Turkish Young Language Learners' Attitudes Towards English *
Türkiye'deki İlköğretim Öğrencilerinin İngilizce'ye Karşı Tutumları

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ÖZ: Bu çalışma 2006-2007 akademik yılında, Türkiye'de ilköğretim okullarındaki öğrencilerin İngilizceye ve İngilizce derslerine karşı olan tutumlarını belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Çalışma, ilköğretim birinci kademede İngilizceye yeni başlayan 4. sınıf öğrencileri ile sınırlı tutulmuştur. 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin İngilizceye ve İngilizce derslerine karşı olan tutumlarını belirlemek için iki sormaca geliştirilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin büyük bir bölümünün İngilizce dil becerilerine, ders araç-gereçlerine ve etkinliklere karşı tutumlarının olumlu olduğunu ve öğrencilerin İngilizceye karşı olan tutumlarının becerilere ve öğrenme ortamına göre farklılık gösterdiği göstermiştir. Cinsiyetler açısından öğrencilerin dil tutumları arasında anlamlı farklılık bulunmamıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: : İlköğretim okulları, İngilizce dersleri, tutum, dil becerileri, ilköğretim öğrencileri

ABSTRACT: This study has been conducted in fourteen 4th graders' classrooms in Turkish curriculum laboratory elementary schools in seven cities of Turkey during the academic year 2006-2007 in order to find out young language learners' attitudes towards English and English lessons in Turkish elementary schools. To determine young language learners' attitudes towards English language inside and outside the classroom, two questionnaires have been developed. The findings of the study have revealed that the pupils seem to have developed positive attitudes towards English language skills and sub skills, materials, the course book, and activities. It has been found out that the attitudes of the pupils change significantly according to language skills and learning environment. There is not a significant difference in the attitudes of pupils towards English according to gender.

Keywords: Young language learners, language attitude, language skills, second language acquisition, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is getting smaller and smaller through globalization which requires interaction and integration among people, companies, and nations. This process has some effects on the environment, culture, political systems, economy, and education around the world. Besides, as Spolsky (2004, p. 76) states English language has gained superiority over other world languages as a language of science, technology, sport, computers, popular music, commerce, and trade in a global framework.

Turkey, being aware of the importance of knowing a foreign language, made some changes in the policy of foreign language teaching. With the acknowledgement of the eight-year compulsory education in 1997, foreign language teaching started at 4th and 5th grades as a compulsory course in elementary schools. As is known, elementary school students are children. In terms of cognitive, language and personality development, children differ from adults.

Whereas young language learners are said to be passing through their cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness, adult language learners already have. However, young language learners can be said to be more successful in second language learning than adults because of the accessibility of the innate language acquisition.

Between the age of 18 moths and 11 or 12, all normal children except for mentally retarded acquire a language to which they are exposed. "It has been hypothesized that there is a critical period for second language acquisition just as for first language acquisition" (Ligthbown and Spada , 2008, p. 68).

Ligthbown and Spada (2008) describe the Critical Period Hypothesis as a "time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning" (p. 68). Thus, the developmental stages of the brain affect the nature of language acquisition and language learning. In addition to cognitive differences, there are also other differences between young and adult learners in terms of learner characteristics and learning conditions. The following table, where the presence or the absence of the learner characteristics and learning conditions according to four types of learners is shown by (+) and (-)notations, gives these differences appropriately.

Table 1: Differences between young and adult learners according to learner characteristics and learning conditions

	FIRST LANGUAGE	SECOND LANGUAGE		
	Young Child (At Home)	Young Child (play groud)	Adolescent (Classroom)	Adult (on the job)
LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS				
Another language	+	+	+	+
Cognitive maturity	-	-	+	+
Metalinguistic awareness	-	-	+	+
World knowledge	-	-	+	+
Anxiety about speaking	-/+	-	+	+
LEARNING CONDITIONS				
Freedom to be silent	-	+	+	+
Ample Time	+	-	-	-
Corrective feedback (grammar and pronunciation)	-	-	+	-
Corrective feedback (meaning, word choice, politeness)	+	+	+	+/-
modified input	+	+	+	+

(adapted from Lightbown and Spada, 2008, p. 31)

As is seen in the above chart, second language young learners differ from second language adult learners in many ways. However, second language acquisition theories aim at explaining the aspects of language acquisition, which are common to all second language learners and contexts.

Second language learners already know at least one language.

