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**THE ROLE OF STARTING AGE TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE IN YOUNG LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH**

**THESIS BY
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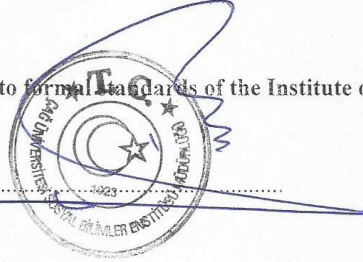
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ÖZET

ÇOCUKLARIN İNGİLİZCE'YE OLAN TUTUMLARINDA YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENMEYE BAŞLAMA YAŞININ ROLÜ

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Bu çalışma 2. sınıfta İngilizce öğrenmeye başlayanlar ile 4. sınıfta İngilizce öğrenmeye başlayanların İngilizceye karşı olan tutumları arasındaki farkı bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın amaçları doğrultusunda, nicel bir araştırma uygulanmıştır. Çalışma, 2014-2015 eğitim öğretim yılında, Mersin'in Mezitli ilçesindeki sekiz farklı devlet okulunda, 290 3. sınıf ve 395 5. sınıf öğrencisi ile uygulanmıştır. Veri, gülen yüz dil tutum ölçeği (Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale) ile toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, 2. sınıfta İngilizce öğrenmeye başlayanların 4. sınıfta İngilizce öğrenmeye başlayanlardan daha yüksek olumlu tutum sergilediklerini göstermiştir. Çalışma ayrıca, kız öğrencilerin İngilizce'ye karşı erkek öğrencilerden daha yüksek olumlu tutum sergilediklerini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tutum, Dile Karşı Tutum, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce, Çocuk

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF STARTIN AGE TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN YOUNG LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH

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This study aims to find out the attitudinal differences of students who have started to learn English at 2nd grade and the ones who have started to learn English at 4th grade towards English. For the purposes of the study, a quantitative research was carried out. The study was conducted with 290 3rd grade students and 395 5th grade students in eight different state schools in Mezitli district of Mersin in the academic year of 2014-2015. Data were collected by means of a Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale. The study results revealed that students who have started to learn English at 2nd grade show more positive attitudes towards English than the ones who have started to learn English at 4th grade. The study also demonstrated that female language learners have more positive attitudes towards English than male language learners.

Key Words: Attitude, Language Attitude, English as a Foreign Language, Young Learner.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to find out the attitudinal differences of language learners who start to learn English at 2nd grade and 4th grade towards English. A Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale was developed for the study and the analysis of the responses was discussed depending on the research questions of the study.

This first chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and operational definitions.

1.1. Background of the Study

With the continual globalization of the world and the great developments in technology, it becomes more than a necessity to learn a foreign language. Day by day, the needs of people about knowing another language apart from their mother tongue and the desire to open up and reach to the further locations of the world out of their own spaces remind them of the essentiality of learning a foreign language, especially English, as it is considered to be the most common lingua franca all over the world (Thomason, 2001). Hence, English is no longer accepted as a compulsory school subject; rather it is seen as a key to open the gates of the fields, ranging from business to daily life.

As in other nations and societies around the world, in Turkey, learning English has gained much importance especially in recent years. When Turkey joined the Socrates Project, which fastens on the common education practices in Europe, the foreign language policies of Europe were also adopted. Just as every European country, the foreign language policy of Turkey is mainly based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The main objective of this framework is to ground the foreign language learning on three principals: learner autonomy, self-assessment, and cultural diversity (Hergüner & Mirici, 2015)

Though many of the private schools had already been providing their students with a facility to start learning English at earlier grades, between 1997 and 2012 when the compulsory education was 8 years, the students in state schools could not get the same opportunity although compulsory foreign language learning used to begin in the 4th grade.

The students had three foreign language classes per week in the 4th and 5th grades, and, four classes in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

In 2012, when the compulsory education was increased from 8 years to 12 years, which is called as the 4+4+4 compulsory education, with an aim to catch up with the changing world, the foreign language curriculum of the primary and secondary schools was also modified and developed. Since then, the students in Turkey have been starting to learn English in the 2nd grade, which is approximately equivalent with the age of 8. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students have two English classes per week while the 5th and 6th grade students have 3 classes, and 7th and 8th grade students have four English classes per week.

This change and development can be considered to be in the same line with many linguistic researchers, who stand for the claim “the earlier is better” (Hall, 2008, Karahan, 2007, Moyer, 2004, Spolsky, 1969). They share a common claim that if the learners start learning a foreign language at an early age, they will accordingly be exposed to the target language more, which results in the more effective and productive language learning. Hence, in accordance with the exposure time, the starting age is considered as one of the key factors in foreign language learning, which complies with the new change of the onset age in foreign language learning. Though there is an ongoing discussion about whether there is a critical age of onset in foreign language learning, and if there is, whether it is advantageous in the long run or not, many researchers agreed with the assertion that the earlier the learner meets the target language and get acquaintance with its context, the firmer base her/his language learning will be on (Hall, 2008, Karahan, 2007, Moyer, 2004, Spolsky, 1969).

1.2.Statement of the Problem

With the modification in foreign language policy, the onset of compulsory language learning in primary schools in Turkey was dropped from the 4th grade to the 2nd grade, which means that the approximate starting age of learning a foreign language was also dropped from 10 to 8. This change brings the discussion with itself as whether and how it will create a difference in students’ attitudes towards English. Since attitude is considered as one of the influential factors in foreign language learning (Baker, 1995, Gardner & Masgoret, 2003, Storm, 2007, Atchade, 2002), it is worth to take into the consideration the role and effects of the attitudes in the foreign language learning context. In addition, as there can be many significant factors that may affect the language attitudes of the students such as gender, personality, language anxiety and starting age, it becomes much more important to underline

them considering the new regulation in the foreign language policy. Along with the factors that affect students' attitudes towards English, especially the starting age, it will be discussed in this study as whether the change in the English curriculum has affected the language attitudes of the students in a positive or negative way.

1.3.Purpose and Research Questions of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the influences of this new regulation on students' attitudes towards English. The study also aims at finding the differences of language attitudes of the students who have started to learn English at 4th grade and the ones who have started to learn English at 2nd grade.

Related to aforementioned aims, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there an attitudinal difference between young learners starting learning English as a foreign language in the 2nd and 4th grades in terms of:
 - a. attitudes towards English,
 - b. attitudes towards learning English?
2. What activities do young learners favour most?
3. Does gender make a difference in young learners' attitudes towards English?

1.4.Operational Definitions

Attitude: This term refers to “a hypothetical psychological construct which defines or promotes certain behaviours and explains their direction and persistence” (Mamun, 2012).

Language Attitude: “The set of beliefs that the learners hold towards the members of the target language group, the target language culture, and in the case of classroom learning towards their teachers and the learning they are given” (Atchade, 2002).

English as a Foreign Language: This term concerns the theory and the practice of learning and teaching English in the countries where it is not the official medium.

Young Learner: This term refers to the English as foreign language learners in primary schools, whose ages are between 6 to 12 (Rixon, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Presentation

In this chapter, the process of second language acquisition and learning, and the factors that affect language learning will be discussed. Out of the factors, language attitudes will be handled in depth, along with the factors that affect the language attitudes of the learners, particularly the starting age of learning, which constitutes the main theme of this study.

2.2. Second Language Acquisition

In the foreign language context, the matter of whether the children would be acquiring or learning a foreign language has been attempted to clarify, especially by Krashen (2009). He defines acquisition as a subconscious process in which the children acquire the language, yet he also claims that not only the children but the adults can also acquire a language (p.17). He at the same time defines learning as a conscious process in which the learner is aware of the rules and forms. He resembles the acquisition process to the one in which the children acquire their first language and because of that, the children need meaningful, natural interactions by which they will be busy with the messages not with the form of the language (p.5). In other words, “ language acquirers are usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring the language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication” (p.17).

Krashen (2009) puts forward four different hypothesis, all of which help to clarify the second language acquisition process. One of them is Natural Order Hypothesis. With this hypothesis, Krashen (2009) claims that the language acquirers first acquire some certain grammatical structures, then the other ones. It resembles to the process in which the child acquires her/his mother tongue. S/he would be first listening to the language, then speaking it. The child reads and writes in the later sessions of the acquisition process.

The second of the hypothesis is the Input Hypothesis, which tries to clarify the way the child acquires the language; that is, how s/he acquires it. It claims that the child can only acquire the language when the given input is a little beyond where s/he is really in. Krashen (1983) also underlies that the input should be taken “in a low anxiety situation” (p.38).

The third of Krashen's hypothesis is the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which explains the affective factors that have an impact on the process of second language acquisition. Those factors are motivation, self confidence, and anxiety. A child who has a low affective filter is most likely to acquire the language more effectively than the one with the one with a high affective filter.

The last one is the Monitor Hypothesis, which explains how acquisition and learning are used and contribute to the process of the child's language development. Krashen (2009) argues that the acquisition system initiates the utterances of the child and it is the managing of the fluency. Learning, on the other hand, is responsible for making the essential changes in the form of those utterances.

Although the term 'learning' generally means acquiring a new knowledge to us, it includes a long and intricate process in itself. Many definitions and perspectives have been adopted for learning (Dörnyei, 2005, Dörnyei, Csizer & Nemeth, 2006, Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, Mercer, 2011, Greeno, Collins & Resnick, 1996, and Block, 2010). In their research, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009) associate learning to "a series of purposive cognitive and social behaviors" and touches on the psychological part of learning (p.275). Greeno, Collins, & Resnick (1996) define learning via making use of its interrelations between cognition. They clarify three general perspectives on learning: the behaviorist, the cognitive and the situative. According to them, the behaviourist view considers learning as a process which requires associations and skills. In this process, the learner transfers her/his learned behaviour in one case to the other. Since behaviourism correlates "the observable connections between stimuli and responses and learning" (p.16), learning is either reinforced or nonreinforced. Hence, the learner is in a process in which s/he reforms the learning object. Houwer, Holmes & Moors (2013) also support this notion since they define learning as "ontogenetic adaptation", which refers to the idea that the behaviour of the organism arouses when the environment of the organism changes. For the cognitive perspective, learning is the matter of "understanding the concepts and theories in different subject matter domains" (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996 p.16). It is a constructive process and requires some general cognitive abilities as comprehending, reasoning and solving problems. The situative process defines learning as the process by which knowledge is increased or modified (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). It associates the knowledge of people with their communities which they belong to.

Piaget relates learning to the external situations and in order to define it, he associates learning with the cognitive and emotional development. For him, "development is a process

which concerns the totality of the structures of knowledge” (p. 20) and it is not the result but the initial point of learning (Cole & Gauvain, 1997). He also defines learning as “a limited process, limited to a single problem, or to a single structure” (p.20), which arises from the stimulus-response schema. For Piaget, learning takes place in four stages, each of which cannot be reached without accomplishing the previous one.

- 1- The stage of sensory-motor intelligence (0 to 2 years): It is the stage in which the child gains the practical knowledge. S/he becomes aware of the schema of the permanent object.
- 2- The stage of preoperational thought (2 to 7 years): It is the stage where the language of the child and her/his thoughts begin to develop.
- 3- The stage of concrete operations (7 to 11 years): The child starts to think logically to solve the concrete problem (MCP Schools, 2009). Language usage becomes more important to gain and transfer the information.
- 4- The stage of formal operations (11 to 15 years or older): It is the stage where the child’s cognitive development reaches its highest level and s/he becomes to think logically in order to solve all kind of problems, even the abstract ones.

