

**LEXICAL APPROACH IN TEACHING VOCABULARY TO YOUNG  
LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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**M.A. THESIS**

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## YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÖZÜ

### ÇOCUKLARA KELİME ÖĞRETİMİNDE LEKSİKAL YAKLAŞIM

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Kelime bilgisi yabancı dil öğrenim süresince önemli rol oynar. Dil öğrenmeyi sözcük kalıpları edinimi olarak kabul eden leksikal yaklaşımının öne sürdüğü sözcük kalıpları kullanımı İngilizce dili öğretiminde son zamanlarda kullanılan bir yoldur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sözcük kalıplarını kullanmanın çocukların tanımlayıcı ve yaratıcı kelime bilgileri üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma Haki Yener İlköğretim Okulu'nda yapılmıştır. Veriler beşinci sınıftaki iki şubeden toplanmıştır. Çalışmadaki tüm çocuklar İngilizce öğreniminin başlangıç seviyesindedir. İki gruptan biri deney diğeri ise kontrol grubu olarak belirlendi. İki grupta da 31 öğrenci vardır. Beşinci sınıfların müfredatına uygun 14 hedef kelime seçildi. Uygulamadan önce, öğrencilerin kelime düzeylerinden emin olmak ve hedef kelimeleri belirleyebilmek için iki gruba da kontrol listeleri uygulandı. İki kısa okuma parçası kullanıldı ve deney grubuyla kontrol grubu arasındaki tek fark deney grubundaki hedef kelimelerin sözcük kalıpları halinde gösterilmesi ve alıştırmaların bu şekilde yapılmasıdır. Diğer yandan, kontrol grubunda hedef kelimeler tek başlarına gösterildi ve alıştırmalar da bu şekilde yapıldı. Bu uygulamadan sonra, iki son test öğrencilere verildi. İlk başta üretim testi uygulandı, bir

hafta sonra tanıma testi öğrencilere verildi. Bu gruplar arasındaki farkı incelemek için T- test kullanıldı. Çalışmanın bulguları deney ve kontrol grupları arasında önemli bir fark olduğunu gösterdi. Uygulama öğrencilerinde tanıma ve üretici kelime öğrenimi için bu uygulamanın önemli etkilerinin olduğu görüldü. İngilizce dili öğretiminde kelime kalıplarının kullanımı sonucunda uygulama grubundaki çocukların kelime bilgilerinin geliştiği belirlendi.

## ABSTRACT

### LEXICAL APPROACH IN TEACHING VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in foreign language learning process. Using lexical phrases proposed by the Lexical Approach, which accepts the language learning as phrase acquisition is a recent way in English language teaching. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of using lexical phrases on the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of young language learners. The study was conducted at Haki Yener Primary School. The data were drawn from two groups from the fifth grade students. All students were young English language learners at the beginning level of proficiency. One group was labeled as the experimental group and the other group was the control group. Both groups included 31 students. 14 target words were chosen according to the curriculum for the fifth grade. Before the treatment checklist was applied to both groups in order to be certain of their vocabulary level and in order to choose the target words. Two small reading passages were used and the only difference between the experimental group and the control group was that the target words were presented and practiced as lexical phrases in the experimental group. Target words were taught and practiced individually in the control group. After the treatment,

two post tests were applied to the students. The production test was conducted at first, and one week later, the recognition test was given to the students. In order to examine the differences between the groups, T-test was used. The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. It was seen that a significant treatment effect was found in the treatment-group students for receptive and productive vocabulary learning. It was determined that young language learners in the treatment group improved their vocabulary in English language learning /teaching situation as a result of using lexical phrases.

## JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

.....'ın .....  
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Vocabulary is an essential integral part of foreign language teaching at the early stages of language learning. Celce–Murcia and Rosensweig (1989) claim that vocabulary should be recognized as a central element in foreign language instruction from the beginning stages and having an adequate stock of vocabulary often helps the learner more not only in reading comprehension, but also in achieving more efficient survival communication than having a perfect command of structures with an inadequate amount of vocabulary. In learning a target language it is crucial for students to have some control over the lexical items of the language they want to use. Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) state that all language learners are well aware of the fact that learning a target language involves the learning of large numbers of words. As Wilkins (1972) stated “while without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 111). Moreover, Kim (2008) states that vocabulary is one of the essential components of a language; so, second language vocabulary acquisition has been the focus of an increasing numbers of studies in EFL and ESL. According to Taguchi (2007) language acquisition is the process of learning phrases/chunks and their associated function in context and the use of chunks is very effective and useful in the early stages of second / foreign language acquisition. Lexical phrases play a crucial role in learning/ teaching target language. For this reason, Lexical Approach to second /foreign language teaching and learning has received interest in recent years as an alternative to traditional grammar-based approaches which emphasize the analysis of individual language items when ever possible. Bolinger( 1976) claims “language does not expect us to build everything starting with lumber, nails and blueprint, but provides us with an incredibly large number of prefabs” ( cited in Fan, 2009, p.1). In other

words, language consists of phrases and language learners are expected to learn and use these phrases in a meaningful context. According to this view, Lexical Approach comes to the stage. Qin (2005) states that the lexical approach places communication of meaning at the center of language learning, which leads to great emphasis on the main carrier of meaning: vocabulary. Nattinger and Decarrio (1992) suggest that the relationship between words comes first in lexical approach and this approach gives language learners more accurate picture of the use of the target language. Also, Bogaards (2001) emphasizes that vocabulary acquisition includes the learning of new meanings for combinations of words.

In Turkey, English is a foreign language and it is an integral part of all levels of national education. In state elementary schools students only have three-hour-English lessons at the fifth/fourth grade in a week and they have four-hour-English lessons at the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The students come across with many unknown words in foreign language learning process. Using beneficial and appropriate methods and techniques in accordance with young language learners' learning features makes this limited time effective in language teaching environment.

Using lexical phrases plays a crucial role in teaching/ learning a target language in lexical approach. Therefore, the lexical approach makes the teaching of lexical phrases a primary component of the approach. According to Boers et al (2006) the main reasons for this include:

- Being able to use lexical phrases makes the students sound more native-like.
- Lexical phrases are retrieved from the memory holistically; so this makes students more fluent.

The use of these phrases creates a comfort zone for students. If they can use multiword units without error, they will feel more confident about their language use. These reasons provide young language learners with a comfortable and effective vocabulary learning environment in language learning situation.

As a result, there are various kinds of lexical phrases and they are main stones for language learners to use the target language. Therefore, the fundamental element of the lexical approach is the lexical phrase. The lexical approach is not a new all-embracing method, but a set of principles based on a new understanding of language. It is based on

the belief that words and word combinations are the foundations of language. Lewis (1993) emphasizes that the lexical approach develops many of the fundamental principles advanced by proponents of the communicative approach and the most important difference is the increased understanding of the nature of lexis in naturally occurring language, and its potential contribution to language pedagogy. Consequently, using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary to young language learners has a lot of advantages for increasing their vocabulary gain and helping them to use the target language interactively.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Vocabulary knowledge is the bridge among the skills in foreign language learning environment. Therefore, it influences foreign language learning process directly. Especially, for beginner levels vocabulary knowledge is much more important. Schmitt (2000) states that although vocabulary has been considered as individual words, it has become clear that much of lexis (lexical phrase) consists of sequences of words which operate as single units. So, lexical phrases are significant for vocabulary acquisition and they are related to functional language use.

It is often observed by teachers in Turkey that language learners have difficulty in learning new words in foreign language learning process and unknown vocabulary items are generally taught and learned individually in decontextualized or contextualized situation. Moreover, the language learners tend to learn and memorize the new words individually. As a result, they forget the meaning of new words easily. Nattinger (1988) states that the whole notion of lexical phrase is extremely important for acquiring vocabulary and has yet to be exploited to its full potential. On the other hand, if the language learners remember the meaning of a word, they can not use it since they don't know how to use the words appropriately. Yong (1999) views that to move from receptive to productive vocabulary language learners need to learn the relationships between the words. In this sense, lexical phrases come to the stage again. Although students begin to encounter many new words from the fourth grade in their books, especially in the instructions or in some reading texts, the curriculum and the

books used in the state primary schools in Turkey do not involve specific suggestions or activities for teaching and practicing these unknown words.

Implementing a lexical approach in the classroom does not lead to radical methodological changes. Rather, it involves a change in the teacher's mindset. Most important, the language activities consistent with a lexical approach must be directed toward naturally occurring language and toward raising learners' awareness of the lexical nature of language. (Olga, 2001, p.6) All in all, this study focuses on the effects of applying lexical approach in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners.

### **1.3. Aim and Significance of the Study**

The aim of this experimental study is to investigate whether teaching vocabulary to young language learners through lexical phrases will result in better vocabulary learning than teaching words individually. In other words, this present study aims at examining the effects of using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners.

Recently, some researches on lexical phrases have been done in Turkey. These researches on lexical phrases deal with teenager or adult learners and the language level of students is not beginner. (Ördem 2005, Balcı, 2006, Avcı, 2006, Koç 2006, Şimşek 2008, Gencer 2004, Erdem 2008) The main differences of the present study are the age of the participants and their language level. The only similarity with these studies is using reading passages to introduce new vocabulary items (Balcı, 2006, Avcı, 2006).

Vocabulary plays an important role in communication as well as the other components of language. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is principal at the early stage of language learning process. The lack of needed vocabulary is a big obstacle for language users. For this reason, this study comes out after a period of classroom observation. The young language learners are observed by the teacher researcher for sixth months and this observation indicates that young language learners tend to learn the new words phrase by phrase. In addition to this, young language learners learn phrases easily whereas they forget the individual words easily. That is, classroom observation is the first and the most important step for the beginning of this study.

As many researchers state that observation plays a crucial role not only in classroom research, but also more generally in supporting the professional growth of teachers and in the process of school development (Cross & Angelo, 1993, Wragg 1999, Walker&



Adelman, 2005 Hopkins, 2008). Observation is a natural behavior which everyone includes in their repertoire of social skills. Therefore, Walker and Adelman (2005) emphasize that observation is not discrete, transitional role between teaching and learning; it is an important integral element of both learning and teaching in every situation. Observation is the inseparable element of learning and teaching process in every area. Hopkins (2008) asserts that classroom observation seems to be the pivotal activity that links together reflection for the individual teacher and collaborative enquiry for pairs or groups of teachers and it also encourages the development of a language for talking about teaching and provides a means for working on developmental priorities for the staff as a whole. Classroom observation is the starting point for this study.

There are a few studies which focus on the question how to increase young language learners' vocabulary knowledge and how to overcome the difficulties in teaching vocabulary to young language learners. Moreover, studies on lexical phrases generally are applied to teenage or adult language learners. This study deals with the young language learners. Owing to the fact that this is an empirical study, it is supposed that these findings of this study can bring enhancing contributions to classroom applications and to the curriculum in Turkey.

It is believed that this study will be helpful for teachers and young language learners in terms of becoming familiarized with a comparatively new technique which will be helpful in their vocabulary development.

Consequently, the data gathered in this study reflect students' vocabulary knowledge at the recognition and production levels unlike the vocabulary studies which ignore this distinction or include only the production or recognition level.

#### **1.4. The Research Questions**

This study investigates the effects of using lexical approach on the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of young language learners. At the end of the study, the following research questions are expected to be answered:

- Does using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners lead more vocabulary gain than teaching young language learners words individually in contextualized situation at the recognition stage?
- Does using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners lead more vocabulary gain than teaching young language learners words individually in contextualized situation at the production stage?

#### **1.5. The Scope of the Study**

This study aiming to find out the effect of using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners is carried out with the fifth grade students in Ordu Haki Yener Primary School. In other words, the study is limited to fifth grade in only one school.

In the second place owing to the strict curriculum which has to be followed, the study takes only four weeks. The time is very limited for this kind of study. In other words, the number of the target words is limited to fourteen words for young language learners. Financial and official obstacles have also been another negative condition throughout this study. Since there is no material except the course book, the writer of this study has to provide the necessary materials for all of the students.