Second language learners are cognitively mature. They are able to engage in problem solving, deduction, and complex memory tasks.

Their metalinguistic awareness is already developed.

Their general knowledge of the world is said to be extensive.

Second language acquisition theories explain how well languages are acquired by children. Among the first language acquisition theories, **behaviorism** is said to be influential on second and foreign language teaching. Nelson Brooks (1960) and Robert Lado (1964) are two

pioneers of the development of audiolingual teaching materials and in teacher training. Mimicry and memorization form the base of classroom activities, such as dialogues and sentence patterns memorized by students. According to behaviorism, language development is viewed as the formation of habits. Thus, "behaviorism was often linked to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), which was developed by structural linguists in Europe and North America" (Lightbown and Spada, 2008, p.34).

According to CAH, there are similarities between the first and target language structures. When differences appear, second language learners have difficulty.

By 1970s, CAH was seen incomplete in explaining second language acquisition from the innatist point of view. According to the principles of **Universal Grammar (UG)**, children acquire first language during a critical period of their development. Thus, White (2003) claims that a second language learned within this period is acquisition. However, according to Schachter (1990), UG does not explain the acquisition of a second language, especially by learners who have passed the critical period. However, according to some researchers, such as Schwarts (1993) and White (1991), UG affects the second language learners' use of language not the underlying systematic knowledge of the new language. Learners' first language knowledge may affect learners' second language performance.

Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition influences Stephen Krashen's **Monitor Model** (1982), which Krashen describes in terms of five hypotheses, such as acquisition—learning, monitor, the natural order, input and affective filter hypotheses. Through these hypotheses respectively, in short, Krashen points out that there is a difference between conscious and subconscious learning; when a learner has a plenty of time, he is concerned about producing correct language, and has learned the relevant rules. He is able to monitor his learning; the acquisition order of morphemes in second language acquisition is almost the same as that in first language acquisition; when a learner is exposed to comprehensible input, which consists of i+1, acquisition occurs; feelings, motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states play an important role for learners in language acquisition.

Some current psychological theories which see language from cognitivist point of view present **information processing and transfer appropriate processing.** In "information processing model", it is discussed that how much information a second language learner can pay attention to when compared with a proficient language user who can give his full attention to the overall meaning of a text or conversation.According to **connectionism,** repeated situational and linguistic contexts are more important than any specific innate knowledge in the learner. It is because learners gradually build up their knowledge of language through exposure to the thousands of the linguistic features they eventually hear.

Another second language acquisition hypothesis which has been affected by cognitivist point of view is the **interaction hypothesis.** According to this hypothesis, learners not only need the simplification of the linguistic form but rather an opportunity to interact with other speakers for mutual comprehension.

From **sociocultural** point of view, social interaction is very important in language acquisition. According to this perspective, speaking and thinking are tightly interwoven. Speaking and writing mediate thinking. Speakers can internalize a language paying attention to what they say to others and to what others say to them.

While some of the second language acquisition theories give primary importance to learner's innate capacity, others emphasize the role of situational or linguistic contexts, attention, and social interaction. Additionally, as Krashen (1982) indicates in Affective Filter Hypothesis, second language learners' attitudes towards language can be considered as a factor of determining their level of proficiency in the language acquisition.

All in all, there are several factors affecting second language learning, such as intellectual development, motivation, attitude, aptitude, sex, language environment, language input, affective factors and learning styles. Attitudinal factors may have a significant effect on one's second language acquisition. If learners develop a negative attitude towards a second language, they may never achieve a full command of language, which creates a problem in learning. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out Turkish young language learners' attitudes towards English and English lessons in Turkey, to determine their second language awareness, language consciousness, language performance, their problems in English, and their priorities in English. How well young language learners are motivated towards second language has been also analyzed in the study.

2. METHOD

In order to find out young language learners' attitudes towards English in Turkish elementary schools, two questionnaires have been developed. In an attempt to prepare these questionnaires, 4th graders have been observed and interviewed in to learn about their opinions of English language, English lessons, coursebooks, activities, materials and other components of the programme as well as the reasons and purposes why they are learning and using English. In adidition to that, a number of teachers of English and teachers of other branches teaching English to young learners have been interviewed to learn about their opinions and expectations of the programme, the activities and methods they use in teaching young learners and problems they face while teaching English.

