ÇUKUROVA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENT

A STUDY ON YOUNG LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH

Aydın FIRAT

MASTER OF ARTS

ADANA, 2009

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Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Fehmi Can SENDAN

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ADANA, 2009

To Çukurova University Institute of Social Sciences

We certify that this thesis is satisfactory for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English Language Teaching.

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ÖZET

ÇOCUKLARIN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENMEYE KARŞI OLAN TUTUMLARI ÜZERİNE BIR ÇALIŞMA

Aydın FIRAT

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı
Danışman: Yrd. Doç Dr. Fehmi Can SENDAN
Eylül 2009, 63 sayfa

Çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi uzun bir süredir eğitimcilerin gündemindedir. Bunun sonucunda, çocuklara en iyi dil öğretimini sağlamak amacıyla çocukların karakter özellikleri, psikolojisi ve öğretim teknikleri üzerine bir sürü araştırma yapılmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar beraberinde, çocukların İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı tutumların özellikleri sorusunu getirmiştir. Bu çalışmada, çocukların İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı olan tutumları araştırılmıştır. Betimsel bir çalışma çocuklara uygulanmıştır. Çalışmaya Adıyaman'da 4 farklı okuldan 5. sınıfta okuyan 11 – 12 yaslarında 300 öğrenci katıldı. Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, veriler bir tutum anketi ve bir ders değerlendirme formu uygulanarak toplanmıştır. Anketler SPSS 11.0 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edildi ve betimsel analiz tekniği kullanıp frekans ve yüzde değerleri hesaplandı. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, çocukların İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı positif tutumlara sahip olduğunu, tutum ile başarı düzeyi arasında önemli bir ilişki olmadığını açığa çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuklar (11 – 12 yaş), Beşinci Sınıflar, Dil Tutumları, Tutumlar, Çocuklarda İngilizce Öretimi, Motivasyon

ABSTRACT

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Teaching young learners (TYL) has been on the agenda of educationists for a long time. Therefore, a lot of investigations have been carried out about the features and psychology of young learners and techniques for how best to teach young learners. In line with this, it is also important to know the attitudes of young learners towards learning English. In the current study, our main concern is to investigate the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English, and whether these attitudes have any relationship with their language proficiency. A descriptive research study was conducted with young learners. 300 fifth grade students aged 11 – 12 from 4 different primary schools in Adıyaman participated in the study. For the purposes of this study, data were collected by administering an attitude questionnaire, and a critical incident questionnaire. Questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive analysis was performed and frequencies and percentages were calculated. The results of this study revealed that students have positive attitudes towards learning English, and that there is not a significant relationship between the attitudes of students and their proficiency level.

Keywords: Young Learners, language attitudes, attitudes, TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners), motivation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

As English is receiving more acceptance as a lingua franca, the teaching of it as a second or foreign language is taken more seriously. Therefore, the age at which English is introduced at schools has been lowered in many countries. Along with this, approaches, methods and techniques of various kind have been employed in classroom setting. All the programmes, styles, materials and lessons have been designed in accordance with characteristics of young language learners and their teachers' point of view. Supporting this, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) point out that it is possible to talk about certain characteristics of young children which language teachers should be aware of and take into account in their teaching, because teachers are the only people who can see how far up the ladder their students are. However, this does not necessarily mean that preparing materials, programmes, teaching styles and lessons merely based on the characteristics of young language learners and the teachers' point of view is sufficient for successful language teaching and learning. Supporting this, Bedir (2009) states that teachers seem to ignore the characteristics of young language learner and the difference between learning a foreign language and other subjects. They concern the movements of the students in the class as unwillingness, or demotivation. However, it is true that young learners have shorter attention span, and materials and methods used should be varied for each lesson and class. Learners are at the center of the learning environment; that is why, self-assessment of the learning experience and the process of lessons are an invaluable source for the teachers and researchers since their reactions and comments vary individually. Vale and Feunteun state most techniques and attitudes that are essential for the teacher of children seem to conflict with general EFL methodology (1995, p.27).

There is a strong 'folk' belief, a sort of 'act of faith', that young children learn languages better and more easily than older children. (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003, p.3). In that regard, Brumfit (1991) and Moon (2000) claim that language acquisition is possible at an early age due to the fact that the brain is more adaptable before puberty

and that children have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults. The introduction of English at state primary schools in Turkey was lowered to the 4th grade (Tebliğler Dergisi, 1997). However, the age factor alone is not sufficient to provide an effective learning environment. As Rixon (1999) assertively claims, "success depends on the way in which an early language learning program is implemented, on the conditions and on the methods, and not on the age factor alone."

Language teachers should be a part of the class rather than being the one who relies just on EFL methodology. Vale and Feunteun (1995) state that a key priority for teachers is to establish a good working relationship with and among children. So, their role should be that of a parent or a friend. Besides, they should act as a motivator, co-ordinator and organizor. The skills for these roles have more to do with understanding children's development, children's needs, interest and children themselves – than with EFL methodology alone (p.27). In other words, during the learning process, YLs should not be exposed to some particular methods that are not in compatible with their interests and aptitudes. The reverse is likely to cause their failure in language learning and to develop negative attitudes towards learning the target language.

Teachers who are unaware of what kind of attitudes their target mass have towards English are likely to misperceive their learning behaviours. Namely, teachers might want to see immediate results of their teaching and some students may not meet this desire by keeping silent for a while. Vale and Feunteun (1995) states that this is potentially a very harmful state of affairs since silence does not mean that the children are ignorant or not learning. Indeed, there is evidence that, in a total immersion situation, for example, many children go through a silent period during which they are processing their language environment (p:32). On the basis of the argument in question, our study is concentrated on the attitudes of YLs towards English and what they bring with themselves into the English class and it investigates the role of teachers, methods, techniques and materials used in the classroom.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Due to globalization and other factors, countries and their cultures are getting closer day by day. Therefore, learning a second language becomes a necessity for

children as well as adults who wants to communicate with people of various cultures. The rapid globalization of the world has brought the need of speaking one common language and it has created a“growing trend for using English as a world language” (Brewster et al, 2003, p.2).

Jackson (1998) emphasizes the fact that the number of children who are taught English at primary level is rapidly increasing in the world, especially in Europe. English as a foreign language is seen as an important issue of primary education in almost all the European countries since there are definite advantages to introducing language learning at early ages such as better preparation to respond to language teaching in the secondary school. Another one is as Cameron (2001) states, language plays an important role in the formation of intelligence. “The development of the child’s first language in the second year of life is held to generate a fundamental shift in cognitive development. Language provides the child with a new tool, opens up new opportunities for doing things and for organizing information through the use of words as symbols” (p.5).

Turkey applied for full membership to the European Union in the late 1990s, and this increased the significance of foreign language learning at an early age. Turkish Ministry of Education lowered the compulsory introduction of English to 4th grade in State Primary Schools in order to establish good relations with all nations in the world and to keep up with the scientific innovations (Tebliğler Dergisi, 1997). As a result of this, English as a foreign language has been taught in the 4th and 5th grades since 1997. After the development at stake, ELT departments of the Turkish universities have started to train students accordingly. Namely, they are taught characteristics of young learners and their psychological development for the purpose of modifying their teaching styles, attitudes and materials to teach better. As a consequence, those who want their students to have a more positive attitudes towards English need to take their preferences into consideration. Two of the most important reasons for pupils to like English appear to be teacher and teaching methods (Moon, 2000). For this reason, teachers of YLs should be aware of such features as how YLs perceive the world they are in, how they learn a foreign language.

Pupils feel quite frightened, embarrassed or insecure about learning a new language (Moon, 2000). So, their feelings should not be underestimated. If they are

happy and feel secure, they are more likely to enjoy and benefit from their language learning. Being unware of students' attitudes towards language, teachers inevitably fail to get full benefit during the teaching process. We need to know what shapes our attitudes. Discovering students' attitudes about language will help both teacher and student in the teaching-learning process. Consequently, being aware of the attitudes, and their causes, and then prepare the learning-teaching process accordingly will incline them to develop and sustain positive attitudes towards language learning.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to (1) identify the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English, (2) find out how the students reflect these attitudes into the learning processes in terms of success, and reactions to specific parts of the lesson. To accomplish these aims: (a) the related literature will be reviewed in order to describe the characteristics of YLs and to explain the effective ways to teach by taking these characteristics into consideration, (b) a questionnaire will be administered to identify the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English, (c) a critical incident questionnaire will be administered to identify different reactions and ideas of the pupils to specific parts of the lesson**s,** (d) students' first term proficiency scores in English lesson will be analysed to identify the relationship between attitudes and proficiency.

1.4. Operational Definitions

In this study, the following terms will be considered in their meanings below:

Language Attitudes: The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistics difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social STATUS, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language (quoted from Longman dictionary of Applied Linguistics,1985)

Young Learners (YLs): Students whose ages are between 7 and 12.

5th grades: 11 or 12 ear old students attending state primary schools in Adıyaman.

ELT: English Language Teaching

The abbreviations used in the study are as follows:

L1: Native language of the learners; Turkish.

L2: Foreign language that the students learn; English

ELT: English Language Teaching

EFL: English as a foreign language

TEYL: Teaching English to Young Learners

1.5. Research Questions

This study seeks answers to the following questions:

1- What is the nature of young learners' attitude towards learning English?

2- What classroom activities do children believe help them learn English well?

3- Are there any differences between the attitudes of high English proficiency and low English proficiency students towards learning English?

1.6. Limitations

This descriptive study aims to identify the nature of young learners' attitude towards learning English, the students' attitudes towards English, and how their learning is influenced by these attitudes. An attitude questionnaire was administered to three hundred YLs. Although it was told that their answers would not be evaluated by their teachers, some of them might have provided information which does not reflect the reality in order to win the teacher's love and interest.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter examines psychological approaches to children's learning. It also presents the characteristics of YLs as well as their implications for teaching English to YLs.

2.1. How Children Think and Learn

Now that English teaching has been lowered to 4th and 5th grades and seems in time it will be lowered to lower grades, any teacher instructing in these classes needs to be aware of the characteristics of the average child at this age. As Harmer (2007, p.83) claims, "Teachers of young learners need to spend time understanding how their students think and operate''.

Various theorists have described the way children develop and ages and stages they go through. However, certain theories, mainly those formed by Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner have become prominent in the past few decades influencing contemporary education. These theories in child development play a significant role in gaining a deeper understanding how young learners acquire first and second languages. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss the leading theories in concern.

According to Piagetian theory for learning, a child is "actively construct his or her own thinking in interaction with physical and social environment" (Brewster et al., 2002, p.29). Action and self-directed problem-solving is at the heart of learning and development according to Piaget (1971). On the other hand, Vygotsky's view labelled as 'sociocultural theory' concentrates on the social context where the child lives. He argues that learning takes place in a social context where the child interacts with people around her/him. Cameron (2001) distinguishes between the two theories as follows:

> "Whereas for Piaget the child is an active learner in a world full of objects, for Vygotsky the child is an active learner in a world full of other people, p.6 " . In a social context, a master individual and the child work together to

> achieve actions so that s/he learns to act by himself or herself. During this process, the child has the opportunity of using his abstract knowledge, which plays a big role for a child to sustain a positive attitude towards learning. Teaching, therefore, needs to support the social context in which the child is in collaboration with her or his teacher."

Another point on children's learning and thinking that is suggested by Jean Piaget is intellectual development. He (1972) claimed that all children go through a series of stages of intellectual development from birth to adulthood. The following are the stages in question:

Sensorimotor stage, is the first two years of a child's life when babies' and toddlers' knowledge and understanding are mainly drawn from physical action and their senses-sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. Children seem to be egocentric but become aware of object permanence.

Preoperational stage from the age of two to six or seven years old, children learn to manipulate environment and to represent objects by words.

Concrete operational stage from about seven to eleven years old, children develop logical thought with a classification or categorization by similarity and difference.

Formal operations stage starts around the age of twelve and continues through adulthood. This is the stage when children's thinking and logical thought emerges.

Thus, for Piaget (1972), teaching can only influence the course of the intellectual development if the child is ready to assimilate it. The concept of 'readiness' has many implications for the design of curricula and for timing formal instruction. It entails that children be taught when they are ready to assimilate the material being taught; otherwise no transition from physical activity to mental operation occurs (Wood, 1988, p.74).

Işpınar (2005, p.10) states “these stages of development can be helpful for teachers because characteristics of each stage are factors to be taken into account in teaching”. Piaget’s work and ideas have become a guide for teachers because Cameron (2001) emphasizes the fact that children are active sense-makers, but their sense-making is limited by their experience. This fact is a key to understanding how they respond to tasks, what their feelings might be during the activities carried out in the classrooms.

