



# Analysis of Young Learners' and Teenagers' Attitudes to English Language Learning

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## Abstract

Attitudes begin to occur with the child's birth and develop with the effects of his/her parents, peers, and the environment (Brown, 1994). Along with that, the attitudes have a significant effect on how much language learners become interested in learning (Inal & Evin, 2006). That's to say, each language learner has the potential to develop different kinds of attitudes towards language learning. The present study focused on the attitudes of Turkish young learners and teenagers towards English Language Learning (ELL). It aimed to find out whether the attitudes of young learners change when they begin to be teenagers and whether the results correlate with the assumptions. If they correlate, the possible reasons behind that were tried to be named for these changes. Moon (2011) claims that compared to young learners, teenagers are inclined to lose their desire for language learning and they could be less motivated. In line with the statement of Moon (2011), the current study displayed that teenagers began to develop more negative attitudes towards ELL, losing their enthusiasm and motivation for ELL for various reasons. The implications of these results on education settings in Turkey were discussed and commented at the end of the paper.

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**Keywords:** Language attitudes; motivation; English language learning; young learners; teenage learners

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## 1. Introduction

Attitudes of the learners who are exposed to English language have been gaining radical and dramatic importance in English language teaching and learning. A great many researchers strongly believe that attitudes of the learners towards the target language is one of the most vital parts of language learning process and have great importance. According to the researchers, there are many reasons underneath this utterance. İnal and Evin and Saracaloğlu (2006) assert that the attitudes of learners towards language learning have a significant effect on how they behave and feel.

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In order to establish more meaningful and reasonable relationship between attitude and its effect on English language learning, it's necessary to be more knowledgeable about the definition of "attitude". This term has been defined and described by many researchers and the authors. According to Kırımsoy (1997), the attitudes are sort of signs of culture and our lives and feelings are formed under the effect of them. There is one more "attitude" definition by Montano and Kasprzyk (2008, p. 71) and this definition explains rather thoroughly and broadly the term and its relation with outcomes of learning as well:

Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioral beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behavior will have a positive attitude toward the behavior. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behavior will have a negative attitude. (as cited in Abidin & Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012).

When the definitions above are taken into consideration, it could be concluded that according the researchers, attitudes are the results of both internal and external factors and they are directly associated with whether the outcomes of learning process are successful or not.

Each language learner has the potential to develop different kind of attitudes towards language learning when all the important issues mentioned above in the definition of attitudes are taken into account. Even though it may be impossible to find out and identify each student's attitudes and their influences on language learning, this situation could be separated into groups as young learners' and teenagers' attitudes towards English language learning. Loukotková (2011) mentions in his thesis that while young learners present and show more positive attitudes and enthusiasm for ELL, teenagers tend to be less motivated and reluctant for learning. Thus, it's highly important to be aware of the attitudes of both age group, namely, young learners and teenagers, towards ELL and try to highlight the reasons underneath of these attitudes.

The aim of the present study is to analyze the attitudes of young learners and teenagers by conducting a research on 3rd and 7th graders in a private school in Istanbul, Turkey. With the help of the results, it could be inferred whether teenagers experience any differences in their attitudes towards ELL when they begin to be in upper primary. If the answer of this question is positive, then the reasons of it from the point of 7th grade students will provide a great guide and benefit for finding a way to turn the negative attitudes into positive ones.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Young learners

In order to have valuable information underneath of young learners' attitudes to ELL, it's highly necessary to be knowledgeable about both groups' characteristics and how they expect to learn a language. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) define young learners as the learners whose ages are from five to ten. Although it's impossible to generalize the characteristics of the young learners because some individual differences certainly exist. However, still some of the most common features of these young language learners could be stated. Brumfit (1996) states enthusiasm and relaxed moods of them. According to him, young learners are inclined to be more enthusiastic and eager to learn a language. Besides, the feelings of shyness or inhibitions which could be brought to learning environment are very rare when the concern is young learners. The other characteristic of them is that they could be much more easily molded by their teachers since it's their very first experiences in school life (Brumfit, 1996).

Two other significant features mentioned by Halliwell (1996) are children's instinct for play and fun and their capacity for indirect learning. The author claims that it's highly possible for young learners to learn indirectly or in other words, learning subconsciously. The children tend to acquire a language as well as information around them instead of being taught any subject in a direct way. Furthermore, when the young learners have a chance to be active during learning process like touching, playing, seeing, hearing, etc., these make more sense for them than just explanations. The other specific feature of these is instinct for play and fun. They love playing games and acting out in the language classrooms and apart from it, they indulge into it a lot. Even though they're certainly aware that the game isn't a real thing, still they participate in it with their whole enthusiasm, effort and power. As a result, the learning process is affected by their eagerness and full activation in a pretty positive way, making their learning more beneficial, and permanent, as well (Halliwell, 1996).