Consequently, despite of these conditions, the study is expected to give valuable results in order to teach vocabulary items to young language learners.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the essential element for language acquisition whether the language is first, second or foreign. Moreover, vocabulary acquisition is a very complex procedure. Nesselhauf ( 2005) emphasizes that owing to the nature of vocabulary acquisition, some techniques are developed in order to enhance this process by speeding it up. One of these techniques is the presentation of vocabulary along with lexis ( lexical phrases). In the 1990s, Lewis comes up with the Lexical Approach suggesting that chunks and collocations should be given the most importance in foreign/ second language situation. Lewis ( 1997) states that it is discovered that native speakers use prefabricated chunks stored in their mental lexicon in order to use language. Due to this reason, Lewis ( 2000) suggests that vocabulary teaching should include lexical phrases ( lexis) since they are necessary not only to understand the meaning of the words and their uses in a context but also to help retention and production. Some words are closely related to other words in the language and the meanings of words depend on the meaning of other words. Because of this reason, lexical phrases play an important role in second / foreign language learning process.

The lexical approach is an approach to teaching the foreign /second language that sees words and word combinations as the basic foundation of language. Language teaching under this approach attempts to build vocabulary and raise students' awareness of language patterns (Vance, 2008, p.1). It places vocabulary before grammar. Lewis (1993) implies this by saying that “language consists of grammaticalized lexis not lexicalized grammar” (p. vi). In other words, lexis is the central in creating meaning. Therefore, the language teachers should spend more time helping learners develop their stock of phrases and less time on grammatical structure. In addition to these, young language learners can easily memorize and use lexical phrases easily and using these

phrases makes them feel confident in themselves. This is an important motivational factor for young language learners. Young language learners are very stressful when they try to learn new words in foreign language. This is a big obstacle for the teacher in a language classroom environment. Schultz (1988) says:

Stress is a major hindrance in language learning process. This process [learning language in traditional way] is by its nature time consuming and stress provoking... ..raise the stress level to a point at which it interferes with student attention and efficiency and undermines motivation. .... one method has been developed to make students forget that they are in class .... Relax students by engaging them in stress-reducing task . (cited in Deesri, 2002, p.2)

When young language learners feel that they are successful in their use of the language, they become relax and willing to learn the language. In this sense, lexical phrases help young language learners use the target language and overcome their negative feelings about learning foreign language.

In the first place, the place of vocabulary in foreign language teaching and vocabulary knowledge will be explained in detail in this part. Following this, Lexical Approach will be discussed and lexical phrases will be defined and explained in detail. Next, general information about young learners will take place. Finally, other studies on lexical phrases will be presented in this section.

## **2.2. The Place of Vocabulary in Foreign Language Teaching**

As Schmitt (2008) emphasizes that one thing students, teachers, material writers, and researchers all agree on is that learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second/foreign language, vocabulary is the main tool for language learners to use the language especially at the early stages of foreign/ second language learning. Ellis (1999) claims that foreign / second language instruction has two good reasons for focusing on vocabulary teaching / learning. The first one is that vocabulary development is recognized by researchers and learners as a major aspect of learning a new language and the second reason is that vocabulary acquisition is easier to investigate than the acquisition of grammatical or pragmatic knowledge. In addition to this, Lewis ( 2005) affirms that vocabulary is the centre of a language and grammar is built around it. As a

result, vocabulary is the key for comprehension and production of the target language. As Sinclair( 1995) points out “*A lexical mistake often causes misunderstanding, while a grammar mistake rarely does.*”(cited in Lewis, 1997, p. 16).

Vocabulary instruction has not received enough attention in foreign/ second language teaching contexts. Nunan (1991) states that there wasn't much concentration on vocabulary teaching before 1970s, and vocabulary was regarded and treated as a part of grammar or the other skills. In other words, vocabulary teaching was under the influence of structuralism, which was based on teaching syntactic patterns with small vocabulary. Since 1970s, the place of vocabulary teaching has changed due to the effect of the communicative approach and the natural approach in teaching, emphasizing the importance of receptive vocabulary growth during the early stages of language learning ( Balci, 2006, p. 16).

Zimmerman (1997) emphasizes that although the communicative approach focuses on communication and not vocabulary, studies and developments resulting from this method leads to further studies and emphasis on lexicalized issues. The results of the studies indicate the importance of vocabulary knowledge in language learning process. Moreover, Zimmerman ( 1997) adds that the Natural Approach, which depends on the hypotheses of Krashen ; (1) the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis (making a distinction between natural acquisition and formal learning), (2) the Natural Order Hypothesis (claiming that grammatical rules are not acquired in a fixed order and thus that artificial sequencing is not necessary), (3) the Monitor Hypothesis (saying that monitoring is limited in conscious learning) ,(4) the Input Hypothesis (claiming that input should be interesting and in context, and also a little above of the learner's level so that language is acquired) and (5) the Affective Filter Hypothesis (claiming that learners with low affective filter will have more confidence and be more likely to absorb what is presented to them), sees the word knowledge as an important factor in foreign / second language teaching context.

Deveci (2004) states that the importance of vocabulary acquisition has always been recognized, although, at times, vocabulary is treated as separate from grammar and other skills. If language learners haven't got enough vocabulary knowledge of the target language, they cannot use structures and grammar rules correctly. Coady and Huckin (1997) affirm that there is general agreement among vocabulary specialists that lexical

competence is at the very heart of communicative competence, the ability to communicate successfully and appropriately.

Nation (1990) admits the idea that vocabulary should be taught in a systematic and principled approach due to the following reasons:

1. Because of the considerable research on vocabulary we have good information about what to do about vocabulary and about what vocabulary to focus on.
2. There is a wide variety of ways for dealing with vocabulary in foreign or second language learning.
3. Both learners and researchers see vocabulary as a very important if not the most important element in language learning. Learners feel that many of their difficulties in both receptive and productive language use result from an inadequate vocabulary

(pp.1-2)

Vocabulary teaching has developed a lot in English language teaching recently, especially via computer aided research and psycholinguistics studies focusing on lexis (Ooi & Seah, 1996; McCarthy, 1991). Concepts of corpus, psycholinguistics accounts of vocabulary, L2 vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary storage in memory, vocabulary retrieval, and lexical phrases have emerged through different researchers in recent years (Nattinger and DeCarrio, 1992, Lewis, 2000, Schmitt, 2009, Fan, 2009). Finally, the Lexical Approach emerges in 1990s and it has received interest in recent years as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. The lexical approach focuses on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations (Lewis, 1993, p.95). It has brought quite a new perspective to vocabulary teaching area in foreign / second language learning environment.

### 2.3. The Vocabulary Knowledge

Learning vocabulary does not mean that memorizing lists of words of the target language. Defining and explaining the knowledge of vocabulary is a very hard task and although it is believed that the amount of words which someone knows directly equals to his / her vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary knowledge refers to much more skills than that. Schmitt (2008) remarks that owing to the complex nature of vocabulary knowledge, it is reasonable to assume that the process of learning this knowledge might have its own complexities.

Schmitt (2000) explains that vocabulary knowledge involves knowing a word's meaning, register knowledge, grammatical knowledge (word class and morphology), orthographical knowledge and phonological knowledge. Nation (2001) defines the vocabulary knowledge as knowing words' forms, words' positions, words' functions, and words' meanings as well as words' collocations and frequencies

As it is mentioned above, when vocabulary knowledge is mentioned, words come to mind. Boogards (2001) emphasizes that the notion of "word" is not very clear, so, words come in many shapes and can be classified in very different ways. When the vocabulary knowledge is considered, words come to the minds. However, words are very complex structures and they do not have specific frameworks on their own. They are essential stones for the languages.

When the word knowledge is examined in detail, four terms; *word*, *lexeme*, *lexical unit* and *lexis* emerge. The question "what is a word" is very difficult to answer. There are many definitions of a word; however, it is almost impossible to give a clear-cut definition of a word. In the first place, Laufer and Nation (1995) define the word as "a base form with its inflected and derived forms, i.e., a word family" (p.312). Carter (1998) says: "An orthographic definition of a word is a practical common-sense definition. It says, quite simply, that a word is any sequence of letters (and a limited number of other characteristics such as hyphen and apostrophe) bounded on either side by a space or punctuation mark" (p.4). Although this definition is related to only the written language, there are potential theoretical and practical problems with this orthographic definition. A word is more than that. In other words, meaning is the most important part of the word. Carter (1998) claims that defining a word as the minimum

meaningful unit of language can be more accurate (p.5). There are a lot of problems in defining what a word is. Carter (1998) suggests that the theoretical notion, *lexeme* takes place. He defines lexeme as the abstract unit which underlines some of the variants in connection with words. Carter et al (1997) claim that lexeme is a meaningful unit and it can be smaller or larger than the word.

Cruse (1986) puts forward the term “lexical unit” and he views that a lexical unit must be at least one semantic constituent and at least one word. According to Cruse (1986) a lexical unit is “the union of a lexical form and a single sense” (p.77). In accordance with this definition, lexical units can be words which have one meaning or a lexical unit can consists of several words. Furthermore, Boogards (2001) suggests that lexical units have their own semantic, collocational, syntactic and morphological relationships.

Lewis (1997) defines the lexis as the strings of words which go together (i.e. idioms and collocations). Olga (2001) claims that lexis includes not only the single words but also the word combinations that people store in their mental lexicons. It is clearly understood that lexis (lexical phrase) is a word combination.

There are not any certain lines among these terms. They are interrelated to each other therefore; giving a specific definition for each one is not possible.

Although vocabulary acquisition is a very complex process, it has been ignored in language teaching process. Boogards (2001) states that the learning of foreign vocabulary refers to one or more of the following:

- Learning an unknown form and a new meaning
- Learning a new meaning for an already known form
- Learning a new meaning for a combination of already known forms
- Learning semantic relations between lexical units / words in terms of synonymy, antonymy and so on.
- Learning morphological relations between lexical units / words
- Learning correct uses of lexical units / words at the level of grammar.
- Learning the usual collocations.
- Learning the appropriate use at the levels of pragmatics and discourse.



Knowing a word or lexical phrase means both recalling the words or phrases and use them in a meaningful context. So, vocabulary knowledge is divided into two categories; receptive vocabulary knowledge and productive vocabulary knowledge. There is a clear distinction between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Mondria and Wiersma (2004) define six terms below:

*Receptive vocabulary learning*: learning the meaning of a new word. Prototypically: learning a word from the second language to the first language.

*Productive vocabulary learning*: learning to express a concept by means of a new word. Prototypically: learning a word from first language to the second language.

*Receptive vocabulary knowledge*: knowledge of the meaning of a new word. Prototypically: being able to translate a word from the second language to the first language.

*Productive vocabulary knowledge*: being able to express a concept by means of a new word. Prototypically: being able to translate a word from first language to the second language.

*Receptive vocabulary testing*: testing a person's knowledge of the meaning of a new word. Prototypically: requiring a person to translate a word from the second language to the first language.

*Productive vocabulary testing*: testing a person's ability to express a concept by means of a new word. Prototypically: requiring a person to translate a word from first language to the second language (p.87).

These definitions indicate that recognition stage comes before the production stage. Without recognition, production cannot take place in vocabulary teaching/learning process. Furthermore, Lee and Muncie (2006) imply that receptive vocabulary is necessary for the productive vocabulary. However, Melka (1997) states that the results from various studies indicate the distance between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge shifts: that is neither fixed nor permanent and that the boundaries between these notions are mobile and can move according to various linguistic or extra – linguistic factors.

In teaching and testing procedures, the two aspects of the vocabulary knowledge should be taken into consideration. Webb (2005) claims that if vocabulary learning is predominantly receptive, learners are more likely to gain receptive knowledge than productive knowledge. Therefore, one aspect of the vocabulary knowledge can not be improved.

## 2.4. The Lexical Approach

The lexical approach to second/foreign language teaching has received interest in recent years for developing learners' linguistic competence. (Schmitt, 2004, Granger, 1998). Harwood (2002) claims that lexical approach has emerged against the dichotomy of grammar and vocabulary with the former emphasizing structures and the latter focusing on single words. Lewis (2000) remarks "Corpus linguistics and computer corpora are powerful tools, and regularly produce new, and unquestionably better, descriptions of English than we have ever had before" (p.154). At the center of Lexical Approach is the stress on teaching real English based on a number of corpus studies providing teachers and learners with frequencies of lexical items, collocations and prevalent grammatical patterns of the lexis (Harwood, 2002, pp.140-141). As a result of this, Lexical Approach emphasizes the necessity of using corpora to inform pedagogical materials and the importance of Recycle and Revisit strategy (R&R) which is the focus of Lexical Approach. Language teachers should apply R&R strategy in an effective way (Harwood, 2002, p.143).

