**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

**ÇAĞ UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**MY JOURNEY WITH FOURTH GRADERS IN SEARCH FOR RAISING INTEREST IN ENGLISH COURSES**

**THESIS BY**

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**MASTER OF ARTS**

**MERSİN, January 2016**

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

ÇAĞ UNIVERSITY

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# DEDICATION

For children,

May their backpacks be light and their learning joyful.

(Cathy Vatterott, 2009)

# ÖZET

## İNGİLİZCE DERSLERİNE İLGİLERİNİ ARTIRMAK İÇİN DÖRDÜNCÜ SINIF ÖĞRENCİLERİYLE YAPTIĞIM YOLCULUK

**Ayşe Şenay KOÇ**

Bu tez, 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılında Türkiye'de bir devlet ilkokulunda, öğrencilerin İngilizce derslerine ilgilerini ve katılımlarını artırmak, derse karşı olumlu bir tutum geliştirmelerini sağlamak üzere yapılmış bir eylem araştırmasıdır. Araştırma, çeşitli etkinlikler kullanmanın genç öğrencilere nasıl katkıda bulunduğu sorusuna cevap bulmak amacıyla yapılmıştır.

Tüm araştırma, gömülü teori yaklaşımıyla yürütülmüş ve triangülasyon için farklı araçlarla nitel veri toplanmıştır. Araştırmada seçilmiş kısa öyküler, ödüller, toplam fiziksel tepki yöntemi, seçmen şapka, öğrenci günlükleri, direkt katılımcı gözlem ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanılmıştır. Öğrenci günlüklerindeki düşünceler betimsel olarak değerlendirilirken araştırmacının gözlemleri içerik analizi ile incelenmiş, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ise MAXQDA sosyal bilimler veri analiz programının 12. sürümü ile analiz edilmiştir.

Kullanılan çeşitli materyal ve etkinliklerin bilginin kolaylıkla içselleştirilmesine, sınıfta ilginin artmasına ve etkileşimin desteklenmesine katkıda bulunduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eylem Araştırması, Genç Öğrenciler, Dördüncü Sınıflar, İlgiyi Artırmak, Kısa Öyküler, Ödüller, İnteraktif Günlükler, Çeşitli Etkinlikler Kullanmak.

# ABSTRACT

## MY JOURNEY WITH FOURTH GRADERS IN SEARCH FOR RAISING INTEREST IN ENGLISH COURSES

**Ayşe Şenay KOÇ**

This dissertation is an action research study about enhancing students' interests, class engagement and promoting a positive attitude towards English in an elementary public school in Turkey in educational year of 2014-2015. Research was conducted to find answers to the question how using various activities contribute to young learners.

Whole research was carried out within grounded theory. Qualitative data with different tools were gathered for triangulation. Selected short stories, rewards, TPR method, sorting hat, learning diaries, direct participatory observation and semi-structured interviews were used in the study. Students' reflections in the diaries were assessed descriptively while observations of the researcher were examined with content analysis and semi-structured interviews were analysed with 12$^{th}$ version of MaxQDA social science data analysis program.

Various materials and activities were found to be contributing for internalizing the information easily, for increasing interest in class and for supporting interaction.

**Keywords**: Action Research, Young Learners, Fourth Graders, Raising Interest, Short Stories, Rewards, Interactive Diaries, Using Various Activities.

# ABBREVIATIONS

**AR**        **:** Action Research

**CIT**       : Classroom Investigation Task

**EFL**       : English as a Foreign Language

**ESL**       : English as a Second Language

**EU**        : European Union

**L2**        : Second Language

**ELT**       : English Language Teaching

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Preliminary Investigation

This dissertation is an action research study about enhancing students' interests, class engagement and promoting a positive attitude towards English in an elementary public school in Turkey in educational year of 2014-2015. This study is an extension of a previous Classroom Investigation Task on fourth graders. It was conducted by the researcher as a teacher of English Language in Adana, The Mediterranean Region of Turkey.