Taking into consideration the target learner groups' specific features, it's vital to provide the most suitable, efficient and beneficial methodological approaches, and techniques. To begin with, it's utmost significant to create a friendly, sincere and secure atmosphere in young language classrooms. Finch (2001) emphasized the promotion of low-stress language learning environment and to encourage the debilitating anxiety for language learners. Even if they're quite young and they're not shy as much as adults, they may still have problems when they don't feel comfortable or secure. Krashen (1982) claims that in order to acquire and use the language effectively, it should happen in informal settings subconsciously. Otherwise, when there's a teaching concern, it will be just learning process and it cannot be as effective as acquiring. When this claim is taken into consideration, it could be said that especially for the young learners who are not

aware of teaching and learning issues yet, it's important to create a natural environment in language classrooms. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), with the help of games, act outs, and fun activities, the language teachers could carry out more natural and authentic atmosphere in young learner classrooms.

Both their features peculiar to this age group and the teaching methods have a great role for the kids to improve negative or positive attitudes towards English language learning. Moon (2000) claims that “Children don't come to their English lessons as blank sheets of paper. They already have some views and attitudes towards learning English” (p. 15). The author also added that the social environment where the kids are grown up and the people surrounding them have an important effect to construct these attitudes. Apart from the external factors mentioned above related to kids' previous environment before coming to school, the young learners' attitudes could be formed or affected by school related issues. The young learners' feelings for their teachers, the general learning atmosphere in the classroom, teaching methods implemented in language classrooms; the activities and materials and their parents' opinions are inclined to affect the young learners' attitudes quite much (Moon, 2000). Besides, Gourneau (2007) advocates that teachers' trusting, accepting to their students, heartening their creativity are called as effective teachers and they highly affect the students developing positive attitudes to English language.

## *2.2. Teenage Learners*

As it was mentioned in the previous subchapter, the learners who are five to eleven years old are named as young learners. Thus, after the age of eleven, they're not young learners anymore. According to Lewis (2007), most experts agree that the learners whose ages are between eleven and nineteen are named as teenage or young adolescent learners.

When the thoughts and experiences of teenage learner teachers are taken into consideration, it's highly possible to label this age group learner as lazy, disrespectful, and problematic students. However, teenagers are described as wondrous group who are eager to learn, having full of energy, curious, ready for adventure, and sociable (“At the Turning Point The Young Adolescent Learner,” 2003). Besides, “this group of students can be both a delight and a challenge for teachers to motivate, hold their attention, and channel their enthusiasm and energy into real learning” (At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner, 2003, p.8). On the other hand, there's one very significant issue and reality need to be definitely examined. It is that this age group learners undergo dramatic change, have differences at this moment of their lives and they have to deal with all of these changes. Lewis (2007) focuses on especially three main changes the young adolescents experience. These are named as physical, psychological and social changes which have a great role in immediate behavioral and attitude changes of

teenage. They have to handle a great number of challenges such as the changes with their bodies, get used to them, try to have an identity and a role in a society to be accepted by their peers and to have a balance with their parents and their social life. Along with this huge burden, they have to adapt to a secondary school which corresponds to the same time with all these differences in their lives. “It’s no wonder, then, that social and emotional concerns often block out academic issues.” (“At The Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner,” 2003, p.11).

Moon (2000) claims that at the age of 11-12 and upwards, the students are not interested in language so much. Besides, with the fear of being stupid and also embarrassed in front of their peers, they don’t want to learn a language. Teenagers’ thoughts and behaviors are mostly under the influence of their peers. From the point of academic world, at school, there’s not much difference actually. “Attitudes do not remain fixed and can be affected both positively and negatively by influences on pupils from outside school, for example parents’ views, and their friends’ views.” (Moon, 2000, p.17). The author also adds that learning process, environment and how English language teachers promote teenagers’ interest and motivation affect their attitudes towards learning. Thus, secondary teachers have a quite significant job at this point.

Lewis (2007) asserts that taking into consideration the studies conducted recently, teenagers learn languages fastest and the most effectively during these years. The reason for this assertion could be that teenagers begin to think in a more complex way and start to figure out the abstract issues. (Harmer, 2007). Ur (1996) says that when the concern is learning potential, compared to younger ones, teenagers have more capability for it. However, the most striking and dramatic point is that because of the changes mentioned above, it could be quite challenging and cause lots of troubles to convert teenagers’ this capability into learning environment. Piccolo (2010) suggests that it’s vital for teenage teachers manage mutual trust and respect relation with them, even it takes some time. If they manage to be understandable, caring and assertive at some point, then, it will be pleasure to teach teenagers (as cited in Loukotková, 2011). Teenagers are quite egocentric and think that the world turns around them. Thus, the teachers should spare time for teenagers to share their opinions. It’s also a good idea to ask personal questions to them, for they love to talk about themselves a lot at these ages. (Lewis, 2007).

