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Raising Awareness of Lexical Semantic Relations in Undergraduate EFL Context

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Abstract: Associating a content word to its rational semantic relations is regarded as a language learning strategy which explicitly contributes to mental lexicon. Semantic mapping herein seems to constitute an efficacious pattern for its practice in language instruction. Conversely, it appears to be among the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies in language classrooms. This study points at semantic mapping as a practice for EFL learners by suggesting its pros and cons, and thus aims to raise awareness with this respect. The samples for the treatment of the study involve 20 EFL students studying at a state university in Turkey. A second group of the same size was randomly chosen as the control group from the same accessible population. All the participants were subject to a pre-test and a post-test measuring the size of the vocabulary known. The findings indicate a significant increase in the vocabulary size of the treatment group, surpassing the average size of undergraduate non-native speakers of English from non-European background.

Anahtar sözcükler
Anlambilimsel ilişki, sözcüksel farkındalık, sözcük dağarcığı, anlamsal eşleme, bireysel öğrenci, sözlük.

Üniversitede Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenimi Ortamında Sözcüklerin Anlamsal İlişkilerine Yönelik Farkındalık Oluşturma

Öz: İçerikli bir sözcüğü mantıklı anlamsal ilişkileriyle bağdaştırmak zihinsel sözlükçeye belirgin katkıda bulunan bir dil öğrenme yordamı olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda anlamsal eşlemenin, dil öğretiminde uygulanışı itibariyle etkili bir şablon niteliğinde olduğu görülmektedir. Bunun aksi şekilde, dil sınıflarında en düşük sıklıkta kullanılagelen öğrenim yordamlarından birisi konumunda olduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Bu çalışma, anlamsal eşlemenin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenenlerce kullanımının artılarını ve eksilerini ele almakta ve dolayısıyla bu meyanda bir farkındalık oluşturmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada yer alan katılımcılar, bir devlet üniversitesinde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenmekte olan 20 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Aynı erişilebilir ana kitleden yine aynı oranda ikinci bir grup da kontrol grubu olarak rastgele seçilmiştir. Tüm katılımcılar, kelime dağarcıklarının boyutunu ölçmek maksatlı birer ön sınav ve ardıl sınava tabi tutulmuşlardır. Bulgular, Avrupa kökenli bir temelden gelmeyen ve anadili İngilizce olmayan lisans öğrencilerinin ortalama dağarcığına kıyasla uygulama grubunun kelime dağarcığında kayda değer bir artışa işaret etmektedir.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary competence has long been one of the highly disputed issues in cognitive psychology. Several theories have been suggested on how human brain accesses, stores and manipulates lexical data. In fact, these three processes seem not to be independent but interactive since one may trigger the others. When the issue is learning the lexicon of a foreign language, awareness towards the nature of the steps in this triangular process comes into prominence. This type of competence is often assumed to be independent of grammatical competence. Pinker's (1999) approach reveals very basic but logical facets of human cognitive system as he benefits from the difference between the way how irregular verbs are restored in adult human mind contrary to the rule-based nature of regular verbs. In English, there are 180 irregular verbs that form their past tense in idiosyncratic ways. The only common grounds of these verbs are their being either mono-syllable or two-syllable verbs in which the first syllable functions as a prefix. Knowing these facts, an adult human brain first recalls the knowledge in mental dictionary which is related to the irregular verbs and then heads for the rules of the regular verbs, which human babies often fail to do since they have not been exposed to these forms.

Now that the existence of a mental lexicon is evident, the question on how this structure categorises input is another issue to be handled, for which the schema theory provides a reasonable perspective. That is to say, to interpret a particular situation in terms of a schema is to match the elements in the situation with the generic characterizations in the schematic knowledge structure (Anderson et al., 1978, p. 434). As our mental cognitive system is exposed to new information, it aims to relate this new information to an already existing knowledge by placing it into the relevant slots of the schemata. Anderson et al. (1978) claimed that this very same schemata provides 'ideational scaffolding' for text information on reading activities (p. 12). In a further study (Anderson et al., 1987, p. 266), a correlation between having a large-scale, long-term vocabulary growth and the acquisition of new schemata or restructuring existing ones was indicated. Furthermore, providing opportunities to enhance students' repertoire through new schemas is attributed to be of high importance. From this point of view, the constituents of such schemata in terms of vocabulary growth are of vital importance while considering that a word should not be regarded as an isolated and autonomous means of language (Altay & Dikilitaş, 2016, p. 111). In other words, there should be some sort of relations between a certain vocabulary item as a new knowledge and other items to share the same schema in different slots so that they can interact through lexical semantic relations.

Lexical semantic relations have a variety of types and can be categorized under 'has-a' relations and 'is-a' relations, though there is not only one specific taxonomy in the literature. The former (has-a relations) category serves for the relation of part and whole. Meronymy is the one which is based on part to whole. Meronyms can be either 'necessary' or 'optional' parts (Lyons, 1977). Holonymy is the converse relation of meronymy (Murphy, 2006) as holonym is a holistic unit which consists of meronyms. The latter category (is-a relations) bears a rich number of relation types when compared to the 'has-a' relation. Two of these are 'hyperonymy' and 'hyponymy' which stand for the super-subordinate relation (Fellbaum, 2005). In other words, if X is a hyponym of Y, then the extension of X is a subset of the extension of Y. Thus, we can say that hyponymy is a relation of inclusion whose converse is hyperonymy (Murphy, 2006). The third one, 'troponymy' is similar to hyponymy in that it relates only verb synset pairs in a way to expresses a particular manner of the other (Fellbaum, 2002).

Some words carry multiple meanings in a way to cause lexical ambiguity due to such relations as ‘polysemy’ and ‘homonymy’, which are often mistaken for each other. According to Murphy (2006), meanings of words extend or shift so that a single lexical item has several distinct senses in polysemy. While the lexical items have systematic polysemy relation if they are of a particular semantic class such as ‘glass’ and ‘cup’ as a container to drink, it is called non-systematic when their relation is limited with having two related senses but not part of a larger pattern as in ‘a person’s leg’ or ‘the leg of trousers’. There are usually some sensible semantic or pragmatic relations of polysemes. Conversely, homonyms are coincidental forms sharing the same phonological or written forms. That is, homophones are two distinct words pronounced in the same way, whereas homographs are written without any difference.

A further example of is-a relation can be regarded as ‘metonymy’. Metonyms are usually compared with metaphors due to their being figures of language; however, they are evidently different forms. Metaphors are based on analogy, whereas metonyms can stand alone in lexicon with certain sense relations (Nerlich, 2006). For that reason, metonyms have potential to have its place among the lexical semantic relations. Inevitably, metonyms trigger the formation and use of homonyms as well.