The main tool of the lexical approach is the lexical phrase (lexis). Lexical phrases play a very crucial role in this approach. They become the basic unit of the language teaching and learning process. Lewis (1993) states that the Lexical Approach highlights lexis however, this does not mean that grammar is undervalued in language learning process. Even though grammar is necessary to combine chunks, if language learners do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge alone will not provide them with a meaningful situation or context (Lewis, 1997, p. 190).

Olga (2001) says that the lexical approach makes distinction between vocabulary and lexis including not only single words but also the word combinations that are stored in mental lexicons.

The lexical approach concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations. It is based on the idea that an important part of language learning is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes, or "chunks," and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar (Lewis, 1993, p. 95). According to Ellis (2005) lexical phrases and patterns are first learned as sequenced

strings of sounds and syllables, they are analyzed as chunks that encode particular meanings and then these chunks are eventually combined together to form more complex structures that assist in the construction of an extended discourse. In order to improve the students' knowledge of the lexical phrases of the target language and to make students be able to use these language patterns efficiently in communication process students should be exposed to words in real contexts and learners should become familiar with how context affects meaning. Vance (2008) claims that an effort is made to encourage students to negotiate for meaning, and the greatest attention is given to the nature of lexical items themselves and their regularly occurring patterns within text.

Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) assert that more recent research puts formulaic speech at the very centre of language learning process and sees it as basic to the creative rule forming processes which follow. Lewis (1997) also remarks that native speakers of any language do not bring many individual words together to express something and they use what already exists in chunks in their minds. Moreover, McCarthy (1991) claims that native speaker language is, to a great extent, formulaic. In accordance with this reason language learners should learn the phrases in order to comprehend and use the target language. If language is broken into pieces learning will take very long time and there won't be successful language acquisition. Therefore, the lexical approach claims that language is not learnt by learning individual sounds and structures and then combining them and whole phrases can be used without understanding their constituent parts. Acquisition is accelerated by contact with a sympathetic interlocutor with a higher level of competence in the target language (Lewis, 1993, p. 46-47). Schmitt (2000) makes a significant contribution to a learning theory for the Lexical Approach by adding that;

The mind stores and processes these [lexical] chunks as individual wholes. The mind is able to store large amounts of information in long term memory but its short term capacity is much more limited, when producing language in speech for example, so it is much more efficient for the brain to recall a chunk of language as if it were one piece of information. Figment of his imagination' is, therefore, recalled as one piece of information rather than four separate words. (p.400)

The lexical approach consists of some basic key principles which shape the language learning / teaching environment. Language teaching process is designed in accordance with these principles. According to Lewis (1993), these key principles are;

- Lexis is the basis of language
- Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar.
- The grammar / vocabulary dichotomy is invalid; much language consists of multi-words 'chunks'.
- A central element of language teaching is raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to 'chunk' language successfully.
- Although structural patterns are known as useful, lexical and metaphorical patterning are accorded appropriate status. Lexical phrase is the most important element in the given context.
- Collocation is integrated as an organizing principle within syllabuses.
- The central metaphor of language is holistic - an organism; not atomistic - a machine. Language is a whole, so language learning is a whole like a living organism.
- It is the co-textual rather than the situational element of context which are of primary importance for language teaching.
- Grammar as a receptive skill, involving the perception of similarity and difference, is prioritized. Grammar is learnt by looking at similarities and differences. Explicit grammar teaching is not necessary in this approach.
- Receptive skills, particularly listening, are given enhanced status. Because listening and reading consist of more various lexical phrases than speaking and writing do.
- As the Lexical Approach is a holistic approach, the Present-Practice-Produce paradigm is rejected, in favor of a paradigm based on the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cycle. In other words, the teacher should make students be aware of lexical phrases and their functions. So, the students should be exposed to the usage of the lexical phrases in the observation stage. Then, the students are expected to hypothesize and try to use these phrases in a meaningful context. Thornbury ( 1998) remarks that this is an

inductive, consciousness raising methodology and at the same time it depends on Krashen's (1983) proposals on the necessity of high quantities of roughly-tuned input. In addition to this, since this approach is based on the holistic view, repetition is important to acquire the language. Lewis (1997) suggests that language learners should be given chances to revise what has been learnt before.

Consequently, these principles state that language learning can not be separated and lexical phrases provide students with the whole language learning situation. In accordance with this idea, Nattinger (1980) suggests that teaching should be based on the idea that language production is the piecing together of ready-made units appropriate for a particular situation and language instruction should center on these patterns and the ways they can be pieced together, along with the ways they vary and the situations in which they occur.

In the Lexical Approach, especially at low levels, students are not expected to participate in lessons by communicating with the teacher actively. Their listening, noticing and reflecting are considered as participation, too. The challenging task for the teacher is to keep the students fully involved in the lesson and make the students engage with some activities to participate in the language learning process. The input provided by the teacher is essential and a language teacher should practice simplifying his / her language in order to make his / her message understood by the students. As a result, the Lexical Approach values comprehensible input in the way outlined in Krashen's input theory" (Lewis, 1997, p. 195).

Chunking is very essential in Lexical approach. Feldman (1997) describes chunking as a meaningful grouping of stimuli that can be stored as a unit in a short term memory" (p.188) Sousa (2000) contends that chunking makes language learners use the language accurately and fluently in a meaningful context. In other words, chunking is the key in Lexical approach and language learners should be aware of this fact. According to Lewis (1997) language consists of chunks and without chunking acquisition, comprehension and production of the language are limited and slowed down. In addition to this, Thornbury (1998) claims that chunking serves two purposes at early

stages of language learning; it enables language learners to have chunks of the language available for immediate use and it provides the learner with data to hold in reserve for subsequent analysis.

Lexical approach is interested in probable language. In the language anything is possible to say as long as the words and the imagination allow. Even though lexical approach values input, there is a condition that the input should be native-like for the sake of good acquisition of prefabricated language and good communication (Lewis, 1997, p.16).

It is argued that learners have a tendency to translate word-for-word. In order to avoid this, language teachers need to encourage learners to translate chunk-for-chunk and recognition of word-for-word equivalence is often impossible. At times translation seems to be inevitable. When learners cannot express themselves in second / foreign language learning, they fall back into first language acquisition and try to translate. Therefore, first language has an important role in this approach. In the lexical approach, it is assumed that human mind deals language in certain non-language-specific ways. Two processes (acquiring first language and second language learning) are similar rather than different. There is a slight difference between them. In acquiring first language a person is able to mediate himself and his world through language in general through a particular language. While acquiring second language, learner mediates himself and the world in a wider range of contexts with a command of second language. When learners ask “*What is .....called in English?*” it represents that they relate second language to the external world. When they ask “*How do you say.....in English?*” they relate second language to first language. And finally if they ask “*Can you say ....?*” it shows that what seems possible to them can not be acceptable in the natural use of second language (Lewis, 1997, pp. 61-65).

All in all, according to Lewis (1997) in lexical approach, word-for-word will be unsatisfactory especially with the idioms, traditional and fixed expressions of the normal spoken language and so on. Learners need to identify the chunks successfully first to translate chunk-for-chunk. Therefore teachers must develop such skills with their learners.

Errors are the natural part of the language learning process in this approach. Lewis (1993) states that error correction should not be attempted as errors are believed to

decrease as exposure to the language continues. Errors indicate the path of language learning process therefore, they are important in lexical approach.

Consequently, Lexical Approach depends on lexical phrases which are the core elements of the languages. Lexis and input are very valuable in Lexical Approach. Input should be provided in a natural way. Vocabulary is the main tool for language learners and Lexical Approach brings a new perspective to vocabulary learning process. It is not a radical change however; it is a different approach for vocabulary. The implementation of the Lexical approach is expected to be beneficial to learners at the early stages of language learning.

## **2.5. The Nature and the Description of The Lexical Phrase ( Lexis)**

As it is defined above, the lexical phrase is a kind of word group consists of sequences of words operating as single units. Lewis (1993) describes the lexical phrase as word combinations which are stored in the mental lexicons of native speakers. Also, Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) state that the lexical phrase is a lexico-grammatical unit which exists somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax. As a matter of fact, lexical phrases include both grammar and vocabulary knowledge in order to provide language learners with the whole language learning situation. Nattinger (1980) suggests that teaching should be based on the idea that language production is the piecing together of ready-made units appropriate for a particular situation and instruction, should center on these patterns and the ways they can be pieced together, along with the ways they vary and the situations in which they occur. Lexical phrase is the fundamental part of language learning process in Lexical Approach. According to Singleton (1997) lexis is not easily distinguishable from the concept traditionally labelled as 'grammar'. According to Schmitt (2000) lexical phrases play a part in vocabulary and grammar acquisition. In order to understand the nature of lexical phrases they should be examined in detail. When examining the nature of lexical phrase (lexis), it is necessary to define linguistic, communicative, pragmatic competence.

*Linguistic competence* is defined as an autonomous syntactic component capable of generating all grammatical sentences of a language in the Chomskyan model

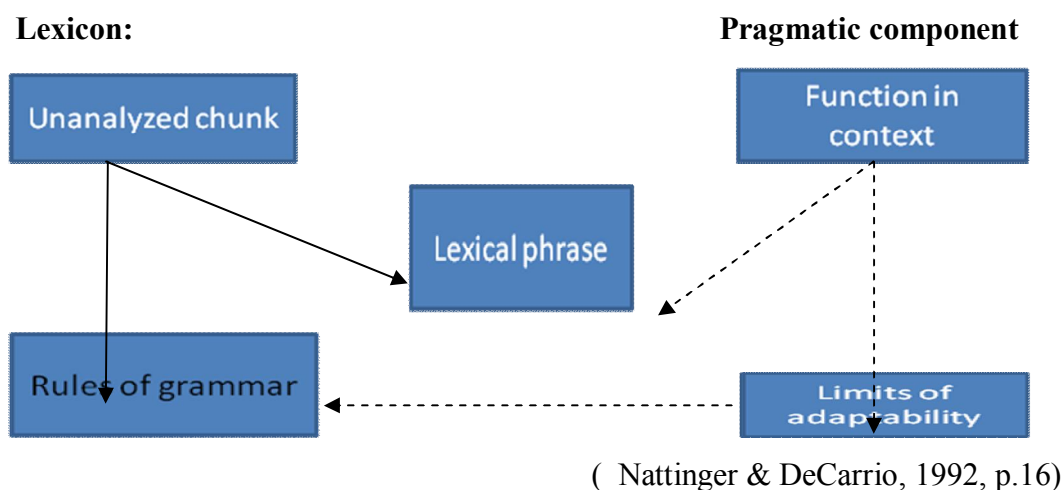
(Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p. 2). Also, Paradis (1998) states that linguistic competence is the implicit knowledge of the speaker-hearer's [sentence] grammar. This competence is the knowledge of the grammar of the target language. Grammar is essential to interpret the literal meaning of sentences in the absence of context. However, knowing and using a language can not mean that knowing all grammar rules of the language. There are other skills and factors while the people using the language in their communication. The linguistic competence is not sufficient to explain the pragmatic use of language. For this reason *communicative competence* emerges. Nattinger & DeCarrio (1992) define the communicative competence as the knowledge of how to use the sentences to achieve the meaning in the context in their book. Furthermore, Kramsch (2006) emphasizes that communicative competence requires the ability of how to communicate as a member of a particular socio-cultural group and communicative competence is about the transmission and reception of authentic content, symbolic competence focuses on the meaning of form in all its manifestations. This definition and explanation show the pragmatic aspect of the language use. The term, *pragmatic competence* comes to the stage in this sense.