Following these, an item pool of 82 statements have been prepared. The item pool was conducted on a sample group that is similar to the target group of the study during the winter term of the academic year 2006-2007. After the administrations of the questionnaire, necessary tests have been done through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to find out the validity and reliability of the statements. Then, items with low reliability and validity have been either excluded from the questionnaire or changes in wording have been made. Finally, 71 statements have been chosen to be used in the questionnaires. These statements have been classified and divided intow two questionnaires.

Both questionnaires have been prepared in Likert scale format. Whereas 30 items in the first questionnaire have been prepared to check the pupils' attitudes towards English outside the classroom, 41 items have been developed for their attitudes towards English inside the classroom. The first Questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha of which is .73, consists of macro and micro language skills in English, authentic materials, language activities, language awareness, and types of motivation.

The second Questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha of which is .81, consists of the items checking for language skills in English, types of motivation, linguistic competence, the course book, materials and language learning activities.

Then, these questionnaires were given to 551 fourth graders at the age of 10 in 14 schools chosen randomly from seven big cities, such as Adana, Ankara, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Izmir, Malatya, Samsun, which represent seven diverse regions in Turkey throughout the second semester of the academic year 2006—2007. Questionnaire I and II were given separately to the fourth graders during the lessons by the school teacher or the researcher, and statements in each item were kept short and simple to keep young language learners' attention span and to encourage them give sincere answers.

3. DATA ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION

The data have been analyzed by Chi-Square, T-test, One-Way Analysis of Variance and Multiple Comparisons of SPSS. In each table, statements have been ranked based on the percentage of positive responses.

3.1. Pupils' Attitudes Towards English and the Comparison of Pupils' Language Attitudes According to Skills

As it is aforementioned, the aim of this study is to determine the pupils' attitudes towards macro and micro skills in English, materials, the course book, and activities. The below given table illustrates the mean scores of the responses given to the statements about these categories in Questionnaire I and II. Macro and micro skills are presented in the order of the priority of their language attitudes.

Table 2: The mean scores of the responses given to the items about macro and micro skills, materials, the course book, and activities

	Negative	Positive	Undecided
	%	%	%
Grammar	6,2	84,6	9,3
Vocabulary	14,9	71,8	13,4
Listening	15,4	71,4	13,1
Writing	17,4	68,7	13,8
Pronunciation	19,6	66,9	13,5
Reading	25	56,6	18,4
Speaking	28,1	56,6	25,2
Course book	6,2	85,4	8,3
Activities	20,4	66,8	12,8
Materials	25,6	58,6	15,8
Mean Score	*18,6*	*68*	*13,4*

According to the findings in Table 2, the pupils' attitudes differs at a significant level of $p<0,05$ depending on the skill (df= 12; $x2$= 298,400; significance= ,000). The responses of the pupils to the questions about macro skills have revealed that more than half of the pupils seem to be positive towards macro skills in English. The skill which has the highest percentage of positive attitude seems to be grammar (84,6%). This may be an outcome of the possibility that we internalize the underlying system of rules, that is to say competence is prior than performance. They seem to be least undecided in their attitudes to grammar with 9.3%. Next, the skill with the second highest score in terms of the positive attitude seems to be vocabulary (71,8%). Therefore, it can be deduced that pupils are motivated to improve their proficiency in grammar and vocabulary. Thirdly, the percentage of the positive attitude towards listening skills (71,4%) seems to be slightly lower than vocabulary. Hence, the language skill with the third highest percentage of the positive attitude is listening skills. Three receptive skills rank first in the young language learners' attitudes towards English. Writing skills (68,7%) have the fourth highest percentage of positive attitude. The pupils seem to be less positive towards writing skills than grammar, vocabulary, and listening. This productive skill may be discouraging for the learners. As for pronunciation, it has the fifth highest percentage of positive attitude, which is 66,9%. Lastly, as is illustrated in Table 2, reading and speaking skills have the lowest percentage of the positive attitude, which is 56,6. It is because the learners find written instructions difficult, and English story books at their level of English may be difficult. Among all the macro skills, the young language learners seem to be most undecided towards speaking skills. It is because they are not conscious about the fact that in language acquisition performance comes later than

competence.   Therefore, this incompetency may have affected their attitude to the speaking skills.