> Meece (2002) summarizes the role of Piaget’s theory in teaching as follows; Piaget’s theory has inspired major curriculum reforms, and it continues to have an important influence on education practice today. Among Piaget’s major contributions to education are the ideas that (a) knowledge must be actively constructed by the child; (b) educators should help children learn how to learn; (c) learning activities should be matched to the child’s level of conceptual development; and (d) peer interactions play an important role in the child’s cognitive development. Piaget’s theory also emphasizes the role of teachers in the learning process as organizers, collaborators, stimulators, and guides (p.169). Piaget, with his well-developed theory, contributed a lot to the studies on children’s thinking and learning.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) is another major figure in psychology. Vygotsky developed a theory called ‘zone of proximal development’ which he describes as the gap between what a child can do alone and what he/she can do with the help of someone more skilled or experienced, who can be an adult or another child. He suggests that children first do the things in a social context and gradually shift away from reliance on others to independent action and thinking with other people and language helping (cited in Cameron, 2001, p.4).

Pound (2005) states that Piaget believes that learning is dependent on the child’s readiness to learn. For Vygotsky, the key factors are not only the child’s existing knowledge or understanding but also their ability to learn with assistance (p.40).

Vygotsky’s (1987) theory of child learning differs from Piaget’s in the way that the emphasis his theory places on language and on other people in the environment of the child. It highlights the role of social interaction, communication, social interaction,

and instruction in determining intellectual development of a child (cited in Cameron, 2001). Especially, language plays an important role during the process of formation of intelligence. “The development of the child’s first language in the second year of life is held to generate a fundamental shift in cognitive development. Language provides the child with a new tool, opens up new opportunities for doing things and for organizing information through the use of words as symbols” (Cameron, 2001, p.5).

Piagetian view perceives the child as an active learner alone in the world of objects, whereas in Vygotskian view, the child is an active learner in a world full of other people with which he or she interacts and thus learns (Cameron, 2001). He puts language and communication (and, hence, instruction) at the core of intellectual and personal development (Wood, 1998). Consequently, key ideas in a classroom then become conversation, play and opportunities to follow interests and ideas which lead to gain and sustain a positive attitude towards learning.

For Bruner (cited in Cameron, 2001), “ language is the most important tool for cognitive growth, and he has investigated how adults use language to mediate the world for children and help them solve problems” (p.8).

Bruner (1986) introduced the term ‘Scaffolding’ to refer to the help given to a child by an adult, usually a talk that supports a child in carrying out an activity. In an example of a baby who tries to learn to feed herself with a spoon, she may be able to get the spoon in the food and can put a spoonful of food in her mouth. However, she cannot quite manage the middle step of filling the spoon with food. Soon, a helpful adult may assist the baby with the difficult part by putting his hand over the baby’s and guiding it filling the spoon. In this way adult and child together achieve what the baby is unable to do by herself. During this procedure the talk that support a child in carrying out an activity (cited in Cameron, 2001).

In language learning process, students sometimes face some difficulty which sometimes result in failure and this naturely affects students to breed some negative attitudes towards learning language. By means of scaffolding, this can be prevented. Cameron (2001) explains the process of scaffolding in classrooms as follows:

> When they focus on some part of a task or the language they want to use, children may not be able to keep in mind the larger task or communicative aim because of limits to their attention capacity. Between them, teacher and pupils manage the whole task, but the way in which the parts and aspects are divided up varies with age and experience. The teacher does most of the managing of joint engagement on a task (p.9).

Teachers can help children attend to what is relevant by suggesting, praising the significant and providing focusing activities. They can also help children adopt useful strategies by encouraging rehearsal and being explicit about organization. In addition to this, teachers can help them remember the whole task and goals by reminding, modeling and providing step by step instruction for the activities (Wood, 1998, p.17). However, as Meece (2002) suggests, teachers should keep in mind that they need to gradually pass more and more control of the activity to the child (p.162).

Bruner (cited in Cameron, 2001, p.10) believes that, as well as scaffolding, classroom routines, which happen every day, may provide opportunities for language development. For instance, while giving out paper and scissors for making activities, the teacher talks to the class and organizes the distribution. The language used would suit the task and the pupils' levels; so they can hear, 'George, please give out scissors'. 'Margaret, please give out the paper'. The context and the familiarity of the event provide an opportunity for pupils to predict meaning and intention, but the routine offers a way to add variation and novelty that can involve more complex language, such as 'Sam, please ask everybody if they want white paper or black paper', or 'Give out a pair of scissors to each group'. He claims that as language becomes more complex, the support to meaning that comes from the routine and the situation helps children continue to understand. Routines then can provide meaningful language development; they allow the child to actively make sense of new language from familiar experience and provide a space for language growth. Routines will open up many possibilities for developing language skills.

In summary, Although these theories differed in important ways, they have essential implications for teaching YLs. Thus, teachers of YLs need to become aware of these theories together with the YLs' characteristics.

2.2. Characteristics of Young Learners

As children are individuals, they develop differently at different stages. However, there are common characteristics of children related with age, as well as the essential abilities that teachers should be aware of. Awareness is needed in order to facilitate the learning process for young learners. For instances, it is important to understand the needs related to the children's age or ability "to see how far up the ladder" (Scott andYtreberg, 1990, p.1) of development the children are. Without the knowledge of the various stages of children's physical, emotional, cognitive, social and language development and an ability to monitor any changes in these, it would be extremely difficult to teach well.

Piaget suggests that a child's ability to use a language informatively depends upon his stage of intellectual development. Children at 5th grade are in the stages of concrete operations (7-11/12 years) according to the stages of development suggested by him. Foley & Thompson (2003) summarize the characteristics of this stage as follows:

- Intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects.
- Conversation of seven conceptual domains related to the learning of mathematics and science is demonstrated in: number, length, liquid, mass, weight, area and volume.
- Operational thinking develops.
- Egocentric thought including private language or speech for oneself diminishes (p.30).

Although a child at this stage still thinks concretely, s/he begins to manipulate the data mentally. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) point out that children at the age of ten are relatively mature children with an adult side and childish side. They list some of the characteristics of YLs as follows:

- Their basic concepts are formed. They have very decided views of the world
- They can tell the difference between fact and fiction.

- They ask questions all the time.
- They rely on the spoken world as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning.
- They have definite views about what they like and what they don't like doing.
- They are able to work with others and learn from others (pp.3-4).

Besides, YLs seem to be very curious and interested in learning something new. For them, the learning experiences they encounter in school are new and unfamiliar and so it is likely that their interest will be aroused. They engage with the activity, explore it, try out what can be done, and in the course of all this activity expand their knowledge. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990, p.3) express, young children love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves. However, they also take themselves seriously and like to think that what they are doing is "real" work.

As every individual, young learners like to be praised as well. As Öztürk (2007, p.16) expresses, praising children encourages them. Valuing children and their work help enhance children's self-esteem, and contribute towards feeling of success. This has a positive influence on their motivation and levels of achievement. When children are praised for their effort, they can cope with the problems because they believe that they could do better if they try harder. Children should be praised at every stage of process rather than for the final product of their ability.

Besides, YLs are not passive listeners, but active participants. This involvement creates motivation and interest. Active participation in creating in the classroom broadens students' experiences, clarifies information, generates new ideas and improves attitudes toward learning. As Salema and Martins (1984, p.37) express, in order to take place in a successful learning process, the learner must be motivated.

While discussing the difference between teaching a foreign language to children in contrast to teenagers, Cameron (2001, p.1) claims that some differences are immediately obvious. For her, children are often more enthusiastic and lively as learners. They want to please the teacher rather than their peer group. They will have a go at an activity even when they don't quite understand why or how. In addition to

these, they seem less embarrassed than adults at talking in a new language. However, they also lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find difficult.

In the light of these characteristics, Harmer (2007, p.38) advises that good teachers need to provide a rich diet of learning experiences which encourages their students to get information from a variety of sources. In addition, they need to consider the needs of their students by developing good relationships and planning a range of activities which are flexible enough to prevent his students getting bored.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that teaching YLs is full of ups and downs since teachers can also be affected with the enthusiasm of YLs and is difficult to maintain their interest. The generalizations mentioned above will help teachers understand their students well enough while they will discover important differences arising from the linguistic, psychological, social development of their learners.

2.3. Children as Language Learners

In the previous section, characteristics of young learners is generally reviewed. This section will focus on how these characteristics are related to language learning and teaching.

The term ‘a young learner’ refers to the children from the first year of formal schooling to the 7th year of schooling (6 -12 year-old learners). Brewster et al. (2002, p.27) distinguishes young children from older learners as follows:

Young children are different from older learners because the former:

- have a lot of physical energy and often need to be physically active
- are emotionally excitable
- are still developing literacy in their first language
- learn more slowly and forget things quickly
- get bored easily
- can concentrate for a surprisingly long time if they are interested
- can be easily distracted but also very enthusiastic…’

Studies (e.g. Scott & Ytreberg, 1990) have revealed that eight to ten years of children have a language with all the basic elements in place. They are component users of their mother tongue and in this connection they are aware of the main rules of syntax in their own language. By the age of ten, children can:

- Understand abstracts
- Understand symbols (beginning with words)
- Generalize and systematize (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

A vast majority of the eight to ten year olds will have some sort of language awareness and readiness which they bring with them into the foreign language classroom. Harmer (2007 p.83) points out that this age group of young learners are different from older children, adolescents, and adults in the following ways:

- They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.
- They often learn indirectly rather than directly; that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught.
- Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.
- They find abstract concepts such as grammar rules difficult to grasp.
- They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.
- They have a need for individuals attention and approval from the teacher.
- They are keen to talk about themselves and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom.
- They have a limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging, they can get easily bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

In addition, Slatterly&Willis (2001) suggest that children as language learners need:

- to hear clear pronunciation and intonation,
- to feel successful when using English,
- plenty of opportunities to communicate,
- to enjoy their efforts at speaking in English,

- to know they have achieved something worthwhile.

Besides, Halliwell (1992) suggests that young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics helping them learn another language. For example, children:

- are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words;
- already have great skill in using limited language creatively;
- frequently learn indirectly rather than directly;
- take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do;
- have a ready imagination;
- above all take great delight in talking! (p.3).

The above mentioned needs and characteristics of young learners as language learners influence language instruction, classroom atmosphere and preperation of the materials. By providing a wide range of opportunities for hearing, using the language, and playing action - based games as an active part of the teaching, YLs work more actively and eagerly on language topics. Moreover, tasks should be meaningful and help children make sense of new experiences by relating them to what they already know. The use of routines and repetition should be emphasized along with opportunities for interaction and cooperation. Finally, praise and encouragement are necessary to maintain cildren's positive attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence.

2.4. Is Younger Better?

Governments and private schools all over the world have decided to introduce English at primary level, because there is a strong 'folk' belief, a sort of 'act of faith', that young children learn languages better and more easily than older children (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003, p.3). As stated by Brumfit (1991) and Moon (2000), the main reasons are that the brain is more adaptable before puberty and acquisition of language is possible without self-consciousness at an early age, and children have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults.

Young learners have many other advantages in learning foreign languages. These have been revealed through a number of conducted in the field. These advantages can be summarized as follows:

1- Children who begin a foreign language at an early level seem to benefit intellectually and to be more culturally aware (Freudenstein, 1990).

2- They have a ready imagination and great skill in using limited language creatively (Halliwell, 1992).

3- They are very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words and they take great delight in talking (Halliwell, 1992).

4- Young children seem to have a greater facility for understanding and imitating what they hear than secondary school pupils. It seemed a reasonable strategy to try to take advantage of children's language learning skills and aptitudes (Jean Brewster and Gail Ellis with Denis Girard, 2003).

5- Young learner brain is still able to use the mechanism that assisted first language acquisition (Cameron 2001).

6- Younger learners may be more proficient in the long run, particularly in the area of oral communication (Krashen, 1982; Harley, 1998).

7 - One of the most common beliefs about age and language learning is that young children learn faster and more effectively than any other age group (Harmer, 2007).

8 - They are competent users of their mother tongue and in this connection they are aware of the main rules of syntax in their own language.

By the age of ten children they can:

- understand abstracts,
- understand symbols (beginning with words) [and],
- generalize and systematize (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990, p.4).

9 - " They respond to the meaning underlying the language used and do not worry about individual words or sentences" (Phillips, 2001, p.7).

In conclusion, introducing English to children at an early age gives them the opportunity to widen their horizons and awaken their early enthusiasm and curiosity about languages. Once they have this initial grasp of English in primary school, they will have a strong foundation which will be an advantage in their later studies. They will be better prepared to respond to language teaching in the secondary school. Cameron (2001) states that language, particularly, plays an important role in the formation of intelligence. “The development of the child’s first language in the second year of life is held to generate a fundamental shift in cognitive development. Language provides the child with a new tool, opens up new opportunities for doing things and for organizing information through the use of words as symbols (p.5). Nothing could be more counter-productive than inaccurate knowledge or language skills which result in the teacher making constant corrections and having to go over what has supposedly already been learned. “This is very discouraging for the pupils and can lead to feelings of failure or may replace pupils’ initial enthusiasm and motivation with a negative attitude to L2 learning” (Halliwell,1992, p.11).