Among all the other relations, ‘synonymy’ and ‘antonymy’ are probably the most distinguished two on which not only lexicographers, but also learners and teachers focus intensively. A synonym can be defined as ‘a word which has the same, or nearly the same, meaning as another word’ and an antonym ‘a word which is opposite in meaning to another word’ (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Still, another controversy rises regarding these relations, basically towards how inclusive they are in their formation. Fellbaum (2002) regards synonyms as ‘words that denote the same concept and are interchangeable in many contexts’. From this point of view, certain hyponyms may also function as synonyms. There has been some opposition to this approach claiming that synonyms are only ‘identical semantic representations’, yet Murphy (2006) believes that synonyms are derived via a pragmatic principle ‘relation by contrast’. Consequently, there are several subtitles under this umbrella term as direct synonymy and full synonymy (Fellbaum, 2002) and close synonymy Kayaoğlu (2013). Such an ambiguity is true for antonymy as well because whether the terminology should be limited to direct antonyms or indirect antonyms is a matter of concern. In brief, some researchers emphasize contrasting gradable predicates as antonyms, while any lexical pairs that constitute semantic opposites are regarded so by many others (Murphy, 2006).

Based on the cognitive findings stated previously, lexical semantic relations are of high importance for learners’ schemata in terms of being basic lexical constituents necessary for a large-scale and long-term vocabulary growth. However, the taxonomy to name and group these relations seems to be conflicting in many occasions which may cause lexicographers some obstacles. The flexible nature of the context make these relations continue to offer only vague descriptions (Storjohann, 2010, p. 9). Considering a great deal of dictionary users are foreign language learners, all these linguistic ambiguities and conflicts underlie further problems in language education by making things even more difficult rather than facilitating the learning process.

After all, semantic mapping may offer panacea despite the rare usage of it in language classes (Schmitt, 1997). Thus, the fundamental point to be concentrated should be on how to use it. From a pedagogical view point, many EFL teachers in Turkey believe that as the first step, making learners focus on new vocabulary by internalizing it is required for successful language learning (Arikan, 2011, p. 5). Hence, the aim of this current study is to raise

language learners' awareness to the lexical semantic relations through mapping them by using their dictionaries in a way to internalize these items by using their own conceptualizations of the wor(l)d.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sampling

The accessible population in this study were L2 learners of English studying at a state university in Turkey. The medium language of instruction in the Faculty of Engineering of the university is English and the students who cannot pass the English proficiency exam at the beginning of the first semester should attend a mandatory preparatory language course for two semesters before taking their departmental courses. Students are placed into three levels in accordance with their exam results as A1, A2 and B1 constructed by considering the Common European Framework of Reference. As the courses continue, those who pass module exams continue with the next level. For this reason, an A1 group at the beginning of the academic year starts the second semester in A2 level. The sample group of 20 L2 learners of English was selected from this level for the treatment which was due to be conducted throughout the second semester. A second group from the same level and of the same population was randomly chosen as the control group.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Nation's (2012) Vocabulary Size Test was used to measure the vocabulary known by the two participant groups. This test includes questions each with four options, and a short but practical stem sentence including a lexical item. Test-takers are expected to relate this item to the correct option. The test has a number of variations but 20,000 words level was determined to be used as it has two versions. Therefore, it would be better to use two different tests with a tested similarity in terms of its style. Version A was used as the pre-test and Version B as the post-test. Rasch reliability measures were around .96 for this test (Nation, 2012). The test includes 100 questions and each correct choice provides 200 points. The total score in the end indicates an approximate number of the vocabulary size of a test-taker.

2.3. Experimental Design

The process followed in this research consists of three stages. The pre-test was answered by both groups at the very beginning of the second semester. Since the learners were newcomers to the school and were not familiar with the system, they only followed the institutional curriculum in the first semester. Meanwhile, they were being exposed to certain vocabulary learning strategies.

Once the pre-test results revealed that both groups shared similar vocabulary sizes, the pilot study started with the treatment group. The students were introduced with the lexical semantic relations. While doing this, they were not only provided verbal and written definition of the terms, but also examples from their everyday environment. However, that would not be enough as this study seeks a feasible alternative to use these theoretical concepts in practice; they were also provided a semantic mapping template in which the lexical semantic items could be stratified. Therefore, a hybrid vocabulary learning strategy was available to enhance the practicality of lexical semantic relations in their learning. A copy of this template was handed out to each student in the treatment group and each template was to be used as a schema for only one new lexical item. The schema was also suitable for the analysis of different sense relations.

The students were requested to carry out this paper-based study outside the classroom using the word list of the new vocabulary of their course book and this list was preloaded to the website of the school. They were urged not to use any external resources for the classification of the relations as it was going to be done in the classroom at the end of each coursebook unit. When a unit was over, the students were requested to contribute with their individual study data. That is to say, the data in their personal templates were collected. The next step was searching other possible relations using web-based resources such as WordNet®. As it is widely known, it is a project of semantic synsets which is used not only for the studies of human languages but also for artificial language. All these data were collected in WebspirationPro®, online software to map ideas and concepts using visual graphics. The logic behind using such software was to make their collaborative database eligible for the learners whenever and wherever they want. Moreover, each learner had an individual learner dictionary of these templates at the end of the semester.

After applying this practice for 15 units, the students took the post-test. As the lexical items in the tests did not include the items studied during the treatment procedure, any positive difference of the treatment group from the control group would be regarded as the indication of their significant awareness towards lexical semantic relations.

3. Findings

3.1. The Vocabulary Size Pre-test

The treatment group and the control group belonged to the same level in their departments and their pre-test results should normally show similarities. If this hypothesis was true, then it could be said that the vocabulary known by the members of both groups had to be parallel and the results would be suitable for further comparisons after the treatment. The Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality results of pre-test are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Test of Normality of different test-taker groups for the vocabulary size pre-test

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test Scores	Target L2	,160	20	,193	,946	20	,311
	Other L2	,105	20	,200(*)	,975	20	,849

As seen in Table 1, the students who were expected to compose the treatment group and the students of the control group were normally distributed ($p \geq ,05$). Additionally, to see if they were precisely distributed, measures of Skewness and Kurtosis were investigated. Table 2 shows these distributions.

Table 2
Skewness and Kurtosis results of different test-taker groups for the vocabulary size pre-test

	Group	Measures	Statistics
Pre-test Scores	Target L2	Skewness	,520
		Kurtosis	-,252
	Other L2	Skewness	-,341
		Kurtosis	-,262

It is indicated in Table 2 that the distribution in each group was reasonable. The data seems to be appropriate to conduct Independent Samples t-Test. Levene's Test shows the results of the variance analysis in Table 3.

Table 3
Levene's Test results for the equality of the student grades in the vocabulary size pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality Variences	
		F	Sig.
Pre-test Scores	Equal variences assumed	,125	,725

Levene's Test result depicts a normal distribution among students' grades ($p \geq ,05$). Since all three types of statistics above indicated an accurate distribution between the variables, it was possible to apply Independent Samples t-Test to see whether there was a significant difference between the correct responds of the students from both test-taker groups to the Vocabulary Size Pre-test. Table 4 shows the results of the Independent Samples t-Test.

Table 4
Independent Samples t-Test results related to the correct responds from the vocabulary size pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	P
Target L2	20	5380,000	797,100	-,514	38	,610
Other L2	20	5510,000	801,249			

It is evident in Table 4 that there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the test-taker groups ($t_{38} = -,514$, $p \geq ,05$). A minimal difference between the mean scores did not seem to cause inconvenience, hence, the vocabulary sizes of the treatment group and the control group were accepted to be close.