Since teenagers tend to be dissatisfied with almost anything, it’s really hard to find interesting and appealing topics and activities for them. So, the teacher has a great job at this point to bring extraordinary activities into classroom. As it was stated in the thesis by Loukotková (2011), activities composed of IT, sport, entertainment, media and English speaking cultures more possibly get their attention and interest. Especially, using technology and computers may provide great benefit for our language classes. “Technology has an enormous impact on all aspects of teenage life which simply cannot be ignored.” (Lewis, 2007). Since they begin to integrate with computers at very early

ages and feel the power of accessing information on their own, without being dependent to anybody, the teachers could benefit from their interest. For this issue, Lewis (2007) claims that teenagers have a chance to practice and use language via email, chat, instant messaging, blogs and social networks with the help of including technology in language lessons.

Apart from the intellectual activities, the teacher should include some humor and varied fun activities in teenage classrooms. According to Lindstromberg (2004), the humor and surprises will definitely get their attention and cause them to concentrate on the lessons much more. Moreover, this language group tends to get bored, distracted from anything so quickly and easily and be pretty impatient, variability of activities is a must in teaching teenage learners. Doing always the same things in one lesson is just a torture for them. (Lindstromberg, 2004). Likewise young learners, teenagers also would like to have some entertainment and fun activities in their lessons. One of the most popular fun activities in language classrooms are games. Lindstromberg(2004) claims that this age group will appreciate games related to topic because they like to win and show off issues at this age. At the same time, games provide a meaningful context for them and hearten their motivation.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Overall design of the study*

As the aim of this research is to examine and analyze the attitudes of young learners and teenagers towards English language learning. The most significant issues for both young learners and teenage learners were stated and explained in a detailed way in the literature review part. The next part is going to be about a case study which will benefit us to get more practical information about changing attitudes towards ELL in Turkey setting when the students complete lower primary and begin the secondary school. The methodology part is composed of three subchapters named as “participants”, “instruments” and “data collection and analysis”. In line with the aim of the study, four research questions that the present study tries to highlight were addressed in the following subsection.

#### *3.2. Research questions*

The present study aimed to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How do young learners (3rd graders) feel about learning English Language? Do they have positive, negative or neutral attitudes to this issue? And what are the reasons for these different attitudes?

2. How do teenagers (7th graders) feel about learning English Language? Do they have positive, negative or neutral attitudes to this issue? Did they experience any difference between lower primary and upper primary from the points of attitudes?
3. If there are changes in attitudes, what are the reasons for the change in attitudes of teenagers towards English language learning compared to the lower primary students?
4. If there are negative attitudes, what kind of suggestions could be made to turn this negative changing in attitude to positive for further studies?

### 3.3. *Participants*

The current research included 25 3rd grade students aged between 8 and 10; and 25 7th grade students at 13 years old. While 3rd grade students were composed of 15 males and 10 females, 7th graders were composed of 12 males and 13 females. Both groups were learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in a private elementary school in İstanbul, Turkey. Almost all of the participants had been introduced this language when they were younger. Moreover, they're somehow familiar with English language outside the classroom.

### 3.4. *Data collection instruments*

In order to gather in-depth information about the attitudes of young and teenage learners towards ELL, data for the present study were collected by means of “questionnaires”, “opinions bubbles” and “interviews”. Even though there were some similar items, two different questionnaires were conducted to each group. To start with young learners, the questionnaire included 13 items which were prepared in English. However, they were translated to Turkish and applied to the students in Turkish version. The young learners’ questionnaire included a Likert scale such as “I agree, I slightly agree, etc.”, multiple choice questions, the questions they can choose more than one option for answers and at last one open ended question where they will both mention their thoughts. They will try to compose a picture under the lights of their feelings, as well. At the end of the questionnaire, the opinion bubbles were prepared in English to have much deeper information about their attitudes towards ELL. Likewise, a questionnaire and opinion bubbles were given to the students in Turkish. The young learners mentioned their general attitudes towards language by writing into these bubbles which were symbolized with happy, slightly happy or sad faces.

For the teenagers, two data collection tools were used in the current study. The first one was a questionnaire composed of 21 items in English. However, it was translated to Turkish and applied to the students in Turkish version. Like young learners’ questionnaire, this one also included a Likert scale such as “I agree, I slightly agree, etc.”, multiple choice questions, and the questions they can choose more than one option for answers. Apart from the questionnaire, with 5 teenage learners, interviews were carried

out, after the questionnaire was completed and analyzed. There were 7 questions prepared in English for each interview with the aim of getting more detailed information about their attitudes for English language. However, the interviews were carried on in Turkish and the answers were translated to English later.

### 3.5. Data collection procedure and analysis

The study took place in the spring term of 2012-2013 academic year. Both the English teachers and the administrative people were informed about the purpose of the study. Not only young learner but also teenage learner participants had the questionnaire in one lesson hour. The students were assured that the results would not affect their grades or would not be shared with anyone either inside or outside the school. When the analysis of data is taken into consideration, in this present study both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were utilized. Questionnaires were presenters of quantitative method providing more concrete and numerical results. On the other hand, opinion bubbles and interviews were mostly included for qualitative data collection method.