Piaget points to four factors each of which clarifies the structures of operations in the developmental stages: maturation, experience, social transmission, and equilibration (self-regulation). He thinks that maturation has a significant role in the child’s learning but not sufficient enough to explain everything. Experience, on the other hand, is divided into two categories by Piaget as physical and logical-mathematical experience. Physical experience is associated to dealing with the objects, gaining the knowledge of them. Logical-mathematical experience is about the actions that cause affects upon the objects. The other factor, social transmission, is related to the learner’s gaining information via making use of language or education. Finally the equilibration, that is self-regulation, comes. Piaget defines it as the most important factor and states that the logical structure of the learner can only be reached by it. It is the process in which the learner begins to regulate her/himself with the help of feedback and feed forward.

Vygotsky (1978) also defines learning via associating it to the development. To him, “learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things” (p.31). Development and learning take place from the very beginning of the child’s life. Vygotsky (1978) mentions about the

zone of proximal development to clarify the difference among the children who are in the same age but not in the same mental age. He defines the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers” (p.33). The actual developmental level of the child expresses the abilities that s/he has gained, that are already matured; on the other hand, the zone of proximal development points to the abilities that are in the process of maturation. Vygotsky (1978) resembles those abilities to the flowers of development, not the fruits of it. In other words, the zone of proximal development is not the end of learning, but the initial part of learning the new knowledge. It also makes us informed about the child’s potential developmental state, where s/he is developmentally in, and which of her/his abilities are in the process of maturing.

Language learning is also a continual process in which the learners experience many ups and downs and feel the tedious part of learning frequently (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Views on language learning are various since there are so many variables associated with foreign language learning such as personality, motivation, attitudes and culture. The foreign language learning/teaching field is a like a deep rooted tree and the researchers of it is dealing with its separate branches which forms the entire body. The matter of how the learner learns, what the motivational factors are and what determines the reasons of succeeding in foreign language learning have always created a curiosity. Hence, there are many arguments which help us to see the different perspectives of foreign language context.

2.3. Factors that Affect Language Learning

There are many factors that affect the process of language learning. Though this study mainly deals with the attitudes of the language learners, the following factors are also discussed.

2.3.1. Personality

Personality is considered to play an important role in the learner’s language learning process (Dörnyei, 2005, Brown, 2007, Erton, 2010, Keshavarz, Kiani, Rakhshani, & Sepehri, 2015). Dörnyei (2005) argues that though the personality factors are not the ones to determine the degree of learners’ academic success directly, they absolutely act in forming how they react to their learning environment (p.30). He proceeds that, because of this significant effect,

the learners who have different personality types are inclined to trace different behavioural patterns (p.30).

One of the examples which give the lead to the studies of personality factors is the Big Five Model “OCEAN” (Goldberg, 1993). It takes its name from the initials of the factors. This model has numbered the personality factors as five and related them to the personality traits. Factor 1 is “Surgency/Extroversion” which is about self confidence, ability to talk well, and activity level. Factor 2 is “Agreeableness” which includes being kind, reliability, and sincerity. Factor 3 is “Consciousness” whose traits can be the ability of arranging things and being rigor. Factor 4 is “Emotional stability” which constitutes of irritability and being bad-tempered. Factor 5 is “Intellect/Openness to experience” which involves being imaginative, curious, and creative.

From the personality factors, the most researched ones in language studies have been the extroversion and introversion. Brown (2007) defines the extroversion as “the extent to which a person has a deep-deated need to receive ego enhancement, self esteem, and a sense of wholeness from other people as opposed to receiving that affirmation within oneself ” (p.166). According to Keshavarz & Kiani & Rakhshani & Sepehri (2015), extrovert learners are inclined to learn through experiencing by themselves and being in touch with others. Hence, they need people around themselves in order for themselves to feel well (Brown, 2007). They give importance to group interaction and study with peers (Keshavarz & Kiani & Rakhshani & Sepehri, 2015).

Introversion is defined by Brown (2007) as “the extent to which a person derives a sense of wholeness and fulfilment apart from a reflection of this self from other people” (p. 168). He thinks that, though they cannot take the very advantage of learning opportunities and communicative activities because of their relatively lack of communicative abilities (Dörnyei, 2005), “they have an inner strength of character that extroverts do not have” (p.168). Keshavarz & Kiani & Rakhshani & Sepehri (2015) argue that the introverted learner are most likely to learn better when they study on their own and expresses their strengths as being able to concentrate easily on the tasks and their self efficacy.

As Dörnyei (2005) suggests in foreign language learning context, both extrovert and introvert learners have some kind of advantages, which are determined by the particular task (p.27). Regarding the academic achievement, in his study, Erton (2010) also finds out that

since both the extroverts and introverts have different learning styles, neither of them takes the leading advantage over the other.

2.3.2. Motivational Self System

Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009) resemble language learning to the training of professional athletes. They argue that since imagery and vision are the motivation sources of a successful sports career, then, super ordinate vision is the very cause of successful foreign language learners. They see the investment in the target language is at the same time an investment in the learner's own identity. Once the learner begins to invest in a language, s/he also begins to get the required sources for boosting their cultural capital, identity, and wishes for the future. Hence, individual differences and personality traits form the body part of their studies (Dörnyei, 2005, & Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Dörnyei (2005) defines individual differences as “anything that marks a person as a distinct and unique human being” (p.3).

Dörnyei (2005) founded out that though they cannot be the every answer of the whole picture, the variances in students' academic performances arise mostly from the ability and motivation. Personality factors also form one of the crucial parts of their academic achievement though they do not directly determine the degree of it (p.30).

In 2005, Dörnyei asserted an L2 Motivational Self System, which has opened a different gate in the foreign language field to help us find the possible answers of the factors which determine the course of learning a foreign language. The system consists of three components:

- 1) **Ideal L2 Self:** Dörnyei (2005) states that ideal L2 Self is a powerful motivator “because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves” (p. 105). In their study Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009) found out that the ideal self is the one which has the more direct relationship with motivated behaviour, so it is a major motivational factor. It is the self which is comprised of the standards that the language learner wants to have in the future. Hence, it serves as a guide to identify to-be-reached standards (p.13).
- 2) **Ought-to L2 Self:** Dörnyei (2005) defines ought-to L2 self as the qualifications or the characteristics that the learner believes s/he ought to have to meet the expectations (p.4). Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009) exemplify it as “a representation of someone else's

sense of duty, obligations, or responsibilities” (p.4). The parental encouragement is considered to be effective in ought-to self; that is, parents’ feelings and ideas about the essentiality and the significance of the language, besides their wishes for their children to enlarge their conception of the world can contribute to the developing of the learners’ ought-to self (p.100). In their study which aims to find out the main factors affecting the learners’ L2 motivation, Kormos & Csizer (2008) also found out that parental encouragement contributes to their ought-to selves besides affecting their knowledge orientation and learning experience.

- 3) **L2 Learning Experiences:** These are the motives related to the language learning environment in which the learner is (Dörnyei, 2005). They can be the influence of the teacher, the content of the course, their friends, and their experience of academic achievement (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Mercer (2011) names these sources of motives as external factors, which are related to the outside world of the learner.

2.3.3. Self-concept

Mercer (2011) believes that when the language learner comes into the class, s/he is not expected to have a psychologically blank sheet of paper; rather s/he comes with her/his beliefs and attitudes towards language learning, which are affected by her/his experiences. She clarifies this notion by defining self concept and relates it to the learner’s beliefs and attitudes. To her, self-concept does not simply mean what the learners believe about themselves and their abilities in a certain domain; it also refers to how the learners evaluate these beliefs and how they feel about themselves (p.2). Mercer (2011) defines the foreign language learning self concept as “an individual’s self-descriptions of competence and evaluative feelings about themselves as a foreign language learner” (p. 14). She notes that learners’ self concept does not necessarily mean the facts about themselves but what they believe to be certain about themselves.

Learners enter the process of language learning with a template which reflects some parts of their identity. Mercer’s views on self concept somehow resembles to the schema theory of Piaget. For Piaget (1952), schema is like a skeleton which the child fills in with the knowledge that s/he gains via his/her experiences throughout her/his cognitive development. In other terms, schema ensures a way of organizing knowledge (McLeod, 2012). Like in Piaget’s schema theory, Mercer (2011) believes that in the foreign language context, learners

begin with a template which includes some parts of their identity, beliefs, and attitudes, that is their self concepts, and then go on with forming them via experiencing.

For Mercer (2011) there are some factors that affect one's developing her/his self concept: demographic factors such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and culture; and additional factors such as individual's environment, previous achievement experiences, feedback, and social comparisons. She also categorizes these factors as external and internal factors. Internal factors are placed at the focal point of the self (p.97). Mercer exemplifies the internal factors as "other self concepts, beliefs, affective and cognitive reactions to external experiences and stimuli" (p.97). External factors refer to the ones which happen outside the learner. They can be the learner's own experiences, experiences with others, her/his learning environment or feedback s/he gets.

2.3.4. Culture

Brown (2007) defines culture as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time" (p.380). He resembles the culture to the glue which is supposed to bond a group of people together. Larsson & Olsson (2008) also qualify culture as "various expressions of human life" (p.9). These are the general descriptions of culture but, in foreign language context, culture is considered to be one of the significant factors that affect language learning (Brown, 2007, Spackman, 2009, Larsson & Olsson, 2008). Since language is related much to culture, learning a foreign language necessitates "learning the linguistic aspects of the target language" (Spackman, 2009 p.2), that is culture learning. Culture learning refers to the continuum in which the two cultural groups compose a meaning that they share together (Brown, 2007). When the learner is in the process of acquiring a foreign language, s/he is supposed to acquire a new identity of that language's culture (Brown, 2007). He asserts four successive stages of culture acquisition. The first stage is where the language seems to be unexplored and exciting to the learner (p.195). The second stage is the culture shock stage, in which the learner is very aware of the cultural differences and feels some kind of insecurity against the language. The third stage includes the learner's slow but confident recovery. S/he deals with solving some of the problems of acculturation. Brown also notes that in this stage the learner may feel the "anomie", which can be defined as the learner's feeling not to belong to the either culture. In stage four, the learner is expected to be mostly adapted to the new culture and feel the self-confidence in her/his new language identity.

In his study, Block (2010) also touches on the cultural learning part of foreign language learning. He mentions about cross-cultural learning and defines it as the learning in which the learner gets to know the cultural differences.

2.3.5. Anxiety

It is a common belief that anxiety affects foreign language learning performance (Dörnyei, 2005, Brown, 2007, Iakovos, 2009, Chan & Wu, 2004, Schroth & Smith, 2014, Cope, Horwitz, & Horwitz, 2012). When we hear the word anxiety, we are most likely to consider it as a negative factor, but the situation may not be like that in the field of foreign language; many scholars are in the opinion that anxiety has both a positive and negative influence on learning (Brown, 2007, Dörnyei, 2005, Schroth & Smith, 2014, Chan & Wu, 2004). Thus, anxiety is categorized into two as facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety (Dörnyei, 2005). Facilitating anxiety has a role in motivating the learner to develop an attitude towards learning and in making the learner enthusiastic about the learning task (Chan & Wu, 2004). Dörnyei (2005) thinks that in some cases anxiety has an enabling affect, and he names this as beneficial/facilitating anxiety. He mentions about the “affective component” of anxiety, emotionality, and emphasizes that it has the one which has no “detrimental” effects (p.198). Brown (2007) states the efficacy of facilitating anxiety as “a learner might be inclined to be “wishy-washy”, lacking that facilitative tension that keeps one poised, alert, and just slightly unbalanced to the point that one cannot relax entirely” (p.162). In their research, Schroth & Smith (2014) also find out that it is useless to try to reduce the learners’ anxiety since there is not a sharp distinction between the performance of the anxious learners and the very relaxed ones.