2.5. Motivation

Success in learning a language depends on a variety of factors such as the qualification of the teacher, the appropriateness of the teaching approach, the quality of the course materials, the duration and intensity of the language course, and last but not least, the characteristics of the language learner. Motivation, one element of the learner characteristics, has risen as a facilitator in the learning process. It is a fact that different learners, in spite of being influenced by the same situational factors, produce very different outputs. Even in the same classroom setting, some learners make rapid progress through the first stage of learning a new language, while others have to work very hard to show progress. Is this to say that individual differences play an important role in language learning? And if so, which factors are important? Is it motivation? Here comes the answers in its definition as Gardner (1985) refers to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity (p.10).

Motivation is such a complex phenomenon that it cannot be defined by a single widely accepted theory. Presumably, it can mean different things and it may be affected by:

a.cause, related to personal goals of the learner or outside incentives such as rewards or punishment;

b.behaviour, which relates to persistence, effort of the learner or enjoyment;

c. outcomes, referring to evaluation of performance and reaction to success or failure.

Gardner (1985) highlights two kinds of motivation in second language learning situation:

i) Instrumental motivation – When the learner wants to learn a language to fulfill immediate goals, such as getting a job or passing an examination etc., his/her motivation is of instrumental kind.

ii) Integrative motivation – when the motive to learn a language is to communicate and integrate with people of another culture who can speak the language in concern, it is called integrative motivation.

Brown (2000) supports these kinds of motivation in second language learning situation and states that the second or foreign language learners who either intrinsically or extrinsically meet their needs in learning the language will be positively motivated to learn.

Besides Gardner's crucial definition as a response to learners' slow and fast progress, Gardner (2001, p.2) states that "motivation is a central element along with language aptitude in determining success in learning another language in the classroom setting" in that other variables are dependent on motivation for their effects to be realized". He argues that the individual who does not have motivation to learn a language probably will not use appropriate language learning strategies, and that the individual who has little or no intention to learn a language will not take risks using it.

Harmer (2007) distinguished between the sorts of motivation by stating that extrinsic motivation is the result of any number of outside factors such as the need to pass an exam, the hope of financial reward or the possibility of future travel. Intrinsic motivation, by contrast, comes from within the individual. He concludes that a person

might be motivated by the enjoyment of the learning process itself or by a desire to make themselves feel better.

Most researchers and methodologists have come to view that intrinsic motivation plays a central role in learning a second/foreign language and that it is especially important for encouraging success (Harmer, 2007).

Ellis (1985, p.119) stresses that "in certain situations an integrative motivation may be more powerful in facilitating successful L2 learning, but in other situations instrumental motivations may count far more".

Dörnyei (2001) believes that by presenting well-chosen authentic materials, students' motivation will be highly generated and well maintained, and thus language acquisition processing will be largely accelerated.

We also should bear in mind that students' motivation is not static. Ellis (1998, p. 76) is of the opinion that motivation is dynamic in nature; it is not something that a learner has or does not have but rather something that varies from one moment to the next depending on the learning context or task.

In conclusion, it is extremely important to understand the nature of student motivation since as discussed above, it partly determines students' choices of language learning strategies and the proficiency levels they achieve. Attitude which is considered to have a great influence of on students' motivation to learn a foreign/second language will be discussed in the following section.

2.6. Attitude

Attitude has recently been on the agenda of both first and second language researchers. Saraçoğlu (2000) states that the studies on this issue have concluded that student's attitude is an integral part of learning and that it should, therefore, become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy. It is important, as Krashen (1985) proposes attitudes can act as barriers or bridges to learning a new language and are the essential environmental ingredient for language learning. Several different

definitions of attitude exist. Gardner (1985, p.91-93) defines attitude as an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent". In line with Gardner, Hohental (1998) claims that attitudes are learned predispositions, not inherited, and are likely to be relatively stable. Attitude refers to ones' likes and dislikes (Harmer, 2007). Brown (2001, p.61) asserts that attitude is characterized by a large proportion of emotional involvement such as feelings, self, relationships in community. Baker (1988) states that an attitude is individual, but it has origins in collective behaviour. It is something an individual has which defines or promotes certain behaviours.

Brown (1994) stresses that attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience. It can be concluded that there are many stimulants leading to attitudes of an individual. Harmer (2007) supports Brown by stating that students are mostly affected by the attitudes of people around them. At this point, the attitudes of learners' parents' gain a vital significance because naturally parents are the closest people to their children. Sönmez also (1994, p. 64), shares the same idea with Brown and Harmer; "attitude is a product of all life experiences". Therefore, attitude stems from a lot of resources. Şeker (2003) claims that every language student has positive or negative attitudes and these can be modified in a desired way. Brown (1994) states that it is the duty of school to help students develop positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language.

To sum up, attitudes are internal states that influence what the learners are likely to do. The internal state is some degree of positive - negative or favorable - unfavorable reaction towards an object. There are a lot of factors causing them to occur. However, they can be modified into a desired nature.

2.6.1. Attitudes in Language Learning

People develop different attitudes towards everything. Halliwell states that these attitudes are formed by the social environment in which they grow up and by the people around them. One of these attitudes is formed towards language. In the school context,

Gardner (1985) points out that these attitudes could be directed toward the teacher, the course in general, one's classmates, the course materials, and extra-curricular activities associated with the course.

In the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (1992:199) language attitudes are defined as follows:

"The attitude which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each others languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language".

In the field of language learning, the attitudes of the learner towards the target language is important because it implies whether somebody will be successful in the target language or not. Attitudes towards a language are likely to have been developed by experience, and are subject to change as long as the reverse is experienced. Halliwell (1992) states 'Children do not come to their English lessons like a blank sheet of paper. They already have views about and attitudes towards learning English, p.15'.

Attitudes towards a particular language might be either positive or negative. It is also possible that individuals might generate neutral feelings. Halliwell (1992) stresses that it is important to be aware of these attitudes as they can influence pupils' desire and motivation to learn and ultimately their success in learning English. A student may have negative attitudes consciously or unconsciously towards the target language. But this is a problem for learning language because if a person develops negative attitudes it is very difficult to motivate him/her to learn that language. So, the person may think that he has inadequacies or other problems for learning language and even give it up. On the other hand, the learner's positive attitudes towards a language, towards the target language community and towards the culture of that community facilitate learning, (Ellis, 1994). Chamber (1999) supports Ellis by asserting that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. Thus, attitudes towards language is a very important notion and plays a key role in language

learning and teaching. In line with these acknowledgements, both negative and positive attitudes have a strong impact on the success of language learning. Halliwell (1992) states that if pupils enjoy their English classes and are successful, this may in turn develop positive attitudes and increase motivation. If both teachers and their pupils have positive attitudes to learning English, this will help to create the kind of learning environment in which learning will flourish. Supporting Halliewell, Krashen (1985) states that learning can only happen if certain affective conditions, such as positive attitudes, self-confidence and low anxiety exist and when these conditions are present then the input can pass through the affective filter and be used by the learner.

In order to show whether there is a relationship between success and attitudes, a lot of studies have been conducted. Gardner & Lambert (1972,1985) assert that there is a close connection between attitude and achievement; Gardner & Lambert (1972) point out "The learner's tendencies and attitude determine how success he will be in learning the new language". Şeker (2003) summarizes Gardner's socio educational model, which is about the importance of the attitudes on the achievement process, as: "If the prevalent cultural belief is that language learning is very difficult and/or not important, the general level of achievement will be low. Contrarily, if the cultural belief suggests that learning a second language is important and not so difficult; the level of achievement will increase, (p. 55)". Saracaloğlu (2000) in her study reveals that there is a positive relationship between affective characteristics and foreign language achievement. Unlike Gardner and Saracaloğlu, Karaş (1997), points out that there is only a weak relationship between achievement and attitudes.

In conclusion, there are attitudes forming towards language learning. These can be both positive and negative attitudes. They have got a great impact on the language learning process. So, just teaching English through activities or hard materials is not enough to gain the desirable level in learning and teaching.

2.7. Motivation and Attitude

Attitude and motivation, two social psychological variables, play a significant role in second language learning. They are related to success in second language learning. This explains perhaps why some people have a much easier time in learning

languages than others. In the same classroom setting, some students progress rapidly, while others just struggle along and never achieve command of a second language. Gardner (2001) states that attitudes and motivation, self-confidence, field independence, intelligence, language aptitude, and language learning strategies have been found to have an effect on language learners' success in their language learning.

Cook (1996) states that the usual meaning of motivation for the teacher is probably the interest that something generates in the students and it relates to the attitudes of children towards the target language, as these are rooted in their minds and their background. He means that teachers should do their best to involve the students in the process of learning, which will foster learning and this can be achieved by motivating them.

Wilhelm (1999) asserts that attitudes are related strongly to motivation, it is evident that people with a negative attitude towards a language could not be motivated learners. On the other hand, if students have favourable attitudes towards the foreign language and its speakers, towards the teacher and the course, they will probably be more attentive in the class, would take assessments more seriously and, be willing to achieve more and would look for situations through which they can obtain further practice in the foreign language.

Gardner (1985) describes motivation as the equation of effort, desire and attitudes (Motivation = effort + desire to achieve a goal + attitudes). He defines attitudes as the base for the middle term of the equation, relating them to behaviour. Moreover, he refers to two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Integrative refers to the attitude of the student towards the target language, the target culture and the people of this culture wheras instrumental motivation relates to ulterior motives, like learning a language for academic purposes (the need to pass exams or to enter university). In line with Gardner, Ellis (1998, p.75) stresses that motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) claim that motivation is extremely important for L2 learning and that having positive attitudes towards the L2 and its people and culture is a beneficial factor for SLA. They also state that motivated, demotivated and amotivated

students have different perceptions of their class, teacher and curriculum. Their perceptions are responsible for their attitudes. An individual's perception of the class, perception of the teacher, peer group, syllabus and his/her awareness for future needs effect his/her attitude to language learning.

To sum up, most children do not have autonomous motivation to learn a foreign language even if they may have good reasons for learning a second or a foreign language. They will learn better if they are motivated and have positive attitudes towards English. To achieve and sustain desire learning, students need to be exposed to fun and games since they are intrinsically motivating for children.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGHY OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents the nature of the research, the selection of the participants, the instruments, the data collection procedures as well as the methods used for data analysis.

3.1. Introduction

Aiming to identify the attitudes of young learners towards learning English, and find out the positive and negative attitudes of YLs towards English, our study was descriptive in design. Thus, it involves collecting data regarding the present status of the subjects of the study rather than trying to explain the relationships or making implications (Ekmekçi, 1997). Thus, 300 students at the 5th grade from four schools in Adıyaman were given an attitude and a critical incident questionnaires. In the following sections, data collection tools were described and outlined.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 300 fifth grade YLs of English aged 10 to 11 who were attending Yavuz Selim Primary School (YSPS), Polis Amca Primary School (PAPS), İMKB Primary School and 100.Yıl Primary School in Adıyaman. All the students were administered an attitude questionnare and a critical incident questionnaire. No variables such as gender, the popularity of the school, the background of the students were taken into consideration in the choice of the participants.

3.3. Instrumentation

The data was collected through an attitude questionnare, a critical incident questionnaire and students' first term proficiency scores in English lesson.

3.3.1. The Attitude Questionnaire

Questionnaires are useful in providing background information. They are usually paper-and-pencil instruments that the respondents complete. Tuckman (1978) states that

they are a way of gathering data about people directly by asking them rather than observing their behaviour. The attitude questionnaire developed by Kara (2003) was administered in this case study. This is a structured five point-Likert- type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The reliability of the measuring instrument was high (Cronbach Alpha 0. 71). The questionnaire was divided into two parts and administered at the beginning and at the end of each lesson in order to reveal YLs’ attitudes towards learning English. The questionnaire consisted of 54 items related to four categories: love of English, interest in learning English, desire for and expectations from learning English, and concerns about learning English.

1. **Love of English:** In this part there are 9 items that intent to evaluate the extent to which participants like learning English.
2. **Interest in Learning English:** This section includes 17 items which focus on the extent to which participants are interested in learning English.
3. **Desire for and Expectations from Learning English:** This section consists of 8 tems which focus on the participants’ desire for and expectations from learning English.
4. **Concerns about Learning English:** This section consists of 20 items which aim to identify the participants’ concerns about learning English.

3.3.2. The Critical Incident Questionnaire

As another research tool, the children were asked to fill out the classroom critical incident questionnaire developed by Brookfield (1995). The questionnaire consisted of five categories, namely, *what I learnt in the lesson, what I did in the lesson, the most difficult parts of the lesson, what I would change, what I liked most in the lesson.* Students answered the questions right after the lesson. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify different reactions and ideas of the pupils to specific parts of the lessons. The Critical Incident Questionnaire informed us about how the same activity is viewed and even named differently by each individual.