3.2. The Vocabulary Size Post-test

Whether the treatment had any positive influence over the vocabulary size, which consists of the words known rather than the words learned, could be measured through the comparison of the pre-test results given above and the post-test results given hereafter. Again, Table 5 includes the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality results of the post-test.

Table 5
Test of Normality of different test-taker groups for the vocabulary size post-test

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post-test Scores	Target L2	,129	20	,200(*)	,960	20	,553
	Other L2	,161	20	,188	,957	20	,480

The Shapiro-Wilk results presented in Table 5 highlights the normality of the participant groups of the post-test ($p \geq ,05$). As in the pre-test analysis, Skewness and Kurtosis descriptive results are intended to visualize the normality of the distribution in each participant group. The results are as in Table 6.

Table 6
Skewness and Kurtosis results of different test-taker groups for the vocabulary size post-test

	Group	Measures	Statistics
Post-test Scores	Target L2	Skewness	,494
		Kurtosis	-,217
	Other L2	Skewness	,637
		Kurtosis	,613

It is seen in Table 6 that the distribution was quite average for each group in the post-test as well. It can be said that the post-test scores of the control group stood for the greatest variation of the Vocabulary Size Tests. Nonetheless, Levene's Test in Table 7 indicated whether this variation threatened the equality of the variances.

Table 7
Levene's Test results for the equality of the student grades in the vocabulary size post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality Variences	
		F	Sig.
Post-test Scores	Equal variences assumed	1,597	,214

The Levene's Test result revealed the equality of the student scores obtained from the post-test ($p \geq ,05$). Therefore, the groups were suitable to be compared using Independent Samples t-Test again. Table 8 includes the data of this comparison.

Table 8
Independent Samples t-Test results related to the correct responds from the vocabulary size post-test

Group	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	P
Target L2	20	8910,000	1166,596	9,067	38	,000
Other L2	20	5910,000	910,118			

A significant difference between the vocabulary sizes of the treatment group and the control group can be inferred from Table 8 (t_{38} = 9,607, p ≤, 05). The mean scores also indicate a huge gap between the two groups, which stands for an average of 15 more correct responds out of 100 questions in the post-test. Such a gap should mean a considerable outcome of the treatment.

3.3. A Comparison of the Vocabulary Size Pre-test and Post-test

A final statistical remark worth mentioning is the comparison of the Vocabulary Size Test conducted as the pre-test and its post-test counterpart. Such a comparison may indicate a compact approach for the influence of the treatment within the treatment group as well as it may imply further about the vocabulary education in EFL context through the results of the control group.

The first comparison in this sense is to see if the control group had any significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, the data will be obtained through Paired Samples t-Test. Table 9 shows the Shapiro-Wilk results related to this participant group before this comparison.

Table 9
Test of Normality for the comparison of vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the control group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
Difference	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
	,138	20	,200*	,978	20	,899

It is seen in Table 9 that the pre-test and post-test results of the control group are normally distributed (p ≥ ,05). However, Skewness and Kurtosis results will depict the shape of this distribution better. Table 10 is towards these analyses.

Table 10
Skewness and Kurtosis results for the comparison of vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the control group

	Measures	Statistics
Test Scores	Skewness	,051
	Kurtosis	-,548

It is indicated in Table 10 that the distribution is reasonable. The data seems to be appropriate to conduct further analysis. As both of the primary analyses seem to be relevant for the

comparison, the next step is to see if there is a significant difference between the vocabulary sizes of this control group at the time of pre-test and post-test. The results of the comparison are stated in Table 11.

Table 11
Paired Samples t-Test results related to the comparison of the vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the control group

Test	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	P
Pre-test	20	5525,000	782,623	-1,430	19	,169
Post-test	20	5910,000	910,118			

Based on the data given in Table 11, it can be said that there is not a significant difference between the vocabulary sizes of the control group at the time of the pre-test and post-test ($t_{19} = -1{,}430$, $p \geq ,05$). On the other hand, the direction of the minor change in the mean scores is towards positive; that is to say, there is an increase in the correct responds to the post-test. However, this direction is limited with only 2 correct answers than in the pre-test as the difference is approximately 400 points.

On the other hand, it was previously pointed out that the treatment group had a relatively higher mean score in the post-test session. However, another Paired Samples t-Test is fundamental to assure the significance, if it is, of the case in the treatment group. The regular process in the other analyses is true in this very last analysis, too; therefore, Table 12 is towards the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality.

Table 12
Test of Normality for the comparison of vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the treatment group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
Difference	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
	,127	20	,200*	,967	20	,688

As given in Table 12, pre-test and the post-test scores of the treatment group are normally distributed ($p \geq ,05$). To see how precisely this distribution has taken place, Skewness and Kurtosis descriptive analyses should be checked. The results of these analyses are given in Table 13 below.

Table 13
Skewness and Kurtosis results for the comparison of vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the treatment group

	Measures	Statistics
Test Scores	Skewness	,192
	Kurtosis	-,411

Table 13 reveals that the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores is undoubtedly accurate. Therefore, there is no obstacle for the comparison of the test scores using Paired Samples t-Test. Table 14 represents the data attained through it.

Table 14
Paired Samples t-Test Results related to the comparison of the vocabulary size pre-test and post-test from the treatment group

Test	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	P
Pre-test	20	5380,000	797,100	-10,573	19	,000
Post-test	20	8910,000	1166,596			

In accordance with the statistics provided in Table 14, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores of the treatment group ($t19 = -10{,}5730$, $p \leq ,05$). Moreover, it is understood that the degree of this difference is around 17 correct answers provided by the treatment group in the post-test as each correct question means 200 points in Nation's 20,000 level Vocabulary Size Test, which is 100 questions in total.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Lexical semantic relations seem to be undervalued in the field of foreign language education. The underlying factors for their being so may be their rather theoretical nature as well ambiguous in many cases. On the other hand, they represent a significant means of acquiring new words necessary for a broader conceptual repertoire in mental dictionary.

Lexicographers usually limit their focus on synonymy and antonymy, whereas there are further relations not less vital then these two for L2 learners. How to implement them into foreign language education should be the focal question before speculating its impact. Therefore, tools to activate them are as important as using them. Semantic maps may be the panacea to stand up for the practical side of the relations. Those maps are among the rarest frequently used vocabulary learning strategies in language classrooms (Schmitt, 1997) and are usually regarded as third party strategies to enrich previous strategies just like polish after paint. On the other hand, mapping of lexical semantic relations can provide learner awareness to the nature, say 'habitat', of words as living beings.

It is clear in this study that a well-designed mapping of lexical semantic relations may provide more than other means of lexicography for the learners. The reason of this is not only because it is learners' own product, but also they view this very habitat in a broader perspective. However, learners should not be left alone at all. The strategy had better be facilitated by teacher's monitoring as well as extensive supplementary materials. Most of the available resources in this sense are frequently used databases by lexicographers indeed. For this reason, guiding learners to these databases is another supportive idea for the welfare of such implementations. A last but not least point to be mentioned is that learners see a concrete harvest of their studies in addition to numeric exam grades, which may stir their motivation.