## 4. Findings

As a result of analysis and interpretation of questionnaires, opinion bubbles and interviews, it is obvious that there are some differences and changes in the attitudes of two Turkish learner groups towards ELL. With the help of the graphs, it will be simpler and easier to understand the differences or maybe at some points, similarities.

### 4.1. The same items for both groups

#### 1. English language subject: (choose one answer)

In this question, the aim is to find out the students' opinions about English lessons and whether there are any changing attitudes of teenage learners towards ELL.

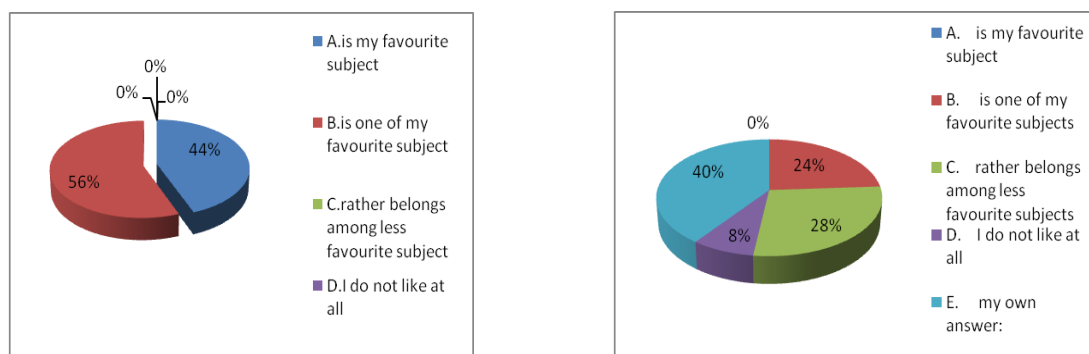


Figure 1. The Thoughts of 3rd and 7th Graders about English Language Subject

Taking into consideration the results and the percentages in two graphs, it's obvious that there is a clear difference between 3<sup>rd</sup> grades and 7<sup>th</sup> grades from the point of their interests for English language course. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade results, C and D options were never chosen at all. Instead, almost half of them mentioned English lessons as their favorite ones (44%). And 56% of the students thought that English lesson is one of their favourite subjects. However, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade results, the situation is a bit different. The most dramatic result is nobody chose English lesson as their favourite one (0%). 24% of the students said that English was one of their favourite subjects, 28% of them chose the option of I don't like at all.

## 2. For English Language and lessons, my feelings and thoughts are... :

In this question, the students were allowed to choose more than one answer. The aim is to elicit the adjectives the students have in their minds related to English lessons and the language.

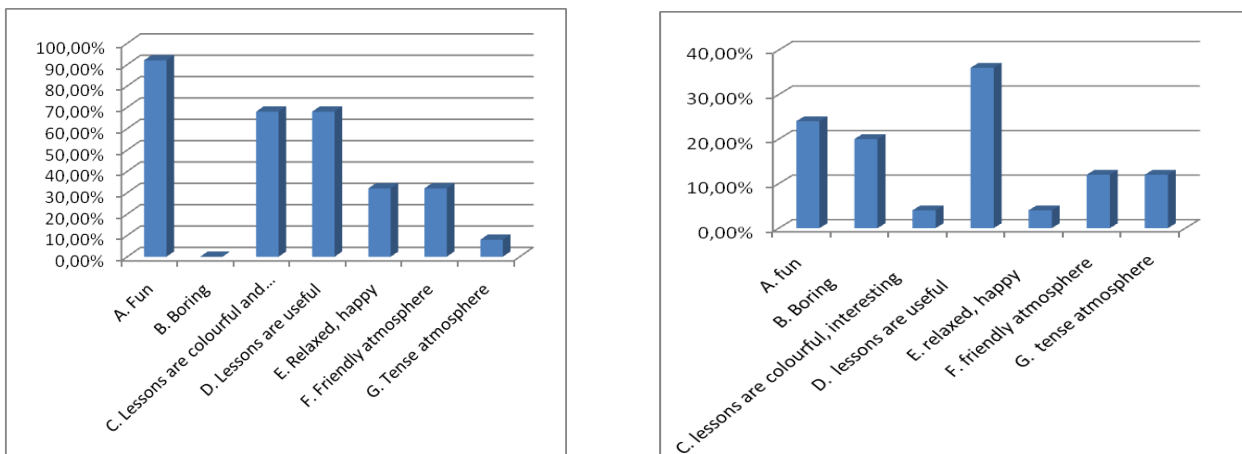


Figure 2. The Feelings and Thoughts of 3rd and 7th Graders towards ELL

In this question, there are some differences, even though it's not as dramatic as the previous one. While among 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, lots of the students think English lessons are quite fun, colorful and interesting, this rate decreased in 7<sup>th</sup> graders. In 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, almost none of the students think English lessons as boring or that there is a tense atmosphere, but in 7<sup>th</sup> graders this situation increased.

### 4.2. Questionnaire items just for 7th grade learners

#### 1. Compare the difficulty of the upper-primary curricula to the lower-primary curricula from the point of English language.