3.3.3. Students’ First Term Proficiency Scores

The focus of this study was not the individual proficiency levels of the students, nor the relationship between their proficiency and attitudes towards learning

English. This study mainly investigated the relationship between the students' English proficiency levels of students at two different schools with the lowest and highest average of scores in English classes and their attitudes towards learning English. Thus, to reveal whether there is any relationship between students' success in English classes and their attitudes towards learning English, students' first term proficiency scores were obtained from the schools and the means of these scores were calculated. Consequently, we chose only two schools out of four. The students of schools had the lowest and highest proficiency level of English in terms of the means of the scores among the schools.

The fifth grade students usually have 2 exams in each term but some teachers can implement more than two exams. Besides, they are given an oral score regarding their in-class performance. The scores students get in each term are calculated accordingly.

3.4. Data Collection

The data were collected through the attitude questionnaire, the critical incident questionnare and students' success in the exams. The questionnaires were administered to students by their teacher of English on different days. Since the attitude questionnaire consisted of 54 questions and was considered to be too long for YLs was divided into two parts lest they get bored or provide unreliable data. One was administered at the beginning and the other at the end of each lesson. The critical incident questionnare was administered on another day. Before administration of the questionnaires, the participants were informed about the aim and scope of the study and reassured that the results would not affect their grades in order to prevent possible constraints in answering the questions. They had no time limit to answer the items in each questionnaire and it took each participant less than half an hour to complete them. The researcher visited the schools during the administration of the questionnaires to answer possible questions or deal with problems likely to occur. He also obtained the students' scores from the management of each school.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected were entered into SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In order to analyze the students' attitudes towards learning English, the mean, standard deviation, median, mode and ranges were computed. The means and standard deviations were calculated under four categories in order to describe the overall picture of how the students rated their perceptions on learning English. However, attention should be paid to the reverse scale of the items twelve, fifteen, seventeen, eighteen, and twenty. The reason for this is that these items include negative attitudes. When students assert that they strongly disagree with "*Learning English is unnecessary and unsensible, English just wastes time, English is time-taking, I dislike to take part in English lessons*", they assign a value of 1, which is in fact a positive attitude; therefore, items four to eight had to be reverse scaled before starting to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis of SPSS was used to present the frequencies and percentages of each item. Then, the results were illustrated in tables.

Research Question 1: What is the nature of young learners' attitude towards English?

In order to find an aswer to this question, descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and mean were used. The aim was to describe the learners' attitudes towards learning English on the basis of four dimensions in the Attitude Questionnaire.

Research Question 2: What classroom activities do children believe help them learn English well?

The question in concern involves lesson evaluation forms and is intended to provide data about activities –particularly those which makes sense to the participants most.

Research Question 3: Are there any differences between the attitudes of high English proficiency and low English proficiency students towards learning English?

In answering the third research question, Independent Samples T- test was used to compare the means of attitudes and students' poficiency level at the schools with

high and low proficiency level of English in terms of the means of the scores. T-test at a significant level of 0.05 was carried out to determine whether there was any significant relationship between their attitudes towards English Language and their proficiency level.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical analyses carried out on the data and the findings which aim to find out the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English, students' perceptions of specific types of activities, and the relationship between the students' English proficiency levels of students at two different schools with the lowest and highest average of scores in English classes and their attitudes towards learning English.

4.2. Findings from the Attitude Questionnaire

4.2.1. Love of English

The percentages and numbers of participants' responses to the first category; Love of English, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Love of English

	strongly agree		Agree		not sure		Disagree		strongly disagree	
Love of English	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I like studying English	218	72,7	49	16,3	31	10,3	0	0,0	2	0,7
I like studying English with my Friends	173	57,7	88	29,3	23	7,7	6	2,0	10	3,3
I study English in my free time.	106	35,3	133	44,3	38	12,7	4	1,3	19	6,3
I like English lessons	239	79,7	42	14,0	14	4,7	1	0,3	4	1,3
I like speaking English with my Friends	161	53,7	90	30,0	21	7,0	10	3,3	18	6,0
To learn English is necessary	271	90,3	11	3,7	16	5,3	0	0,0	2	0,7
If it were possible, I would always study English	112	37,3	106	35,3	48	16,0	12	4,0	22	7,3
It is fun to learn English	242	80,7	29	9,7	21	7,0	2	0,7	6	2,0
I love my English teacher	254	84,7	25	8,3	18	6,0	0	0,0	3	1,0

F: Frequency

Table 1, regarding *the attitudes towards the Love of English*, shows that the students strongly agreed with the following statements: *I like English lessons* (%79,7),

It is fun to learn English (%80,7), *to learn English is necessary*, and *I love my English teacher* (%84,7).

Although they show a strong agreement on *love of English*, they do not support to study English in their free times. Strong disagreements were expressed with the following statements: *If it were possible, I would always study English* (%7,3), *I study English in my free time* (%6,3).

The following pie chart shows the overall results of The Love of English in percentages.

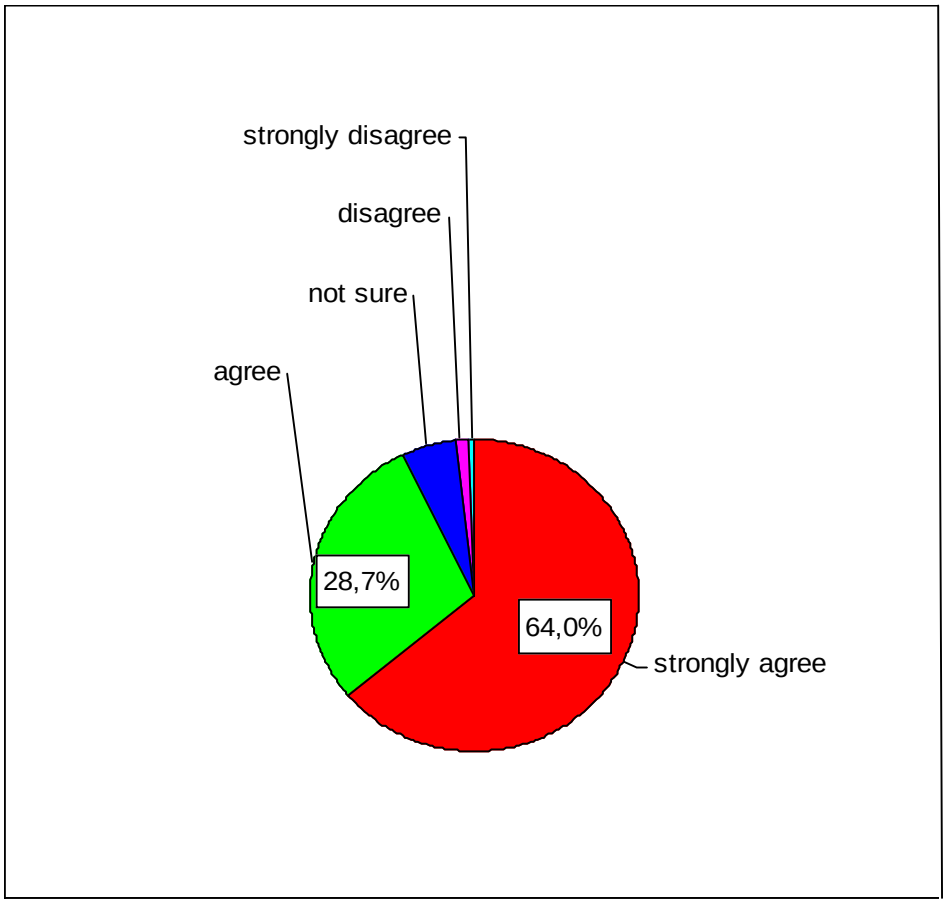


Figure 1. The Pie Chart of ‘ Love of English’

As seen in the chart, the students love English with a %64 of strongly agree, and %28,7 of agree. It shows that students have a high general love towards English, which is considered to lead to a positive attitude.

4.2.2. Interest in Learning English

The percentages and numbers of participants' responses to the second category; Interest in Learning English, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Interest in Learning English

Interest in Learning English	Strongly agree		Agree		not sure		Disagree		strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Learning English is an adventure full of excitement.	204	68,0	53	17,7	27	9,0	2	0,7	14	4,7
I am interested in English lessons.	205	68,3	60	20,0	24	8,0	4	1,3	7	2,3
Learning English is unnecessary and unsensible.	235	78,3	18	6,0	23	7,7	12	4,0	12	4,0
I would like to keep studying English even if I get low scores.	238	79,3	26	8,7	27	9,0	0	0,0	9	3,0
English is an important and necessary lesson.	249	83,0	21	7,0	18	6,0	4	1,3	8	2,7
English just wastes time.	236	78,7	19	6,3	20	6,7	10	3,3	15	5,0
I would like to live in an English-speaking country for a while.	181	60,3	51	17,0	31	10,3	8	2,7	29	9,7
English is time-taking.	232	77,3	19	6,3	26	8,7	11	3,7	12	4,0
I dislike to take part in English lessons .	223	74,3	19	6,3	26	8,7	14	4,7	18	6,0
I wonder English life style.	233	77,7	28	9,3	21	7,0	2	0,7	16	5,3
English only wastes time.	249	83,0	12	4,0	23	7,7	4	1,3	12	4,0
I would love to speak English with tourists.	235	78,3	25	8,3	18	6,0	0	0,0	22	7,3
To study English appeals me.	211	70,3	69	23,0	12	4,0	4	1,3	4	1,3
Nothing can deter me from learning English.	186	62,0	57	19,0	32	10,7	6	2,0	19	6,3
English should be taught no matter how hard it is.	257	85,7	27	9,0	5	1,7	2	0,7	9	3,0
It is necessary to struggle in English lessons.	263	87,7	14	4,7	17	5,7	0	0,0	6	2,0
I like to study English in my free time.	152	50,7	101	33,7	26	8,7	3	1,0	18	6,0

F: Frequency

Table 2 shows that the students strongly agreed with the following statements in accordance with *the attitudes towards the Interest in Learning English*: *It is necessary to struggle in English lessons* (%87,7), *English should be taught no matter how hard it is* (%85,7), *English is an important and necessary lesson* (83,0), and *I would like to keep studying English even if I get low scores* (%79,3).

Although they show a strong agreement on *Interest in Learning English*, they do not like to live in an English-speaking country for a while. Strong disagreements were expressed with the following statements: *I would like to live in an English-speaking country for a while* (%9,7) and *I would love to speak English with tourists* (%7,3).

The following pie chart illustrates the overall results of Interest In Learning English in percentages.

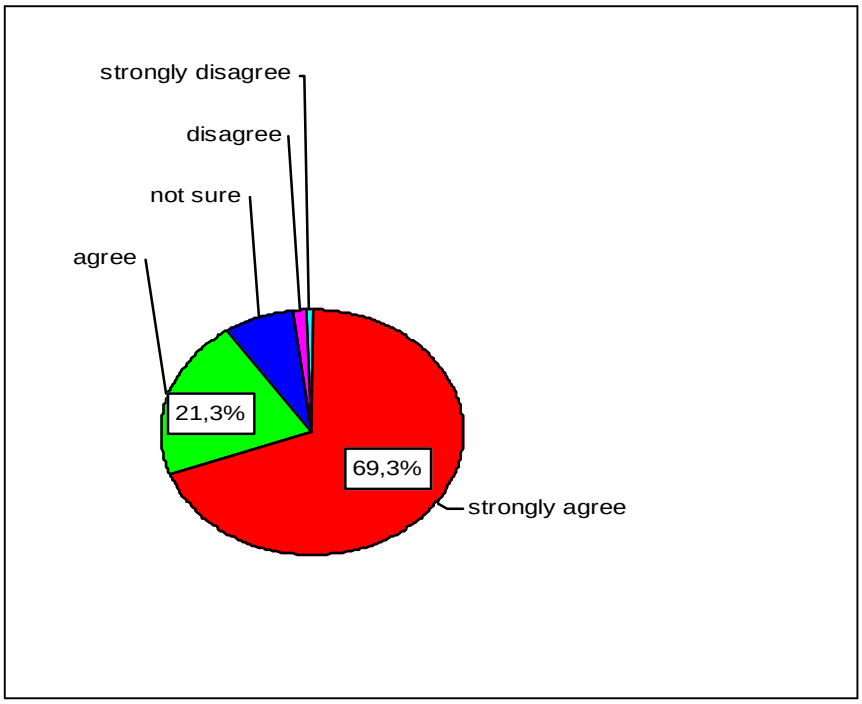


Figure 2. The Pie Chart of 'Interest in Learning English'

As can be seen in the chart, students are interested in learning English with a %69,3 of strongly agree and %21,3 of agree. Thus, they are interested in learning English with a high positive attitude towards learning English.