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Young Learners' Attitudes and Motivation to Learn English

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Young learners,
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Abstract: According to recent modifications in Turkish educational system, English language teaching starts in the second grade. Young learners studying in this grade were in the focus in this study. This paper reported on the findings of a mixed method study conducted in three different primary schools in the west of Turkey. The main aim was to represent the views of the second graders regarding their motivation and attitudes toward learning English and their perceptions concerning English language learning and instruction. While quantitative data were gathered via two questionnaires from 192 participants; three personal semi-structured interviews and a focus-group interview were conducted for qualitative data gathering. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Following data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification phases, qualitative data were analyzed through interpretive-descriptive analysis technique. The findings indicated that parents, teachers, and favorable learning conditions and activities were important factors in determining young learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English. Students' attitudes were mostly positive toward learning English. Singing songs and playing games were their favorite activities and they had an intrinsic motivation to learn English.

Anahtar sözcükler
Genç öğrenen,
motivasyon,
tutum,
karma metot.

Genç Öğrenenlerin İngilizce Öğrenmeye Olan Tutum ve Motivasyonu

Öz: Türk eğitim sistemindeki son değişikliklere göre İngilizce eğitimi ikinci sınıfta başlamaktadır. Bu seviyedeki genç öğrenenler bu çalışmanın odağındadır. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'nin batısındaki üç farklı ilkokulda uygulanan karma yöntemli çalışmanın sonuçlarını raporlamaktadır. Ana amaç, ikinci sınıf öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenimine olan tutum ve motivasyonunu belirlemek ve İngilizce öğrenimi ve öğretimine ilişkin algılarını ortaya koymaktır. Bu amaçla nicel veri iki anket vasıtasıyla 192 katılımcıdan toplanırken; nitel veri için üç kişisel yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat ve bir odak grup görüşmesi uygulanmıştır. Nicel veri analizi için tanımlayıcı istatistikler kullanılmıştır. Veri indirgemesi, veri gösterimi ve sonuç çıkarma aşamalarını takiben, nitel veri, yorumlayıcı-tanımlayıcı analiz tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, genç öğrenenlerin İngilizce öğrenmeye olan tutum ve motivasyonunun, ebeveynleri, öğretmenleri, tercih edilen öğrenme ortamları ve aktiviteleri tarafından belirlendiğini ortaya koymuştur. Öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye olan tutumları çoğunlukla olumlu bulunmuştur. Şarkı söyleme ve oyun oynama en sevdikleri aktiviteler olarak belirlenirken, öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye içsel olarak motive oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır.

1. Introduction

In order to have successful English users, education ministries all over the world tend to lower the age of onset of formal English language teaching. Early start of language teaching is supported by the studies conducted in psychology, linguistics, and other related disciplines (Juriševič & Pižorn, 2013). In connection with this view, the grade of onset of teaching English in Turkey was lowered from sixth to fourth grade in 1997, and then from fourth to second grade in 2012.

The debates concerning the ideal age of onset for foreign language learning continues. Though teaching English to young learners is often viewed as challenging because of the characteristics of these learners (Cameron, 2003), such as inability to understand abstract concepts or short attention span, researchers provided the advantages of early start to learning English, such as young learners' lower affective filters, their ability to acquire the sounds and rhythms of the foreign languages faster, the longer time they can spend on learning languages, and their potential to develop higher awareness of intercultural identity (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979; Damar, Gürsoy, & Korkmaz, 2013). In Turkey's context, the first step in terms of lowering the age of onset of teaching English was taken in 1997 with the introduction of 8-year compulsory education. Increasing young learners' communicative abilities in English by exposing them to a foreign language at an earlier age was the main objective of this change. However, a recent result showed that EF EPI (Education First English Proficiency Index), which is a standardized test aiming to find out countries' level of English proficiency through gathering measurements of adult English proficiency, ranked Turkey 47th among 63 countries labeling Turkeys' English proficiency band as 'very low,' according to the data of the 2014 index (Savaşkan, 2016).

The effort to lower the age of onset of English continued in Turkey and a major change was implemented in 2012-2013 academic year. This new model coming along with the comprehensive educational reform not only comprised three four-year segments (primary, elementary, and high school levels) with a total of twelve years of compulsory education but also entailed lowering the starting age of English language learning from grade four (age 9) to grade two (ages 6-6,5) by the Ministry of National Education (hereafter MoNE) (2013). The reports concerning the theoretical and especially practical problems associated with Turkish young learners' English learning with regard to the 2005 curriculum, the problematic techniques, activities, materials, and methods employed with these learners, a departure from the integrated skills approach by emphasizing speaking and listening before writing and reading were important factors determining basic tenets of the current curriculum (Kırkgöz, Çelik, & Arıkan, 2016). The emphasis on the use of internet technology, learners' individual differences, involvement of young learners' parents in their kids' language learning, consideration of crowded classes and work load of teachers, the need of young learners to communicate with people from different cultures, the need to increase awareness of young learners to treat English as a means for human interaction, and the development of communicative competence as well as learner autonomy and intercultural awareness around the principles of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages were among the aspects mentioned during the design of the current English language curriculum (Kırkgöz, et al., 2016). After the revisions of several drafts, the current curriculum came into use, which included TPR, arts and crafts, and drama as the main activities and strategies for the first four-year segment. Speaking and listening were determined to be the focus skills for the second, third, and fourth grades. However, very limited writing and reading activities were added for the third and fourth grades as well (MoNE, 2013).

As teaching of English to young learners at the ages of six, seven, and eight in the second and the third grades is new in the context of Turkey, it has been comprehensively investigated by the researchers. Many researchers have already examined views on the second grade English course and curriculum from the perspectives of teachers (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Merter, Şekerci, & Bozkurt, 2014; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe, & Baykın, 2014; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015), school administrators (Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014), and students (Maviş & Bedir, 2015). The results of these studies investigating teachers' point of view mostly indicated that despite of the positive attitudes of the teachers concerning the early start of English teaching, they also thought that technological and physical facilities of the schools should be developed at schools. However, the inadequacy of the presentation of the program to the teachers (Alkan & Arslan, 2014), course book and activities suggested (Merter et al., 2014), high number of students in the classes, the problems in classroom management (Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015), teachers' lack of knowledge about how to teach effectively in this grade, lack of materials (Küçüktepe et al., 2014), lack of learning techniques and extra materials (İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015) were among the negative findings of the studies. School administrations' attitudes were also positive about teaching English to young learners. However, there was also agreement on the need of a revision (Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014).