My journey began in the fall semester. Students' non-participation and nonfulfillment of assignments often restrained the classes flow. Besides I was not satisfied with their productions during classes. That was the very first year I was teaching English to elementary students after having spent 23 years with teenagers. I, personally, have given a great importance to assignments in the courses for the fact that homework assignments are the first sources of reference out of which a teacher can consider the reflections of what has been learned or not. For this reason, I have always checked my students' assignments in class and tried to give feedback. Yet, I have realized that something went wrong with my fourth grade elementary students. Their lack of confidence and use of native language could be found in the mistakes in their written works and in their performances in examinations. They were not certain about what to accomplish. I decided that they should have been given chance. Then I decided to search different and effective options for teaching the target language in order to let my students make progress in learning.

What could I do? (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). I made my plan and started collecting data for my research including the following steps:

1. Students' physical attendance in classes,
2. The completion of homework,
3. Their participation in group work,
4. Their attitude towards homework.

What did I do? (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). Before taking the action steps, I made a survey on what had been written about homework in the literature. First, I examined the attendance reports of my students in order to find out whether there was a correlation between their learning and physical attendance in class. Secondly, I started to keep a homework checklist and I tried that the minuses and plusses were clearly seen by the students while I was checking their homework one by one. I wanted my students to have an understanding about all given homework assignments were truly checked out and evaluated by the teacher and every single effort was welcomed. Then, I tried to find out to what extent they contributed to group work by having very short meetings with the groups and I tried to determine the dominant and reserved ones so that I could rearrange the groups accordingly. Finally, I prepared a questionnaire for students and made interviews with their parents in order to understand their attitudes towards homework.

## 1.2. English Language Teaching in Turkey

Nowadays, for teaching foreign languages in Turkey, we think primarily of the western languages English, German and French. Among these, English has been the most widely taught foreign language at schools in Turkey for years. "English has been taught as a second language with the opening of the Robert College since 1863" (Demircan, 1988, p. 32). Turkish education system internalizes teaching a foreign language to each student. In addition, we need to keep in mind that every student is unique with his/her own potential.

Students, unfortunately, do not have an awareness about how useful their English will be in their future career. Although they are supposed to be educated with an extensive programme of English, even Anatolian High school (a kind of high school in Turkey in which students have an extensive second language teaching programme in preparatory classes)    graduates do not give importance to English courses when they are at school. They ignore studying English because applicants except from foreign languages branches are not responsible for the English test in university entrance examination. They have to pay a lot of money for English courses when they step into real adults' world because they come to an understanding that there is a necessity for using English in business life.

The question, why a foreign language cannot be taught in our country, has been asked over the years, but reliable implementations could not be put into practice. Some reasons for failure in English learning in Turkey are that the majority of students do not understand the importance of foreign language learning, they do not have real interest in foreign language, lack of motivation, and they consider foreign language courses something to be forgotten after the exams (Soner, 2007, pp. 397-404).

A teenager, whose goal is to pass the university entrance examination, does not spend his/her time studying English, for this seems as a waste of time. S/he prefers studying history, geography or philosophy instead, because an English test is not worth in the exam.

"It is undeniable that learning English is crucial for people to reach information, to communicate with the others in the world. However, one must be conscious about his/her aims while learning English" (Özdemir, 2006, p.11). We cannot disregard that some measures need to be taken while implementing foreign language policies. Some countries may have foreign language courses in their curriculum for people can easily understand what they have read in order to follow up-to-date information abroad and have a rapid knowledge in their fields whereas some other may have foreign language courses for people can easily speak in a daily life without being drowned in tough grammar. According to Sezer (1988),

…the emphasis on English education in Turkey is explained by the wish to thrive in Turkey's economic and technological fields; having cultural, economic and technologically concentrated relationships with other countries, Turkey has to maintain this relationship with English. Because of this requirement, teaching English has become a mobilization in Turkey (p. 185).

It is essential to use the foreign language while teaching. One cannot learn a second language unless s/he uses it. Using the language means doing basic listening, speaking, reading and writing activities sufficiently. Yet, a student has only a minute to practice speaking in a class of thirty-five students in forty minutes. These thirty-five students may read, listen and write at the same time but they cannot speak. That is the case in our schools today, students are not sure whether they can do other activities after they have not been given a chance to practice speaking English. Thus, they develop a sort of anxiety towards learning a second language and comment that they do not know English unless they can speak fluently.