In addition to micro and macro skills, mean scores of the items related with materials, the course book and activities show that more than half of the pupils are positive towards them. The percentages of positive attitude towards these categories are respectively 56,8, 85,4 and 66,8. As to negative attitudes, 26,5% of the pupils are negative towards materials, while only 6,2% of them seem to be negative towards course book, and 20,4% of them seem to be negative towards activities. Finally, 15,8% of the pupils are undecided about materials, 8,3% of them are undecided about their attitudes towards the course book. The items related with activities revealed that 12,8% pupils seem to be undecided. All in all, the mean scores in the above given table reveals that 68% of the pupils seem to be positive towards the categories of micro and macro skills, materials, the course book, and activities.

3.2. Types of Motivation

3.2.1. Intrinsic Motivation

In order to determine whether pupils are intrinsically motivated to learn English, five statements have been included in Questionnaire I, while two statements are about intrinsic motivation in Questionnaire II. The responses given to these items are presented in the following table.

Table 3: The Pupils' Attitudes Towards English According to Intrinsic Motivation

	Statement No	Negative	Positive	Undecided
		%	%	%
	1	2,5	92,2	5,3
	2	6,5	82,0	11,4
	3	11,6	78,6	9,8
Questionnaire I	4	8,7	78,0	13,2
	5	34,5	45,7	19,8
Mean		*12,8*	*75,3*	*11,9*
Questionnaire II	1	3,8	86,9	9,3
	2	6,7	78,4	14,9
Mean		*5,3*	*82,7*	*12,0*
Mean Scores of Questionnaire I—II		***10,6***	***77,4***	***12,0***

As Table 3 illustrates, the item with the highest percentage of positive responses is the first statement, which is "I want to improve my English." According to the analysis of this item, 92,2% of the pupils are motivated to improve their English, while 5,3% of them seem to be undecided, and 2,5% of them seem to be negative. As the results illustrate, great majority of the pupils seem to be motivated enough to learn English. Similarly, 82% of the pupils agree on the second item which is "I want to meet my peers who can speak English." 6,5% of the pupils disagree on this item, and 11.4% seem to be undecided. Next, the statement "I walk away when people start speaking English." ranks the third with 11,6% of agreement and 78,6% of disagreement. The percentage of undecided pupils is 9,8%. In other words, 78,6% of disagreement on statement three might mean that pupils feel comfortable in an English-speaking environment and may show a tolerance of ambiguity when they do not understand the whole conversation. As it is known, tolerance of ambiguity is one of the characteristics of intrinsically motivated learners. The fourth given Question in Questionnaire I is "I want to visit countries where English is spoken as a native language." The responses given to this statement show that 78% of the pupils seem to be willing to travel to English speaking countries, while only 8,7% of them do not seem to be interested. 13,2% of the respondents seem to be undecided. As the

statements two and four show, a great majority of the pupils want to visit English speaking countries, such as the UK or the USA and meet people from these countries. This may be related with their positive attitude towards and curiosity about the culture and people living in those English speaking countries, which may contribute to their intrinsic motivation. However, statement five "I should start learning English in pre—school age" reveals the fact that only 45,7% of the pupils are of the idea that they should start learning English earlier. The percentage of pupils who have showed a negative attitude by agreeing on the item is 34,5, while 19,8% have stated that they are undecided. As is seen in analysis of the statement one and five, although majority of the pupils seem to be motivated to learn English, less than half of the pupils think that English teaching should start in pre-school.

In Questionnaire II, the first item has the highest percentage of positive attitude. Responses given to the first statement "I want to answer the questions asked in English classes" reveal that 86,9% of the pupils are willing to answer questions during English classes although 3,8% of them seem to be unwilling and 9,3% seem to be undecided. The second given statement "I revise what I have learned in English classes." has a lower percentage of agreement. 78,4% of the pupils agree on this item, whereas 6,7% of them disagree and 11,9% of them have been undecided. As it is seen in Table 3, majority of the pupils revise what they have learned in the class and are willing to answer the questions asked by the teacher or presented as a part of an activity. Their motivation to be engaged in those activities may indicate that the pupils are aware of what they should do to achieve their goals. As is known, another important characteristic of a motivated learner is goal orientation (Ur 1996, p. 275). Therefore, it is necessary for a learner to be clear about their goals and conscious about specific learning activities that will lead to success.

3.2.2. Extrinsic Motivation

With the aim of determining the power of extrinsic motivation, six statements have been given in Questionnaire I. In Questionnaire II, five statements related to extrinsic motivation have been included. The table given below shows the statistical analysis of the responses given to the statements about extrinsic motivation.