The concerns of these studies were mostly related with school administrators' views about teaching of English to young learners and teachers' views regarding the curriculum of the second grade English teaching. Though several studies were conducted to investigate the views of the implementers of the second grade English teaching program, only Maviş and Bedir (2015) examined young learners' views on the program. They found out that young learners had positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more motivated when they learned English through games and activities. Moreover, students favored singing songs, pictures, and computer-based activities in their English classes (Maviş & Bedir, 2015). It is obvious that second grade students' views were neglected in the studies investigating several aspects of English curriculum and program of the second grade in Turkey.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Teaching English to Young Learners in Turkey

There was no English class in the public primary schools in Turkey until 1997 when compulsory education was extended to eight years. MoNE in Turkey conducted a huge reform in 1997 in education system. Among the changes in this reform, English was started to be offered as a compulsory course in public schools in the fourth grades. The motivating factors were Turkey's political and economic ambitions as well as Turkey's aim of keeping its relations with European countries using English (MoNE, 1997). This program's aims, content, methods, and evaluation system were reformed in 2004 by integrating English classes of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades with the final expectation of pre-intermediate English proficiency at the end of the eighth grade (MoNE, 2004a). According to targets of the program, students would have a good control of four skills in English language, they would tolerate other cultures, and they would be willing to speak in English. Although this program could not fully achieve its aims, it was the first program which could be claimed to be learner-centered highlighting communicative side of language (Kırkgöz et al., 2016).

Following 1997 English language teaching program, another one was provided by MoNE in 2006, which favored the principles of constructivist approach (MoNE, 2006). According to this program, from fourth grade to eighth grade learners should be provided with comprehensible input and they should be eager to use the language in the classroom context which would be supportive, motivating, and communicative (MoNE, 2006). This program

also defined fourth and fifth graders as young learners and provided characteristics of them as well. According to these characteristics, although young learners have short attention span, they have the knowledge of the world growing. They can work independently and in groups, but they need security, pleasure of studying, and personalized learning experience (MoNE, 2006). Moreover, singing, chants, games, craft activities, physical and mental involvement in the production of something concrete are among the activities suggested for these learners (MoNE, 2006).

However, the failure of 2006 program in some aspects, such as the inadequacy in improving students' communication skills and teachers' preference for the use of traditional teaching methods (Kırkgöz, et al., 2016) entailed a reform in 2013 in English language teaching, which was in general known as 4+4+4 system. With this recent change, the starting age for English language learning was lowered to second grade (6-6.5 years) like in many other countries in the world (MoNE, 2013). Developing language skills and communication were emphasized in this new program as well.

As this program focuses primarily on communicative aspects of language, while the main emphasis is on speaking and listening skills in second and third grades, reading and writing skills are more common in higher grades. In line with this, the program helps second graders love learning the foreign language and make them feel that language learning is fun and easy (MoNE, 2013). Thus, one of its aims is to create positive attitudes toward language learning for the second graders. In order to create enjoyable classroom atmosphere in second grade language classes, game-based and enjoyable activities are chosen (Erarslan, 2016). Students are not suggested to use notebooks. Cartoons, tales, maps, posters, cards, memos, and notes are among the suggested materials to be used by the teachers teaching in second grades.

Researchers investigating young learners' foreign language learning in the context of Turkey or any component of the new program examined foreign language teaching program within 4+4+4 program. In of these studies, Alkan and Arslan (2014) conducted an evaluation study on the second grade English language curriculum from the perspective of the teachers. Statistical results indicated that teachers' priorities were students' communication in the target language in English classes, the elimination of direct grammar teaching, and focus on listening activities through songs. Although teachers were pleased with the fun the program provided in English classes, they also considered it necessary to revise the goals and aims of the new program. In another recent study conducted with the same purpose, İyitoğlu and Alçı (2015) examined second grade English teachers' opinions about second grade English language curriculum. Analysis of the qualitative data showed that there was a lack of the use of extra materials. Another problem was the number of students in the classes which created serious problems regarding the implementation of the program. On the other hand, the teachers appreciated the new program for the needs analysis conducted, assessment, and vocabulary teaching. Language teachers' views concerning teaching English in 4+4+4 system were also investigated in another study (Gürsoy, Korkmaz, & Damar, 2013). The results showed teachers' preference for the early start of language teaching. According to the teachers' views, songs and games should be employed in teaching English to young learners with the special emphasis on speaking and listening activities. The need for in-service teacher training for teaching of English for young learners was also emphasized. The results of another recent study with the purpose of investigating language teachers' views on the second grade English course and curriculum (Küçüktepe, et al., 2014) indicated that suggested teaching techniques and methods in the program were suitable for the students' level. Educational games, drama, listening and speaking activities, and singing songs were among

the most popularly used activities. The time allocated for the implementation of the program was also found suitable by the teachers. Flashcards, CDs, and songs were the most commonly used materials. However, classroom management and lack of expertise and knowledge regarding teaching English to young learners were the problems mentioned by the teachers. English language teachers' views on the second grade English classes were also qualitatively examined in another study (Merter, et al., 2014). The problems with the course book and suggested activities and lack of technological equipment were found to be problematic. However, the teachers' attitudes toward the new program were mostly positive. In addition, with regard to the new Elementary English teaching curriculum, the processes for preparing the program as well as political, pedagogical, and contextual factors affecting the implementation were investigated from an insider's point of view as well (Kırkgöz, et al., 2016).

2.2. Attitudes and Motivations of Young Learners in Learning English

Despite their similarity, language learning motivation and attitude are two different individual differences affecting language acquisition success of the learners. They are accepted closely inter-related factors and often investigated together (Djigunović, 2012). While attitude basically refers to "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event" (Ajzen, 1988, p. 4), language attitude is known as the positive or negative feelings toward a language.

Motivation, is referred as a combination of the desire to learn the language, positive attitudes to learning the language, and the effort invested in learning (Gardner, 1985). Although, language attitude and language learning motivation are believed to be the main predictors of success and failure in language acquisition (Gardner, 1985), there are numerous other factors affecting foreign language learning performance and success. Rosansky (1975) emphasized the importance of interaction among affective and cognitive factors in the language reception process and mentioned about the impossibility of separating these factors in a meaningful way.

From the research that investigated the impact of attitude and motivation on foreign language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Smythe et al., 1975), the view that intelligence and aptitude on one hand, and attitude and motivation on other should be treated as independent variables was established. The latter ones have crucial roles in determining whether a student will start learning foreign language and how learning will develop (Alexander & Murphy, 1998; Boekaerts, 2001; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998).

The results of attitude and motivation related studies showed significant differences depending on the context and the participants. In general, the factors affecting learners' attitudes were age (Julkunen & Borzova, 1997), gender (Carr & Pauwels, 2006), and language proficiency level (Lukmani, 1972); whereas the young learners mostly adopted attitudes of their teachers, parents or friends (Szpotowicz, Djigunovic, & Enever, 2009; Nikolov, 1999). Therefore, factors affecting young learners' attitudes were the teacher (Vilke, 1979), favorable teaching conditions (Djigunovic, 2009), and early start in foreign language learning (Nikolov, 1999). The same differences could be claimed for the motivation aspect as well. Young learners' motivation to learn a foreign language varied according to the factors of parental influence (Ohlshtain, Shohamy, Kemp, & Chatow, 1990), positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher (The Pecs Project (Nikolov, 2002), Nikolov, 1999; Julkunen, 2001), and impact of learning conditions (Djigunović, 2009). Moreover, young

learners are mostly intrinsically motivated to learn a language till the age of eleven after which the indications of instrumental motivation appear (Nikolov, 1999).