4.2.3. Desire for and Expectations from Learning English

The percentages and numbers of participants' responses to the third category; Desire for and Expectations from Learning English, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Desire for and Expectations from Learning English

Desire for and Expectations from Learning English	strongly agree		Agree		not sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The benefits of English will be a lot in my professional life.	252	84,0	30	10,0	7	2,3	0	0,0	11	3,7
Learning English will help me earn my living.	242	80,7	38	12,7	14	4,7	0	0,0	6	2,0
I will need English for finding a job.	256	85,3	22	7,3	12	4,0	4	1,3	6	2,0
I would love to learn English.	240	80,0	38	12,7	12	4,0	2	0,7	8	2,7
I would like to make friends who speak English via learning it.	239	79,7	26	8,7	14	4,7	6	2,0	15	5,0
It is getting more important to learn English.	240	80,0	33	11,0	8	2,7	8	2,7	11	3,7
English will play an important role in the future.	248	82,7	28	9,3	12	4,0	2	0,7	10	3,3
I will use English in many places when I grow up.	227	75,7	49	16,3	8	2,7	2	0,7	14	4,7

F: Frequency

Table 3 indicates that the students strongly agreed with the following statements regarding *the attitudes towards the desire for and exxpectations from learning English,*: *I will need English in finding a job* (%85,3), *the benefits of English will be a lot in my professional life* (%84,0), *English is important for my future* (82,7), and *it is getting more important to learn English* (%80,0).

Although they show a strong agreement on *desire for and expectations from learning English*, there are some strong disagreements. These were expressed with the following statements: *I would like to make friends who speak English via learning English* (%5,0*), I will use English in many places when I grow up* (%4,7).

The following pie chart shows the overall results of *Desire for and Expectations* from Learning English in percentages.

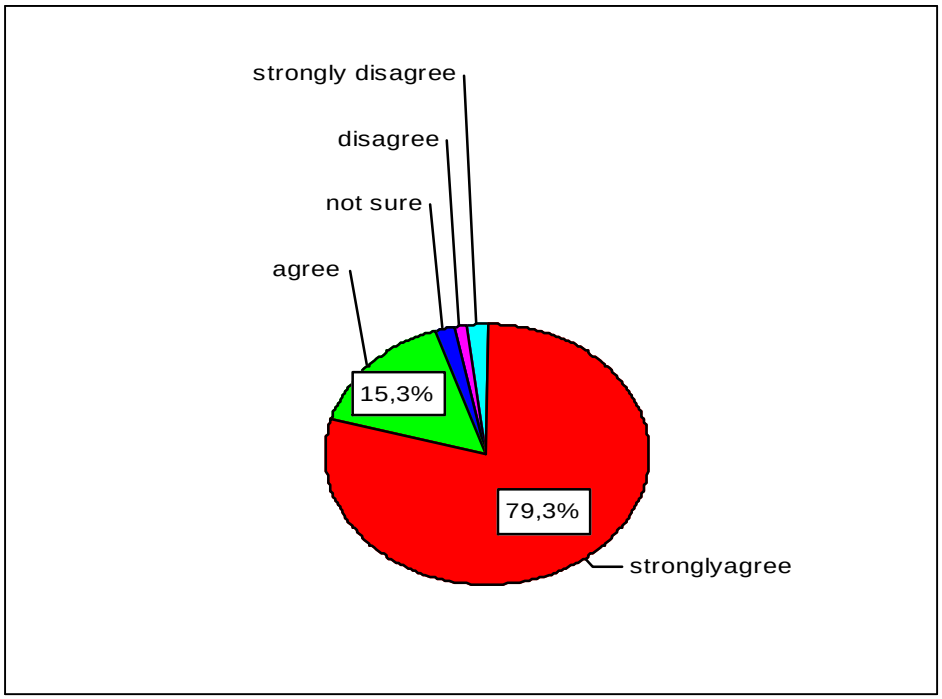


Figure 3. The Pie Graphs of 'Desire for and Expectations from Learning English'

As can be seen clearly in the chart, the students have *desire for and expectations* from learning English with a %79,3 of strongly agree, and %15,3 of agree. Thus, it can be deduced that students have a high positive attitude towards desire for and expectations from learning English.

4.2.4. Concerns About Learning English

The percentages and numbers of participants' responses to to the fourth category; Concerns About Learning English, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Concerns About Learning English

Concerns About Learning English	strongly agree		Agree		not sure		disagree		strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
English lesson causes me to become depressed when I do my homework.	29	9,7	53	17,7	23	7,7	14	4,7	181	60,3
Whenever I study English, I feel something bad in me.	14	4,7	32	10,7	33	11,0	16	5,3	205	68,3
Our teacher cannot teach well.	10	3,3	7	2,3	15	5,0	7	2,3	261	87,0
I cannot learn English since I am not good at memorization.	30	10,0	55	18,3	29	9,7	21	7,0	165	55,0
I cannot focus on English lesson.	21	7,0	54	18,0	25	8,3	26	8,7	174	58,0
I cannot learn English in any way.	22	7,3	44	14,7	21	7,0	21	7,0	192	64,0
I have difficulty in reading in English lesson.	37	12,3	83	27,7	22	7,3	18	6,0	140	46,7
I am unsuccessful in English lesson.	26	8,7	34	11,3	46	15,3	27	9,0	167	55,7
I cannot be successful in English lesson.	44	14,7	23	7,7	30	10,0	16	5,3	187	62,3
English lessons are very difficult.	22	7,3	51	17,0	37	12,3	28	9,3	162	54,0
The mistakes I make during reading activities affect me in a negative way.	93	31,0	45	15,0	39	13,0	10	3,3	113	37,7
I avoid speaking English.	18	6,0	38	12,7	29	9,7	20	6,7	195	65,0
I am not capable of learning a language.	29	9,7	34	11,3	38	12,7	24	8,0	175	58,3
I cannot do my English homework alone.	53	17,7	54	18,0	24	8,0	23	7,7	146	48,7
English lessons are very boring.	17	5,7	16	5,3	20	6,7	29	9,7	218	72,7
It is impossible to be successful in English lesson.	18	6,0	11	3,7	18	6,0	14	4,7	239	79,7
English lesson causes fatigue in me..	19	6,3	26	8,7	22	7,3	28	9,3	205	68,3
English lesson has showed that I am incompetent.	21	7,0	21	7,0	18	6,0	20	6,7	220	73,3
When we start the English lesson, I have a headache.	22	7,3	19	6,3	15	5,0	10	3,3	234	78,0
I am afraid of answering questions during English course.	44	14,7	34	11,3	35	11,7	10	3,3	177	59,0
I do not want to go to school on the days we have English lessons.	29	9,7	13	4,3	8	2,7	11	3,7	239	79,7

F: Frequency

Table 4, regarding the attitudes towards the *Concerns About Learning English*, shows that the students strongly disagreed with the following statements: *Our teacher cannot teach well* (%87,0), *It is impossible to be successful in English lesson* (%79,7), *I do not want to go to school on the days we have English lessons* (%79,7), and *when we start the English lesson, I have a headache* (%80,0).

Although they show a strong disagreement on desire *for and expectations from learning English*, there are some strong agreements. These were expressed with the following statements: *The mistakes I make during the reading activities affect me in a negative way* (%31,0). *I cannot do my English homework alone* (%17,7). I *am afraid of answering questions during English course* (%14,7), and *I cannot be successful in English lesson* (%14,7). The following pie chart shows the overall results of concerns about learning English in percentages.

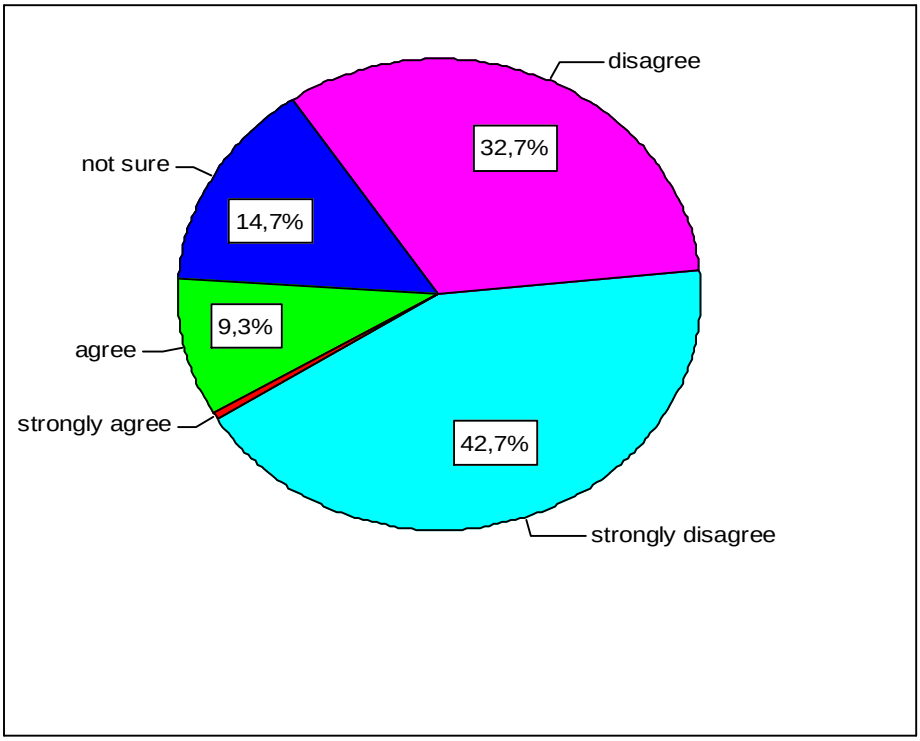


Figure 4. The Pie Graphs of Concerns About Learning English

As seen in the chart, the students have concerns about learning English with a %42,7 of strongly disagree, and %32,7 of agree, which implies that students have some concerns about learning English. This may cause negative attitudes towards learning English.

4.3. Findings From The Critical Incident Questionnaire

The chart below shows what students learnt and what they did in classes, what they believed to be the most difficult, and the most enjoyable parts of the lesson were, as well as what they would change if they carried out a particular activity again. Different colors show the frequency counts of the responses.

4.3.1.What I Learnt in the Lesson

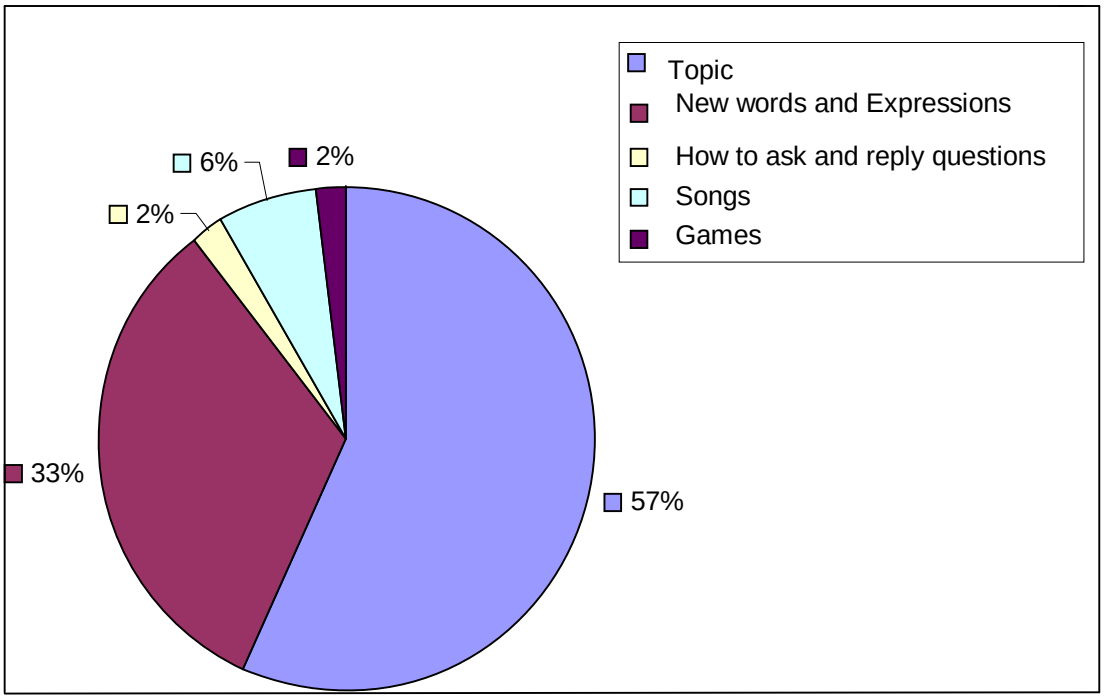


Figure 5. What I learnt in the lesson

According to the chart, learning *the topic* with %57 is the most frequently cited one among young learners. 240 students stated that they learnt *the topic* whereas 138 students stated that they learnt *new words and expressions*. *Learning the new words and expressions* is the second most frequently stated item with %33. *Learning songs* is the third most frequently stated item with %6. Twenty - seven students stated that they learnt *songs*. *How to ask and reply questions* is the fourth frequently stated item with %6. Twenty - seven students stated that they learnt *how to ask and reply questions*. *Games* is the least frequent among the stated items with %2. Eight students stated that they learnt *game*.