On the other hand, there is debilitating anxiety, for which many studies have been held to find out the reason. Dörnyei (2005) claims that this type of anxiety is associated with the cognitive component of anxiety, that is, worry. He thinks that it has a negative impact and also inhibits the performance of the learner (p.198). Keramida & Tsiplakides (2009) conducted a classroom based case study and discovered two factors which deteriorate the students’ performances. The anxious students are either afraid of being evaluated negatively by their peers or they consider themselves as with low ability in comparison with their peers. Cope, Horwitz, & Horwitz (2012) also categorize the reasons of debilitating anxiety: 1) communication apprehension, which stems from shyness about communicating with people,

2) test anxiety, and 3) fear of negative evaluation, which can take place “in any social, evaluative situation” (p.128). Chan & Wu (2004) also define the factors of debilitating anxiety as “task difficulty, teachers’ attitude and evaluation, teacher-student interactions in class, parents’ expectation, classmates’ attitude, and students’ own achievement” (p.290).

It can be inferred that, as Brown (2007) suggests, foreign language learning may come to a standstill if the learner has too much or too little anxiety. It is good for the learner to have the facilitating type of anxiety, which will keep her/him motivated and be concerned about language learning.

2.3.6. Some Concluding Remarks on Factors that Affect Language Learning

Factors that affect language learning are not limited to the ones mentioned above. Some of them have been discussed explicitly or implicitly under some factors; some others have not been included in this part, not because we underestimate the importance of them but either because they are beyond the scope of this study or they need to be discussed in more detail as they are the main theme of our research. One of these factors, attitude, is discussed in the next section (2.4), with some information about the attitudes of language learners, their positive and negative attitudes, and the factors that affect these attitudes. The second factor, age, will be discussed more in Section 2.4.3. Being the dependent variable of this study, gender and its relation to language learning will also be explained in Section 2.4.4.

2.4. Attitude

Attitude has already been accepted as a common, significant term in many branches of psychology since “attitudes are a convenient and effective way of explaining consistent patterns in behaviour” (Baker, 1995, p.11). It has been defined in different ways by different researchers. Oroujlou (2011) shortly defines the attitude as “a set of beliefs” (p.994) Mamun (2012) considers the attitude as a suitable and effective way to express the logical norms of the human behaviours and states that it is the one to make sense of the aspects and permanency of those behaviours. For Hosseini (2013), attitude is “an individually-driven trait” (p.69).

In a learning environment, attitude is supposed to affect one’s behaviours, inner mood, and therefore learning (Evin, İnal, & Saracalıoğlu, 2005). In other words, attitudes can rule over how one approaches learning (Elyıldırım & Ashton, 2006). Attitudes begin to develop in the early stages of learning and they are affected by many things such as parents, peers, and

interactions with people who have different cultural characteristics from each other (Elyıldırım & Ashton, 2006). Gardner & Masgoret (2003) define attitude toward the learning situation as the individual's reaction to anything related with the immediate context in which the language is taught. Once they get in a classroom, they come along with their personality characters which are composed by their attitudes, beliefs and their own viewpoint of language (Hosseini, 2013).

In the foreign language learning context, since a student's attitude is a complementary part of learning, it, then, should become a major component of second language learning pedagogy (Gajalaks, 2013). Attitudes of learners have been considered as the set of beliefs they have towards the target language group, culture and in the case of classroom learning towards their teachers and the learning (Atchade, 2002). Attitude in language learning can also be taken as the way of feeling, thinking or behaving of the learners, which has the ability to affect their learning capability (Atchade, 2002).

In his study, Oroujlou (2011) aims at making foreign language teachers aware of the fact that the language learners do not just communicate or solve the problems of their learning but they are "whole persons with hearts, feelings, beliefs, identities" (p.995), and he finds a strong link between the performance of the learners and their attitudes. Hence, foreign language teachers are supposed to consider their students' emotions, thoughts, and attitudes prior to their cognitive abilities (Abidin, 2012).

Baker (1995) also explains three reasons why attitude is a central explanatory variable:

- 1) Attitude is a term in common usage, which is supposed to be part of terminology system of many individuals. Common terminology provides bridges between research and practice, theory and policy.
- 2) A survey of attitude has the power to demonstrate the current community thoughts and beliefs, preferences and desires while it provides social indicators of changing beliefs and the measurement of the health of the foreign language policy implementation. Baker thinks that the language policies must consider the ones who are to be affected in the system of education, and they must take account of three things: a) be in a rapport with the expressed attitudes of the learners, b) convince the ones who have negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy, c) search for removing the causes of the disagreement.

- 3) Its sustained and proven efficacy ensures a valuable construct in theory and research, policy and practice.

2.4.1. Positive & Negative Attitudes

Oroujlou (2011) claims that a learner's positive or negative attitudes have a strong effect on either making things simple or worse for her/him in the foreign language context. It is essential for the language learners to have high motivation and positive attitudes towards the language (Rahimi, 2011). Hence, positive attitudes are supposed to be "the umbrella of the language learning" (Abidin, 2012). According to Storm (2007), positive attitudes boost the learners' motivation and facilitate language learning. Hosseini (2013) supports this claim and continues that positive attitudes of the learners help them develop their integrative motivation. If the learner steps in the language classroom with neutral or positive attitudes towards the language, the learning process will be strongly affected and supported by the personal traits which their attitudes assure, such as being open and ready enough for learning (Oroujlou, 2011). Thus, "having positive attitude towards learning a language is a good start to learn a language" (Oroujlou, 2011 p.994).

On the other hand, while the positive attitudes of the learners facilitate their language learning, negative attitudes can cause the motivation of the learners fall and accordingly threat the learning process (Storm, 2007). Kızıltan & Atlı (2013) claim that if a learner develops negative attitudes towards the language, it is a strong possibility for her/him not to succeed in language learning with a full efficient capacity. Oroujlou (2011) agrees with this generalization and argues that even the smart and gifted learners with negative or low attitudes are quite likely to proceed less in language learning. In his study, Storm (2007) finds out that the learners who regard themselves as poor learners and find studying language hard are the ones who have negative attitudes towards language learning.

Negative attitudes and low motivation can hinder the language learning process, but learners' negative attitudes can be turned out to be the positive ones (Oroujlou, 2011). To achieve this, "English curriculum and classroom activities should involve affective aims according to the students' needs and their individual differences to build up positive attitudes towards English" (Abidin, 2012 p.126). If their negative attitudes turn into the positive ones,

the participation of the learners will increase; hence they begin to make great use of the learning sessions by modifying their learning styles (Rıfai, 2010).

According to the studies, it can be easily inferred that learners' positive or negative attitudes towards the target language have great impacts on their language achievement and the whole language learning process (Hosseini, 2013). Hence, it is essential for the language curriculums to be developed according to the needs and peculiar personal traits of the learners, and also for the language teachers to take these needs and individual differences into consideration.

2.4.2. Classroom Activities and Language Attitudes

The type of task can be determining factor in a language attitude study. Learners may develop different attitudes towards four main skills and different tasks; that is, listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, the course book activities, and teaching games. Hosseini (2013) argues that the type of task is a major effective factor in the attitude development of the learners and their reaction to the tasks. In his study, Bain et. al. (2010) ask the learners to evaluate themselves in regards of different tasks and their difficulties, namely, vocabulary and spelling, grammar, conversational language, writing, translating, understanding spoken language, reading, and difficulty relative to other subjects. In the study, he finds out a direct and strong relationship between foreign language success of the learners and their different attitudes towards the tasks.

Kızıltan & Atlı (2013) also have a study on the attitudes of the learners towards different tasks. In her study, she finds out that learners develop various attitudes depending on the type of the task. According to Kızıltan & Atlı (2013), learners have the highest positive attitude score towards grammar. She associates the reason for this to the learners' internalization of the rules; that is giving much more importance to the cognition rather than performance. The second highest scores of positive attitudes are towards vocabulary learning. Kızıltan & Atlı (2013) state that the main reason for developing positive attitudes towards vocabulary is that the learners are very keen on knowing new words. Along with grammar and vocabulary, learners also have positive attitudes towards listening and reading skills. According to Kızıltan & Atlı (2013), these receptive skills do not seem threatening to the learner; they are comfortable with these tasks. Learners are also aware of the importance of the writing, speaking, and pronunciation skills, though they do not have positive attitudes as much as receptive skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Kızıltan & Atlı (2013) claim that it may arise from the fact that the learners do not have enough chances to speak and use English

outside the classroom. Lastly, she finds out that the learners are happy with the textbook activities and enjoy participating in these during the lessons, which also supports Rahimi's finding that there is a close relationship between the textbook attitudes and overall foreign language attitudes (Rahimi, 2011).

2.4.3. Starting Age and Language Attitudes

Whether there exists a critical age for second language acquisition is a controversial issue among scholars. Rather than putting an end to it, it is important to clarify the crucial points and results of the earlier age of acquisition. It is also substantial to identify the differences between the earlier and later onset of second language acquisition.

The starting age of learning becomes one of the key factors in determining the foreign language achievement. There are many studies that take the starting age of learning a foreign language into consideration (Karahan, 2007, Gonzalez, 2003, Munoz, 2010, Hall, 2008, Johnstone, 2002, & Spolsky, 1969). In accordance with the results of their studies, many of the researchers consider the earlier onset of second language acquisition as advantageous while the others do not strongly support this claim and think that the older starters may take more advantage of the acquisition process.

Most of the researchers, whose beliefs are in favor of the earlier start of acquisition, tend to support their ideas via a common claim. They think that if the learners get in the acquisition process earlier, they will have the chance to get more amounts of input and they will be exposed to the target language much more than the older starters (Hall, 2008, & Moyer, 2004). In this context, Hall (2008) examined whether a younger starting age is advantageous in an instructed foreign language environment that has the minimum exposure to the language, which is 4 hours classroom contact per week. The study compared the long-term outcomes of younger versus older starters. There were two groups in the study. One of them consisted of Japanese college students who began studying English at a median age of nine while the other group consisted of the ones who began studying English when they entered junior high school at age of 12 or 13. The study showed that an early starting age in both grammatical and receptive phonological abilities had strong effects on the learning. Hall (2008) found out that, in an instructed environment which supplies enough input for the learner, age plays a non-negligible role in improving second language acquisition. He argues

that one way to assure larger amounts of language input is to start to study the foreign language at a younger age. Hence, he claims that “the younger is the better” phenomenon does not ensure to survive in situations of only minimum input. Accordingly, in her study, Karahan (2007) searched for the relationship among language attitudes, the starting age of language learning, and the place where the individual started to learn the language. She studied with two groups of learners; the ones whose starting age of learning English is 0-6, and, the ones whose starting age of learning the language is 7 and above. In the study, she found out that the first group considered English more pleasant than the second one. She also discovered that the first group shows more positive attitudes than the second one. Moyer (2004) and Spolsky (1969) are other researchers who claim that the earlier the learners begin the more efficient and productive the acquisition process will be. Though he thinks that the age cannot be separated from the other factors, according to Moyer (2004), the earlier onset of second language acquisition assures the advantageous amount of exposure to the target language. To him, when a learner begins to acquire the language earlier, s/he will have the very chance of benefiting from various contact sources in different areas, hence s/he will have more opportunities to use the language both in personal and professional spaces. These chances will be great help in the development of the learners’ own language confidence and their self (Moyer, 2004). Spolsky (1969) also supports the “earlier is better” claim. He compares the stages of “up to puberty” and “beyond puberty,” specifying that before puberty children have the ability of acquiring more than one language at the same time span while the learners in the stage of puberty will have to meet more troubles with the pace and acquisition level.