Table 4: The Pupils' Attitudes Towards English According to Extrinsic Motivation

Type of the Questionnaire	Item No	Negative	Positive	Undecided
		%	%	%
Questionnaire I	1	4,7	87,5	7,8
	2	13,8	75,7	10,5
	3	21,4	62,3	16,3
	4	36,7	40,8	22,5
	5	40,5	36,1	23,4
	6	76,6	11,0	12,3
Mean		*32,3*	*52,2*	*15,5*
Questionnaire II	1	35,8	51,4	12,9
	2	31,0	46,3	22,7
	3	37,6	42,1	20,3
	4	52,5	31,9	15,6
	5	60,8	19,8	19,4
Mean		*43,5*	*38,3*	*18,2*
Mean Scores of Questionnaire I—II		***37,4***	***45,9***	***16,7***

The first item in the table given above is the statement "My family wants me to learn English." 87,5% of the pupils agree on the statement, which indicates that a great majority of the parents of those who have responded this item have positive attitude towards English. 4,7% of the pupils stated their disagreement on the item, while 7,8% seem to be undecided. As it is known, the attitude of the family members may affect pupils' attitude towards English negatively or positively. Harmer (2005, p. 52) underlines the importance of the attitude of family members and considers it to be crucial. "It is early to learn English at 4th grade." is the second given statement. 75,7% of the pupils disagree on the statement, whereas 13,8% of them have stated their agreement, and 10,5% have stated that they are undecided. It can be inferred from the data that only a small number of pupils seem to think that they should start learning English at an older age, while the majority of them seem to believe that learning English at 4th grade is reasonable. The third statement is "I learn English as it is a different way of speaking." Sixty-two point three per cent of the pupils agree on the item; 21,4% of them disagree, and 16,3% of them seem to be undecided. These findings suggest that more than half of the learners seem to be motivated to learn English as it is a different way of speaking. In other words, different sounds of English seem to be a motivating factor for the pupils to learn English. Therefore, it may increase the motivation and interest of the pupils to highlight the differences between English and their native language. The fourth, fifth and sixth statements investigate external reasons for learning English. The fourth item is the statement "I learn English to find a good job." According to the responses given to this item, 40,8% of the pupils agree on the item, while 36,7% of them disagree, and 22,5% are undecided. "I learn English to go abroad." is the fifth statement. 36,1% of the pupils have stated agreement on the item. 40,5% of them disagree, and 23,4% stated that they are undecided. As it is seen, there is a slight difference between the percentages of the people who have stated agreement and disagreement both in the statement four and five. As is stated by Gardner (2001, p.11) "motivated individuals have goals both proximate and distal." Accordingly, finding a good job and going abroad are distal/long term-goals for elementary level students. Long-term goals may not always be effective in motivating learners when they are faced with challenges. In that respect, finding a good job and going abroad might seem to be less motivating external factors for children as they seem to be distal goals. The statement six is "I learn English to marry a foreign person." 76,6% of the pupils have stated disagreement on this item, whereas 11% seem to agree, 12,3% seem to be undecided. As it is clearly seen, the majority of the pupils are not motivated by the possibility of marrying a foreign person, which is also a distant goal. Besides, when the pupils' personality development is considered, marrying a foreign person may not seem to be a motivating factor for children of this age since one of the characteristics of children in the latency period is their interest in safe topics and same-sex friendship.

The items in Questionnaire II are related with the sources of extrinsic motivation in the formal learning context. The first statement in Questionnaire II is "I learn English because it is in the curriculum of the school." As it is seen in Table 4, the data indicate that only 35,8% of the pupils learn English because it is a compulsory subject, while 51,4% disagree, and 12,9% state that they are undecided. Hence, the findings reveal that although English is one of the compulsory subjects in Turkish elementary schools, only a small percentage of pupils seem to learn English, as it is dictated by the authorities. The first statement has the highest percentage of positive attitude. The statement "The teacher should give the instructions in English during the lesson." has the second highest percentage of positive attitude which is 46,3%. 31% of the pupils disagree on the item, while 22,7% of them seem to be undecided. The statement with the third highest percentage is the statement "I can't relate English lessons to my life." 37,6% of the pupils state their agreement on the idea, whereas 42,1% of them state their disagreement, and 20,3% stated that they are undecided. As it is known, in EFL settings pupils generally have the opportunity to use the target language only inside classroom. Therefore, they may tend to find it difficult to relate the target language to their lives as they do not have an access to the target