The age of onset for the language learning is one of the important factors determining the attitude, motivation, and language learning success of the learners. Though researchers remain debating about the proposition of 'the earlier, the better', there are some counter arguments as well. In this respect, Snow (1983) comparing adults and children found out superiority of older learners of second languages to the younger ones. However, critical period hypothesis still receives positive outcomes from several research studies in psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines. This hypothesis claims a negative correlation between the ages of the learners and the success of the acquisition of foreign language. Apart from the age of learners, obviously there are some other factors affecting young learners' success, such as environmental factors and teachers' way of teaching. Researchers already proved that game-like activities work well with the young learners (Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011). The main target of teaching English to young learners is to make learners develop an intrinsic motivation toward learning it and develop their communication skills in this language. This target is also embraced by the ministry of education in Turkey for the English program of second graders (MoNE, 2013).

Though the perspectives of different stakeholders were examined in the context of young learners, factors affecting young learners' success in language learning were neglected. Among these factors, motivation is considered as the most influential one by the teachers (Williams & Burden, 1997). Apart from motivation, learners' attitudes towards language learning are crucial for the acquisition of that foreign language. Although researchers attempted to understand the factors affecting young learners' motivation and attitude to learn a foreign language (Juriševič & Pižorn, 2013; Nikolov, 1999; Djigunović, 2012), the literature on young learners' motivation and attitude to learn English in both Turkish and all over the world is still scarce. Among the limited number of studies, Nikolov (1999), who investigated attitudes and motivation of Hungarian young learners in a longitudinal study, found out that children's motivation to learn English was based on several factors, such as classroom experience, the teacher, external reasons, and utilitarian reasons. The extrinsic motives, such as rewards, grades, and approval were very important for the young learners. Playing games was students' favorite activity in English classes. In another study conducted in Slovenian context, Juriševič and Pižorn (2013) investigated students aged 6-8 found out that students developed positive attitudes towards language learning and they preferred activities involving games to classic reading and writing activities. In another study presenting an overview of the papers focusing on young foreign language learners' attitudes and motivation in European context, Djigunović (2012) explained approaches to studying learners' characteristics and results of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Young learners' changing nature and instability was the main conclusion of this study.

Despite of the importance of these constructs in language learning, no attempt has been made to investigate the attitude and motivation of the young learners at this age in Turkish context. Only Maviş and Bedir (2014) investigated the opinions of teachers and second year students (aged 7-8) concerning English program applied in 2012-2013 academic year. The data gathered from the students' diaries showed that students' love of their English teacher, learning new things, the possibility of communicating with foreign people, and entertaining atmosphere of English classes were the reasons why they liked English classes. Students mostly developed positive attitudes towards English classes and they also wanted to continue learning English. Colors, numbers, and apologizing were students' favorite subjects. To fill

this gap in this field especially in the context of Turkey, this study attempted to find out the perspectives, attitudes, and motivation of young learners toward learning English. Therefore, it is expected that the findings will shed light to the following research questions:

1) What are Turkish young learners' attitudes towards learning English?
2) What are young learners' perceptions of English language learning and instruction?
3) What are young learners' perceptions of motivational orientations toward learning English?

3. Method

The design of the present study is mixed method design, which combines and associates both qualitative and quantitative designs to strengthen the structure of the study and to increase reliability and validity of the results by triangulating different forms of data gathering techniques. The main strategy of inquiry in this research design is concurrent mixed methods, in which the researcher collects both forms of data at the same time and integrates them to interpret about the overall findings (Creswell, 2003). In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problems in this study, this strategy of inquiry is employed by collecting data through questionnaires, personal interviews, and a focus-group interview.

3.1. Participants and Setting

The present study was conducted in three different primary schools in the Çanakkale province of Turkey. The main goal was to represent the views of all second graders regarding their motivation and attitudes toward learning English. Therefore, the data were gathered from three different districts ranging from low developed rural areas to developed city centers in the west of Turkey. With this aim, quantitative data were gathered via a questionnaire from 192 second graders. For the qualitative data, three semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with one student from each school. In addition, three participants from each school with a total of nine participants joined the focus-group interviews. Participants of personal interviews were coded P1, P2, P3; and participants of focus-group interview were coded F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, and F9 for anonymity. The number of students from both sexes was equal in the interviews. All the participants were seven years old and they started learning English first time in the second grade. For the quantitative data, convenience sampling strategy was employed where members of the target population meet certain criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, or willingness to participate of the participants (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, geographical proximity of the schools to the researcher and the easy accessibility of the students were the two factors that played role in the determination of the participant selection procedure.

3.2. Instruments

In order to gather quantitative data, a questionnaire with a total of 19 questions was developed by the researcher. During the questionnaire development process, the data collection instruments employed in the studies of Juriševič and Pižorn (2013) and Sougari and Hovhannisyan (2013) were used with some minor changes. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section aimed to find out young learners' favorite school subject, their ideas regarding how they had expected to learn English before they started learning it, the activities in their English classes, and their ideas about where they could see an English speaker. This section revealed participants' general views regarding English.

The second section of the questionnaire included five motivation related questions with multi-choice format. The main aim was to measure learners' likes, dislikes, and their reason to learn

English. In the third section, the remaining ten attitude-related questions made use of a four point Likert style. The items in this section aimed to measure young learners' views regarding their English class, their English book, their English teacher, their parents' views about kids' learning English, and learning English in general. This Likert-type range was specifically designed for this age group including 'yes', 'a little', 'no', and 'I don't know'. The format of the paper was made suitable for the age group as well supported by several different smileys and colorful pictures. In order to attract young learners' attention, rather than just marking, they were required to paint the boxes or smileys suitable for them. Students' classroom teachers and their English teachers were consulted during the questionnaire development process as well. All the questions were written in Turkish. The internal consistencies of the scales were α= .85 and α= .87 for attitude and motivation scales respectively.

The questions used in the personal interviews were similar to the items in the questionnaire. However, compared to the questionnaire data, it was possible to elaborate the answers to get deeper understandings of the young participants. Semi-structured interview style was employed because communication with kids at this age may deviate from the target easily. Therefore, a set of prepared questions was used as a guide. Extra prompts were also used during the interviews.

The questions used in semi-structured personal interviews were also used during the focus-group interviews. The gist of using focus-group interview in this study was to let the learners have an opportunity to listen each other's words and get inspired from each other (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). It was observed during personal interviews that kids may remain silent when they respond alone. However, in focus-group interviewing the researcher not only controls the flow of interaction but also gathers the participants' ideas coming up as a result of discussion among them. In this respect "the researcher may thereby elicit a richer data set than if he or she is conducting individual interviews" (Nunan & Bailey, 2008, p. 315). Hence, focus-group interview helped them to express their ideas in a more comfortable atmosphere and to get inspired from one another. The main reason to employ focus group interview in this study was to let participants spark off one another and to let them suggest new ideas that any one student might not have thought of (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

3.3. Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The quantitative data were gathered with the help of three different teachers responsible for teaching English in participants' classes. Kids were instructed to color smileys for their answers. Individual semi-structured interviews and focus-group interview were conducted by the researcher with the assistance of their English teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (SPSS). Three flows of activities were followed for the analysis of the qualitative data: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984). First, both personal interviews and focus-group interview data were transcribed and irrelevant parts were removed. Second, they were put into separate tables for classification, and finally, the results were provided by employing interpretive-descriptive analysis technique. The reliability of the quantitative instrument was estimated with Cronbach's alpha. In addition, validity and reliability of this study were also established through triangulation of quantitative statistics with the findings of personal and focus-group interviews.