The critical age issue is also discussed through a different point of view. It is argued that while the older starters may be advantageous at the beginning of the acquisition process as they learn and advance faster, the early starters are more advantageous in the long run although they are slower at the beginning (Gonzalez, 2003, Munoz, 2010, Johnstone, 2002). Gonzalez (2003) considers the situation as the early teaching of the foreign language will have a better effect in the long run on students’ attitudes towards the foreign language. Munoz (2010) also studied on the starting age of learning a foreign language. His project was conducted on two groups, group 1 consisting of younger children and older children, group 2 consisting of adolescents and adults. His study provided significant evidence which allowed arguing that in an instructed foreign language learning setting, an early start does not automatically confer an ultimate attainment advantage. Unlike Gonzalez (2003), Munoz

(2010) argues that the long-term advantage of younger starters cannot be found in a foreign language learning setting.

In their study, Csizer & Kormos (2008) relate the age-related differences to the anxiety level and motivation of the learners. They make a different inference at the end of the study and claim that, in the situations of later onsets, motivated learning behaviour arises and the anxiety can be overcome more easily.

Johnstone (2002) also searches for the critical age factor in second language acquisition. He views the issue from both perspectives: whether the earlier onset of acquisition is advantageous or the later one. However, unlike Munoz (2010), Johnstone (2002) thinks that less language anxiety is one of the advantages of the earlier starters. Beside this, he points out the learner's more available time and considers it as a benefit as the learner will be able to find more time to think of and study the language. He, at the same time, touches on the advantages of the older starters and finds them lucky as they can make better judgments of why they are learning and make use of different ways of learning strategies. Hence, different views exist in the study of Johnstone (2002) and in pursuance of it he summarizes this critical age claim as "it is never too early to begin, but equally it is never too late to begin".

2.4.4. Gender and Language Attitudes

In most of the studies which are investigating into the role of learner attitudes in foreign language teaching (Anderson, 2005, Kızıltan & Atlı, 2013, Bağçeci, 2014, Ghazvini, 2011, İnal, Evin, & Saracaloğlu, 2005, & Tierney & Gallastegi, 2011), gender differences are taken into consideration. In his study, which is conducted on 2000 people in Ukraine, Bilaniuk (2003) claims that gender is a major factor that affects the language ideologies in Ukraine. He defines the role of gender as a complex social construct which has a strong relationship with the constructs of ethnicity, age, profession, class, and other facets of identity. Schwieter (2008) supports this definition with the findings in his study that nationalistic language ideology and ethnocentrism were two interrelated concerns among the participants whose attitudes were stated as negative.

When the social factors are regarded, it is also possible to associate the role of gender on foreign language learning and individuals' status in society. In his study, Bilaniuk (2003) searched for the relationship among gender, language attitudes, and language. He conducted

his research on 23 English language learners of Spanish and wanted his participants to define Spanish with relevant adjectives. He found out that females were in more tendencies to describe Spanish language with positive adjectives than males. Actually, this result represents a common conclusion that female students show more positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language than male students (Anderson, 2005, Bağçeci, 2014, Bilaniuk, 2003, Ghazvini, 2011, Henry & Apeltgren, 2008, İnal, Evin, & Saracaloğlu, 2005, Karahan, 2007, & Tierney & Gallastegi, 2011).

As aforementioned, throughout the process of foreign language learning/teaching, the learners experience the language with their emotions, attitudes, individual differences, and conception of themselves. These psychological parts of learning can also be considered as the factors that affect the language learning process and it the reason why this chapter includes the psychology of learning. Out of these factors, language attitude is handled in depth since it is the main theme of this study.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Presentation

In this chapter, the research design of the study, participants, instruments, and the piloting process of the instruments are presented.

3.2. Research Design

This study aims to investigate attitudes of young learners towards English in the primary schools of the Mezitli district of Mersin, Turkey. As the new regulation of Turkish foreign language learning policy has dropped the starting age of learning English from 10 to 8, it is the main purpose of this study to find out whether there are any differences between the attitudes of students who begin to learn English at 2th grade and 4th grade.

For the purposes of the current study, survey based research was conducted. Survey research includes gathering information from a sample of individuals through their responses to the substantial questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). In other words, it is a method of collecting data in an appropriate way and it is considered to be one of the most common forms of research (Babbie, 1990). Survey research can be beneficial when the purpose is to:

1. Define the characteristics of a community or a population
2. Determine their existing conditions of a community or a population and compare them with the other communities or populations
3. Documenting the community opinion (Babbie, 1990).

This study is also a quantitative research since it involves the use and analyses of numerical data via making use of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) (1.3.). A quantitative research method is characterized by the collection of information which can be analysed numerically, the results of which are typically presented using statistics, tables, and graphs (ACAPS, 2012).

3.3.Participants

The scope of this study is limited with 3rd and 5th graders in public primary and secondary schools in Mezitli district of Mersin, Turkey. The ages of 3rd graders are between 8 and 9; the ages of 5th graders are between 11 and 12. Hence, the scope of the study is young

learners since the ages of young language learners are defined as between the ages of 6 and 12 (Rixon, 2012).

According to the Formal Education Statistics of the Ministry of National Education for the year 2014/2015, there are totally 24 primary schools and 17 secondary schools in Mezitli. The number of the students in the 3rd and 5th grades is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The number of 3rd and 5th grade students in Mezitli

Grades	Female	Male	Total
3 rd graders	1.011	1.026	2.037
5 th graders	984	1.020	2.004

According to Table 1, there are totally 2.037 3rd graders and 2.004 5th graders in the public primary and secondary schools in Mezitli. Out of these, 1.026 of the 3rd graders is male and 1.011 of them is female. In the 5th graders, 1.020 of them is male and 984 of them is female.

In the study, 3rd and 5th grade learners were chosen as participants. Since the aim of this study was to find out the attitudinal differences between 3rd and 5th grades towards English, it was suitable for conducting the study on 3rd and 5th graders rather than 2nd and 4th grades as students need to develop language attitudes towards English as time goes by. A year of language learning was considered as suitable and hence 3rd and 5th graders were included in the study.

This study has been limited with 3rd and 5th graders in only four public primary schools and four public secondary schools, which comprises approximately 20 % of the total population in Mezitli. Cluster random sampling method was used to select the schools. After assigning all the schools in Mezitli a number, four primary and four secondary schools were selected. All the 3rd and 5th graders in these schools constituted the sample of this study. The distribution of number of students in these schools is presented in Table 2. Names of the schools were kept confidential to protect anonymity of the participants.

Table 2. The Distribution of Number of Students

School Names	Female Students	Male Students	Total
<i>Primary Schools</i>			
School 1	23	35	58
School 2	40	31	71
School 3	25	25	50
School 4	61	50	111
TOTAL	149	141	290
<i>Secondary Schools</i>			
School 5	62	54	116
School 6	41	39	80
School 7	21	34	55
School 8	80	64	144
TOTAL	204	191	395

As is seen in Table 2, the participants of this study are 290 3rd graders attending public primary schools and 395 5th graders attending public secondary schools in Mezitli district of Mersin, Turkey.

3.4.Instruments

For the purposes of the study, a Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale, developed by the researcher of this study, was administered to the 3th grade and 5th grade students in order to collect data. Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale is a Likert type self-report assessment instrument which is “used primarily to measure the affective domain of children” (Salam & Yahaya, p.2). Smiley questionnaires are suitable for young learners since they include visual scales which young learners can effectively identify (Djigunovic, 2012).

As a first step to develop the Language Attitude Questionnaire, literature was reviewed to compose the most effective and suitable statements for the participants. It was a bit challenging to find enough examples of smiley questionnaires to make use of since there are not so many examples in the literature. However, the ELLIE (Early Language Learning in Europe) study can be considered as the starting point of developing our smiley questionnaire. ELLIE study is a research project whose aims are to investigate the effectiveness of the

teaching of languages in primary schools in Europe. In the project, a Likert type questionnaire was used as an instrument for young learners. Hence, the researcher looked through the questionnaire and benefited from it in order to get necessary information about how to prepare the questions of a questionnaire for young learners. The ELLIE questionnaire was not adapted for this study. Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale was developed originally by the researcher.

3.4.1. Piloting the Scale

The smiley questionnaire was piloted on November 18th in 2014 with five random classes of 3rd grade English learners at Faris Kokulu Primary School in Mezitli district of Mersin. The total number of the students who filled in the questionnaire was 128. In each class, the researcher introduced herself, made a brief explanation of the questionnaire, and made them aware of the two sections in the questionnaire.

The piloted scale had 22 Likert-type and one open-ended type of items. The 22 items were subjected to Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) to check the reliability of the scale and to identify the number of factors that would emerge. As the first step, the sample size was checked. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value is accepted to be good when it is between .70 and .80 (Field, 2009, p.647). Our scale's KMO test (.89) confirmed the adequacy of the sample size, which showed that the data could be subjected to factor analysis. The second step was to check the correlation matrix to see if there were any items in the scale that would have too high correlations (above -.8 and .8) or too low correlations (below -.3 and .3). This correlation analysis revealed that Item 16 did not correlate with any other items. When we analysed the content of the item, which asked some information about the foreign language background of the parents, we realized that it was not appropriate to the study. For that reason, we removed this item from the questionnaire.

After these first analyses, an explanatory factor analysis was applied. Factors with values higher than 1 eigenvalue were checked to retain the number of the suitable factors. Initially three factors, explaining % 64 of the total variance, were observed. Finally, rotated component factor was examined to see the distribution of items for each factor (Table 3). Only highly-loaded items (over .5) were retained in the data. Based on the factor analysis, two items (Q5 and Q7) were excluded from the data because they loaded on more than two factors. When we examined the two items (Q15 and Q22), we decided to converge them with the first factor because both were about attitudes towards learning English. As a result, the

questionnaire had 19 Likert-type questions with two sub-scales: Attitudes towards general English and attitudes towards learning English.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix of Pilot Data

	Component		
	1	2	3
Q4	,803		,
Q13	,770		,424
Q19	,736		
Q18	,704		
Q12	,663		
Q20	,639		
Q11	,633		
Q9	,612		
Q6	,605		
Q8	,604		
Q21	,521		
Q10	,510		
Q1		,815	
Q16		,722	
Q3		,674	
Q14		,620	
Q2		,555	
Q5*	,436	,510	,478
Q15			,743
Q22			,687
Q7*	,554		,584

** loaded on more than one factor*

3.4.2. Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale

The smiley questionnaire consisted of two sections and 20 items, one of which is an open-ended question. As we deleted one item considering the correlation co-efficiency and

two items after factor analysis, the item numbers in the final questionnaire had to be changed (see Appendix 7.3).

