



CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TO LEARN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

In this article discusses about children's attitudes to learn foreign languages especially english and gives some useful ideas and modern methods.

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

English. Students' attitudes were mostly positive toward learning English. Singing songs and playing games were their favorite activities and they had an intrinsic motivation to learn English.

In order to have successful English users, education ministries all over the world tend to lower the age of onset of formal English language teaching. Early start of language teaching is supported by the studies conducted in psychology, linguistics, and other related disciplines. In connection with this view, the grade of onset of teaching

The debates concerning the ideal age of onset for foreign language learning continues. Though teaching English to young learners is often viewed as challenging because of the characteristics of these learners, such as inability to understand abstract concepts or short attention span, researchers provided the advantages of early start to learning English, such as young learners' lower affective filters, their ability to acquire the sounds and rhythms of the foreign languages faster, the longer time they can spend on learning languages and their



potential to develop higher awareness of intercultural identity. The first step in terms of lowering the age of onset of teaching English was taken in 1997 with the introduction of 8-year compulsory education. Increasing young learners' communicative abilities in English by exposing them to a foreign language at an earlier age was the main objective of this change. However, a recent result showed that EF EPI (Education First English Proficiency Index), which is a standardized test aiming to find out countries' level of English proficiency through gathering measurements of adult English proficiency.

The effort to lower the age of onset of English continued in Turkey and a major change was implemented in academic year. This new model coming along with the comprehensive educational reform not only comprised three four-year segments (primary, elementary, and high school levels) with a total of twelve years of compulsory education but also entailed lowering the starting age of English language learning from grade four (age 9) to grade two (ages 6-6,5) by the Ministry of National Education (hereafter MoNE) (2013). The reports concerning the theoretical and especially practical problems associated with young learners' English learning with regard to the 2005 curriculum, the problematic techniques, activities, materials, and methods employed with these learners, a departure from the integrated skills approach by emphasizing speaking and listening before writing and reading were important factors determining basic tenets of the current curriculum. The emphasis on the use of internet technology, learners' individual differences, involvement of young learners' parents in their kids' language learning, consideration of crowded classes and work load of teachers, the need of young learners to communicate with people from different cultures, the need to increase

awareness of young learners to treat English as a means for human interaction, and the development of communicative competence as well as learner autonomy and intercultural awareness around the principles of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages were among the aspects mentioned during the design of the current English language curriculum. After the revisions of several drafts, the current curriculum came into use, which included, arts and crafts, and drama as the main activities and strategies for the first four-year segment. Speaking and listening were determined to be the focus skills for the second, third, and fourth grades. However, very limited writing and reading activities were added for the third and fourth grades as well (MoNE, 2013).

The concerns of these studies were mostly related with school administrators' views about teaching of English to young learners and teachers' views regarding the curriculum of the second grade English teaching. There are some pedagogical implications of this study. First, teachers of English for young learners should use more symbolic awards in their classes by giving a star or putting a smiley on their face or notebooks as a response to students' efforts to learn English because it is one of the most important factors motivating and increasing positive attitudes of young learners to learn English. It is also suggested that teachers should include more games, songs, and painting activities in their classes also they should eliminate writing activities. One important institutional implication stems from the unstable readiness level of the learners at this age. Second graders differ greatly from each other regarding the ability to write, read, or do some basic activities, such as cutting, painting, and pasting. The difference among the learners causes the more successful ones to wait longer which makes them feel bored



and eventually lose their attention and motivation. Therefore, only for English classes, learners from different classes may be grouped according to their abilities so that teachers can design learning activities which can be optimally set in students' zone of proximal development.

As a final remark, this study has the limitation of employing a small sample size.

Future researchers should expand the number of participants so as to determine further young learners' views concerning their attitude and motivation to learn English in an EFL context. Also, cross-cultural studies may be organized in order to compare learners in different educational settings.

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