4.3.2. What I Did in the Lesson

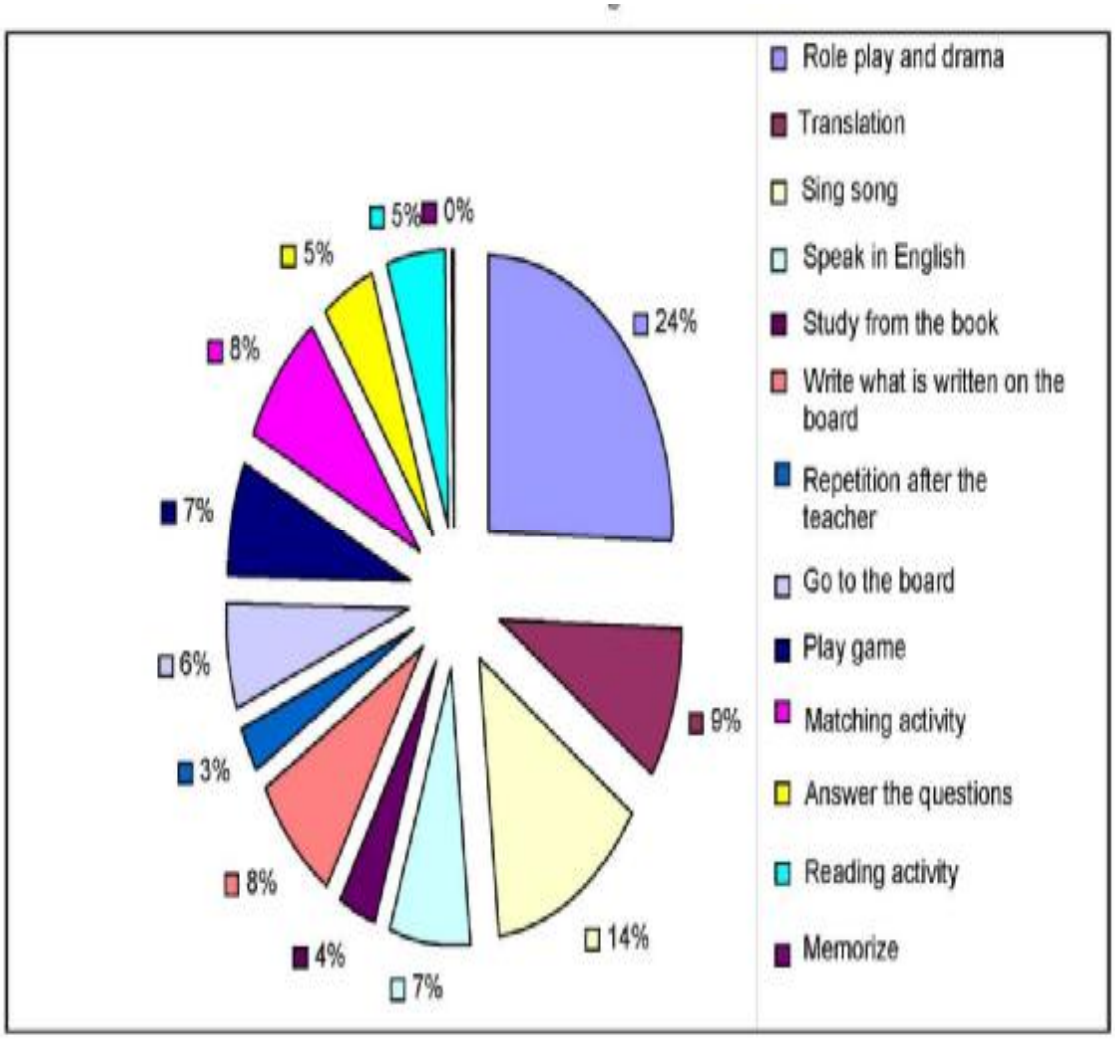


Figure 6. What I Did in the Lesson

As the chart illustrates, *Role play and drama* is the most frequently stated item among young learners (24%). 79 students stated that they did the role play and drama. *Singing song* which is stated by 43 students is the second most frequently stated item with 14%. *Translation* is the third most frequently stated item with 9%. *Matching activity* is the fourth in the order of frequency with %8. Twenty-five students stated that they did matching activity. *Writing what is written on the board* is the fifth frequently stated item with %8. Twenty-four students stated that they did writing what is written on the board. The other activities that students stated that they did are *speaking English* (7%), *playing game* (7%), *going to board* (6%), *reading (5%), answering the questions (5%), using the book (4%) and repetition (3%)*.

4.3.3. The Most Difficult Part

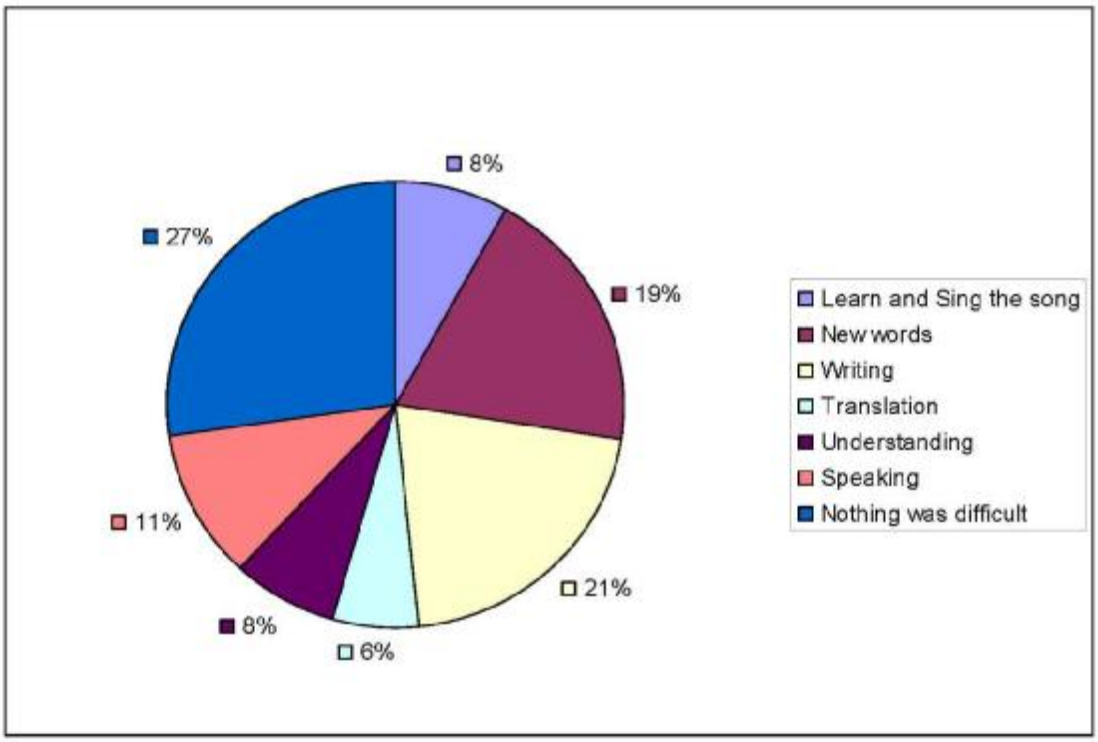


Figure 7. The Most Difficult Part

According to the chart, *nothing was difficult* with %27 is the most frequently stated item. *Writing* is the second most frequently stated item with %21. Forty-eight students stated that they had difficulty in writing. *Learning new words* is the third frequently stated item with %19. Fourty-five students stated that they had difficulty in learning new words. On the other hand, speaking is the fourth frequently stated item with %11. Twenty-five students stated that they had difficulty in speaking. *Learning and singing the song* is the fifth frequently stated item with %8. Nineteen students stated that they had difficulty in learning and singing songs. The other activities that students stated they had difficulty are *understanding* (%8) and *translation* (%3) .

4.3.4. What I Liked Most

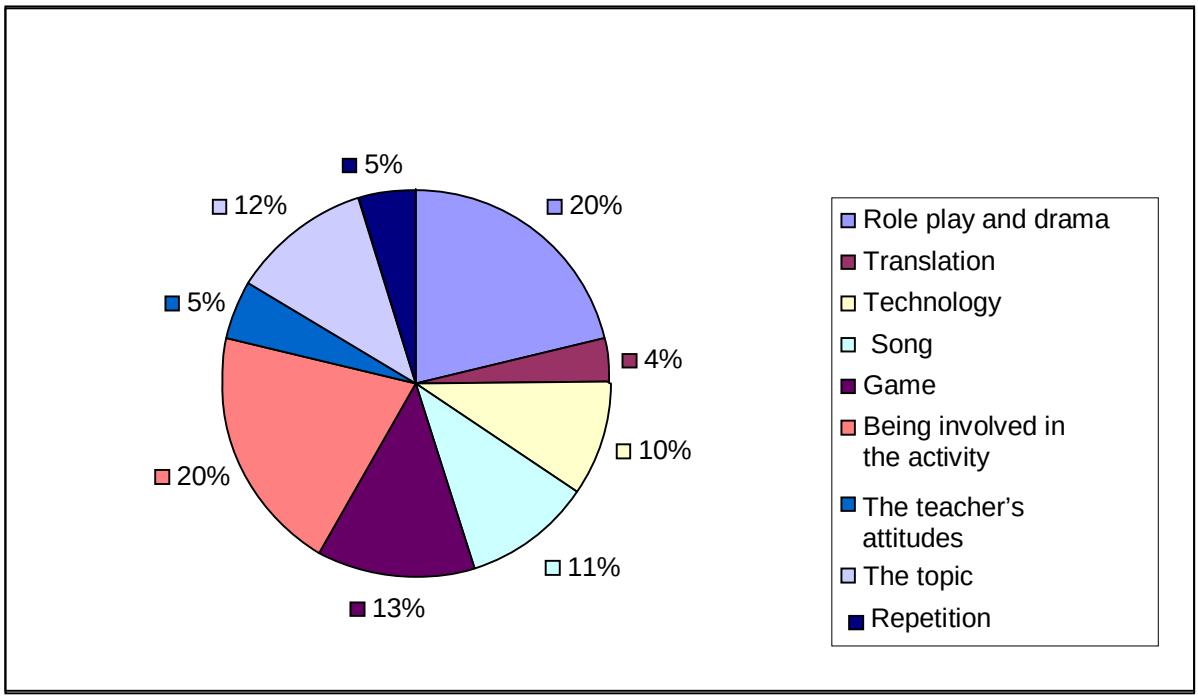


Figure 8. What I Liked Most

According to the chart, *role play and drama* with %20 is the most frequently stated item. 87 students stated that they liked role play and drama. *Being involved in the activity* is the second most frequently stated item with %20. Eighty-three students stated that they liked being involved in the activity. *Game* is the third most frequently stated item with %13. Fifty-four students stated that they liked games. The *topic* is the fourth frequently stated item with %12. Fourty-eight students stated that they liked the topics most. The *song* is the fifth stated item with %11. Fourty-three students stated that they liked singing the song. The other activities that students stated that they liked most are the *technology (10%)* and *the teacher's attitude (5%)*. Nineteen (5%) students stated that they liked *repetition*. And finally, fifteen students stated that they liked the *translation* most (4%).