In the first section, we asked students questions about their gender, as the only demographic information, grade, and the time span they have been learning English. The second section consisted of 20 questions which aimed to measure students' attitudes towards general English and learning English. Under the subscale of general English, it was aimed to measure students' feelings about English, how much they love English and learning it. It was also aimed at checking students' ideas about the difficulty of English and their own language learning process. Under the subscale of learning English, it was aimed at checking students' feelings and ideas about four main skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), classroom tasks and activities, the necessity of learning English and their mood in English classes.

In the questionnaire, there are five questions for measuring students' attitudes towards general English and fourteen questions for measuring students' attitudes towards learning English. Under the subscale of students' attitudes towards general English, there are:

- Five questions for checking students' attitudes towards general English

Question 1: What do you feel about learning English?

Question 2: How much do you love English?

Question 3: How difficult do you think English is?

Question 12: How good are you at English?

Question 14: How difficult do you think learning English is?

Under the subscale of students' attitudes towards learning English, there are:

- Four questions for four main skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)

Question 6: How much do you love listening in English?

Question 5: How much do you love speaking English?

Question 10: How much do you love reading in English?

Question 11: How much do you love writing in English?

- Two questions for vocabulary learning

Question 4: How much do you love learning new words in English?

Question 13: How much do you wonder about the new English words?

- Six questions for classroom tasks and activities

Question 4: How much do you love learning new words in English?

Question 7: What do you feel about singing in English?

Question 8: What do you feel about the games you play in English?

Question 9: What do you feel about doing English homework?

Question 15: How enjoyable do you think English classes are?

Question 16: How necessary do you think learning English is?

- Two questions for course book activities.

Question 17: How enjoyable do you think the activities in English course book are?

Question 18: How attractive do you think the topics in English course book are?

The last question was an open-ended question which asked for the three favourite classroom activities of the students in English classes.

- Question 20: What are three of your favourite activities in English classes?

3.5.Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure started with deciding on the schools in which the study would be conducted. As is aforementioned, four primary and four secondary schools were decided on. The researcher wrote a permission letter to the District National Education Ministry to get allowance for conducting the study (See Appendix 7.4). The researcher visited each school in person, and distributed the questionnaires to the sampled classes. Since the instructions have an important role for the sake of the reliability concerns, the researcher gave the instructions to each sampled group.

3.6.Data Analysis

As is aforementioned, in order to collect data, a language attitude questionnaire was developed for the study, consisting of 19 Likert and one open-ended type of questions. The quantitative data were analyzed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), and the qualitative data were analyzed through the content analysis. To analyze the research question 1.a, descriptive statistics were used and for the research question 1.b, T-test was used. For the content analysis, a tally sheet was used to determine the number of popular activities of students.

CHAPTER 4

4. RESULTS

4.1. Presentation

In this chapter, results from the analyses of the data gathered through the Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale are presented. According to the analysis of each question in a factor, the frequency and percentage rates of the responses are demonstrated in the form of tables. The analysis of gender differences and finally the open-ended question are also presented in this chapter.

4.2. Learners' Attitudes

As is aforementioned, the data from the Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics in the SPSS program. In accordance with the factor analysis, the questions that stand for the same claims and that were loaded to the same factor were categorized under two main titles: 1. Attitudes towards General English, 2. Attitudes towards learning English.

4.2.1. Learners' Attitudes towards General English

This factor includes the questions investigating young learners' feelings about English, ideas about the process of their own learning and the degree of difficulty in learning English. Learners' attitudes towards general English were investigated through 5 questions.

Table 4. Learners' Attitudes towards General English (All participants)

Questions		Percentages				
Q1	55.6%	30.6%	7.7%	3.4%	2.7%	
What do you feel about learning English?	(very good)	(good)	(no idea)	(bad)	(very bad)	
Q2	58.3%	26.1%	3.0%	8.4%	4.0%	
How much do you love English?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q3	22.3%	43.6%	14.5%	13.6%	6.1%	
How difficult do you think English is?	(very easy)	(easy)	(no idea)	(difficult)	(very difficult)	
Q12	47.3%	34.3%	10.1%	5.2%	3.1%	
How good are you at English?	(very good)	(good)	(no idea)	(bad)	(very bad)	
Q14	29.1%	35.1%	8.7%	19.1%	8.0%	
How difficult do you think learning English is?	(very easy)	(easy)	(no idea)	(difficult)	(very difficult)	

As is seen in Table 4, in Question 1, students' responses show that 55.5 % of the students, both 3rd and 5th graders, feel "very good" about their learning English. In accordance with this, the results given from Question 2 showed that 58.3 % of the students like English very much. These two questions, aiming at investigating students' feelings about general English, demonstrated that most of the students love English very much. These results were also relevant to the ones given in Question 12. Forty-seven percent of the students stated that they are very good at learning English, which facilitates concluding that when students think that they are very good at learning English, they also have the highest affection for it. The responses to Question 3 showed that 43.6 % of the students considered English as "easy." Question 14 was in the same line with the third one since they both asked for students' ideas about the difficulty of English. According to the responses, 35 % of the students think that learning English is "easy."

Table 5. Learners' Attitudes towards General English (3rd Graders & 5th Graders)

Questions	Percentages									
	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th
Q1	72.4	43.3	21.3	37.4	3.5	10.8	1	5.1	1.7	3.3
What do you feel about learning English?	very good		good		no idea		bad		very bad	
Q2	73.4	47.3	19.6	30.9	0.3	4.9	4.2	11.5	2.1	5.4
How much do you love like English?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q3	37.1	11.5	39.9	46.3	14	14.8	6.3	18.9	2.8	8.4
How difficult do you think English is?	very easy		easy		no idea		difficult		very difficult	
Q12	62.6	36.2	25.9	40.5	6.6	12.6	1.7	7.7	3.1	3.1
How good are you at English?	very good		good		no idea		bad		very bad	
Q14	45.5	17.2	32.5	36.9	10.1	7.7	7.3	27.7	4.5	10.5
How difficult do you think learning English is?	very easy		easy		no idea		difficult		very difficult	

As is shown in Table 5, according to the responses of the first question, both 3rd graders and 5th graders feel "very good" about their learning English. However, the percentages of the participants in two groups are different. While 72.4 % of the 3rd graders feel very good about their learning English, the percentage is 43.2 % among 5th graders. Thus, it can be clearly seen that when they evaluate their own process of language learning, most of

the 3rd graders feel very good about the process while nearly half of the 5th graders feel very good about it. The situation is nearly the same in the responses of Question 2. While % 73.4 of the 3rd graders stated that they like English “very much”, the percentage is 47.3 % among the 5th graders. Though it seems that both 3rd and 5th graders liked English very much, the rate is much higher among 3rd graders. Question 12 also asked for the participants to evaluate their own language learning process like Question 1 and 2. The responses to this question differentiated between two groups. While 62.6 % of the third graders think that they are “very good” at learning English, 40.4 % of the 5th graders think that they are “good” at it. Along with the responses to Question 1 and Question 2, it can easily be concluded that 3rd grade learners who start learning English at 2nd grade are more positive about their own language learning process than 5th grade learners who start learning English at 2nd grade.

The aim of Question 3 was to find out the views of the students on the difficulty of English. Thirty-nine point nine percent of 3rd graders and 40.4 % of 5th graders consider English as “easy”. Though the percentages seem to be nearly the same, the situation is different in the other choices of the participants. While 37.1 % of 3rd graders consider English as “very easy,” 11.5 % of 5th grade learners consider English as “very easy.” The aim of Question 14 was to investigate the views of the students on the difficulty of learning English. The distinction between the results of the two groups is clearer in this question. Forty-five percent of the 3rd graders think that learning English is “very easy,” and 32.5 % of them think that English is “easy.” Thirty-six point eight percent of the 5th graders stated that learning English is “easy,” and 17.11 % of them think that English is “very easy.” The responses to both Question 3 and Question 14 showed that learning English seems much easier to the 3rd graders than the 5th graders.

4.2.2. Learners’ Attitudes towards Learning English

In this study, learners’ attitudes towards learning English were also investigated through their feelings about four main skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), classroom tasks and activities, their ideas about the necessity of learning English, and their mood in English classes.

Table 6. Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English (All participants)

Questions	Percentages					
Q4	69.1%	19.8%	3.8%	4.7%	2.5%	
How much do you love learning new words?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q5	56.6%	25.4%	5.8%	8%	4.3%	
How much do you love speaking English?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q6	63.5%	21.6%	5.9%	6.6%	2.4%	
How much do you love listening in English?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q7	55.7%	26.6%	9.6%	3.2%	4.9%	
What do you feel about singing in English?	(very good)	(good)	(no idea)	(bad)	(very bad)	
Q8	61.4%	23%	9.5%	3.5%	2.5%	
What do you feel about the games you play in English?	(very good)	(good)	(no idea)	(bad)	(very bad)	
Q9	52%	31.8%	5.9%	5%	5.3%	
What do you feel about doing English homework?	(very good)	(good)	(no idea)	(bad)	(very bad)	
Q10	49.9%	29.2%	6.8%	9%	5%	
How much do you love reading in English?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q11	51.6%	29.4%	6.5%	7.1%	5.5%	
How much do you love writing in English?	(like very much)	(like)	(no idea)	(like a little)	(don't like at all)	
Q13	70.8	19.5%	3.2%	4.1%	2.4%	
How much do you wonder about the new English words?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	
Q15	64%	22%	3.4%	5.8%	4.9%	
How enjoyable do you think English classes are?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	
Q16	81.1%	10%	3.5%	2.7%	2.7%	
How necessary do you think learning English is?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	
Q17	57.8%	25%	4.6%	6.1%	6.6%	
How enjoyable do you think the activities in English course book are?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	
Q18	54.7%	29.8%	3.9%	6%	5.5%	
How attractive do you think the topics in English course book are?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	
Q19	56%	27.5%	5%	6.2%	5.4%	
How comfortable do you feel while learning English in class?	(a lot)	(to some extent)	(no idea)	(a little)	(not at all)	

As is seen in Table 6, in Question 4, students' attitudes towards learning new words are very positive and 69.1% of them stated that they like learning new words "very much." Question 13 was in the same parallel with Question 4 and aimed at investigating students' feelings about vocabulary learning. Seventy point eight percent of students stated that they wonder about the new English words "a lot." There was one question for each main skill in the questionnaire. In Question 5, it was found out that 56.6% of students like speaking English "very much." In Question 6, it was seen that 63.5% of students like listening in English "very much." In the tenth question, 49.9% of students stated that they like reading in

English “very much” and in the eleventh question, 51.6% of them stated that they like writing in English “very much.” As it is seen in the results, students’ attitudes towards four main skills are very positive and they love each of the skills very much.