Pragmatic competence is a component which is placed on the continuum between grammatical competence and performance (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p.8). Pragmatic competence reflects the usage of the lexical phrases in the theoretical background. Knowing a language includes the three types of competence and these competences are interrelated to each other. These are grammatical competence, pragmalinguistic competence and socio-pragmatic competence. As Matthews (2006) affirms that language knowledge is distinct from merely knowing how to speak a language, this knowledge constitutes a speaker's linguistic competence, this knowledge is what speakers acquire in acquiring a language and what they use in language production and comprehension and the knowledge in question is *propositional* in character, a matter of *knowing that S*, where "S" takes as substitution instances the sentences that constitute the grammar proposed by linguists to characterize a speaker's competence. In addition to this, Paradis (1998) claims that pragmatic competence includes the inferences from the discursive and situational context at the time of the utterance on the basis of which elements are selected from among the available linguistic choices. That is, pragmatic competence determines the appropriate choice as a



function of the context. Paradis (1998) suggests that pragmatic abilities (competence) help language learners compensate for the deficits in linguistic competence. Schmitt (2000) claims that lexical phrases are so common that they are typically related to functional language use. Owing to this reason, knowledge of lexical phrases is essential for pragmatic competence.

One's knowledge of language and one's ability to use it mean that knowing how to create sentences from the scratch and knowing language patterns (grammatical competence), knowing how to select and retrieve ready-made form/ function composites (pragmalinguistic competence) for appropriate situations and contexts (socio-pragmatic competence) (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p.13). As it is said before, these three competences are interdependent and interrelated in language learning / teaching process. In lexical approach grammatical competence and pragmatic competence are hand in hand in language learning process. The figure 1 indicates their relationship with each other;



The solid lines indicate the process of grammatical competence on the other hand broken lines involve pragmatic competence's process. Lexical phrases come to the stage throughout these processes. Language learners use a large number of prefabricated expressions in acquiring language like learning their mother tongue.

As a result, lexical phrase can be defined as the ready –made form / function composites and it is the main of the pragmalinguistic competence. It is considered as the essential element of foreign / second language learning process.

## 2.6. Formal Aspects of Lexical Phrases

In order to understand and implement Lexical approach better and explain the lexical phrase in detail, it is necessary to define features of various structural types. As mentioned before to define “word” is not easy, to define types of lexical phrases is difficult.

Bolinger (1975) states that words are stored not only as individual morphemes but also as parts of phrases or as longer memorized chunks of speech and they are often retrieved from memory in these pre-assembled chunks (cited in Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p.31). Lexical phrases can be defined as chunks to learn for language users. They help language learners use the language communicatively in a meaningful context. Thus language learners should be aware of these chunks they need to be able to describe these chunks. Lexis (lexical phrase) is also considered to be important in psycholinguistic processing too because words are stored not only as “individual words but also lexical phrases and chunks and often retrieved from memory in these pre-assembled chunks” (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992, pp.31-32). According to Jiang (2000), lexical phrases are thought to facilitate acquisition, and in this sense, they help development of lexical competence leading to an easy retrieval and automaticity in language learning process for natural communication.

Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) classify lexical phrases into two groups. Firstly, **non-canonical phrases** are sorts of patterned phrases and do not have typical shapes of English language. They violate the conversationalized rules of structure. *Waste not, wants not*; *as it were* are examples for non-canonical phrases. They are sometimes invariable such as *by and large*, but often they are flexible. Secondly, as opposed to non-canonical phrases, **canonical phrases** are more variable and their meanings can be described by traditional rules of syntax: *a year ago*; *as far as I know*.

Lewis asserts (1997) that all lexical items are arbitrary therefore, the question “why the X word is called like that” is not answered in a logical way and the only answer is “Language is like that”. In fact, arbitrariness is the main feature of the languages.

Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) emphasize that more recent research puts formulaic speech at the very centre of language acquisition and sees it as basic to the creative rule forming processes which follow in language learning process. In their book, they classify the lexical phrase into seven groups; *idioms*, *clichés*, *polywords*, *institutionalized expressions*, *phrasal constraints*, *sentence builders* and *collocations*. They classify the lexical phrases in terms of how they are perceived, stored, remembered and produced. Moreover, Lewis (1997) gives different kinds of lexical items such as, polywords, collocations, fixed and semi fixed expressions and collocation in his book.

### 2.6.1. Idioms

Idioms can be defined as complex bits of frozen syntax and meanings of them cannot be derived from the meaning of their constituents. To simplify, *raining cats and dogs* which means raining heavily; or *kick the bucket* which means to die cannot be understood when looked at their constituent; cat, dog, bucket or so on. They have to be learned as a whole (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992, pp.32-33). Moreover, Liu and Shaw (2001) define idioms as sequences of words whose meanings are not the sum of the meanings of, or cannot be inferred from, their components such as *make / do (with sth.)*, *make good*, *make something of oneself*, *make it*, etc. Idioms and collocations are groups of lexical items which repeatedly or typically co-occur, but unlike idioms, the meanings of collocations can usually be deduced from the meanings of their parts. On the other hand, like all lexical phrases, idioms provide a real bar to comprehension of the target language. Lewis (2000) asserts that idioms focus mainly on the meaning of the whole.

The *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* categorizes idiomaticity into two groups; **pure idioms** and figurative **idioms**. In the first group, substitution of the elements is impossible and the combination has a figurative meaning and does not preserve a current literal interpretation. “*Blow the gaff*” is an example for pure idioms. In the second place, substitution of the elements is seldom possible in the figurative

idioms and the combination has a figurative meaning, but preserves a current literal interpretation. An example for this category is “*catch fire*” (Şimşek, 2008, p. 22).

Lewis (2000) says “idioms are the central part of the lexicon” (p.131). They are important for language learners and they take a part in vocabulary knowledge process.

### 2.6.2. Clichés

**Clichés** are characterized as patterns that are relatively frozen and consist of larger stretches of language and their meanings might be derived from individual constituents. *Have a nice day, there is no doubt about it, sick as dog, calm before the storm and fish out of water* can be examples for clichés and their meanings can be understood easily (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p. 33).

According to Smith (2005), the cliché is the one of the most characteristic feature of English language. He defines (2005) clichés as expressions used so much in the language and he states that they are often dismissed as throwaway verbal shorthand.

Clichés are a kind of lexical phrases and they can be easily used in language teaching process. They make students feel confident when they use the target language as they are easy to memorize.

### 2.6.3. Polywords

As for **polywords**, they can be identified as short phrases which function like individual lexical items: *by the way; what an earth; nevertheless*. They never allow variability and they can be both canonical and non-canonical. They help speakers to emphasize topic shifts, summaries, agreement or disagreement with the others and so on (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p. 34) .

According to Lewis (1993), like single words, polywords are frequently found in dictionaries. They are relatively short – two or three words; *record player, put off, of course, by the way, the day after tomorrow*.

Lewis (2000) categorizes the polywords into two groups. The first one is expressions which have no variation. They are indivisible and they are usually short (2-3 word expressions) and the words in those expressions cannot be replaced with synonyms. *By*

*the way, on the other hand, upside down* are the examples of this group. The second one is a compound noun which consists of two words that are closely bound to each other. For example, *prime time, nativity play*.

Consequently, polywords are single lexical units consisting of more than one word. They are an important part of lexical phrases and they take a part in vocabulary teaching / learning in language teaching process.

#### **2.6.4. Institutionalized Expressions**

Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) state that institutionalized expressions are depicted as lexical phrases of sentence length and usually function as separate utterances. They are invariable like polywords. Proverbs, aphorisms and formulas like *once upon a time; and they lived happily ever after; long time no see;* are classified as institutionalized expressions. They are canonical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, p. 37).

Institutionalized expressions can be classified into three categories. The first group is short, hardly grammaticalised utterances such as *not yet, certainly not, just a moment, please*. The next one is is sentence heads or frames. *Sorry to interrupt, I see what you mean; I wonder if.....are* some examples of this category. The last one is full sentences readily identifiable pragmatic meaning; *Can I help you, I am fine, I will give you a ring.... etc.* (Lewis, 1993, pp. 93-94).

Lewis (1998) affirms that these institutionalized multi-word units provide the efficient processing both receptively and productively. They have many advantages for the language learners. They play an essential role for the language fluency of the language learners. Ördem (2005) emphasizes that institutionalized expressions provide a way of increasing the elementary students' communicative resources rapidly.

#### **2.6.5. Phrasal Constraints**

This group consists of a small number of words, some of which constrain the variability of others. Many of them can be varied for expressive effect to show emphasis, irony, sarcasm such as by *pure coincidence, down with the king, a year ago*. In the last phrase, for example, the words can be varied not only to show a different time unit. *A week ago,*

but also to show emphasis, *a long time ago*, sarcasm, *a light year ago*, or metaphor, *a grief ago*, among other things (Nattinger, 1980, p. 340).

Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) claim that phrasal constraints include short-to-medium-length phrases and they can be both canonical and non-canonical and allow variation. *See you soon; as far as I know; for better or worse; for instance* can be given as samples for this category.

#### 2.6.6. Sentence Builders

Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) define **sentence builders** as a kind of lexical phrases that provide the framework for whole sentences. They allow variation of phrasal and clausal elements. *I think that; I am a great believer in; let me start by; that reminds me of etc.* are some samples of sentence builders (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992, pp. 56-58).

Nattinger (1980) claims that sentence builders contain slots for parameters or arguments; they can be highly variable. He also (1980) adds the point by saying that;

Their function is to provide a skeleton for the expression of an entire idea: *A gave B a long song and dance about C; Not only A but also B; If I past tense A, then I conditional tense B.* Often non-canonical forms fit here, particularly the long sentence- like ones, for they are not traditional sentence patterns, and they contain elements that vary freely: *the faster you drive the sooner we'll get there; if he would only stop talking for a minute* (p. 340).

Sentence builders help language learners make sentences and make connections with other sentences. In language learning / teaching process they are essential for learners to be fluent and accurate language users.

#### 2.6.7. Collocations

Collocation is an essential aspect of language which is generally considered arbitrary by nature (Fan, 2009, p. 110). The term “collocation” was first introduced by Firth in 1957 and he remarks that words should be known by the company they keep (cited in Eryıldırım, 2002, p.85). Eryıldırım (2002) claims that collocation is the most essential factor in the creation and comprehension of any languages. Furthermore, McCarthy (1990) remarks that languages are full of strong collocational pairs and they deserve to

be a central feature of vocabulary teaching / learning process. The term “collocation” is a wide and complex concept to define, so researchers and writers describe this term in different ways.

Generally, language learners tend to mix idioms up with collocations. Lewis (2000) states that idioms focus mainly on the **meaning** of the whole while collocations are concerned with **combinations** of words. In other words, the main feature of collocations is the relationships between the words.

Collocation is first introduced by Firth and he (1957) defines this term as “an abstraction at the syntagmatic level, and is not directly concerned with the conceptual or idea approach to the meaning of words” (cited in Ördem, 2005, p. 2). Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) add this definition by saying “Collocations are strings of specific lexical items and collocations are defined in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis consisting of a node with a span of words in either side” (p.20). Also, Lewis (1993) states that collocations identify the ways individual words co-occur with others. Lewis (1997) stresses, “collocation is a predictable combination of words” (p.51). With this mind, Deveci (2004) asserts that collocations describe the relationship among the words which often appear together.

Collocations are typically identified as those combinations in which either word takes on meanings which it does not have in other environments (e.g., *curry favour*) or there are arbitrary restrictions on what words can be substituted into a particular phrase (Schmitt 2009 p.5). On the other hand, according to Nation and Shin (2008) “a collocation” is described as a group of two or more words that occur frequently together, and it is not restricted to two or three word sequences. Collocation is made up of two parts; a pivot word which is the fundamental word in the collocation and its collocate(s), the word or words accompanying the pivot word. For example, in the sequences ‘*high school*’, ‘*high court*’, ‘*high street*’, ‘*so high*’, and ‘*too high*’, ‘high’ is the pivot word and the other words such as ‘school’, ‘court’ and ‘so’ are the collocates of the pivot word ‘high’(Nation and Shin, 2008, p. 341).

Yong (1999) affirms that collocation refers to how words typically occur together. In his article, Yong (1999) claims that collocation is arbitrary and in any language certain words regularly combine with other certain words or grammatical constructions without

any rules. In addition to this, Kennedy (1990) remarks that collocations are where grammar and vocabulary meet.