This item is one of the most significant items, since the aim of the study is to seek for the differences between the attitudes of young and teenage learners towards English language learning. With this item, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students had a chance to compare upper and lower primary curricula in general. The results show that just 8% of the students can

deal with primary curricula without having any difficulties. Later, almost half of the students (44%) think that upper primary is challenging, but they manage it. When A and B options are taken into consideration, which describe that the students have some problems to tackle with upper primary, they get the highest percentage seen as together ( $16\% + 32\% = 48\%$ ).

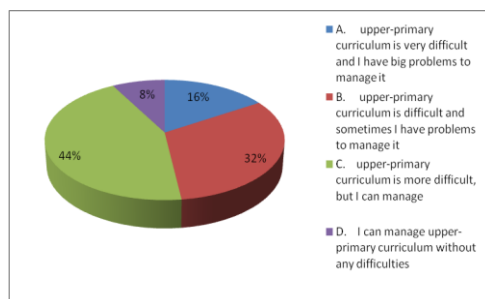


Figure 3. The thoughts of 7th Graders about Upper-Primary Curricula

## 2. I believe that the course book we have now is suitable for our English proficiency level.

The graph shows that the percentages are not so different from each other. However, still 32% of the students agreed that their course book was suitable for their proficiency level. On the other hand, 20% of the students disagreed with that.

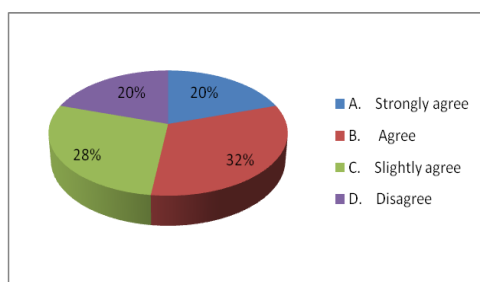


Figure 4. The Thoughts of 7th Graders about Difficulty Level of Course books

## 3. I believe that the course book we have now is suitable for our needs and interests.

In this one, the percentages are also quite similar to each other. But this time, the results are just the opposite of the previous one. 36% of the students chose the disagree option, which means they think that their course book isn't suitable for their needs and interests. Agree and slightly agree options were chosen at the same percentages (20%). At last, 24% of the students strongly agreed that their course book met their needs and interests.

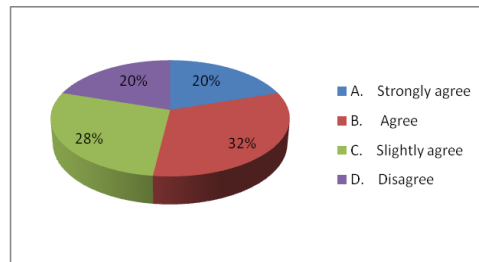


Figure 5. The Thoughts of 7th Graders about Suitability of Course books

#### 4. Would you like to learn by “games, songs or act outs” like it is at the lower-primary grades?

This result is quite dramatic and needs to be regarded very sensitively. 76% of the students mentioned that they would like to have “games, songs or act outs” in their English lessons. Just few of them (8%) answered that question as “No”.

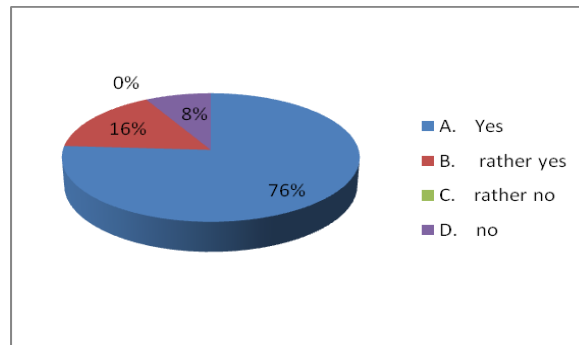


Figure 6. The Thoughts of 7th Graders about Games, Songs or Act outs in ELL

#### 5. Our lessons are equipped with different kind of activities and materials.

Half of the students (52%) think that their lessons do not include variable activities or materials. With percentages of 24% and 20%, students agree with this statement at some point. Just few of them (4%) strongly agree with it.

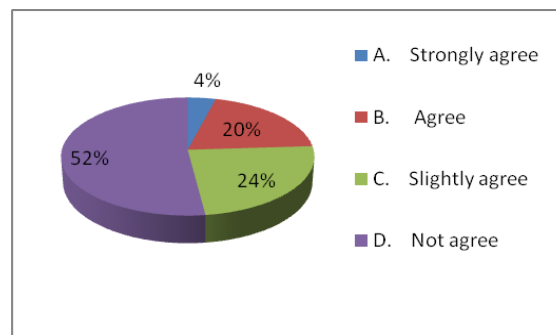


Figure 7. The thoughts of 7th Graders about different kind of activities and materials in ELL