There were also eight questions in the questionnaire in order to check students’ attitudes towards classroom tasks and activities in English classes. Question 7 was aimed at investigating students’ feelings about singing in English and it was found out that 55.7% of them feel “very good” about it. Accordingly in the 8th question, 61.4% of the students stated that they feel “very good” about the games they play in English. Students’ feelings about doing English homework were investigated in Question 9 and it was found out that 52% of them feel “very good” about doing English homework. Question 16 aimed at finding out students’ ideas about the necessity of learning English and 81.1% of them stated that it is necessary “a lot.” In order to check students’ attitudes towards English course book, there were two questions in the questionnaire. In Question 17, it was seen that 57.8% of the students think that the activities in English course book are enjoyable “a lot” and in Question 18, it was found out that 54.7% of the students think that the topics in English course book are attractive “a lot.” Question 19 was for exploring about how much comfortable students feel while they were learning English at class and it was seen that 56% of them feel comfortable “a lot.”

To sum up, the results showed that students’ attitudes towards learning English are very positive. Most of them like doing all kind of classroom tasks and activities in English classes and very few of them do not like dealing with those tasks and activities.

As is seen in Table 7, out of four main skills, learners like listening most. In Question 6, both 3rd grades and 5th graders stated that they like listening “very much.” Yet, the difference in the percentages is high. While 77.6 % of the 3rd graders like listening very much, 53.2 % of the 5th grades like it very much and 26.6 of the 5th graders “like” listening. Only 1.7 % of 3rd graders and 2.8 of 5th graders do not like listening at all. This can arise from the fact that learners develop higher positive attitudes towards receptive skills as is aforementioned in Chapter 2 (Kızıltan & Atlı, 2013).

As the listening skill, both 3rd and 5th graders like speaking “very much.” In question 5, while 65.4 % of 3rd graders like speaking very much, the percentage is 50.1 % among 5th graders. Though they both have positive attitudes towards speaking skills, attitude scores are higher in the responses of 3rd graders, as in other main skills. Furthermore, while 2.1 % of 3rd

graders do not like speaking at all, the percentage is 3.6 % among 5th graders, which can again show the higher attitude scores of 3rd graders.

Table 7. Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English (3rd Graders & 5th Graders)

Questions	Percentages									
	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th
Q4	82.5	59.3	11.5	25.8	2.8	4.6	2.1	6.6	1	3.6
How much do you love learning new words?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q5	65.4	50.1	23.8	26.6	4.5	6.6	4.2	10.7	2.1	5.9
How much do you love speaking English?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q6	77.6	53.2	13.3	27.6	3.8	7.4	3.5	9	1.7	2.8
How much do you love listening in English?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q7	66.8	47.6	24.1	28.4	3.5	14.1	2.4	3.8	3.1	6.1
What do you feel about singing in English?	very good		good		no idea		bad		very bad	
Q8	74.5	51.9	16.4	27.9	4.9	12.8	1.7	4.9	2.4	2.6
What do you feel about the games you play in English?	very good		good		no idea		bad		very bad	
Q9	61.5	45	25.5	36.3	5.2	6.4	2.4	5.9	5.2	5.4
What do you feel about doing English homework?	very good		good		no idea		bad		very bad	
Q10	56.6	45	29.7	28.9	5.6	7.7	4.2	12.5	3.8	5.9
How much do you love reading in English?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q11	61.5	44.2	25.2	32.5	5.6	7.2	3.8	9.5	3.8	6.6
How much do you love writing in English?	like very much		like		no idea		like a little		don't like at all	
Q13	81.1	63.2	13.3	24	2.1	4.1	1.7	5.9	1.7	2.8
How much do you wonder about the new English words?	a lot		to some extent		no idea		a little		not at all	
Q15	81.8	50.9	11.2	29.9	1.7	4.6	2.8	7.9	2.4	6.6
How enjoyable do you think English classes are?	a lot		to some extent		no idea		a little		not at all	
Q16	86.4	77.2	9.1	10.7	2.8	4.1	.3	4.3	1.4	3.6
How necessary do you think learning English is?	a lot		to some extent		no idea		a little		not at all	
Q17	78.3	42.7	12.6	34	3.1	5.6	2.1	9	3.8	8.7
How enjoyable do you think the activities in English course book are?	a lot		to some extent		no idea		a little		not at all	
Q18	71.8	42.4	20	27	2.9	4.7	2.5	8.5	2.9	7.5
How attractive do you think the topics in English course book are?	a lot		to some extent		no idea		a little		not at all	
Q19	70	45.9	21.1	32.1	2.9	6.5	3.2	8.3	2.9	7.3
How comfortable do you feel while learning English in class?										

As is seen in Table 7, responses given to Question 11 have revealed that 61.5 % of 3rd graders like writing in English “very much” while 44.2 % of 5th graders like it very much. Again here, the difference in the percentages demonstrates that though both learner groups have positive attitude towards writing in English, 3rd graders have higher attitude scores than 5th graders. It can also be easily seen in the other choices of the learners. While 3.8 % of 3rd graders do not like writing in English at all, the percentage is 6.6 % among 5th graders.

In the responses of learners to Question 10, it shows that 56.6 % of 3rd graders and 45 % of 5th graders like reading in English “very much.” As other skills, 3rd graders have higher attitude scores towards reading in English than 5th graders. This can also easily be seen in the other choices of the students. Three point eight percent of 3rd graders do not like reading in English at all while 5.9 % of 5th grade learners do not like it at all.

Question 4 and Question 13 were for investigating students’ attitudes towards learning new vocabulary. As it is seen in Table 7, the results of the both questions are similar. Attitudes of both 3rd graders and 5th graders towards learning new vocabulary are positive. However, the big difference in the percentages of the two groups is important. In Question 4, 82.5 % of 3rd graders stated that they like learning new vocabulary “very much” while 59.3 % of 5th graders like it very much. In the thirteenth question, 81.1 % of 3rd graders wonder about the meaning of new vocabulary “a lot” while the percentage is 63.2 % among 5th graders. As it can be easily observed, the attitude scores of 3rd graders on learning new vocabulary are higher than the ones of 5th graders.

In the fifteenth question, 81.8 % of 3rd graders and 63.2 % of 5th graders think that English classes are enjoyable “a lot.” Both groups consider English classes as “enjoyable a lot”, yet the percentage in the results of 3rd graders is much higher than the one of 5th graders.

In Question 17, though both groups think that the activities in English course book are “enjoyable a lot,” the attitude scores of 3rd graders were much higher than the ones of 5th graders. While 78.3 % of 3rd graders think that the activities in the English course book are enjoyable a lot, the percentage is 42.7 % among 5th graders. Question 18 is included in the questionnaire for the same purpose with Question 17; to check students’ attitudes towards their English course book. Seventy point three percent of 3rd graders stated that the topics in the English course book attract them “a lot” while the percentage of 5th graders is 41.9. This result is not surprising since the course book of 3rd graders and the course book of 5th graders is different from each other. It is sure that the course book of 3rd graders includes listening and

speaking activities more and it also includes many games and songs that 3rd grade students make fun with. However, the contents of 5th grade course books have many grammar, reading, and writing activities which can be the reason of 5th graders' relatively low positive attitudes towards their course books.

Learners' attitudes towards learning English were also checked by other three questions whose focuses were on teaching games, songs, and homework. In the seventh question, 66.8 % of 3rd grade learners stated that they felt "very good" about singing in English while 47.6 % of 5th graders felt very good about it. In Question 8, it was seen that 74.5 % of 3rd graders felt "very good" about English games that they play in class while the percentage is 51.9 % among 5th graders. In Question 9, it was found out that 61.5 of 3rd graders felt "very good" about doing English homework while 45 % of 5th graders marked that they felt very good about it. As it can easily be seen in the statistics, 3rd graders and 5th graders stated that they felt very good about English games, songs, and homework. However, the attitude scores of 3rd graders are much higher than the ones of 5th graders, which means that 3rd grade learners are more inclined to have positive attitudes towards these tasks as in other classroom tasks and activities.

In Question 16, it was seen that 86.4 % of 3rd grade learners think that it is necessary "a lot" to learn English. Seventy-seven percent of 5th graders also stated that it is necessary a lot. As it is seen, huge numbers from both groups think that it is necessary a lot to learn English. Yet, the percentage in 3rd graders' responses is again higher.

In Question 19, it was found out that 97.9 % of 3rd graders feel comfortable "a lot" while learning English in class. This is a much higher percentage when it is compared to the one of 5th graders. Forty five point three percent of 5th graders stated that they felt comfortable "a lot" and 31.7 % of them stated that they felt comfortable "to some extent" while learning English in the class. Via this question, it was aimed to checked students' mood in English classes and it was seen that 3rd grade English learners are more relaxed than 5th grade learners while learning English in the class.

4.2.3. Comparison of 3rd and 5th Graders through T-Test

Table 8. Difference between 3rd Graders and 5th Graders in terms of Their Attitudes towards General English

	mean	s.d.	t	p
3rd graders	4.34	.711	9.22	.000
5th graders	3.74	.92		

In Table 8, the positive t value (9.22) indicates that the mean of responses for the 3rd and 5th grades yields a significant difference in terms of their attitudes towards general English. It is clear from the statistical analysis that 3rd grade students have higher values of attitudes than 5th graders, which could stem from the fact that the earlier children start to learn English, the more effective will their language learning process be in comparison to the older starters (Hall, 2008, & Moyer, 2004).

Table 9. Difference between 3rd Graders and 5th Graders in terms of Their Attitudes towards Learning English

	mean	s.d.	t	p
3rd graders	4.55	.60	7.60	.000
5th graders	4.13	.78		

As is shown in Table 9, the positive t test value (7.60) points put that there is a significant difference in responses of 3rd and 5th graders in terms of their attitudes towards learning English.

4.2.4. Analysis of Learners' Favourite Activities

In the last question of the Language Attitude Questionnaire (LAQ), students were asked to state three of their favourite activities in English classes. The findings from the open-ended question in the questionnaire were analyzed through the content analysis. However, we had to eliminate some of the statements since they were not considered as “activity.” This probably aroused from the fact that the participants were young learners and they could not distinguish activities from the other things that they did in English.

Table 10. Favourite Activities of Students

Activities	3 rd Graders			5 th Graders			TOTAL
	Male	Female	<i>Tot</i>	Male	Female	<i>Tot</i>	
Playing Games	59 43%	65 44%	124 43%	70 38%	64 31%	134 34%	258 38%
Singing Songs	39 28%	50 34%	89 31%	22 12%	57 28%	79 20%	168 25%
Speaking	22 16%	25 17%	47 16%	51 27%	51 25%	102 26%	149 22%
Writing	29 21%	33 22%	62 22%	37 20%	44 22%	81 21%	143 21%
Reading	16 12%	10 7%	26 9%	41 22%	65 32%	106 27%	132 20%
Learning Words	11 8%	14 9%	25 9%	28 15%	60 30%	88 23%	113 17%
Listening	11 8%	3 2%	14 5%	14 8%	25 12%	39 10%	53 8%
Puzzle	9 7%	10 7%	19 7%	13 7%	18 9%	31 8%	50 7%
Painting	14 10%	18 12%	32 11%	--	5 2%	5 1%	37 5%
Watching Videos	7 5%	13 9%	20 7%	5 3%	2 1%	7 2%	27 4%
Cut & Paste	4 3%	12 8%	16 6%	--	--	--	16 2%
Drama	--	1 1%	1 0.3	1 1%	3 1%	4 1%	5 1%

As is seen in Table 10, the most favourite activity of 3rd grade female students is playing games; they stated it 65 times in the questionnaires. They also stated that they love singing songs 50 times, writing 33 times, and speaking 25 times. Painting (18 times), learning vocabulary (14 times), watching videos (13 times), cut and paste activities (12 times), reading (10 times), and doing puzzle (10) were also stated many times in the questionnaires. However,

only 3 of the students stated that they love listening in English and one of the students stated that s/he likes drama.