Another definition comes from Simpson. He (1996) describes the collocation as follows:

Significant chunk of the meaning of a word will be derived from the syntagmatic relationships into which it conventionally enters. This principle of lexical combination is known as collocation. Collocation refers broadly to the grammatical combination of lexemes, while the term collocate is used to describe any word which exhibits a standard pattern of co-occurrence with another word. The principle of collocation helps explain why words occur in the sequences they do. Given that the syntagmatic axis sets up strong structural constraints, collocates are often easily predicted. Collocation is a probabilistic phenomenon: it is a question of whether this or that item is more likely to occur than another (pp. 78-79).

Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2002) gives more operational and functional definition. According to this dictionary “Collocation is the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing”, which emphasizes production in the target language rather than only comprehension (cited in Ördem, 2005, p. 8). On the other hand, McCarthy (1990) claims; “a collocation is a marriage contract between words and some words are more firmly married to each other than others.” (p. 12).

All in all, collocation is regarded as arbitrary and it includes more than one word. This group of words has a special relationship among each other. Collocations identify the relationship between words which often appear together. In any language they play a crucial role in both acquisition and learning. Collocations are categorized in some ways by some researchers and writers (Yong, 1999, Hill 2000, Lewis 1997, Bahns 1993). Lewis (1997) suggests three categories for collocations:

1. *Strong*: Many collocations are strong or very strong. For instance, people speaking English most commonly talk of *rancid butter*, but that does not mean that other things cannot be rancid.
2. *Weak*: These are words which co-occur with a greater than random frequency. Many things can be long / tall or short, cheap or expensive, ugly or beautiful, good or bad



but some things are more predictable, which could be called collocation such as *white wine* or *red wine*.

3. *Medium strength*: These are words that go together with a greater frequency than weak collocations such as *hold a meeting*; *carry out a study*.

In his book, Lewis ( 2000) states that a collocation can consist of two or more words and accepts all of the following as collocations since they are regularly found together;

1. *a difficult decision* (adjective + noun)
  2. *submit a report* (verb + noun)
  3. *radio station* (noun + noun)
  4. *examine thoroughly* (verb + adverb)
  5. *extremely inconvenient* (adverb + adjective)
  6. *revise the original plan* (verb + adjective + noun)
  7. *the fog closed in* (noun + verb)
  8. *to put it another way* (discourse markers)
  9. *a few years ago* (multi-word prepositional phrase)
  10. *turn in* (phrasal verb)
  11. *aware of* (adjective + preposition)
  12. *fire escape* (compound noun)
  13. *backwards and forwards* (binomial)
  14. *hook, line and sinker* (trinomial)
  15. *on the other hand* (fixed phrase)
  16. *a sort of ...* (incomplete fixed phrase)
  17. *Not half!* (fixed expression)
  18. *See you later/ tomorrow/ on Monday.* (semi-fixed expression)
  19. *Too many cooks ...* (part of a proverb)
  20. *To be or not to be ...* (part of a quotation)
- (p.133)

Bahns (1993) divides collocations into two groups; *grammatical collocations* and *lexical collocations*. Yong (1999) underlines this point by describing these two categories. Lexical collocations are combinations of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs such as Verb+Noun, Adjective+Noun, Noun+Noun, Verb+Adverb. Lexical collocations, in contrast to grammatical collocations, normally do not contain prepositions, infinitives, or clauses. In other words, lexical collocations consist of two open class words. On the other hand, *grammatical collocations* are between one open and one closed word. They are phrases consisting of a dominant word (noun, adjective, verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause. As a matter of fact, grammatical collocations are combinations of content words (nouns, adjectives or

verbs) and a grammatical word such as a preposition or certain structural patterns such as *account for*, *by accident*, *to be afraid of that* (Yong, 1999, p. 8).

The ‘quality’ of a collocation is crucial issue during the study of collocation. In this sense, Lewis (1997) declares that strength or importance of a collocation is more important than its frequency. Words like *a*, *an*, *the*, *his* or *this* are the most frequent collocates of many nouns; however, a verb which collocates with a noun is more valuable in this respect. For example, *a* is the most frequent collocate of *film*. However *watch* or *act in* are less common than *a*. However, it is surely more useful for a learner to be presented with *watch films* or *act in films*.

Collocations help language learners use the language communicatively and they make the language learners feel confident while they are engaging with the target language. In addition to this, collocations accelerate the acquisition of the target language. Lewis (1997) asserts the following;

- Words are not normally used alone and it makes sense to learn them in a strong frequent pattern of actual use.
- It is more efficient to learn the whole and to break it into parts and then to learn the parts and to learn the whole as an arbitrary item.

(p. 37)

Deveci (2004) claims that collocations are important to language learners. When learners use collocations, they will be better understood. Native speakers unconsciously predict what is going to be said based on the use of phrases. If a non-native speaker uses collocations, it will be easier for native speakers to guess what the non-native speaker is saying and using collocations help compensate for other language issues, such as pronunciation. For these reasons, collocations play a major role in language processing and use of language. They are essential for fluency in both spoken and written language. Also, the use of collocations supports comprehension of the target language. Nattinger (1988) declares that collocations are as useful for teaching production as they are for teaching comprehension.

Yong (1999) suggests that to move from receptive to productive vocabulary language learners need to learn a wide variety of ways that words collocate with each other. Collocations support the vocabulary learning of language learners and they make language learners use the new words efficiently in a meaningful context. Besides, Nattinger (1988)

states that the meaning of a word mostly depends on the other words that it collocates with; by the help of these collocates the learner keeps the words in memory and can easily infer the meaning from the context.

Jiang (2000) affirms that chunks are more efficient than discrete items and a collocation is thought to facilitate acquisition, in this sense, helps development of lexical competence, which leads to an easy retrieval and automaticity in natural communication. Moreover, Hill (2000) underlines this point by saying; “The first and most obvious reason why collocation is important is because the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use.” (p.53)

Consequently, collocations play a crucial and an active role in language learning process, especially the process of vocabulary learning. According to McCarthy (1990), all languages are full of collocational pairs and for this reason collocations deserve to be a central aspect of vocabulary learning/ teaching process. Therefore, Nattinger and DeCarrio (1992) say, “Learners also should understand the power of pragmatic value of collocations.” (p.6). These benefits of the collocations are appropriate for elementary language learners, especially young language learners. They become confident when they use the target language appropriately and the use of collocations makes language learners feel confident with the language they use.

## **2.7. Young Language Learners**

There have been several definitions of young learners according to different scholars. In order to prepare the language teaching environment for young language learners, it is helpful to define the term “young learners”.

Kulaksızoğlu (1998) separates the developmental stages into four which are before birth; infancy (0-2 ages); first childhood (2-7 ages); last childhood (7-11 / 13 ages); teenagers (13-17 ages). According to this classification, the last childhood period can be accepted as young learners.

Piaget presents four intellectual development periods that all normal children pass. These are; sensori-motor period (birth to 18 months), pre-operational period (age 2 to 7), concrete operational period (age 7 to 11) and formal operational period (age 12 to

age 18) (cited Ersanlı, 2005, p.128). In this study, language learners are at the age of 11-13, they can be called as young language learners.

Young learners are different from adult learners in many ways. Because of children's special learning strategies, traditional techniques don't work in teaching English to children. Moreover, learning new words in another language makes young language learners feel stressed and anxious. Hence, the language teacher has to find new techniques which are appropriate for their learning strategies in order to make young language learners learn and use the target language efficiently. In this sense, phrases gain importance in language teaching process.

According to his longitudinal study, Wu (2003) reveals that by creating a supportive learning environment and effectively intervening in the learning process, the intrinsic motivation of young foreign language learners could be stimulated from the beginning. In order to create this supportive learning environment the language teachers should use the lexical phrases as supportive tools. Mackenzie (2000) affirms that foreign language teachers clearly need to give serious consideration to the prevalence of lexical phrases, in both speech and writing. Language learners retain language in chunks, and much of their mental lexicon is stored in prefabricated, and fully contextualized, lexical phrases. They routinely rely on a vast store of fixed phrases and pre-patterned locutions and they prefer to use these institutionalized units rather than generate locutions from scratch (MacKenzie, 2000, p.62). In this sense, lexical phrases play a crucial role in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners.

Young language learners love to imitate and mime; they are uninhibited in acting out roles, and they enjoy repetition because it gives them a sense of assurance and achievement. This being so, an essentially oral approach, using patterned activities like games, songs and short dialogues which lend themselves to repetition is ideal (Kaya, 2007, p. 30). These activities and exercises consist of lexical phrases.

In the light of these characteristics, the teachers should pay attention to the ages, needs, interests, attention span of the young learners in the classroom. The language teacher should prepare the foreign / second language vocabulary learning environment by using lexical phrases appropriately and effectively in accordance with the learning characteristics of young language learners. If they are used properly, lexical phrases become crucial supportive tools for both young language learners and language teachers

in vocabulary learning / teaching process. As it is said before, the use of lexical phrases creates a comfort zone for young language learners. The more young language learners use the lexical phrases, the more they feel confident about the target language. Finally, using lexical phrases makes language learning environment comfortable and effective for young language learners in vocabulary teaching process.

## **2.8. Other Empirical Studies of Lexical Phrases Carried out in Turkey**

Altınok (2000) conducted a study on collocation. The purpose of her study was to examine whether teaching vocabulary in collocations would result in better vocabulary learning than teaching vocabulary using definitions only. The participants were from Çukurova University, Center of Foreign Languages Department. In the study, there were 65 students participating, one control group and two experimental groups. The results of the study showed that teaching words in collocations did not produce a statistically significant difference in learning new vocabulary items. She affirmed that collocates of words should be taught when presenting new vocabulary because students particularly Turkish students had difficulty in finding appropriate collocates for words.

In 2004, Gencer conducted a research on raising awareness of verb- noun collocations through chunking to improve their vocabulary knowledge. The aim of this study was to investigate to what extent Turkish learners of English would chunk collocations and word partnership in texts and whether a focus on these partnerships through an awareness-raising activity would make any contribution language learners' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. In this study there were two groups including 36 upper- intermediate students. Each group included 18 students. In the procedure of study, two texts consisting of common verb+noun collocations under the topics of Education and Traffic were formed by a native speaker of English with reference to Oxford Collocations Dictionary. The same reading texts were given to both groups however the only difference was that the experimental group was exposed to some activities raising awareness of collocations. Two forms of test, recognition and production were prepared and each one comprised 25 items. At the end of this study the results showed that the experimental group which was trained in chunking collocations scored higher in both forms of the tests.

In 2005, Ördem conducted a study on retention and the use of lexical phrases. The aim of her study was to find out whether teaching vocabulary via collocations would contribute to retention and use of foreign language. During the study there were two groups of students. Each group included 60 participants, and the study lasted ten weeks. They were all students at the English Language Teaching Department, Muğla University. They were adult language learners. The experimental group was taught collocations through lexical approach through ten different kinds of activities. The control group was taught in a traditional way, only focusing on word definitions from dictionary, antonyms, synonyms and guessing from the text. The data were collected through pre- and post tests, guided writing tasks and retention judgment test. Quasi-experimental design, composed of three instruments, was formed to collect data. The results of this study revealed that a long treatment and exposure of collocations led the treatment group to remember and produce the collocations in the reading course more appropriately than the control group. According to this study, the experimental group outperformed the control group in all of the three instruments.

Koç (2006) conducted a study which aimed to find out what extent explicit instruction of vocabulary in collocations, using different techniques developed collocational awareness in students, and whether such instruction had any enhancing effects on the retention of vocabulary. Four of the groups were assigned as the experimental group and received vocabulary instruction focusing on collocations, whereas the remaining four were assigned as the control group and received instruction concentrating on single words. A vocabulary retention test, which was administered as the pre and post-test, three tasks for the three treatment sessions, transcriptions of verbal processes of one of the experimental groups, and retrospective interviews with the participant instructors were used as data collection devices for this research. Results indicated that the participants developed awareness to the extent that they could identify collocations in any text and categorize lexical collocations. Vocabulary instruction in collocations yielded far better results in terms of vocabulary retention.