In Turkey, second language courses have been carried out with regard to language education policies of European Union for years. In accordance with the EU language policies, foreign language courses in our schools have been methodised within the frame of "Regulations for Foreign Language Education and Training of Ministry of National Education" that was published in official journal on February 10 (MEB, 2006:14). According to these regulations, foreign language courses are obligatory for fourth graders and English had been implemented as a course in the curriculum for the fourth grades since the beginning of 2006-2007 educational year.

Providing an effective learning is the main goal in schools but what we witness today does not usually serve the idea. Most of our classes have a competitive learning environment wherein the strongest ones win and others fail. Teacher asks, students raise their hands, one is chosen by the teacher and the process is completed when the answer is correct. Other students are lucky to get a chance to talk when the given answer is wrong or insufficient. This is what happens in a traditional classroom.

## 1.3. Background to the Study

After examining the official attendance reports for the fourth grade students, I developed an understanding that there might have been a positive correlation between student's physical attendance and his/her success. Lamdin (1996) also relied on that student attendance had a positive and significant effect on academic performance (as cited in Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The results could only be interpreted in terms of average school performance. Urban-Lurain and Weinshank (2000) also studied the relationship between attendance, classwork, homework, and grade based on collaborative tasks (as cited is Sarawit, 2004). Their results revealed that overall attendance predicted success on the task tests.

As a teacher, I have experienced that one of the top excuses for not accomplishing the assigned homework was "being absent". I could not determine but for some certain reasons, students tend to feel themselves exempted from providing an assigned homework after the period of absence. They tend to think that it is out of their responsibility/duty to submit the homework. "Why submit a homework if it was assigned during my absence?", they would say. Here, an awareness needed to be raised among students that there was a necessity for the submission of homework in order to provide the sustainability of learning process.

There are many reasons students do not do their homework. They may not know how to do the assignment, do not have enough time outside school to do their homework, or simply do not make a plan to do it (Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006). Also, students may feel that there is no point in doing homework and that "teachers really do not care about it" (Hinchey, 1996) (as cited in Nail, n.d.). I spent five weeks on student perceptions about homework and examined reasons why they do not accomplish. In addition, I studied what strategies, as a teacher, I might use to increase my students' levels of interest to do their homework.

A questionnaire made up of fourteen close ended questions were distributed to the students. I had understood that students perceived homework as something the teacher had to assign, and teachers gave homework just to have grades. Most of the students believed that the purpose of homework was to practice and improve skills they have learned in class. They also believed it helped to prepare them for assessments. Some also thought teachers used homework for students to "teach themselves". According to all I have witnessed, I had the contentment that doing homework was, sometimes, not perceived to be an enjoyable activity. A possible explanation for this might be that we do not determine willingly what to accomplish as a homework, but someone dictates us to do it. As a human being, psychologically, we tend to avoid when we do not take pleasure and we desire to get the control of our 'to do lists'. So, teachers and parents need to be careful when or how to use the word 'homework'. Children move away if we remind them to do their homework with unpleasant expressions. By doing so, we might, unfortunately, cause children, the 'congenitally learning and curiosity machines', become disinterested and unmotivated.

The parents were interviewed through five questions. Parents, rather than students, were preferred to be interviewed, for I believed that parents were more conscious for the context of the interview when compared to kids. Most of the parents shared that "homework issues" often created unrest at home. Additionally, parents stated that they were generally supportive of homework practices. They were involved in homework in minimal according to their knowledge and skills. Still, most of the parents have drawbacks whether they would contact to the teacher or not in order to check or monitor their children's assignments. Since I believed that parents needed to be awaken about the "Three Muskeeters in Homework Battles", I asked parents to serve as "homework coaches" with some useful tips. At the parent-teacher meetings, I

specifically requested the parents' cooperation, notifying that we all were members of the team and I would not be able to achieve without their assistance. In order to sustain the system without trouble, everybody should do his/her best with responsibility. First of all, we need to think about why children do not do their homework. Do they think homework is something imposed upon them? Or stealing from playtime? Or do they have some trouble at school and for this reason, as a reminder of school, do they ignore homework?