The most favourite activity of 3rd grade male students is also playing games as is among female students. They stated it 59 times in the questionnaires. They also love singing songs (39 times) and writing (29 times) in English. Speaking (22 times), reading (16 times), painting (14 times), listening (11 times), and learning vocabulary (11 times) are also their favourite activities. Nine of the male students in 3rd grades stated that they love doing puzzle in English, 7 of them stated that they love watching videos in English, and 4 of them stated that they love cut and paste activities in English classes.

The most favourite activity of 5th grade female students is reading. They stated it 65 times in the questionnaires. They also love playing games in English (64 times), learning new words (60 times), and singing English songs (57 times). Speaking (51 times), writing (44 times), listening (25 times), and doing puzzle in English (18) are also their favourite activities. Five of them stated that they love painting; three of them stated that they love drama and two of them stated that they love watching videos.

As is seen in Table 10, the situation is different among 5th grade male students. The most favourite activity of them is playing games; they stated it 70 times. They also love speaking (51 times), reading (41 times), writing (37 times), and learning vocabulary (28 times). Singing songs in English (22 times), listening (14 times), and doing puzzle (13 times) are also their favourite activities. Five of them stated that they love watching videos and only one of them stated that s/he loves drama.

It can be deduced from the statements of students that favourite classroom tasks and activities differ between the responses of 3rd and 5th graders. Playing games and singing in English are the most common popular activities among both 3rd and 5th graders. While speaking, reading and vocabulary learning are more common among 5th graders, painting and watching videos are more common among 3rd graders. It may arise from the fact that younger learners enjoy doing the activities that are more suitable for their ages while 5th graders gradually moves away from those kind of activities and head for the ones that they also deal in the other school subject

It is clearly seen from the statistical and content analysis of responses that both earlier and later starters of language learners have positive attitudes towards English. However,

attitudinal scales of earlier starters; that is 3th graders, are higher than the ones of later starters; that is 5th graders. The situation is the same both in the attitudes towards general English and towards learning English. It has also been found important in the study that gender makes a difference in the attitudes of language learners. It has been found out that female language learners have more positive attitudes than male ones towards English.

4.2.5. Comparison of Female and Male Learners' Attitudes towards English

In the study, the differences between the responses of female and male students have been analyzed in order to determine whether a significant difference exists. Table 11 shows the t-test results for the difference between the attitudes of female and male students towards general English and learning English.

Table 11. Difference between Females and Males in terms of Their Attitudes towards General English

		mean	s.d.	t	p
General English	female	4.07	.87	2.40	.16
	male	3.91	.89		
Learning English	female	4.40	.69	3.68	.000
	male	4.19	.78		

As is shown in Table 11, though two groups have higher attitude scores towards general English, the attitudinal difference between female and male learners is obvious. The mean scores of female learners (4.07) are higher than the ones of male learners' (3.91). It can be concluded that though the attitudes of male learners are not negative, the attitudes of female learners towards general English are more positive and they are more optimistic about their process of language learning than male learners.

As it is demonstrated in Table 11, the mean scores of female learners (4.40) towards learning English are higher than the ones of males' (4.19). However, the difference is less than the one in general English. Both female and male learners have positive attitudes towards

learning English though female learners are again more positive and optimistic about their process of learning English.

As for the gender differences in attitudes of students towards English, results of independent-samples t test indicate that there is a significant difference between female and male students in terms of their attitudes towards both general English and learning English. It is clear from the statistical analysis that females show higher values of attitudes than males, which stem from the fact that female student may be more open to different cultures and more inclined to learn foreign languages (Bilaniuk, 2003).

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Presentation

This chapter presents the summary of the study, discussion of the findings along with implications and recommendations for further studies.

5.2. Summary of the study

The main aim of this study was to find out the attitudinal differences between 3rd grade learners who start learning English at 2nd grade and 5th grade learners who start learning English at 4th grade. The study also aimed at exploring the effects of gender differences in attitudes of learners. In order to collect data, a language attitude questionnaire was designed with the help of adapting several questionnaires which were prepared with the goal of collecting information about learners' attitudinal predispositions towards English and language learning in various countries around the world. The study sampled 685 students in state schools of Mezitli district in Mersin. Two hundred and nine of them were 3rd graders in four primary schools, 395 of them were 5th graders in four secondary schools in Mezitli. In addition to the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, qualitative data were obtained from the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire. While the quantitative findings of the data were analyzed using SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences), qualitative data were analyzed through the content analysis.

According to the factor analysis of the responses in the pilot and the actual study, the parallel questions were categorized into factors. Two factors which formed two themes were obtained. The research findings were interpreted with reference to these factors; one of them was "Attitudes towards General English," and the other one was "Attitudes towards Learning English."

5.3. Discussion and Implications

Summary of the findings are provided under the subtitles attitudes towards general English, attitudes towards learning English, gender differences in attitudes of students, and favourite activities of students in English classes.

5.3.1 Discussion of Attitudes towards General English

According to the factor analysis, the first component of the questionnaire was ‘attitudes towards general English’ which included the questions exploring the opinions of the respondents of general English. The questions in this cluster were similar in that they all aimed at finding out feelings and ideas about general English and difficulty of it.

It is clear from the research findings of the first component that attitudes of both 3rd graders and 5th graders are positive and they feel very good about English. Yet, in this cluster, the rate of every question of 3rd graders’ is higher than the ones of 5th graders’. While most of 3rd graders feel very good about English and they love it very much, the rate is lower among 5th graders. Nearly half of them feel very good about English and they love it very much. This finding supports Karahan’s (2007) study in which she found out that the ones whose starting age of language learning is earlier consider English more pleasant than the one other group.

This situation can be more clearly observed in the results of the questions exploring students’ opinions about the difficulty of English. While 3rd graders consider English and learning English as very easy, 5th graders think that both English and learning English is easy. This can arise from the fact that as children grow up and the onset age of learning English rises, they will have to face more troubles and with the pace and acquisition level (Spolsky, 1969). Since children in younger ages have the higher advantage to make use of their grammatical and receptive phonological abilities (Hall, 2008), they find it much easier to learn a foreign language.

5.3.2 Discussion of Attitudes towards Learning English

The second component of the questionnaire was attitudes towards learning English which included the questions searching for the opinions and feelings of the respondents about four main skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and classroom tasks and activities in English classes. Research findings indicated that, in the results of each question, though attitudes of both 3rd graders and 5th graders towards learning English are positive, the rate is higher in attitudes of 3rd graders as in attitudes towards general English. In four main skills, both 3rd and 5th graders stated that they love listening, speaking, reading, and writing very much. Yet, the big difference in the rate of attitudes indicated that 3rd graders have much higher positive dispositions towards these skills. As Bain et. al. (2010) suggest, this finding reflects parallel results with the findings of students’ attitudes and feelings towards general

English and the difficulty of it. As is stated before, Bain et. al. (2010) claim that there is a direct relationship between foreign language achievement and their attitudes towards skills and tasks.

The findings showed that the most popular skill among students is listening. However, the attitude scales vary between 3rd graders and 5th graders. While 77.6 % of the 3rd graders stated that they like listening very much, 53.2 % of the 5th grades told that they like it very much. This finding supports the claim of Kızıltan & Atlı (2013) that learners favourite receptive skills more and they have higher positive dispositions for them. The second favourite skill was speaking. While 65.4 % of 3rd graders like speaking very much, the percentage is 50.1 % among 5th graders. This finding contradicts with the common bias in our culture that Turkish people are incapable of speaking English. Since speaking confidence plays an important role in the development of learners' speaking skills (Boonkit, 2010), language teachers should create opportunities for them to speak the target language and help them accelerate the process of developing speaking skills.

According to the findings, both 3rd graders and 5th graders like writing very much. However, while the rate was 61.5 % among 3rd graders, it was 44.2 % among 5th graders. The attitudes of students towards reading skills were also positive among both groups. While 56.6 % of 3rd graders like reading in English very much, the percentage was 45 % among 5th graders. These findings showed that at the beginning of their language learning process students develop positive attitudes towards four main skills. Yet, the ones that start learning English earlier develop much higher positive attitudes than the ones start learning later.

The research findings showed that both 3rd graders and 5th graders develop positive attitudes towards vocabulary learning though the rate is higher among 3rd graders as in all areas of language learning. This may arise from the fact that children are very curious about learning the meanings of new words (Kızıltan & Atlı, 2013).

It is clear from the research findings that both 3rd graders and 5th graders consider English classes as very enjoyable. The percentage was 81.8 % among 3rd graders and 63.2 % among 5th graders. It is the same with the activities in English course book as students think that they are also very enjoyable. Yet, the attitude scales of 3rd graders were much higher than the ones of 5th graders. While 78.3 % of 3rd graders think that the activities in the English course book are enjoyable a lot, the percentage is 42.7 % among 5th graders. It is very obvious that students also develop positive attitudes towards English classes and the activities in their

course book as they do towards general English. This finding supports Rahimi's claim that there is a close relationship between the textbook attitudes and overall foreign language attitudes (Rahimi, 2011).

Based upon the research findings, both 3rd graders and 5th graders have positive attitudes towards English games, songs, and homework. Yet, as in all other areas, the attitude rates of 3rd graders were much higher than the ones of 5th graders. Both learner groups are young learners, hence when we consider the ages of the participants, it is very usual for them to have high positive dispositions towards games and songs in English. It may arise from the fact that by the help of games, learners have the very chance of speaking and using the language rather than merely study it, and for this reason games help and encourage language learners to sustain their interest and work (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). Besides, songs are also capable of adding interest to the classroom routine and accordingly improve students' motivation (Millington, 2011).

Research findings also showed that both 3rd graders and 5th graders think that it is necessary "a lot" to learn English. It can be easily seen that learners are aware of the importance of learning English. Positive attitudes of the students can be determining factor in this since positive attitudes of learners help them to develop and sustain their intrinsic motivation (Hosseini, 2013).

According to the findings, 97.9 % of 3rd graders stated that they feel comfortable "a lot" while the percentage is 45.3 % among 5th graders. This huge difference shows, in a sense, the anxiety and concern status of the learners. Nearly all of the 3rd grade learners feel very comfortable in English classes and have minimum debilitating anxiety and worries (Dörnyei, 2005) in their language learning process. 5th grader also feel very comfortable but with a much higher percentage.

5.3.3 Discussion of "Learners' Favourite Activities"

Students' favourite activities were searched with an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire and analyzed through the content analysis. According to the findings of this analysis, the most popular activity of learners is playing games in English. It is in the same line with the results of the questionnaire. As is aforementioned, language learning through teaching games forms a crucial part in the language learning process of young learners. They like to take part in using the language without a feeling that they are merely studying. Hence,

playing English games provide an important motivation source for them. Singing songs is the second popular activity among students. As children already love to listen and sing songs either in their mother tongue or in a foreign language, it was a normal result for the study. While singing, they also have the chance to practice a new sound without producing the same level of boredom (Millington, 2011).