4. Findings

According to descriptive statistics results, young learners' favorite class was mathematics (34.9%) which was followed by English (28.1%), physical education (25%), and Turkish

language (7.3%) class. However, in personal interviews and focus-group interviews, all students chose English as their favorite class. As previously put forward, parents' attitude toward learning a foreign language is one of the important factors determining kids' wish to learn it. However, only 44% of the young learners' parents speak English as reported by the participants in this study. Descriptive statistics concerning young learners' attitudes toward learning English were provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of young learners' attitudes toward learning English

Expressions	***Yes***		***A little***		***No***		***I don't know***	
	%	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**	***f***
1. I would like to continue learning English.	87.5	168	8.9	17	3.6	7	0	0
2. It is fun to learn English.	84.4	162	12.0	23	2.6	5	1.0	2
3. My parents say that learning English is important.	82.8	159	10.9	24	2.6	5	2.6	5
4. I like my English teacher.	82.8	159	6.3	12	9.9	19	.5	1
5. Our English book is fun.	80.2	154	13.5	26	3.6	7	1	2
6. My parents are happy that I learn English.	79.7	153	11.5	22	4.7	9	4.2	8
7. I like English.	79.6	152	16.2	31	3.7	7	.5	1
8. I'm looking forward to English classes.	73.4	141	15.1	29	9.9	19	1.6	3
9. I am good at English.	56.8	109	35.9	69	6.3	12	1	2
10. English is easy to learn.	42.9	82	47.6	91	9.4	19	0	0

Firstly, it was obvious that young learners had quite positive attitudes toward learning English. Over 85% of these learners wanted to continue learning it and they found it fun to learn English. Concerning the wish to continue learning English, F8 stated that: *'yes, I want to continue learning English, because I want to be an English teacher*.' It was also obvious that learners' parents supported them in having positive attitudes because they were both pleased that their kids learned English and they explicitly stated that learning English was important for young learners.

Except for 10% of the participants, all young learners liked their English teachers and for most of them their English book was fun. When learners were interviewed about the possible reasons why they found it fun to learn English, P1 explained it: *'we enjoy on Fridays in our English classes. It is very interesting because we speak the same in mathematics (Turkish) but we speak differently in English classes.*'

Almost 80% of them liked learning English. However, it was not very easy for them to learn it, therefore almost half of them found it only 'a little' easy to learn this language. Supporting this result, P3 stated that: *'I think it is very difficult to learn because pronunciation is very hard for me.*' On the other hand, students provided counter ideas as well. For instance, F5 stated that: *'I think English is easy because I can answer all questions our teacher asks.'*

Regarding young learners' perceptions of English language learning and instruction, they had various ideas. To start with, when this research was conducted, learners could sing the song of alphabet, introduce themselves, meet someone, and say colors and numbers with their current English knowledge. When they were interviewed what they would change if they were the teacher in their English class, mostly they seemed to be pleased with the method followed by

their teachers because they said they would not change anything (P2, F1, F5, F6, F8, F9). However, P1 stated that: *'I would not change anything, but maybe I can add more games*.' Similarly, P3 also suggested games and songs by stating that: *'I would allow students to play games and sing songs in the class.'* Finally, when they were given the chance to change the book, they could not provide suggestions. Only P1 stated that: *'I like it, but I would add more colorful pictures because I want to look more when they are colorful. When I see writing on the page, I don't like it.'* Another interesting finding was found concerning the mismatches between students' expectations regarding learning English before they started learning it and how they learn now. Results showed that 113 participants among 192 had expected to learn English just by listening to their teacher before they started learning English. 'Writing and reading' (*f*= 39) and 'doing homework' (*f*= 29) were also popular expectations among learners. It was interesting to find that only 6% of all participants expected to learn by playing games and singing. In contrast to the expectations, learners mostly write (41.1%), cut and paste (33.9%), say words (9.9%), play games (7.8%), paint (4.2%), sing and dance (3.1%) in their English classes.

Students' perceptions of English as a language and speakers of English changed according to the place they lived in and their family. When they were interviewed about the possible speakers of English, they provided different answers, such as my sister (F1), my uncle (F5), singers (F9), Germans (P2), and tourists in Çanakkale (P3). Teachers' use of the target language also shaped students' perceptions because for 35% of all participants English speaking person was 'my teacher'. The rest thought that 'people on holiday' (45%) and 'people on TV' (20%) speak English. It was also interesting to find out that some of them were not aware of the fact that they were learning a foreign language. It was more like *'something different than their own language*' as in the expression of P1 above. Table 2 illustrated the items representing young learners' motivation to learn English.

Table 2
Young learners' motivation toward learning English

Expressions	**Answers**	***f***	***%***
Which one is the happiest moment for you in English classes?	Playing games	58	30.2
	Writing	29	15.1
	Singing	60	31.3
	Repeating words	45	23.4
Why do you learn English?	To speak with the tourists	30	15.6
	Because it is our class	22	11.5
	To speak English	105	54.7
	Because I like it	35	18.2
Which one is the most boring one for you in English classes?	Playing games	25	13
	Singing	13	6.8
	Writing	46	24
	Repeating words	24	12.5
	Waiting friends to finish the activity	84	43.8
Which one is your favorite activity in English classes?	Writing	40	20.8
	Saying words	23	12
	Painting	44	20.8
	Cut and paste activities	16	8.3
	Singing	23	12

	Playing games	41	21.4
	Repeating words	5	2.6
Which one is the most difficult for you in English classes?	Repeating words	42	21.9
	Playing games	1	.5
	Answering teacher's questions	49	25.5
	Painting	12	6.3
	Cut and paste activities	13	6.8
	Writing	39	20.3
	Singing	23	12
	Saying words	12	6.3

The results indicated that singing songs and playing games were the activities that made students happy. Repeating the words also made them feel happy in English classes. Although it did not take place in quantitative data, students mentioned about painting activities as well (P2, P3, F5). It was obvious that symbolic awards worked very well with this age-group learners. P1 stated that: *'we play a game, that time I feel very good. We put parts of the pictures together after cutting them from book and if it is correct, teacher gives us a star*.'

Young learners' motivation to learn English varied. It was very clear that they learned English just to be able to speak English. This response included speaking English with various recipients. Young learners explained this in their own words, such as, F3: *'when we see a tourist, we can talk with him'*, F8: *'we can understand what the tourist says'*, F7: *'when foreign kids come here, I would like to meet them'*. Students also learned English just because they liked it and they had it as a course in their program. In this respect, P1 stated that: *'I learn English to be successful in my classes, to be an English teacher or professor*.' Apart from these reasons, students also provided their concerns for future by stating that '*when we go to higher school, we will need it*' (F6), and *'I learn English in order to teach it to children when I grow u*p' (P2).