Another study was done by Avcı in 2006. There were two groups in this study, too. There were two C-Level classes consisting of 37 students. All of them were Turkish young adults at Istanbul Technical University (ITU), School of Foreign Languages

Basic English Department and they were selected randomly as the participants. Both groups studied the same reading texts, did brainstorming activities prior to writing about the same topics and they were both given feedback on their work. The only difference between the experimental and control group was that the experimental group was provided collocations of the suggested words during brainstorming activities and specific feedback was given for collocation mistakes to this group. So, this study examined that whether there were any significant differences between the experimental and the control groups in terms of learning vocabulary, producing better-written work and gaining awareness of collocations. Although the findings of the study revealed that the experimental group showed more improvements than the control group, this study did not indicate that collocation instruction did not have positive effects on awareness, writing productions or vocabulary gains of the students as measured by later tests and grades.

The next study belongs to Balçı. The aim of her study was to investigate whether teaching vocabulary through collocations would result in better vocabulary learning than teaching vocabulary using classical techniques such as using definition, synonym, antonym, and mother tongue translations. Her study was done in 2006 in Konya. This research was conducted at Hacıveyziade Ahmet Haşhaş primary school. The participants were 59 seventh grade students. Twelve small reading passages were used. The control group was presented the new vocabulary through classical techniques and the experimental group was presented the new vocabulary through their collocations. According to the results of this research, teaching vocabulary through collocations and clichés resulted in a better learning of the words than presenting them using classical techniques and enhanced retention of new vocabulary items.

Şimsek did a research on collocation in 2008. The purpose of this study was to examine whether teaching vocabulary through collocations would result in better vocabulary learning than teaching vocabulary using classical techniques such as using definition, synonym, antonym and mother tongue translation. The study was conducted at Selçuk University, Faculty of Education, and English Language Department. The participants were 79 undergraduates of first-graders. In the experimental group, there were 40 students and in the control group there were 39 students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20. The findings of this study revealed that there were not any significant differences

between groups. The researcher gave some reasons and told about his limitations in his dissertation. Şimşek (2008) stated that even though in this study teaching words in collocations did not produce any statistically significant difference in learning new vocabulary items, collocations should be dealt with more carefully especially in our context and the teaching of them should take more time according to the findings of this study.

The last study was done by Erdem in 2008. The purpose of this research was to analyze the effects of phrasal verbs on speaking skills of students within the framework of Lexical Approach. It was conducted in two intermediate level preparatory classes of Çankaya University during the spring semester of 2007–2008 year. The research tools included achievement tests which aimed to evaluate the number of accurate uses of the related phrasal verbs and the overall fluency in students' speech. In the experimental group the language instruction was based on Lexical Approach. In accordance with the results of this study it was found out that the use of Lexical Approach in vocabulary teaching in terms of phrasal verbs and the activities prepared in the light of this approach resulted in a significant difference in favor of the experimental group and had a positive effect in terms of the number of accurate phrasal verb use and overall fluency in speech.

## **2.9. Other Empirical Studies on Lexical Phrases Abroad**

In 1992, Biskup tried to find out whether lexical collocations caused problems for second language learners and which subtypes were difficult for them. After the tests, there seemed to be no difficulty in perception, but in production and when the students were asked to provide the translation of collocations. They also had difficulties in the verb + noun category. The results indicated that first language had a significant influence on second language use. He stated that verbs were the main part in most collocations and they determined the collocational system of a language. He affirmed that it was not easy for a non-native speaker to guess the collocates of a word, it needed exposure, so collocations should be taught. Furthermore, according to Biskup when learners encountered a new collocation together with a word they did not make an effort



to learn it and this did not ignite their mental process. For this reason, teaching collocations should be dealt with separately and it should be focused.

Al-Zahrani (1998) investigated the relationship between knowledge of collocation and overall language proficiency of Arabic university students at four different academic levels. The findings of the study showed that the knowledge of collocation was fundamental for vocabulary learning and there was a strong relationship between knowledge of collocation and the overall language proficiency of these students.

Myles & Mitchell (1998) examined whether learning in chunks was beneficial to language learning. They investigated data from a longitudinal study of 16 child beginner classroom learners of French for occurrences of three chunks and then tracked these forms for two years to chart their breakdown and explore their contribution to the development of a creative language capacity. The results showed that most of the learners successfully acquired these chunks and in time were able to unpack them and use the components in the generation of new utterances.

Taylor (2000) conducted a crucial research on lexical phrases especially collocation. He remarked that there was a consensus among researchers and language teachers about the importance of collocations for second and foreign language learning and using collocations was believed beneficial for the development of second language vocabulary and communicative competence. The aim of this study was to investigate the patterns of acquisition of English collocations. In the study, 275 junior high school Greek learners in three different levels participated. They used three measures: a writing task, a gap-filling task and a translation task. According to the results of this study, the knowledge of collocations occurred gradually; the higher levels were more successful than the lower levels and the amount of exposure to a particular collocation correlated with better acquisition of that collocation.

Another study conducted by Hsu (2002) showed that the teaching of lexical collocations in a business English workshop had positive effects on learners' language in terms of writing speed, spoken fluency and collocational proficiency. Moreover, he concluded that that the integrating of collocations into English as a Foreign Language Classroom was highly achievable by non-native teachers.

Lien (2003) did a study examining the effects of collocation instruction on reading comprehension, and the relationship between knowledge of collocations and reading comprehension. This research was conducted among college students at three academic levels with all participants receiving three types of instruction: collocation instruction, vocabulary instruction, and no instruction. According to the study results, there was a clear relationship between collocational knowledge and reading comprehension.

Wood (2004) did empirical study of the role of automatized lexical phrases in the development of second language speech fluency. In his study, he tested whether the possibility that automatic retrieval of lexical phrases was important in the development of spontaneous speech production in a second language or not. Four speech samples, collected over the course of two months, of six learners of English as a second language were examined for evidence of the role of lexical phrases in facilitating increased fluency. The results of this study indicated that fluency increased as measured by temporal variables, and that lexical phrases played a crucial role in this improvement of the fluency.

Taguchi (2007) examined the development of spoken discourse among second language learners of Japanese who received extensive practice on grammatical chunks in his study. Participants were 22 college students enrolled in an elementary Japanese course. They received instruction on a set of grammatical chunks in class through communicative drills and the memorization of dialogues that contained the target chunks. The development of the students' spoken discourse was examined through spontaneous conversations and narrative tasks administered twice during the semester at five-week intervals. The findings of this study indicated that the students produced twice as many grammatical chunks in the second data collection session, with a wider range of chunk types. Taguchi (2007) implied that memorized chunks served as a basis for the creative construction of discourse in language learning process.

In their paper, Schmitt and Li (2009) reported a longitudinal case study which followed a Chinese MA student over the course of an academic year. All of her written assignments (8 essays and a dissertation) were analyzed for lexical phrase use, and she was interviewed after each assignment was submitted. At the end of this case study, it was seen that she learned 166 new lexical phrases during her studies, and she improved in her degree of appropriate usage. They claimed that learners tended to rely too heavily

on a limited repertoire of phrases, which indicated that pedagogies needed to be developed which could help learners to build up more diverse phrasal lexicons.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The goal of this study is to find out whether teaching vocabulary through lexical phrases will result in better vocabulary learning in recognition and production stages than teaching vocabulary items individually in both stages of vocabulary learning.

This chapter presents the information about the research design, the participants, the instruments, the procedure, the materials to collect data, and the methods for data analysis.

#### **3.2. The Participants of the Study**

This study was conducted at Haki Yener Primary School in Ordu in the second term of the academic year 2009-2010 with the participation of two intact 5th grade classes. Vocabulary teaching is much more important at this grade than other grades. Due to the level of the students at this grade the students have to learn many words in order to learn and use the target language. Therefore, the fifth grades were chosen for this study. In this study, there were two groups; one was assigned to experimental group and the other one was the control group. There were 31 students in the experimental and the control groups. Their ages ranged from 10 to 11. The researcher has been the English teacher of these groups.

Although Haki Yener primary school is located in the center of the city, students come from one of the poorest parts of Ordu (Şahincili). Students' families' incomes are very low. Most parents do not have a regular job and some of them are illiterate. Most of them migrated from villages to this part of the city to find a good job. Neither they belong to the city nor do they belong to the village. They are in the middle. For these reasons, the students do not have a chance to go to English courses, take private lessons and get extra English materials. The students do not have computers in their houses.

According to the arithmetic average of the last year's exam results, it was assumed that these two groups were almost equal in terms of their language levels. The arithmetic average of exam results of the control group (5-A) was 84.5 whereas the experimental group's (5-C) arithmetic average of exam results was 83.2. In addition to this, based on their sociocultural and language background, it was assumed that they were all beginner learners of English and classes were randomly assigned to treatment conditions.

The students at the fifth grade have only three-hour- English lesson in a week. Although they have been learning English for a year, their foreign language level is almost beginner. Their language course is mostly based on vocabulary and grammar. Students' exposure to English is limited with classroom context. For this reason, the teachers have difficulties in teaching the new words in English language learning process.

### **3.3. The Research Instruments**

This research aims to find out whether using lexical phrases makes a significant difference in receptive and productive vocabulary gain of young language learners. Materials used in this study are classified into two parts which are 1) teaching materials and 2) testing materials.

Before presenting the new words, the teacher applied a kind of checklist to both groups in order to ensure that these words are unknown words for the participants (see Appendix 1). The participants had to indicate their knowledge of the words by circling one of the two options: 'I know the word'; 'I don't know the word'. Besides, in order to get a realistic result the students had to write the meaning of the word if they circle the 'I know the word' option. Only those words they indicated that they did not know were selected for further use.

These target words were chosen from their course books used in their schools. In other words, the target vocabulary items were selected in accordance with their curriculum in the school. In order to prevent students from looking at their course books for the target words the course books were collected and were not given to the students during the study.

As it was mentioned before 5-C was assigned as the experimental group on the other hand 5-A was labeled as the control group.

For the experimental group, two small reading passages with pictures were used. Lexical phrases were embedded in these passages and they were written in bold. These lexical phrases were mostly combination of verbs and nouns. One of them included three words; verb+ prep+ noun. The chosen lexical phrases were fundamental for acquisition of target vocabulary learning. The reading passages for the treatment were chosen from the website <http://www.eslprintables.com/> , where English Language Teachers exchange resources: worksheets, lesson plans, activities, etc. Some parts of the texts were omitted and the pictures were embedded into the text by the teacher (see Appendices 2-a, 3-a). These passages were chosen as their level was appropriate for the participants and they included the target words for the present study. Moreover, reading passages with pictures appealed to the interests of young language learners. With the help of the book, *Implementing the Lexical Approach* the teacher prepared the activities according to the reading passages for experimental group. There were two kinds of activities. Matching activities were in the first part of the practice stage and fill in the blanks activities were in the second part (see Appendices 2b, 2c, 3b). In order to check whether these passages were appropriate for the fifth grades or not, the teacher asked other English language teachers working in the same school to check the reading passages and activities. Moreover, these teachers were asked to make their students read the passages and do the related activities in their classes to ensure that these passages and the activities were appropriate for the fifth grade students' language level.

For the control group the same reading passages were used (see Appendices 4a, 5a). The only difference was that the individual words were written in bold. In addition to this, activities were similar; however the individual words were practiced in the activities. For instance, in the experimental group the word “study” was presented and practiced in a phrase as “study English” and “study lessons”, on the other hand the same word was presented and practiced individually in the control group (see Appendices 4b, 4c, 5b). The activities in the production stage were the same; however the difference emerged in the activities of recognition stage.

In both groups activities were divided into two parts. The first part of the activities was related to the recognition stage of vocabulary learning and the activities in the next part were based on the productive vocabulary learning.

The post tests; recognition and production used in the study were designed by the researcher. The items of the tests were similar to the activities the students had done before. Examples of the post tests were given below. These both tests for the experimental and the control groups included 14 items (see Appendices 6, 7). For recognition tests the multiple choice items were used and fill in the blank items were expected to be used for the production test. In other words, the same tests were applied to the experimental and the control groups to see the effects of the treatment of using lexical phrase in vocabulary teaching process. The production test was prepared in parallel to the recognition test. The pictures of the tests and the order of the test items were different in both tests in order to minimize the effects of memorization. Furthermore, the other English language teachers working in the same school were asked to check these tests and apply them to their students in order to exchange views, pilot the tests and see weak points of the tests.