#### 4.3. Opinion Bubbles for 3rd grade learners

Compared to the questionnaire, this data collection method is more qualitative and cannot be described with the numbers. In the Opinion bubbles, the young learners stated their thoughts and feelings about English learning with the words and specific adjectives they used in their sentences. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners were given three bubbles and three pictures of feelings such as happy, slightly happy and sad. Thus, they were supposed to give reasons for their choice. According to the results, almost all of them chose happy face which means “I like English.” The reasons for their satisfaction with English are like; “*We have real fun*”, “*We play games*”, “*We act out, watch movies, cartoons,*” and so on. Even though the number was not too many, some of them also stated that they sometimes like; their reasons are such as “*Sometimes it could be boring*”, “*Sometimes I can’t understand*”, etc. At last, just few kids chose sad face, stating the reason as “*Sometimes the questions could be really bad*”. However, in total, the “*Opinion Bubbles*” results show that most of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners appreciate English lessons. Their reasons for that are more or less the same, for they stated that they had fun activities and enjoy a lot during the lessons.

### 5. Discussion

The results of this study made it clear that the attitudes of young learners and teenagers towards English language learning certainly had some basic differences. The reason for that is teenagers experienced some changes when they began to study in upper primary. However, still, there is going to be some contrasting and comprising point in taking the advantage of the results of young learners in order to understand the reasons behind 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners changing attitudes towards English language learning broadly.

Actually, when the results of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners are taken into consideration, it is quite obvious that they have highly positive attitudes towards ELL. Since at this age, the main factors affecting their attitudes are related to feelings and emotional issues (Moon, 2000). 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students proved this statement very well in their sentences. In “Opinion Bubbles”, most of them wrote that they loved their teachers and enjoyed in English lessons a lot. Moreover, in questionnaire of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, almost all of them strongly agreed that they loved their teachers and English subject a lot. Safe, secure and relaxed relationship between teacher and student leads the young learners to enhance positive attitudes towards ELL. (Gourneau, 2007).

When young learners are asked about the activities they would like to have in English lessons in the questionnaire, most of them chose the options of “games, songs, stories, act outs, puppet shows” and so on. Thus, it could be inferred that the young learners preferred to have more fun in their English lessons rather than studying only grammar or course books. Furthermore, in Opinion Bubbles, some of the students mentioned that

they sometimes don't like English when they don't have fun activities. Thus, fun activities and games have a great role in attitudes of young learners. Apart from the young learners, the results of 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners' questionnaires showed that they would like to have more songs, games or act outs in their English lessons. More than half of teenagers preferred to have those kinds of activities in their lessons as they had in lower primary. Especially, in the interviews with 7<sup>th</sup> grades, all of them mentioned that they would like to have more videos in their English lessons. Among 5 of 7<sup>th</sup> graders, 3 of them mentioned that they could have vocabulary games still related to English. As Lindstromberg (2004) claims, this age group will appreciate games related to topic, for they like to win and show off issues at this age. These results are significant, as there's always a general misinterpretation about the games thinking that just young learners like them. However, teenagers are also satisfied with the concept of the games and would like to have them in their lessons, as this present study shows.

Because the teenagers undergo dramatic changes in this phase of their lives, they highly tend to be under the impression of their peers. In the interviews, when they were asked about the changes occurred when they began to study upper primary, all of them directly talked about their peers. Most of them mentioned that they started to have new friends and it took some time to get used to them. Moreover, they had some problems with their old friends in the meantime. They added that those problems affected them during that process so much. As Lewis (2007) claims, teenagers care a lot about the relationships with their friends. Thus, the answers of the students in the present study support this statement of the author.

According to the results, another very important issue is about the materials and activities taking place in English lessons of 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners. While the students begin to be mature and be able to think about more abstract and complex issues (Harmer, 2007), the same and repetitive activities and materials seem to be boring and meaningless to them. As a result of both questionnaires and interviews of the present study, the students mentioned that they were not satisfied with either activities or materials used in their English lessons. In the questionnaire, 52% of the students, which constituted the highest percentage, disagreed with the statement that their lessons include different kind of activities and materials. Furthermore, in the interviews, all of them said that their teachers mostly used the course book in the lessons. When they were asked about the appropriateness of the course book to their needs and interests, the results were not satisfactory enough. In the questionnaire, 36% of the students, which took the highest percentage compared to other options, thought that the course book they're using at that moment wasn't suitable for their needs and interests. Taking into consideration both the questionnaire results and the significance of this topic stated in literature in the interviews, the activities and materials used in their lessons were analyzed and discussed with the learners in a more detailed way. One of the students said *"I also think that the course book isn't suitable for our needs and interest. There could*

*be more interesting things. For example, different reading texts and videos could take place in our lessons. Our teacher could prepare some dialogues or conversations related to daily life.*” The other one also said *“it could be more fun if the book included more activities, videos and movies.”* Another student answered as *“in the lessons, of course we use the course book most of the time. Since this book doesn’t include many videos, we can’t have any opportunity to have fun and do joyful activities.”* The student’s using the “of course” phrase makes it quite obvious that the main material used in their lessons is mostly course book and as a result, the activities are based on the book. It’s highly important to include entertainment and variability into English lessons with teenagers to trigger their interest and attention to the lessons.