4.3.5. What I Would Change

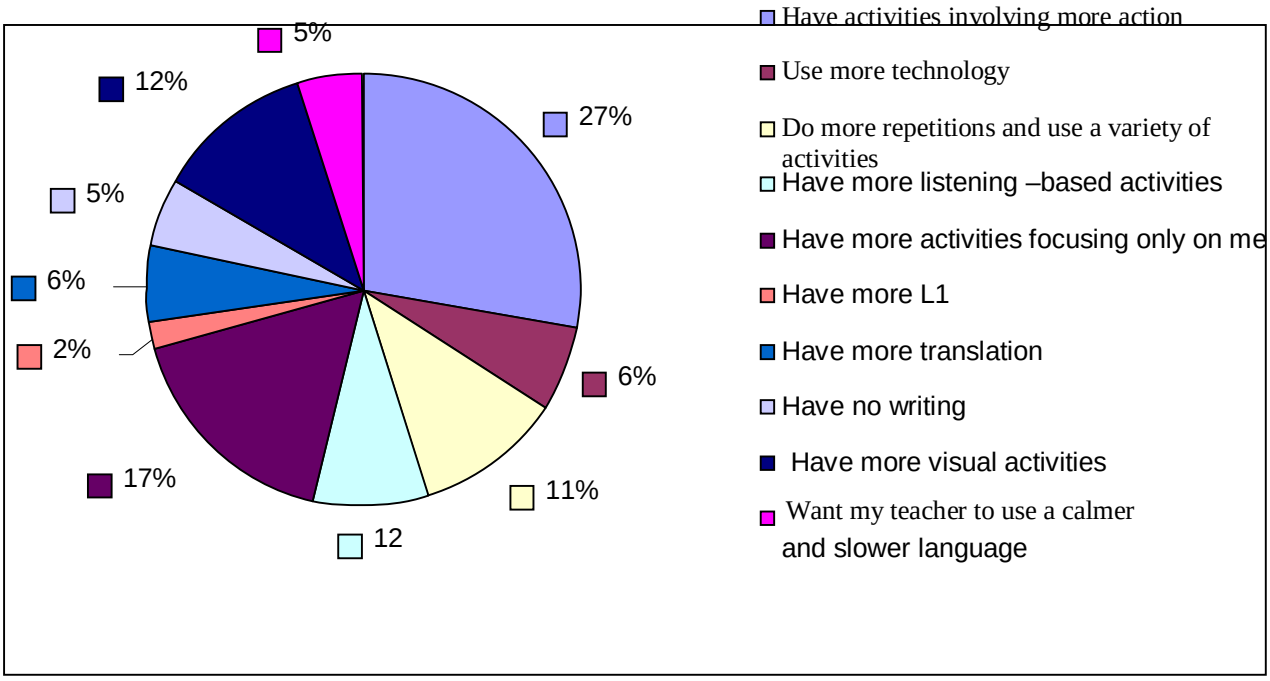


Figure 9. What I Would Change

According to the chart, *having more action requiring activities* with %27 is the most frequently stated item during the lesson among young learners. 79 students stated that they would prefer to have activities involving more action. *Having more activities focusing only on me* is the second most frequently stated item with 17%. Fourty-eight students stated that they would prefer to have more activities focusing only on themselves. *Having more visual activities* is the third frequently stated item with 12%. Thirty-three students stated that they would prefer to have more visual activities. *Doing more repetitions and varieties* is the fourth frequently stated item with 11%. Thirty students stated that they would prefer to do more repetitions and use a variety of activities. *Having more listening –based activities* is the fifth frequently stated item with 9%. Twenty-five students stated that they would prefer to have more listening –based activities. Eighteen (6%) students stated that they would use *more technology*. Seventeen (6%) students stated that they would prefer to do *more translation*. Additionaly, fourteen students stated that they would prefer to have no writing and fourteen students stated that they would *want their teacher to use a calmer and slower language (5%)*. Lastly, five students stated that they would prefer to have more *L1 language* in their English lessons (2%).

4.4. Finding From Students' English Scores in The First Term

The focus of this study was not the individual proficiency levels of the students, nor the relationship between their proficiency and attitudes towards learning English. This study mainly investigated the relationship between the students' proficiency English levels at the schools with high and low proficiency level of English in terms of the means of the points and their attitudes towards learning English.

As stated earlier, students' first term English scores were obtained from the schools' management. This section presents the data about the students' performance in English in the first term. Table 5 shows the names of the schools and means of English scores of students attending the schools in concern.

Table 5. The Students' Proficiency Scores

Schools	Mean
Polis Amca Primary School	2,05
100. yıl Primary School	2,97
IMKB Primary School	3,84
Yavuz Selim Primary School	4,17

Students attending Yavuz Selim Primary School (YSPS, hereafter) have higher proficiency scores than those attending the other schools. Students attending Polis Amca Primary School (PAPS, hereafter) have the least proficiency scores among them. The reseacher compares the most and the least successful schools to figure out whether there is a relationship between students' proficiency level of English and their attitudes towards learning it.

4.4.1. Students' Proficiency Scores and Their Attitude Towards Loving English

Tablo 6. Descriptive Statistical Scores of Yavuz Selim and Polis Amca Primary Schools

School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Yavuz Selim Primary School	52	1,4850	,49740	,06898
Polis Amca Primary School	96	1,5660	,66688	,06806

When the figures in Table 6 are examined, it is observed that the arithmetic mean of PAPS is higher than that of the YSPS with respect to love of English, which discloses that the pupils attending the former provide more positive answers and love English more than those attending the latter.

Table 7. Independent T-Test Results for PAPS and YSPS

Love of English	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	,393	**,532**	-,767	146	**,444**	-,0809	,10555	-,28954	,12768
Equal variances not assumed			-,835	131,657	,405	-,0809	,09690	-,27262	,11076

Table 7 illustrates that the p-value is higher than 0.05 (t=0,444, pt>0.05). Therefore, it can be suggested that there is no significant difference between students attending the schools in question in terms of love of English with 95% degree of confidence. As above, the writer's investigation with young learners has displayed that succes in learning English does not merely depend on the love of English.

4.4.2. Students' Proficiency Scores and Their Interest in Learning English

Table 8. Descriptive Statistical Scores of YSPS and PAPS

Schools	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Yavuz Selim Primary School	52	1,3371	,47233	,06550
Polis Amca Primary School	96	1,5398	,72467	,07396

Figures in Table 8 indicate that the arithmetic mean of PAPS is higher than the mean of YSPS in terms of interest in learning English. This discloses that the pupils attending the former give more positive answers and are more interested in English than those attending the latter.

Table 9. Independent T-Test Results for PAPS and YSPS

Interest in Learning English	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
								Lower
Equal variances assumed	5,540	**,020**	-1,818	146	,071	-,2027	,11154	-,42317
Equal variances not assumed			-2,052	140,950	**,042**	-,2027	,09880	-,39804

When the figures in Table 9 are examined, it is observed that the p-value is lower than 0.05. Therefore, the result displays with 95% degree of confidence that there is a significant difference between the answers of students attending PAPS and those of students attending YSPS. So, it is suggested that there is a relationship between proficiency scores and being interested in English. However, it does not necessarily mean that the more interested students in English are more successful at learning it.

4.4.3. Students' Proficiency Scores and Their Desire for and Expectations from Learning English

Table 10. Descriptive Statistical Scores of students attending YSPS and PAPS

Desire For And Expectations From Learning English	SCHOOL	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Yavuz Selim	52	1,2716	,57454	,07967
	Polis Amca	96	1,3724	,78618	,08024

As can be seen in Table 10, a small amount of difference is observed between the arithmetic means of both schools. While the mean of PAPS is 1.27 ± 0.574, the mean of YSPS is 1.37± 0.78. This leads to the conclusion that students attending PAPS have more desire for and expectations from learning English than those attending YSPS.

Table 11. Independent T-Test Results for Polis Amca and Yavuz Selim Primary Schools

Desire For And Expectations From Learning English	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2,062	**,153**	-,813	146	**,417**	-,1008	,12386	-,34556	,14404
Equal variances not assumed			-,891	133,301	,374	-,1008	,11308	-,32442	,12290

Table 11 uncovers that the difference between the arithmetic means of PAPS an YSPS with respect to the students' desire for and expectations from learning English is not statistically significant since the p-value is higher than 0.05 (t=0,417, pt>0.05). Consequently, it can be advocated that having desire for and expectations from learning English does not lead to the students' success in learning it.

4.4.4. Students' Proficiency Scores and Their Concerns about Learning English

Table 12. Descriptive Statistical Scores of YSPS and YSPS

Concerns About Learning English	SCHOOL	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Yavuz Selim	52	4,1163	,81744	,11336
	Polis Amca	96	4,0422	,99441	,10149

When the figures in table 12 are examined, it is observed that the arithmetic mean of YSPS is higher than that of PAPS in terms of students' success and concerns about learning English, which shows that the pupils attending the former are more concerned about learning English than those attending the latter.

Table 13. Independent T-Test Results For Polis Amca and Yavuz Selim Primary Schools

Concerns About Learning English	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1,235	**,268**	,460	146	**,646**	,0741	,16123	-,24452	,39279
Equal variances not assumed			,487	123,076	,627	,0741	,15215	-,22704	,37531

When the figures in Table 13 are examined, it is observed that the p-value is higher than 0.05 (t=0,646, pt>0.05). Therefore, the result with 95% degree of confidence displays that there is not a significant difference between the students attending PAPS and YSPS with respect to their concerns about learning English. As above, the writer's investigation with young learners has displayed that being successful in English does not merely depend on concern about learning English.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the discussion of findings, conclusions drawn from the study, and suggests implications for further research and practice.

This study aimed to identify the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English and find out how the students reflect these attitudes into the learning processes. Data for the present study were collected through an attitude questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and a critical incident questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The research questions for the study were as follows:

1- What is the nature of young learners' attitudes towards learning English?
2- What classroom activities do children believe help them learn English well?
3- Are there any differences between the attitudes of high English proficiency and low English proficiency students towards learning English?

5.1. What is the Nature of Young Learners' Attitudes Towards Learning English?

Research Question 1 investigates the attitudes of YLs.
The overall results indicate that the attitudes of students towards learning English were positive. The findings revealed that a considerable majority of students expressed positive attitudes regarding their love of English, interest in learning English, desire for and expectations from learning English (see Table 1, 2, and 3). In line with this finding, Brumfit, Moon and Tongue (1991) point out that children have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults.

One of the most important reasons for pupils to like English appears to be the consciousness they developed about the importance and necessity of English in today's world. They strongly agree with the items "*English is important for my future, The importance of English is increasing day by day, The benefits of English will be a lot in my professional life*". The importance of these items can find a basis on a study conducted by Demirel (2007, p.22). The results of this study held in the European

Union countries indicate that 89% of the learners learn English as a foreign language, while 32% of the learners learn Spanish, 18% of them learn German, and 8% of the learners learn Spanish as a foreign language. This study is an indicator of the popularity and dominance of English as a foreign language over other languages in European countries.

Young learnes' awareness about the significance of knowing English may affect their attitudes towards English and increase their level of motivation. However, Gardner (2001) states that "motivated individuals have goals both proximate and distal" (p.11). Accordingly, finding a good job and going abroad are distal - long term - goals for primary level students. Long-term goals may not always be effective in motivating learners when they face challenges. Emphasizing the importance of short-term goals in motivating a learner, Harmer (2007, p.53) contends that when English seems to be more difficult than the student had anticipated, the long term goals can begin to behave like mirages in desert, appearing and disappearing at random. Therefore, finding a good job and going abroad might seem to be less motivating external factors for children as they appear to be distal goals. Similarly, the findings of our study have revealed that students do not have any concern about using English in the future which may be considered distal goal (see Table 4).

In her study, Karahan (2007) has found that students have strongly positive attitudes towards the importance of English; however, they do not have high-level positive attitudes towards English itself at expected level but the English based culture, which probably stems from the fact that the participants were at different ages. Likewise, Djiugunovich (1995) found that children's attitudes to languages considerably developed from age 6 to 9. S/he relates their positive attitudes to learn English at the age of six mainly to enjoyment of classroom language games. She also contends that those younger than nine perceive classroom activities as learning rather than as 'playing' and that there may be a link between their positive attitudes and this new perception. In other words, she advocates that they have already developed an explicit concept of themselves as language learners and are taking pleasure from this.

Our study has revealed that pupils like English because they like their teacher and the teaching methods issued by the teacher. Similarly, Inal, Evin, and Saracaloğlu

(2007), describing the way of creating positive attitudes, claim that students will have positive attitudes if the teacher respects their feelings. Moon (2000, p.16) contends that younger children tend to be influenced by feelings about their teacher, the general learning atmosphere in the classroom, the methods used in the classroom and the opinions of their parents. This suggests that selecting appropriate learning materials, planning interesting learning activities and creating positive learning environment should be brought into force. As also suggested by Vale & Feunteun (1995), making students feel confident and helping them love English are more important than teaching English. When they feel confident and when they enjoy, learning is maximized. Consequently, teachers of English instructing YLs should be aware that establishing these priorities is of great importance.

5.2. What Classroom Activities do Children Believe Help Them Learn English Well?

Research Question 2 attempted to identify reactions and ideas of the pupils about specific parts of the lesson. The participants were asked to fill the classroom critical incident questionnaire developed by Brookfield (1995). The Critical Incident Questionnaire revealed their ideas about how a particular activity was viewed and even named differently by each individual. The students described *what they learnt and what they did in classes, what they believed to be the most difficult, and the most enjoyable parts of the lesson were, as well as what they would change if they carried out a particular activity again*. A great majority of the students expressed that they learnt *the topic*. Thus, they were aware of both the topic and what they were doing. Our study has revealed that they are not passive learners and they do not perceive the lesson just as part of a game and fun. More specifically, 6% of the students expressed that they learnt *songs* whereas 2% of them stated that they learnt *games* (see Figure 5). It can also be claimed that they like and prefer action requiring activities such as *drama, role play, singing songs*, and *playing games* (see Figure 8, and 9). This might enable us to suggest that young learners learn unconciously by playing, singing, and enjoying themselves (see Figure 8, and 9). Similarly, Scott and Ytreberg (1990, p.3) assert that young children love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves. However, they also take themselves seriously and like to think that what they are doing is “real” work. In this respect, Cameron (2001, p.246) states that children will bring their curiosity and

eagerness to language learning to make sense of the world. A case study about children's beginning second language learning literacy done by Huss (1995) has proved that children have greater language and literacy learning abilities and are much more interactive literacy learners than their teachers perceive. On the other hand, Slattery and Willis (2001) state that young learners do not learn but acquire language and they do this unconsciously.