It was also found out that students love to speak English. It was again in the same parallel with the results of the questionnaire as most of the students stated that they like speaking English very much. These results may suggest that learners are aware of the necessity and importance of speaking skills. Therefore, language teachers should try to provide more alternative situations and activities for the learners to develop their speaking skills, and make them feel comfortable with their language use (Boonkit, 2010).

Another popular activity of the students was writing. While writing is considered to be the most difficult one among four main skills (Tangpermpoon, 2008), the results seem to be favorable. As young learners are potentially energetic and motivated, teachers need to take the advantage of it. Hence, through the process of writing, teachers may help students realize the importance of writing and provide them with a chance to self-correct their own writing mistakes to raise their awareness in L2 writing (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

Learning vocabulary was also one of the most popular activities among students. As is aforementioned, young learners are naturally curious and keen on knowing the meanings of new words. Their love to sing English songs can be also dedicated to their wish of knowing and using new words in English (Atlı, 2008). The other popular activities of students were painting, watching videos, cut and paste activities, reading, listening, and watching videos.

5.3.4 Discussion of Gender Differences and Language Attitudes

The research findings showed that the attitudes of female learners towards general English are more positive than the ones of males'. The mean score of female learners was 4.07 while the mean score of male learners was 3.91. The situation is the same with attitudes towards learning English. The mean score of female learners was 4.40 while the mean score of male learners was 4.19. This finding supports the common claim that female language learners have more positive attitudes towards language learning than males (Anderson, 2005, Bağçeci, 2014, Bilaniuk, 2003, Ghazvini, 2011, Henry & Apeltgren, 2008, İnal, Evin, & Saracaloğlu, 2005, Karahan, 2007, & Tierney & Gallastegi, 2011).

To sum up, it is clear from the findings that a great majority of students have positive attitudes towards general English and learning English though 3rd graders showed much higher positive attitudes than 5th graders. Hence, it can easily be said that this study showed the importance of the starting age of language learning and its effects on learners' attitudes towards English. Therefore, the finding of this study supports the “earlier is better” claim (Spolsky, 1969). The study also demonstrated and supported the common claim that female language learners have more positive attitudes than male ones (Anderson, 2005, Bağçeci, 2014, Bilaniuk, 2003, Ghazvini, 2011, Henry & Apelgren, 2008, İnal, Evin, & Saracaloğlu, 2005, Karahan, 2007, & Tierney & Gallastegi, 2011). Despite being in a lower attitude rate than females, males also showed positive attitudes towards English. Hence, it is essential to sustain students' positive attitudes towards general English and learning English through necessary changes by the help of the findings of this study. Authorities can take into consideration the responses of the students in the development of the language learning curriculum or language teachers can make use of the tasks and activities which students show higher positive attitudes in order to change the negative attitudes of students into positive ones. Since, as is mentioned in Chapter 2, English curriculum and classroom activities which were adapted for the needs and individual differences of the students can change negative attitudes of students and build positive ones.

5.4. Limitations of the study

For the aims of the study, in order to investigate the attitudinal differences between students who start learning English at 2nd grade and 4th grade, only a Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale was applied as a data collection instrument.

Another limitation of the study was that, in the questionnaire of the study, students' attitudes were checked through questions related only to classroom tasks and activities, hence other factors which may affect attitudes of students could not be investigated.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies

The current study proposes beneficial findings for the investigation of students' language attitudes. However, since the data collection instrument of the study was limited only to a Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale, the other data collection instruments could not be applied, which might provide much more effective results for the study. Hence, in further studies, researchers can benefit from the other data collection instruments, such as

interviews or small group meetings/discussions and give the participants a chance to express themselves and mention about their language learning process in their own words.

Moreover, though the reliability and validity of the questionnaire was high, the study was conducted only in a district of Mersin. Hence, there need to be more studies to develop more reliability and validity in different regions of Turkey.

Furthermore, since in the questionnaire of this study, students' language attitudes were investigated through the questions related only to the classroom tasks and activities, in the further studies, researchers can take into consideration other factors which may affect language attitudes of students, such as the role of teachers, parents, or culture.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. Appendix 1: Smiley Face Language Attitude Scale (English Version)

Gender: Female ☐

Grade:.....

Male ☐

ESL Timespan:.....(year)

***Please tick the box of the answer you find yourself on each question.**

1. What do you feel about learning English?



Very good

☐

Good

☐

No idea

☐

Bad

☐

Very bad

☐

2. How much do you love English?



Like very much

☐

Like

☐

No idea

☐

Like a little

☐

Don't like at all

☐

3. How difficult do you think English is?



Very easy

☐

Easy

☐

No idea

☐

Difficult

☐

Very difficult

☐

4. How much do you love learning new words in English?



Like very much

☐

Like

☐

No idea

☐

Like a little

☐

Don't like at all

☐

5. How much do you love speaking English?

				
<u>Like very much</u>	<u>Like</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Like a little</u>	<u>Don't like at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. How much do you love listening in English?

				
<u>Like very much</u>	<u>Like</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Like a little</u>	<u>Don't like at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. What do you feel about singing in English?

				
<u>Very good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Very bad</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. What do you feel about the games you play in English?

				
<u>Very good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Very bad</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. What do you feel about doing English homework?

				
<u>Very good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Very bad</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. How much do you love reading in English?

				
<u>Like very much</u>	<u>Like</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Like a little</u>	<u>Don't like at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. How much do you love writing in English?

				
<u>Like very much</u>	<u>Like</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Like a little</u>	<u>Don't like at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. How good are you at English?

				
<u>Very good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Very bad</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. How much do you wonder about the new English words?

				
<u>A lot</u>	<u>To some extent</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. How difficult do you think learning English is?

				
<u>Very easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>Difficult</u>	<u>Very difficult</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. How enjoyable do you think English classes are?

				
<u>A lot</u>	<u>To some extent</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. How necessary do you think learning English is?

				
<u>A lot</u>	<u>To some extent</u>	<u>No idea</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. How enjoyable do you think the activities in English course book are?



A lot

☐

To some extent

☐

No idea

☐

A little

☐

Not at all

☐

18. How attractive do you think the topics in English coursebook are?



A lot

☐

To some extent

☐

No idea

☐

A little

☐

Not at all

☐

19. How comfortable do you feel while learning English in class?



A lot

☐

To some extent

☐

No idea

☐

A little

☐

Not at all

☐

20. What are three of your favourite activities in English classes?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

7.2. Appendix 2: Gülen Yüz Dil Tutum Ölçeği (Turkish Version)

Cinsiyet: Bayan ☐

Sınıf:.....

Bay ☐

İngilizce öğrenim süresi:.....(yıl)

***Lütfen her soruda kendinize en yakın bulduğunuz cevabın kutucuğunu işaretleyiniz.**

1. İngilizce öğrenmele ilgili kendini nasıl hissediyorsun?



Cok İyi

☐

İyi

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Kötü

☐

Cok Kötü

☐

2. İngilizce' yi ne kadar seviyorsun?



Cok seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

3. Sence İngilizce ne kadar kolay?



Cok kolay

☐

Kolay

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Zor

☐

Cok zor

☐

4. İngilizce'de yeni kelimeler öğrenmeyi ne kadar seviyorsun?



Cok Seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

5. İngilizce konuşmayı ne kadar seviyorsun?



Cok Seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

6. İngilizce dinlemeyi ne kadar seviyorsun?



Çok Seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

7. İngilizce şarkı söylemeyle ilgili kendini nasıl hissediyorsun?



Çok İyi

☐

İyi

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Kötü

☐

Çok Kötü

☐

8. Oynadığınız İngilizce oyunlarla ilgili kendini nasıl hissediyorsun?



Çok İyi

☐

İyi

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Kötü

☐

Çok Kötü

☐

9. İngilizce ödev yapmayla ilgili kendini nasıl hissediyorsun?



Çok İyi

☐

İyi

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Kötü

☐

Çok Kötü

☐

10. İngilizce' de okumayı ne kadar seviyorsun?



Çok seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

11. İngilizce' de yazmayı ne kadar seviyorsun?



Çok seviyorum

☐

Seviyorum

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az Seviyorum

☐

Hiç sevmiyorum

☐

12. İngilizce öğrenmede ne kadar iyi olduğunu düşünüyorsun?



Cok İyi

☐

İyi

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Kötü

☐

Cok Kötü

☐

13. Karşılaştığım yeni İngilizce kelimelerin anlamlarını ne kadar merak ediyorsun?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az

☐

Cok az

☐

14. İngilizce öğrenmenin ne kadar kolay olduğunu düşünüyorsun?



Cok kolay

☐

Kolay

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Biraz zor

☐

Cok zor

☐

15. İngilizce derslerini ne kadar eğlenceli buluyorsun?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Cok az

☐

Hic

☐

16. İngilizce öğrenmenin ne kadar gerekli olduğunu düşünüyorsun?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az

☐

Cok az

☐

17. İngilizce ders kitabındaki aktiviteleri ne kadar eğlenceli buluyorsun?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az

☐

Cok az

☐

18. İngilizce ders kitabındaki konular ne kadar ilgini çekiyor?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az

☐

Cok az

☐

19. Sınıfta İngilizce öğrenirken kendini ne kadar rahat hissediyorsun?



Cok

☐

Orta

☐

Fikrim yok

☐

Az

☐

Cok az

☐

20. İngilizce derslerinde en sevdiğin üç (3) aktivite nelerdir?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

7.3. Appendix 3: Item Numbers of Old and Final Scale

Old No	New No
Q1	Q1
Q2	Q2
Q3	Q3
Q4	Q4
Q5	Deleted
Q6	Q5
Q7	Deleted
Q8	Q6
Q9	Q7
Q10	Q8
Q11	Q9
Q12	Q10
Q13	Q11
Q14	Q12
Q15	Q13
Q16	Q14
Q17	Deleted
Q18	Q15
Q19	Q16
Q20	Q17
Q21	Q18
Q22	Q19

7.4. Appendix 4: Allowance from District National Education Ministry



**T.C.
MEZİTLİ KAYMAKAMLIĞI
İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü**

Sayı : 631406699/200/2777245
Konu: Öznur ÇELİK

13/03/2015

KAYMAKAMLIK MAKAMINA

İlgi :Davultepe Belediyesi İlkokulu İngilizce öğretmeni Öznur ÇELİK'in 06/03/2015 tarihli dilekçesi

Davultepe Belediyesi İlkokulu İngilizce öğretmeni Öznur ÇELİK'in Yüksek Lisans Tez anketini 3. ve 5. Sınıflarda uygulamak isteği ile ilgili dilekçesi ekte olup, İngilizce öğrenmeye başlayanların, İngilizceye karşı tutumları konulu tezini 3.ve 5. sınıflarda uygulaması okul müdürlerinin sorumluluğunda ve eğitim- öğretimi aksatmamak kaydıyla tüm okullarımızda yapması Müdürlüğümüzce uygun görülmektedir.

Makamlarınızca da uygun görüldüğü takdirde Olur'larınıza arz ederim.

**Dursun KILIÇ
İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürü**

OLUR

**Nazım MADENOĞLU
Kaymakam**

EKLER:
1-Dilekçe

MEZİTLİ İLÇE MİLLİ EĞİTİM MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
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Ayrıntılı bilgi için irtibat: Mesleki ve Teknik Eğitim Şubesi H.ORANLI

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