### Fill in the blanks (production test)

1. Sandy ..... Social Sciences at the school.



2. My grandmother..... her cat every day.



### Multiple choice (recognition test)

1. We .....English at school.



a) help    b) teach    c) eat    d) feed

2. They.....their dog every evening.



a) teach    b) eat    c) sell    d) feed

### **3.4. Data Collection**

The primary focus of this study was to examine the effects of using lexical phrases on the vocabulary gain of young language learners. In accordance with the aim of this study four stages were followed carefully in the treatment process; pre- experiment stage, presentation stage, practice stage and testing / evaluation stage.

In the first place, before the experiment, the checklists were given to both groups in order to be sure that they did not already know the meaning of the new words to be presented to them. After a week, the treatment began and it took five weeks (twelve consecutive class hours) in the experimental and the control groups.

In the second place, throughout the study, the participants in the control and the experimental groups were exposed to the same reading passages. The passages were read three times. At first, in the experimental group the teacher read the passages loudly in order to show them how to pronounce the unknown words and then the teacher asked students to read the passages carefully and silently by paying attention to phrases written in bold and to guess the meanings of these phrases with the help of pictures near the phrases. If necessary, in order to make the meanings of unknown phrases clear, the teacher translated them phrase by phrase. Thirdly, after reading passages, the teacher made the students work on these phrases with the help of activities which were prepared according to the Lexical Approach in the experimental group. At first, the students were asked to look at the pictures and match the pictures with the phrases. The teacher gave the students 5 minutes to complete this activity. Finally, the teacher asked the students to fill in the blanks in the sentences by looking at the pictures near the sentences in 10 minutes. At the end of every activity, the activities were checked by the teacher in the class. The teacher chose the students randomly to read their answers in every activity. The students stood up and read their answers one by one. The teacher confirmed or did not confirm each answer. The teacher made the students correct their wrong answers by giving appropriate feedback.

In the control group the same passages were used but the lexical items were introduced and practiced individually. The passages were read three times again. Firstly, in the control group the teacher read the passages loudly to indicate how to pronounce the unknown words and then students were asked to read the passages carefully and silently



by paying attention to the words written in bold and to guess the meanings of words with the help of pictures near the unknown words. If necessary, in order to make the meanings of the new words clear, the teacher translated word by word. The teacher followed the same procedure in the control group. First of all, the students matched the pictures with the individual words. This activity was completed within the time allotted (5 minutes). Finally, students were asked to fill in the blanks in the sentences by using the pictures near the sentences. 10 minutes were given to students for this activity. At the end of every activity, the activities were checked by the teacher in the class. The teacher chose the students randomly to read their answers in every activity. The students stood up and read their answers one by one. The teacher confirmed or did not confirm each answer. The teacher made the students correct their wrong answers by giving appropriate feedback.

This treatment lasted two weeks. It took 6-hour-lesson for both groups. 14 lexical phrases were introduced and practiced in the experimental group while 14 individual words were presented and practiced in the control group. The difference of the treatment was based on the presentation of the target words and practicing the target words. In the experimental group the target words were presented in phrases and matching activities depending on these phrases were done whereas these target words were presented individually and the matching activities were done with these individual words. The productive activities were the same for the control and the experimental groups. The time which was allotted for each activity was the same in both groups.

The last stage was the testing / evaluation stage. After the treatment sessions, these two classes took post-tests two weeks later. All of the students were given two post tests: recognition and production. First, the production test was conducted in both groups at the same time and one week later the recognition test was applied to all students in both groups. The allocated time for the production test was 20 minutes in both groups whereas 15 minutes were given for the recognition test in both groups. All in all, this treatment lasted for five weeks.

The scores of the students in the post tests were examined in detail. The total scores of the recognition and production tests were 14 points. For example, the students were given 1 point for each correct decision and 0 point for incorrect decision. Independent Samples T -test was used to find out the differences between the variables of the control

and the experimental groups. For the evaluation of the differences between the recognition and production tests Dependent T-test was used. This data analysis indicated whether there was a significant difference between the groups or not.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### 4.1. Introduction

This study was set out to investigate effects of using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary to young language learners. As it has been mentioned before, there are two groups to find out the effects of using lexical phrases. In order to see whether there is a significant difference between the groups the scores of post tests were examined in detail. The information about the analyses of the test scores are given in this chapter.

#### 4.2. Comparisons of the Recognition and Production Test Results

The scores of both groups were examined in detail. It was found that the analysis of the scores of the groups indicated a crucial difference between the experimental and the control groups. An important increase in the scores of experimental group was found according to the analysis.

**Table- 4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics for recognition test results of two groups**

| <b>The fifth grades /<br/>Recognition Tests</b> | <b>Number of<br/>students</b> | <b>Mean</b>    | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Experimental group                              | 31                            | <b>11,0000</b> | 1,94936               |
| Control group                                   | 31                            | <b>7,8065</b>  | 2,85680               |

As seen in Table 4.2.1, there is a significant difference between experimental and control groups for recognition test results. The mean ranks showed that this significant difference came out due to the higher scores of the experimental group. On the other hand, the scores of recognition tests were examined in the table 4.2.2.

**Table - 4.2.2 The statistics of T- test for Recognition Test Results**

|                |                             | <b>F</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>t</b>     | <b>df</b> | <b>P</b>     |
|----------------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Recognition -5 | Equal variances assumed     | 5,088    | ,028        | <b>5,141</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>,0001</b> |
|                | Equal variances not assumed |          |             | 5,141        | 52,959    | ,0001        |

$\alpha = 0,05$

Because of the *t* value and P value,  $P(,0001) < 0,05$ , it was stated that the lexical phrase treatment was effective in terms of improving students' recognition of vocabulary items when compared with the control group. The treatment created a difference between the groups at the fifth grade.

The tables below show the changes between the groups in the scores of production tests. The difference between the experimental group and the control group is important because the improvement of students in vocabulary knowledge can be seen by looking at this difference.

**Table- 4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics for production test results of two groups**

| <b>The fifth grades /<br/>Production Tests</b> | <b>Number of<br/>students</b> | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Experimental group                             | 31                            | <b>9,4194</b> | 2,30614               |
| Control group                                  | 31                            | <b>2,3226</b> | 1,95597               |

**Table 4.2.4 The statistics of T- test for Production Test Results**

|              |                             | <b>F</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>t</b>      | <b>df</b> | <b>P</b>     |
|--------------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| Production_5 | Equal variances assumed     | 1,429    | ,237        | <b>13,067</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>,0001</b> |
|              | Equal variances not assumed |          |             | 13,067        | 58,443    | ,0001        |

$\alpha = 0,05$

The values written in bold indicate the significant difference between the groups in the tables above. Table 4.2.3 reveals the mean ranks of both groups and the scores of the experimental group are higher than the control group's scores in the production test. On the other hand, according to the P value, there is a significant difference between the scores of the two groups in the production test since  $P(0,001) > 0,05$ . A crucial difference is seen in the experimental group but not in the control group and, the increase in the experimental group's production scores is significantly more than the control group's in accordance with  $t$  value and P value in the table above.

The effects of the treatment (using lexical phrases) were clearly seen in the data analysis. The results of this study showed that using lexical phrases had positive effects on the vocabulary teaching to young language learners. The research questions found their answers in a positive way at the end of this study.

Consequently, as it was said before, there was a significant difference between the groups. For this reason, it was clearly found that using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners had positive and beneficial effects on language learning process. A conclusion reached by the end of this study was that using lexical phrases in the procedure of teaching vocabulary items to young language learners increased their receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The intention of this study was to investigate the effects of using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners. In particular, it aimed at finding out if teaching new words by using lexical phrases could result in a better learning and recalling of those words than teaching them individually.

In order to answer the research questions, the data obtained from post tests were used in within-group comparisons and between-group comparisons. At the end of this study, the findings answered the research questions of the present study.

#### **5.2. The Summary of the Study**

This study aimed at investigating the effects of using lexical phrases on young language learners' receptive and productive vocabulary gain. Two classes at the fifth grade participated in the study: one group as the experimental group and one group as the control group. The checklist was applied to both groups in order to find out their knowledge about the target vocabulary items and see whether the vocabulary level of the groups was the same or not. The target words were selected according to the checklist's results. After that, the students in both groups were given the same reading passages and activities. The only difference was that the target words were presented in phrases and the matching activities were done with the help of phrases in the experimental group. In the control group individual target words were presented and practiced. Two weeks later production test was applied to the students at first, and then one week later recognition test was given to the students. The findings of the study demonstrated that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The research questions of the present study found their expected

answers and it was found that using lexical phrases led more vocabulary gain than teaching words individually in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners.

### 5.3. Conclusions and Discussions

This study shows a different dimension of teaching vocabulary to young language learners. It is found that using lexical phrase treatment is superior to teaching individual words. The findings of this study give positive answers to the research questions.

The first research question was as follows: *Does using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners lead more vocabulary gain than teaching young language learners words individually in contextualized situation at the recognition stage?* The results of the recognition test indicated that there was a significant difference between the control and the experimental groups. Using lexical phrases led more vocabulary gain than teaching words individually at the recognition stage. In other words, independent variable (using lexical phrases) had more positive effects on the dependent variable (the vocabulary gain of the young language learners)

The second research question was; *Does using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners lead more vocabulary gain than teaching young language learners words individually in contextualized situation at the production stage?* According to analysis of the scores of production test results, using lexical phrases supports young language learners' vocabulary learning at the production stage. A significant treatment effect was found in the experimental group subjects for vocabulary learning. Independent variable (using lexical phrases) influenced the dependent variable (vocabulary gain) significantly according to the results of the analysis of T-test. In other words, independent variable led to the expected effect on the test scores in the production test.

Young language learners in the experimental group improved their receptive and productive vocabulary in English learning / teaching process as a result of using lexical phrases.

Sarıçoban (2001) states that vocabulary, without which a language is meaningless is an important aspect in all language teaching processes since language is a system of

arbitrary vocal symbols, which permit all people in a given culture or other people who have learned the system of that culture to communicate. Vocabulary is a crucial element for students to be able to become competent learners. Moreover, teaching vocabulary items individually to young language learners is a complicated task in accordance with their special needs and interest. McGlothin (1997) stresses that language is always of secondary importance for children and all of their early language learning is peripheral learning and the meaning is very important for them. Children have the special ability to learn indirectly and they do not focus their attention on the language but meaning. Lexical phrases provide young language learners with a meaningful situation in a language learning process.

Lewis (1997) states that native speakers do not bring many individual words together to express something and much of a native speaker's mental lexicon is stored in prefabricated and fully-contextualised phrases. Due to this reason, a learner's aim should be to acquire these phrases for fluent and probable English. Moreover, Lewis (2000) states that the Lexical Approach does not have a linear view but a holistic view and so this approach suggests that some language can be given without analysis for the sake of comprehension and, when possible, communication. For young language learners details are not important; that is, they see the whole word not in the parts of the world. Bourke (2006) states that language learning should reflect the world of the child and in his world there are no tenses, nouns, or adjectives; meaning is important. For this reason, Morgan Lewis (2000) notes that early exposure to language is a key to learning a language, so teachers should reduce explanation and show how words are actually used instead. The best way to do is to use lexical phrases. These views support the findings of this study in a way.

Lexical phrases should be given utmost importance in teaching language to young learners. As suggested by Harwood (2002) lexis which meant "strings of words which go together" is highlighted in order to provide language learners with a meaningful situation for language use. Lewis (1993) suggests three characteristics of lexical items; 1) Meaning is not totally predictable from form. 2) Each is a minimum unit for certain syntactic purposes. 3) Each is a social institution. Moreover, the characteristics of the lexical phrase appeal to learning needs of young language learners. For instance, young language learners tend to learn via social context and social clues are important for him.



Dobinson (2001) states that social environment and the language use is important for language acquisition of young language learners.

Consequently, using lexical phrases in teaching vocabulary items to young language learners is beneficial to language learning process and it makes the procedure easier than using the individual words.

#### **5.4. Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

The results in this study have potential implications in teaching vocabulary to young language learners. This study was carried out with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students of a state school in Turkey and it intended to investigate the effects of using lexical phrases on the vocabulary gain of young language learners.

Based on the findings of the study, the first pedagogical implication is that students receiving the treatment can easily recall the words they have learned before. It can be said that language teachers can use lexical phrases in order to facilitate vocabulary learning procedure. As Woolard (2000) stated, using lexical phrases at the early stages of language learning is good for young language learners.

