A more detailed investigation conducted over a longer period on a wider geographical area around parents' perceptions of English learning and assessment might help to deepen the likely relationship between parents, schools, and students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 worked on the design of the research study, literature review, complemented, and edited each one of the sections of the text. Author 2 piloted the instruments and interviewed several parents. Author 3 interviewed more parents and worked on the findings. Author 4 worked on the discussion and conclusion.

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