Apart from the English lessons, when the point is the importance of English language and how this language takes place in their lives, the results are quite interesting and really worth to be investigated and discussed. Some of the questions in the questionnaire were closely associated with this issue. For example, when the students were asked how important it is for them to speak in English, 60% of them chose the “absolutely necessary” option but none of them chose the “little” option. Furthermore, 32% and 28% of the students, which were the highest percentages, chose the options ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ successively. It shows that they become happy and excited when they use English outside the classroom. Moreover, most of them mentioned that they used English outside the classroom, while playing computer games, watching films and series in English, listening to music and being abroad. Thus, these results make it obvious that these students are aware of the importance of English language. For example, one of the students in the interview said *“We already have interest for English. We always watch English movies, series, our mobile phone languages are English as well. Especially, the boys play games on the computers in English. Thus, in order to reflect our interest into English lessons, our teacher needs to do more. I believe that they can make it, and we can still have fun with the books.”* Compared to the young learners, the teenagers actually have more learning potential and they can think more critically (Ur, 1996). As it could be inferred from their statements in interviews, they do not see English as just a lesson; rather they think it more thoroughly, by including it into their lives. However, the point is that they prefer more integrative lessons including videos, movies and English speaking cultures. Twitchell (2011) provokes that it’s almost impossible to disregard the effect of movies, videos, television from teenagers’ lives. Instead, teacher can make use of their affects in getting teenagers’ attention to language lessons.

The results show that there are some common issues for both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students from the points of teachers’ qualities, which are named as the teachers respecting, and being interested in the students’ opinions. When the features of teenagers are taken into consideration, it’s vital for teenagers that teachers are respectful towards them, and care about what they think and feel. Piccolo (2010) points out that when teachers manage a respectful relationship with teenagers, it could be pleasure for them

to teach this age group (as cited in Loukotková, 2011). Apart from teenagers, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders also would like these two qualities for their English teachers. Even though they may not be aware of the concept of “respect”, they still need to be cared, loved and paid attention by their teachers. Feelings, emotional factors, and treatments of teachers highly affect the attitudes of English learners (Moon, 2000).

There is one more item related to young learners’ desire to be cared by their teachers. This is their teachers’ remembering their names and using them. For example, as an answer for an open-ended question in the questionnaire, one of the students wrote that s/he was very happy when the teacher uses their names. This result supports the idea that emotional issues, especially related to their teachers, have a significant effect on the attitudes of the young learners. When considered the items chosen mostly just by teenagers, the results are not surprising. Because of the lots of changes they’re experiencing, they are inclined to rebel for everything and not to obey the rules (Salyers & Mckee, 2011). Therefore, the authority of the teachers is included in this process. Since they are really ego-centric and do not accept any negative comments, they prefer their teachers’ showing friendly behaviors towards them.

One more significant quality they would like their teachers to have is trying to make lessons interesting. As it was discussed thoroughly both in literature part and the previous paragraphs in discussion part, one of the main characteristics of this age group is that they find almost everything boring and meaningless. Both in the questionnaire and the interviews, lots of the students would like their lessons to be more interesting and appealing for them.

## 6. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the attitudes of the students change somehow when they begin to be in upper-primary. Under the light of the result of questionnaires, opinion bubbles and interviews, the results were stated below:

- While almost all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners mention English Language as their most favourite subject, this rate was quite low in 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners.
- Most of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners thought that English lessons are fun, colourful and interesting. Just few of them regard English lessons as boring and a lesson that has a tense atmosphere. However, some of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners thought it was fun and find the lessons useful. Some of them also thought that the lessons are boring and have a tense atmosphere.
- From the point of the importance they give to English Language, the results are closer to each other; but still 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners had a bit more percentage.
- Most of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders mentioned that they liked English Lessons most when they had games, songs, act outs, drawings and colouring activities. 7<sup>th</sup> graders also mentioned that they would like to have fun activities in their English lessons as they used to have when they were in lower primary.

- The results of the open-ended questions taking place at the end of the questionnaire for 3<sup>rd</sup> grades and opinion bubbles showed that 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners had really positive and nice ideas and feelings towards ELL.
- Most of 7th grade learners come across with English outside the classroom when they listen to music, watch English series or films and when they are abroad.
- While almost half of 7<sup>th</sup> graders (44%) thought upper primary as quite challenging but still manageable, 32% of them mentioned that they had some problems to deal with the lessons in upper-primary.
- Most of 7th grade learners agreed that their course book was suitable for their proficiency level. On the other hand, they disagreed that it was suitable for their needs and interests.
- More than half of 7th graders believed that their lessons were not equipped with a large variety of activities or materials.
- 7th grade students would like to have more fun activities in their English lessons, instead of just focusing on grammar topics.