In the second place, the productive vocabulary knowledge of the students learning the words with their collocates increases more than the productive vocabulary knowledge of the students learning the words individually. Nattinger (1988) states that to know the meaning of a word becomes the task of knowing its associations with other words: therefore, to teach it most effectively, we must present it in this network of associations. Besides this, Wallace (1982) points out those words very seldom occur in isolation. It is very important for the learner to know the usual collocations that the word occurs with. So from the very beginning the word must appear in its natural environment as it were, among the words it normally collocates with. In this sense, lexical phrases play a crucial role in vocabulary learning process at every level of language learning. Williams (2006) concludes that learners need to be aware of the fact that all words have their own, unique collocational fields. It can be said that a word does not survive on its own and every word needs another word for its survival.

In the light of the conducted study, some implications can be elucidated and some suggestions can be given.

Teachers should be familiarized with applying Lexical Approach and apply them in the class. Since using lexical phrases is a way of teaching vocabulary, it can be used in the classroom safely. Language teachers should keep in mind the fact that students have to be aware of what “knowing a word” means. Language learners should know that just knowing the definition or mother tongue equivalent of a word does not mean that they know that word. For using a word in a context, they should know the collocation of that word. Students should be encouraged to develop a system of vocabulary learning which will lead them to be independent vocabulary learners.

The findings of the study are limited to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at one state school in Turkey, so a further research can be carried out to find the effects of using lexical phrases on the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of young language learners and data can be collected from a larger group of participants to increase the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this study conducted for five weeks however, in order to see the long-term effects of the treatment the allocated time can be lengthened in another study. It can be concluded that this kind of treatment needs to be adjusted in order to increase its effectiveness in accordance with the students’ learning needs and features.

In this study all teaching and testing materials are prepared by the teacher in accordance with the principles of Lexical Approach. In language teaching procedure preparing all materials for young language learners is time consuming and demanding for teachers. In addition to this, it is not a practical way to teach the target language. Owing to this reasons, material and textbook writers should present the words in phrases and prepare different activities for these lexical phrases in a challenging way, which will facilitate learners’ retention of collocations while they are preparing course books or developing language learning materials. They should also sustain lexical phrase activities in the next chapters. They should not present lexis only once in the units but they would rather use the strategy of recycle and revisit systematically, which is at the heart of Lexical Approach. Moreover, they should also design activities which will direct the learners into the text again and re-scan the text in order to focus on lexical phrases. In addition to this, test writers should prepare exams which stress not only meaning of the word but also word combinations.

Finally, the word knowledge is really a complex issue and includes many aspects other than knowing the word’s equivalence in the first language. There is a strong relationship

between the early stages of language learning and vocabulary knowledge. In this sense, lexical phrases come to the stage and act their roles. Lexis is a kind of guide for young language learners to become component language users.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix-1

#### The Checklist

| Words      | I know | I don't know | Meaning |
|------------|--------|--------------|---------|
| 1. climb   |        |              |         |
| 2. go      |        |              |         |
| 3. watch   |        |              |         |
| 4. read    |        |              |         |
| 5. collect |        |              |         |
| 6. help    |        |              |         |
| 7. teach   |        |              |         |
| 8. eat     |        |              |         |
| 9. feed    |        |              |         |
| 10. drink  |        |              |         |
| 11. sell   |        |              |         |
| 12. grow   |        |              |         |
| 13. clean  |        |              |         |
| 14. tidy   |        |              |         |

## Appendix 2-a



## SUSAN

My name is Susan and I live with my family in a small town. We like animals very much, so we have a dog, two cats, and a bird. I **feed the**

**animals**



every day.

We **eat honey, bread, cheese and olives**



in the morning. I

sometimes **eat sausages**. My mother and father **drink tea**  
**drink milk** in the morning.



I

My father is a farmer. He **grows a lot of vegetables** in the garden: carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers,... and then he **sells his**



**vegetables**



in the market.

My mother is a teacher. She **teaches English**. She sings songs very well. She is very happy because she likes children very much.



I **help my mother**



at home. I **tidy my bed**



and **clean**

**my room,**



but I don't help my father because I am still very young.

## Appendix 2-b

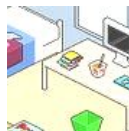
## A) Match the phrases with the pictures.



1.....



2.....



3.....



4.....



5.....



6.....



7.....



8.....



9.....

help my friend / teach Maths / eat a hamburger /  
 feed the dog / drink tea  
 sell vegetables / grow fruits / clean the room / tidy your bed

## Appendix 2-c

### B.Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

1. Sandy ..... Social Sciences at the school.



2. Tom ..... rubbers, pencils and notebooks in the bookstore.



3. My grandmother..... a cup of coffee everyday.



4. I ..... my mother every weekend.



5. My brother ..... the bird every morning.



6. Sam ..... .. two hamburgers for lunch.



7. Sally and Mary .....their beds every day.



8. Her grandparents ..... fruits; bananas, strawberries, cherries and apples



on their farm.

"Monsters won't eat you if they're not hungry. So, wash right, Mom makes it a sandwich. I'll keep my room tidy."

9. I ..... the house once a week.



### Appendix 3-a

#### John's new hobby

John is ten years old. He lives in the small town near London. John has got a big family. His father Peter is a reporter and his mother Anna is a housewife. His sister Sara is five years old. His brother Tom is seven years old. Sara likes playing with dolls. Tom likes riding a bicycle.

John is very sporty. Every day after school he plays football **and** at weekends he



**climbs mountains or climbs trees**

Sometimes, John and his family **go to**



**the cinema.**

Then one day he breaks his leg. He can't do any sports. John



**watches TV**

every day. Then John says: "I don't like watching football matches. I like playing football!" His mother brings him books - story books, comics, books about sport.



He **reads these books.**

John doesn't want to be at home. He wants to **go to**



**school.**

His favorite subjects are Science and English.

One evening, when John's father comes home, he has got two letters. John looks at a big stamp on one letter. John likes the stamp. He says: "I want to **collect**



**stamps.**

Buy me the album, please."

Now **collecting stamps** is John's hobby. He has got twenty seven stamps in his album. There are mountains, rivers, seas, beaches, animals, birds, buildings, cars, flowers and people on the stamps.



### Appendix 3-b

A- Look at the picture and fill in blanks by using the phrases in the box below

1.....



2.....



3.....



4.....



5.....



Climb tree/ collect stamps/ read book/ watch cartoons/ go to school

1. My teacher .....our worksheets.



2. Children ..... to the café every Monday.



3. My sister.....television every morning.



4. Cats ..... trees.



5. I like..... comics and storybooks.



## Appendix 4-a



My name is Susan and I live with my family in a small town. We like animals very much, so we have a dog, two cats, and a bird. I **feed** the

animals  every day.

We **eat** honey, bread, cheese and olives  in the morning. I

sometimes **eat** sausages. My mother and father **drink** tea  I **drink** milk in the morning.

My father is a farmer. He **grows** a lot of vegetables  in the garden: carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers... and then he **sells** his

vegetables  in the market.

My mother is a teacher. She **teaches** English . She sings songs very well. She is very happy because she likes children very much.

I **help** my mother  at home. I **tidy** my bed  and **clean** my

room,  but I don't help my father because I am still very young.

## Appendix 4-b

## 1. Match the words with the pictures.



1.....



2.....



3.....



4.....



5.....



6.....



7.....



8.....



9.....

help / teach / eat /  
 feed / drink  
 sell / grow / clean / tidy

## Appendix 4-c

## 2. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

1. Sandy ..... Social Sciences at the school.



2. Tom ..... rubbers, pencils and notebooks in the bookstore.



3. My grandmother ..... a cup of coffee everyday.



4. I ..... my mother every weekend.



5. My brother ..... the bird every morning.



6. Sam ..... two hamburgers for lunch.



7. Sally and Mary ..... their beds every day.



8. Her grandparents ..... fruits; bananas, strawberries, cherries and apples



on their farm.

9. I ..... the house once a week.



## Appendix 5-a

### John's new hobby

John is ten years old. He lives in the small town near London. John has got a big family. His father Peter is a reporter and his mother Anna is a housewife. His sister Sara is five years old. His brother Tom is seven years old. Sara likes playing with dolls. Tom likes riding a bicycle.

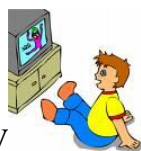
John is very sporty. Every day after school he plays football **and** at weekends he



**climbs** mountains or **climbs** trees Sometimes, John and his family **go** to the



cinema. Then one day he breaks his leg. He can't do any sports. John **watches**



TV every day. Then John says: "I don't like watching football matches. I like playing football!" His mother brings him books - story books, comics, books about sport.



He **reads** these books. John doesn't want to be at home. He wants to **go** to



school. His favorite subjects are Science and English.

One evening, when John's father comes home, he has got two letters. John looks at a big stamp on one letter. John likes the stamp. He says: "I want to **collect**

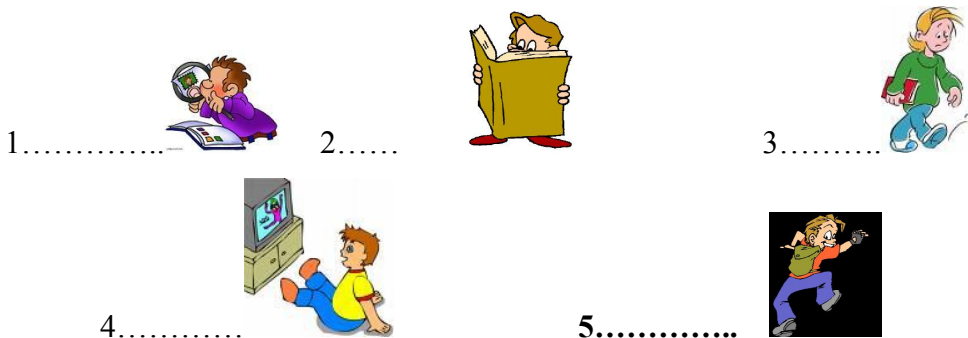


stamps. Buy me the album, please."

Now **collecting** stamps is John's hobby. He has got twenty seven stamps in his album. There are mountains, rivers, seas, beaches, animals, birds, buildings, cars, flowers and people on the stamps.

### Appendix 5-b

A- Look at the picture and fill in blanks by using the words in the box



Climb / collect / read / watch / g o

### C) Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.

1. My teacher .....our worksheets.



2. Children ..... to the café every Monday.



3. My sister.....television every morning.



4. Cats ..... trees.



5. I like..... comics and storybooks.



## Appendix 6

### The Recognition Test

A- Look at the pictures and choose the best alternatives

1. I .....my mother at home.  a) have b) sell c) help d) grow
2. We .....English at school.  a) help b) teach c) eat d) feed
3. I .....Kebab and yogurt every weekend.  a) drink b) sell c) eat d) feed
4. They.....their dog every evening.  a) teach b) eat c) sell d) feed
5. The children .....milk every morning.  a) eat b) drink c) grow d) teach
6. They .....fruit and vegetables at the bazaar.  a) sell b) grow c) drink d) help
7. I .....tomatoes and cucumber.  a) sell b) feed c) grow d) teach
8. You should .....your bed every morning.  a) tidy b) grow c) set d) help
9. I.....my room every Saturday.  a) feed b) grow c) sell d) clean
10. We want to.....stamps.  a) make b) clean c) collect d) set
11. They .....to school.  a) go b) make c) play d) get
12. I .....story books every night.  a) play b) ride c) collect d) read
13. Children.....cartoon on TV.  a) play b) watch c) read d) climb
14. Cats .....trees.  a) climb b) play c) watch d)read

*Each question is one (1) point.*

## Appendix 7

### The Production Test

A- Look at the pictures and fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

1. She .....his sister at home ever weekend.



2. They .....Social Science at school.



3. Boys .....mountains every Sunday.



4. My mother and sister .....horror films on TV.



5. Jack and Sally ..... books every evening .



6. We .....to the theatre.



7. They .....books for the school.



8. I.....my house every weekend.



9. We should .....our rooms every day .



10. They .....cucumbers and apples.



11. My uncles .....bread and cheese at the bazaar.



12. The people .....water every day.



13. I .....chocolate every day.



14. We .....the cat every evening.



*Each question is one (1) point.*



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