language in the outside world. As to the items with low percentages of positive attitude, Table 4 shows that the fourth given item-"The teacher corrects my mistakes/errors in English."- has the lowest percentage of positive attitude. Namely, statistical analysis of this item has shown that 52,5% of the pupils agree with the statement, and 42% of the them disagree. The data imply that slightly more than a half of the pupils have stated that they are corrected by the teacher during the classes. Correction is a critical issue that can affect the motivation of the pupils negatively or positively depending on its quality. Thus, it is necessary to be careful in correcting pupils' mistakes/errors. Otherwise, correction can demotivate pupils and affect the teacher—student relationship. Finally, the statement five, which is "The teacher should give the instructions in Turkish during English lessons." has the lowest percentage of positive attitude as 60,8% of the pupils disagree with the statement five, while 19,8% of them agree, and 19,4% seem to be undecided. The findings of these statements indicate that the number of the pupils who agree on the fourth item stating that instructions should be given in the target language is higher. The reason why more than half of the pupils prefer the instruction in English rather than Turkish may be related with their positive attitude towards the target language and their concern about improving their speaking and listening skills. Hence, it is important to use English in classroom to encourage pupils to use it to communicate and help them develop a positive attitude. However, it is important to point out that classroom instructions should not be beyond the pupils' linguistic competence. Teachers of English should pay attention to adjusting their speech to the linguistic and cognitive levels of the pupils.

Consequently, the comparison of the mean scores in Table 3 and Table 4 indicate that 77,4% of the pupils seem be intrinsically motivated to learn English, while 45,9% of them seem to be externally motivated. Therefore, based on the difference of percentages between the scores, it can be concluded that internal factors are more effective in motivating Turkish pupils.

3.3. The Comparison of Female and Male Pupils' Language Attitudes

There have been a number of studies that investigate how gender influences the affective factors in language learning. Therefore, the differences between the responses of female and male pupils' have been analyzed in order to determine whether a significant difference exists. The following table illustrates the t-test results for the difference between the language attitude of male and female pupils.

Table 5: The Pupils' Attitudes Towards English according to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig.
Female	293	243,6348	23,43893	1,36932	,738
Male	258	243,8566	23,71029	1,47614	

P< 0,05

Accordingly, as is seen in Table 5, overall language attitude of pupils does not seem to change significantly according to gender.

4. CONCLUSION

This study discusses Turkish young language learners' attitudes towards English and English lessons in Turkish elementary schools. The findings have shown that Turkish young language learners' attitudes towards English are positive. The results suggest that they are conscious about the discrepancy between Turkish and English. They seem know that Turkish and English differ from each other in terms of spelling and pronunciation. However, their attitude towards English differs significantly according to the macro and micro skills. They give importance to macro and micro skills in the order given below:

Grammar: Majority of young learners show a positive attitude towards grammar.

Vocabulary: Depending on curiosity of knowing more words in English, they are positive in learning vocabulary.

Listening Skills: A great majority of the young learners are willing to understand spoken English. As long as listening activities are presented according to their level of English, listening activities do not seem problematic for them.

Writing Skills: They seem to be positive towards writing skills when they are given a chance to have fun with English through writing activities. They prefer controlled writing activities due to their limited command of English.

Pronunciation: Children are aware of the importance of pronunciation to improve their speaking skills and language proficiency.

Reading: Majority of the young learners are enthusiastic about reading in English, being aware of the importance of reading in expanding their linguistic and cultural knowledge. However, they have difficulty in understanding written instructions in activities.

Speaking: They are aware of significance of speaking in second language communication. They are not so positive as they are for other language skills. The reason behind this lies in the fact that they have difficulty in speaking English outside the classroom, whereas they do not find speaking English difficult in classroom.

Last but not least, the young language learners show a positive attitude towards language materials, the course book and language activities. They like the topics in their course books, and they enjoy being exposed to the cartoon characters. They find art and craft activities in their course books enjoyable and have fun while they are doing them.