The statements mentioned above quite in a simple and clear way shows the results of the present study. It showed that young learners mostly had more enthusiasm and motivation for ELL. And this is mostly associated with their feelings and emotional sides. As it was seen especially in “Opinion Bubbles”, they mostly used sentences like “*I like English, for I love my teacher, “English lessons are so fun and I enjoy a lot”*”. Thus, taking into account these utterances, it could be inferred that they develop quite positive attitudes towards ELL.

However, when the consideration point is teenagers, the feelings are not just the only concern anymore. They undergo quite dramatic changes at this phase of their lives, so it affects everything in their lives. As the present study makes it clear, even 7<sup>th</sup> graders mentioned that they had some sort of interest for language learning; however, they didn’t have enough motivation or desire for ELL compared to young learners. As it was mentioned above quite clearly, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students pointed many reasons for their developing some negative attitudes for ELL such as its being meaningless, doing boring activities, overuse of course book, too much grammar focused lessons, and so on. The significant point, especially for language teachers who are teaching teenagers, at this point is to be aware of these and take them into consideration in their lessons.

Thus, the following part aims to suggest some recommendations, especially for teachers.

## 7. Suggestions and implications

The results of the study provide valuable and important data in order to have information about the thoughts and feelings of both young learners and teenage students. Since 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners experience more changing attitudes and are more inclined to

have negative attitudes towards ELL, in the present study, the main focus group is mostly on 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners. However, still the results of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners give a chance to manage comprising and contrasting issues with the results of 7<sup>th</sup> graders, so to figure out the differences occurring during this time. Furthermore, they are quite beneficial and kind of a guide for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers.

Thus, this part aims to talk about what the implications of the present study for education world and especially for ELT field are. If the starting point is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, English teachers who are working with young learners and other educators associated with ELT world such as writing books, and stories, preparing visual, audio materials and games should be really aware of the needs of young learners. When the results of the present study are taken into consideration, it is obvious that their attitudes' being positive or negative towards ELL is directly related with their emotions and feelings. Moreover, the teachers should be aware of that young ones really need their care, interest and love. Both in the open ended question taking place at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade questionnaire and the opinion bubbles, almost all of them talked about their teachers quite in a detailed way and always mentioned emotional things. Thus, if we are teaching young learners, the first thing we should do is to care about their thoughts and feelings and appreciate their love. Furthermore, from the point of activities and materials, the results make it clear that when young learners have games, drawings, songs, act outs in their English lessons, they enjoy and love the lessons. Otherwise, the lessons become boring for them.

When the concern is 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, the results have great significance and implications for ELT world. Teenagers are a special learning group due to the fact that they undergo dramatic changes and differences in this phase of their lives. Even though they have quite high potential for learning more and faster, at the same time, they could be rather trouble makers in the classrooms. Thus, the vital point at this moment is to be aware of what they think, believe, and expect. In other words, it is highly significant to be able to comprehend what is going on in their lives. The present study also could be named as a sort of need analysis to have comprehensible information about teenagers.

Taking into consideration the results of the present study, the teachers of teenagers definitely should be aware of the reality that this language learner group is different from the other and it is highly possible for them to push the limitations and challenge the teacher a lot. Nevertheless, if a teacher manages to have respectful and friendly relationship with them, it will be certainly a pleasure for them to teach teenagers. The results of the questionnaire show that 7<sup>th</sup> graders would like to have teachers whose most important qualities are being friendly towards them and having sense of humour. Thus, the teachers should take into account the students' expectations.

When the results of both questionnaires and interview carried out with 7<sup>th</sup> grades are evaluated in general, almost all of the teenagers complain the teachers' overuse of course

book and focusing on grammar a lot. They would like to have more fun activities like vocabulary games, videos. These results are actually quite striking and need to be taken into account thoroughly by the English teachers of teenagers. Even though they have course books and it is required for them to have covered the book by the end of the year, they could skip some parts which do not get the attention of the students and they could create different, more attractive, and appealing activities, and still teach the same subject. Instead of just focusing on grammar teaching, the teachers should give place for some vocabulary games and fun activities as well in their language classes.

Group work and pair work could also be beneficial for teenagers in order to focus on and participate in the lessons more. Since this age group looks for the freedom and has great potential to create, search and discuss, they will enjoy group work. Moreover, for teenagers, their peers are quite important and they try to find an identity in a group. Thus, with the help of group work activities, they will have more opportunity to show themselves to their peers. If the teachers manage to create meaningful and suitable group work activities in their language classes, it is highly possible for teenagers to pay attention to the activities and to be more indulged in learning process.

All in all, it is obvious that 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are not fully satisfied with the materials and activities of English lessons and the attitudes of their teachers. Therefore, this reality unfortunately leads them to be not really interested in English language lessons. Some of them mentioned in the interviews that the lessons are repetitive and grammar focused and it does not affect their attitudes, however, most of them do not appreciate this situation. Thus, taking into consideration individual differences and different learning styles, the teachers of 7th graders should take the results of the present study into consideration and try to change negative attitudes of their learners towards ELL into more positive ones.

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