One of the most problematic issues regarding young learners' motivation to learn English was heterogeneity in the classroom in terms of students' readiness level to learn a foreign language. It was obvious that the most boring moment for the learners in English classes was waiting friends to finish the activity. Especially when this activity included writing or cut and paste actions, some students spent very long time on it and the ones finishing fast became bored. P2 explained it: "*when I am waiting my friends to finish the activity, I really feel bored, because some of my friends cannot write or read fast*". Writing was also another boring activity for young learners, according to the data.

Painting, playing games, and writing were learners' favorite activities in English classes. Students in the personal and focus-group interviews also supported these answers. P2 stated that: *'painting and cut and paste activities are my favorite because I enjoy doing them*'. It was interesting to find out that writing was boring for students but it was also among their favorite activities. Finally, young learners found it difficult to answer teacher's questions, repeat the words in English, and write in English classes.

In addition, only few significant differences could be observed in the responses of the participants in personal semi-structured interviews and focus-group interview. They were presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Major differences in the responses of the participants in personal and focus-group interviews

Questions	Responses of the participants	
	Personal semi-structured interviews	**Focus-group interviews**
How do you like your English classes? Why?	**P1:** *We enjoy on Fridays in our English classes. It is very interesting because we speak the same in mathematics (Turkish) but we speak differently in English classes*.	**F9:** *I like our English classes because we play games and sing songs.*
When do you feel the worst during your English classes?	**P2:** *When I am waiting my friends to finish the activity, I really feel bored, because some of my friends cannot write or read fast.*	**F6:** *When I have to write the meaning of the words in Turkish.*
Why do you learn English?	**P1***: I learn English to be successful in my classes, to be an English teacher or professor*. **P2:** *I learn English in order to teach it to children when I grow u*p	**F3:** *When we see a tourist, we can talk with him.* ***F8:*** *We can understand what the tourist says*. ***F7:*** *When foreign kids come here, I would like to meet them*. **F6:** *When we go to higher school, we will need it*.
Who speaks English?	**P3:** *The students who already learnt English before us for example seventh or eighth graders. I* mean older students. **P1:** *English teachers.*	**F3:** *Tourists*
What would you change if you were your English teacher?	**P1:** *I would not change anything, but maybe I can add more games.* **P3:** *I would allow students to play games and sing songs in the class.*	**F1:** *I would change the fast songs because I can't sing them.*
Do you like your English book? What would you like to change in your English book?	**P1:** *I like it, but I would add more colorful pictures because I want to look more when they are colorful. When I see writing on the page, I don't like it.*	**F8:** *I would add more animal pictures because I like animals so much.*

Although the responses of the participants in both personal interviews and focus-group interview were quite similar, there were some differences as well. First, while the reason why P1 liked his English classes was the language (English) used in English classes, it was the games and songs that made it attractive for F9. Speaking another language automatically takes attention of the young learners as in the expression of P1. However, games, songs, and other activities were the other factors that made English classes more interesting for F9. The moments when the students felt bored in English classes also differed. While waiting for

friends who could not finish the activities on time was the main reason for P2, writing meanings of words in Turkish played the role of boring activity for F6.

One of the most significant differences observed was the reason to learn English. While it was mostly about their future profession for the students in the personal interviews, such as to be an English teacher (P1) or to teach it to children (P2), it was mostly the communication with the tourists for the students in the focus-group interview (F3, F8, F7). Similarly, it was the tourists who speak English for the young learners in the focus-group interview, whereas English speaking people were the students in the upper classes for P3 and the English teachers for P1. In terms of the changes students would do if they had the chance, while P1 and P3 suggested adding more games and songs to their English program in the personal interviews, F1 preferred changing the fast songs due to his inability to sing them well.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The focus of the present study was on investigating young learners' motivation and attitudes toward learning English. In general, almost all of them liked learning English, which is in line with the results of the study of Maviş and Bedir (2015). However, although they liked English, they found it difficult to learn. In order to make it easier for the learners, young learners' parents supported them to make them have positive attitudes by expressing their contentedness that they learn it, and also by stating the significance of learning a foreign language to their kids. It is already known that young learners mostly adopt the attitudes of their teachers, parents, or friends (Szpotowicz et al., 2009, Nikolov, 1999). It was already claimed that young learners' motivation to learn a foreign language depends partly on parental influence (Ohlshtain et al., 1990). Although more than half of the participants' parents did not speak English, it was obvious that their positive perspective on their kids' learning English created students' positive attitudes and high intrinsic motivation to learn English in the context of this study.

The investigation of young learners' attitudes toward learning English showed that learners mostly exhibited positive attitudes toward learning English, which is in accordance with the results of Nikolov's study (1999) who found out that young learners had more positive attitudes toward learning English compared to older learners. Apart from exhibiting positive attitudes, participants were also intrinsically motivated to learn English because over %85 of them found it fun to learn English and they wanted to continue learning it. It was interesting that some learners found it interesting to learn English just because they spoke a different language from other classes.

Additionally, students suggested including more games and songs by decreasing the number of writing activities in their programs. It was also obvious that what students expected in terms of the way they would learn English and how they learn it in their classes were too different from one another. They mostly expected to learn English just by listening to their teachers, writing, and reading, and doing homework as they used to do in their other classes. However, what they found out during their English classes were quite different, such as cut and paste activities, singing and dancing, painting, and repeating words.

It was also obvious that students' perceptions of English as a language and speakers of English changed according to the place they lived in, their family, and their teachers. English speaking people for the young learners in the context of this study were the tourists visiting their towns, the people in their families, and their English teachers. Therefore, this result also supports the claims of Vilke (1979), Djigunovic (2009), The Pecs Project (Nikolov, 2002),

Nikolov, (1999), and Julkunen (2001) who support the idea that young learners' attitudes and motivation are affected by the teacher, favorable teaching conditions, positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher, and impact of learning conditions respectively.

Learners in this study stated that they enjoyed singing songs and playing games most in learning English. This result is also in accordance with the results obtained by Szpotowicz and his friends (2009). Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) also suggested that games and songs could be good sources to make the learners be willing to learn English since they are entertaining and intrinsically motivating for children.

There are some pedagogical implications of this study. First, teachers of English for young learners should use more symbolic awards in their classes by giving a star or putting a smiley on their face or notebooks as a response to students' efforts to learn English because it is one of the most important factors motivating and increasing positive attitudes of young learners to learn English. It is also suggested that teachers should include more games, songs, and painting activities in their classes also they should eliminate writing activities. One important institutional implication stems from the unstable readiness level of the learners at this age. Second graders differ greatly from each other regarding the ability to write, read, or do some basic activities, such as cutting, painting, and pasting in Turkey. The difference among the learners causes the more successful ones to wait longer which makes them feel bored and eventually lose their attention and motivation. Therefore, only for English classes, learners from different classes may be grouped according to their abilities so that teachers can design learning activities which can be optimally set in students' zone of proximal development.

As a final remark, this study has the limitation of employing a small sample size. Future researchers should expand the number of participants so as to determine further young learners' views concerning their attitude and motivation to learn English in an EFL context. Also, cross-cultural studies may be organized in order to compare learners in different educational settings.

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