Suggestions

1. In vocabulary teaching, teachers should consider their cognitive development;

2. To create an anxiety free environment in classroom, school teachers should present speaking activities in accordance with young language learners' interest and linguistic competence;

3. Written instructions in activities should be simplified or in young learners' mother tongue;

4. In beginning classes teachers should use free activities less often than controlled and guided writing activities;

5. Young learners should be given a chance to work in pairs or groups to lower their anxiety;

6. Authenticity should be taken into consideration by school teachers in class to help young language learners to relate their English to outside world;

7. Different supplementary course books can be prepared according young language learners' needs, interests, language styles, and social backgrounds;

8. Young language learners' attitude towards English lessons should be checked by teachers before and after teaching through a "Language Attitude Form." In each school year, teachers should take young language learners' attitudes towards English into account in the preparation of the foreign language curriculum.

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Extended Abstract

The world is getting smaller and smaller through globalization which requires interaction and integration among people, companies, and nations. This process has some effects on the environment, culture, political systems, economy, and education around the world. Thus English language has gained superiority over other world languages as a language of science, technology, sport, computers, popular music, commerce, and trade in a global framework.

Turkey, being aware of the importance of knowing a foreign language, made some changes in the policy of foreign language teaching. With the acknowledgement of the eight –year compulsory education in 1997, foreign language teaching started at 4th and 5th grades as a compulsory course in elementary schools. As is known, elementary school students are children. In terms of cognitive, language and personality development, children differ from adults.

Whereas young language learners are said to be passing through their cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness, adult language learners already have. However, young language learners can be said to be more successful in second language learning than adults because of the accessibility of the innate language acquisition.

Between the age of 18 moths and 11 or 12, all normal children except for mentally retarded acquire a language to which they are exposed. It has been hypothesized that there is a critical period for second language acquisition just as for first language acquisition.

In the lights of this fact, the study has been conducted during the academic year 2006-2007 in order to find out young language learners' attitude towards English and English lessons in Turkish elementary schools to determine their second language awareness, language consciousness, language performance, their problems in English, their priorities in English, and their motivation levels.

The study is limited with the 4th graders in Turkish elementary schools since foreign (English) language instruction starts at this grade in primary education. Two questionnaires have been constructed with the aim of determining young language learners' attitude towards English and English lessons. Questionnaire I, which includes 30 statements, investigates the pupils' attitude towards English outside the classroom. Questionnaire II includes 41 statements aiming at finding out the pupils' attitude towards English inside the classroom. Both questionnaires have been constructed in Likert scale format and administered in fourteen randomly chosen curriculum laboratory schools located in Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Malatya and Samsun during the spring semester of the academic year 2006-2007. The population of the cities and the location of the schools have been taken into account in determining the cities and the schools included in the study. Next, the obtained data have been analyzed and assessed by SPSS. Chi square, T-test, One Way Analysis of Variance and Multiple Comparisons of SPSS have been used in data analysis.

The findings of the study have revealed that the pupils have developed a positive attitude towards English language skills and sub-skills, materials, course book and activities. Besides, the majority of the pupils seem to be internally motivated and seem to have developed language awareness and linguistic competence. In EFL settings pupils generally have the opportunity to use the target language only inside classroom; therefore, they may tend to find it difficult to relate the target language to their lives as they do not have an access to the target language in the outside world. It has been found out that the attitude of the pupils change significantly according to language skills and learning environment. They give importance to grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, pronunciation, reading, and speaking skills, respectively. Additionally, the young language learners show a positive attitude towards language materials, the course book and language activities. They like the topics in their course books, and they enjoy being exposed to the cartoon characters. They find art and craft activities in their course books enjoyable and have fun while

they are doing them. There is not a significant difference in the attitude of pupils towards English according to gender.

Last but not least, the following suggestions can be considered in order to help young learners to develop positive attitudes towards English lessons:

1. In vocabulary teaching, teachers should consider their cognitive development;

2. To create an anxiety free environment in classroom, school teachers should present speaking activities in accordance with young language learners' interest and linguistic competence;

3. Written instructions in activities should be simplified or in young learners' mother tongue;

4. In beginning classes teachers should give free activities less than controlled and guided writing activities;

5. Young learners should be given a chance to work in pairs or groups to lower their anxiety;

6. Authenticity should be taken into consideration by school teachers in class to help young language learners to relate their English to outside world;

7. Different supplementary course books can be prepared according young language learners' needs, interests, language styles, and social backgrounds;

8. Young language learners' attitude towards English lessons should be checked by teachers before and after teaching through a "Language Attitude Form. In each school year, teachers should take young language learners' attitude towards English into account in the preparation of the foreign language curriculum.

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