Another crucial finding of the present study is that many students learn *new words and expressions* with ease. So, it can be concluded that young learners can learn languages in small parts rather than in structures. This may be due to the fact that the words and expressions are short and not complex. Similarly, Kale (2008) states that young learners are quick to learn vocabulary, slower to learn structures because words have tangible, immediate meanings whereas structures are less obviously useful. Besides, Reilly and Ward (1997, p.7) state that it is important for the language teacher to remember that young children may spend a long time absorbing language before they actually produce anything.

When asked what they did in the lesson, they reported a variety of activities which did not surpass each other significantly. Nonetheless, activities which mainly required their active participation such as *role play, games, repetition drills, matching activities, and Q-R sessions* were the most stated ones among them all. This may be attributed to the fact that the pupils do not view English lessons in the way they view other lessons due to the nature of the former which permits relatively various activities. Namely, the activities in concern require their full participation, keep them very active and let them make a cooperation with their friends. Accordingly, Brumfit (1984) advocates the idea that pair work and group work are the most effective techniques of classroom organization which combine aspects of communication learning and natural interaction in a stress free environment, (p. 78). Likewise, Pound (2005, p.21) asserts that education should be based on real life situations, thus, experimentation and independent thinking can be fostered because children learn by doing. Similarly, Brewster et al. (2003) suggest that use of songs have linguistics, cognitive, cultural and social advantages. On the other hand, Harmer (2007, p.82) claims '..a natural result of their characteristic features, they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them'. That is, young learners always want attention

on themselves, so they are always eager to learn and respond to the environment. They are willing to answer a question, participate in any activity or do an exercise even when s/he has no idea about how to do it. In English lessons, YLs have the opportunity to participate in lessons easily through games, songs, flashcards, dramas and dialogues, which is likely to create a comfortable environment and incline them towards loving English. Active participation in the classroom broadens students' experiences, clarifies information, generates new ideas and improves attitudes towards learning.

As regards parts of the lesson which the participants found difficult, they generally reported that nothing was difficult. Some stated they had difficulty in activities which involves writing and spelling (see Figure 7). Since English has some letters which do not exist in their L1 such as x, q, and w, it is quite normal for them to have problems of such kind. Our study has also revealed that students have difficulty in speaking, which may stem from the fact that they do not have an opportunity to practise their L2 outside the classroom and that their L1 and L2 differ extensively in pronunciation. Namely, they try to read and speak English as they do in Turkish. These are the factors that are considered to prevent those students from expressing themselves in the target language easily.

The findings of the present study have revealed that young learners do not rely on the coursebook. They liked and preferred a book free lesson of English. Young learners prefer being an active part of lessons to being passive followers of a coursebook. They are in need of S-T and T-S communication in the learning environment more than they currently have (see Figures 8 and 9).

Halliwell (1996, p.7) states that if we accept the role of the imagination in children's lives, we can see that it provides another very powerful stimulus for real language use and that we need to find ways of building on this factor in the language classroom because he believes that they are living the language for real when they are involved in enjoyable activities through their sense of fun and play. Illustrations and the use of visual aids are extremely important in teaching YLs (Vale & Feunteun, 1995). Similarly, Pakkan (1997, p.11) states that a picture is worth a thousand words, which means that the visual channel of transmitting information is very important in language teaching.

5.3. Are There Any Differences Between the Attitudes of High English Proficiency and Low English Proficiency Students Towards Learning English?

Research Question 3 attempted to identify the relationship between the students' English proficiency levels of students at two different schools with the lowest and highest average of scores in English classes and their attitudes towards learning English For the analysis of data, Independent Samples T- test was used. T-test at a significant level of 0.05 was carried out to determine whether there was any significant difference in their attitude towards English language and their proficiency level. Students' achievement was analyzed in four dimensions of attitudes towards learning English: love of English, interest in learning English, desire for and expectations from learning English, and concerns about learning English.

A great number of studies have been done on the influence of motivation and attitudes upon the learning process and it is generally reported that there was achievement during the studies (Crookes & Schmidt 1989; Gardner 1985; Ellis 1994). Researchers agree that positive attitude towards a language and its components facilitate language learning. Similarly, Prodromou (1992, cited in Şeker, 2003) states that successful learner is the one who has a positive attitude towards the target culture.

Gardner and Masgoret (2002), similarly, draw attention to learning situation claiming that achievement in second language learning is related to a positive attitude towards the learning situation. Moreover, Lalleman asserts that there exists a relationship between positive attitudes and successful language learning. Lalleman's (1987) study of Turkish immigrant children learning Dutch in classroom found positive and significant correlations between Dutch proficiency and both social and psychological orientations towards Dutch society. Supporting the positive correlation between attitudes and success achievement, Inal, Evin and Saracaloğlu (2005) report that there is a strong relationship between the language achievement and attitudes towards English but statistically no relation between gender and success. Findings of our study contradict with those mentioned above in that it reveals there is no significant relationship between students' attitudes and their language proficiency (see Tables 7, 9, 11,12). This may result from the difference between levels of the participants who were

primary school students in our study and students attending secondary schools and colleges in the previous studies in concern.

5.4. Implications for Further Study

The present study has many implications for English teachers, school authorities, ELT departments, teacher trainers and curriculum designers particularly in terms of understanding the nature of the young learners' attitudes towards learning English and its relationship with achievement as well as their perceptions of the activities implemented during the lessons.

In accordance with our findings, students do not have any prejudices towards learning English even though it is suggested that they do not come to class like a blank sheet of paper. They already have some knowledge of English which they have unconsciously acquired through media, cartoons and English labels on the goods, which helps them be familiar with English and establish positive attitudes towards learning English, respectively.

This study has also revealed that a considerable majority of the teachers do not reward students even though they know it fosters the students' positive attitudes. Similiarly, teachers are very strict in terms of giving high scores to young learners beacuse they assume that giving high scores might result in students not working hard enough. On the other hand, our findings have revealed that scores do not play any roles in forming students' attitudes towards learning English. Hence, teachers should not limit themselves to give high scores to students who deserve them at the end of the term; instead, they should employ them during the term to reinforce the students in concern positively. Our study has also revealed that a vast majority of teachers do not know the characteristics of young learners. Thus, they misperceive students' behaviours during the lesson. For example, some students can be silent for a while, and teachers think that learning does not occur. Another example is that some students seem very active but they always talk to their friends about topics which have nothing to do with what is taught in the course, in fact. In both situations teachers treat the students negatively. Consequently, this causes students to have negative attitudes towards learning English, and they may think that learning English is very difficult.

Another important implication that can be drawn from this study is the necessity to create a positive learning environment. The study has revealed that some teachers avoid employing enjoyable activities and letting students walk around, act and talk during the lesson and that they waste their time trying to keep the classroom silent. As a consequence, it is of vital importance to provide learners with a variety of activities which engage young learners physically and mentally.

5.5. Recommendation for Further Research

In this study, the nature of YLs attitudes towards learning English was investigated by administering questionnaires only to the students. Teachers' views of their students' attitudes towards learning English and the foreign language communities, perceptions of their language learning process might also be investigated in order to find out whether the students' responses to the questionnaires reflect their actual thoughts and behaviours, and gain a clearer picture of the nature of YLs attitudes towards learning the language at stake.

In the present study, attitudes of fifth grades have been examined. It might be interesting to replicate this study with fourth grades who meet English for the first time which may shed light to interesting results, ideas and directions in the field. Similarly, a replication of this study with adults or teenage language learners might be helpful in revealing whether the nature of their attitudes towards learning English plays a role in their language proficiency. Moreover, since the attitudes are affected by many factors including age, gender, their cultural, educational and social background, further studies involving these variables can be conducted to contribute to the field of TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners).

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APPENDIX 1

İNGİLİZCE DERSİ İLE İLGİLİ TUTUM ÖLÇEĞİ

Aşağıda İngilizce dersiyle ilgili çeşitli ifadeler verilmiştir. Bir ifadeye hangi oranda katılıyorsanız, lütfen onun altındaki sütunu "X" ile işaretleyiniz.

Verdiğiniz bilgiler İngilizce dersiyle ilgili istek, beklenti, sevgi, ilgi, merak, ve kaygılarınızı belirlemede kullanılmakla birlikte bilimsel amaç taşımaktadır.

Katılımınız için teşekkürler

Adı Soyadı: Sınıfı: Numarası:	Tamamen [illegible]	Kısmen Katılıyorum	Kararsızım	Çoğunlukla Katılmıyorum	Hiç Katılmıyorum
1. İngilizce çalışmaktan hoşlanırım					
2. Arkadaşlarımla İngilizce çalışmayı severim					
3. Boş zamanlarımda İngilizce çalışırım					
4. İngilizce dersini severim					
5. Arkadaşlarımla İngilizce konuşmayı severim					
6. İngilizce öğrenmek gereklidir					
7. Mümkün olsa her gün İngilizce çalışırım					
8. İngilizce öğrenmek çok zevklidir					
9. İngilizce öğretmenimi çok seviyorum					
10. İngilizce öğrenmek heyecan dolu bir maceradır					
11. İngilizce dersine ilgi duyuyorum					
12. İngilizce öğrenmek gereksiz ve anlamsızdır					
13. Zayıf not alsam bile İngilizce dersine devam etmek isterim					
14. İngilizce dersi önemli ve gerekli bir derstir.					
15. İngilizce dersi zamanımı harcamaktan başka bir işe yaramıyor					
16. İngilizce konuşulan bir ülkede bir süre yaşamak isterim					
17. İngilizce dersi zamanımı harcamaktadır					
18. İngilizce dersine girmekten hoşlanmam					
19. İngiliz yaşam biçimini merak ediyorum					
20. İngilizce dersi zaman kaybından başka bir işe yaramıyor					
21. Turistlerle İngilizce konuşmayı çok istiyorum					
22. İngilizce dersine çalışmak hoşuma gidiyor					
23. Hiçbir şey beni İngilizce öğrenmekten vaz geçiremez					

24. Ne kadar zor olursa olsun İngilizce öğretilmelidir					
25. İngilizce dersinde çaba göstermek gerekir					
26. Boş zamanlarımda İngilizce çalışmaktan hoşlanırım					
27. İş hayatımda İngilizce'nin faydası büyük olacaktır					
28. İngilizce'yi öğrenmek hayatımı kazanmada bana katkıda bulunacaktır					
29. İleriki çalışmalarımda İngilizce'ye ihtiyaç duyacağım					
30. İngilizce öğrenmeyi çok istiyorum					
31. İngilizce öğrenerek İngiliz arkadaşlar edinmek istiyorum					
32. Gün geçtikçe İngilizce'nin önemi artmaktadır.					
33. Geleceğim için İngilizce önemlidir					
34. Yetişkin olduğumda İngilizce'yi birçok yerde kullanacağım					
35. Ödevlerimi yaparken İngilizce dersi bende bunalıma sebep oluyor					
36. Ne zaman İngilizce çalışsam içimde bir rahatsızlık hissediyorum					
37. Öğretmenimiz İngilizce'yi öğretemiyor					
38. Ezberim zayıf olduğundan İngilizce öğrenemiyorum					
39. İngilizce dersinde dikkatimi toplayamıyorum					
40. İngilizce'yi bir türlü öğrenemiyorum					
41. İngilizce dersinde okuma zorluğu çekiyorum					
42. İngilizce dersinde başarısızım					
43. İngilizce dersinde başarılı olamıyorum					
44. İngilizce dersleri çok zordur					
45. İngilizce konuşmaktan kaçınırım					
46. Dil öğrenmeye yetenekli değilim					
47. İngilizce ödevlerimi tek başıma yapamıyorum					
48. İngilizce dersleri çok sıkıcı geçiyor					
49. İngilizce dersinde başarılı olmak imkansızdır					
50. İngilizce dersi beynimi yoruyor					
51. İngilizce dersi bana beceriksiz olduğumu gösterdi					
52. İngilizce dersine başladığımızda başım ağrır					
53. İngilizce sorulara cevap vermekten korkuyorum					
54. İngilizce dersinin olduğu günler okula gitmek istemiyorum					

APPENDIX 2

İNGİLİZCE DERSİ ETKİNLİK DEĞERLENDİRME FORMU

Adı ve Soyadı: …… **Tarih: ……**

***Sınıfı* : ……**

Bu derste neler yaptım?
……
……
……

Bu derste neler öğrendim?
……
……
……

Bugünkü çalışmada en çok zorlandığım etkinlikler:
……
……
……

Nedenleri (Çünkü):……

Bugünkü konuları tekrar dinleyecek olsaydım farklı neler olmasını isterdim:
……
……
……

Nedenleri (Çünkü)……

Derste en çok hoşuma giden etkinlik:
……
……
……

Nedenleri (Çünkü)……

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