Children generally come home from school with their homework in the backpack, meaning that plenty of time should be spent on it at home. The most important obstacle against homework is "not to be able to start doing it". Some children sit at their study directly as soon as they reach home and begin doing their homework, studying with pleasure until they accomplish it. Some other, with the impact of past habits, try to come to the conclusion later. And some are the children who can, in no way, not start doing homework, cannot help playing games and are activated with force or warning. They have many reasons that can block their studying such as playing computer, watching TV, a friend at the door, playing outside and so on.

As a result, homework topics were found to be "not difficult" but "uninteresting" by the students since there are differences in their choices as well as they have different learning styles. As mentioned in the literature, "different individuals will have different understandings and create their own meanings that are personal to them" (Williams & Burden, 1999, p. 193). Some children learn by listening while some other learn by doing. If you are teaching the "Parts of the House", you had better assign kinesthetic learners to make a model of their houses. Homework need to be carefully designed by teachers according to differences in multiple intelligences so that young learners may not be in need of too much parental help. By doing so, we would give children a chance to prove themselves with glory, feel self-sufficient and take the responsibility of their own learning. With diversity among learners in our schools, many teachers should not "continue to assign the same homework to all students" (Vatterott, 2009).

Doing an action research (AR) for a Classroom Investigation Task (CIT) was really challenging for the first time, but I experienced what I might encounter on my way. "The best teachers are also the best learners-ones who try new ideas, make some mistakes, learn from them, and try new ideas again" (Knowing Fourth Graders, 2015).

After implementing my plan with the fourth grades, I was satisfied with the results. Because my action plans worked well with most of my fourth graders. Among my all fourth graders, distinguished a class in the terms of motivation, readiness, awareness, engagement, and attitude towards English. The students in that class were different from others in the terms of willingness. So, I decided to carry out a new action research in the Spring Semester for my thesis by using various instruments to check how they work in English classes with those fourth graders and whether they enhance the interests of already enthusiastic students. Now I have the energy and desire to test my new action plans with my students and learn further for my professional development

## 1.4. Significance of the Study

English has become the language of the century in the globalized world, and nations have required to learn and use English language in every respect. Many difficulties are encountered in overcoming this requirement. Students need to be put into motion precisely in order to exhibit their learning behaviour. Research have exposed that students who started motivated in a way, remain interested constantly throughout the course and demonstrate what they have learned better than other students (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner & Lambert, 2003; Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010; Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2014). Students' motivation should not be ignored and this great task falls to teachers' share.

> Teachers working in state schools are first and foremost supposed to teach the curriculum, but we cannot ignore the fact that this will not happen without motivating our learners. In addition, learners come with their own emotional and psychological baggage and interests making the task of motivating them one of the greatest challenges for teachers" (Ellis, "Motivating Pupils", 2015).

This study, in fact, was the story of my own journey with thirty-eight fourth graders during a semester. To be honest, conducting an action research with ten year old children was tiring, for I had to convince them to cooperate. Moreover, I was an inexperienced researcher. I often felt like I was spinning in a circle. However, I cannot tell you the joy I got when writing my thesis, because I had got the results of a year's work. This story completely belongs to me and my children, therefore it is so valuable. I am sure, the story would be different if I had been on this journey with some other children. This is the significance of the action research since every attempt is exclusive and unique.

## 1.5. Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributed to the practice of teaching English in elementary classes for the fact that it has given the chance to test a set of activities and use several instruments as course materials. The AR let my students and me have a deeper and better understanding into ourselves, learn from mistakes and regain the opportunity to organize ourselves according to various situations. I really made use of the cyclical feature of the Action Research, for I had the chance to turn back whenever I need to. As Featherstone (2010) quoted in Whitehead, "I myself was living a contradiction" because I was doing my best for being well-prepared before any class and trying to convey what I had known to my students. After some classes, the tension in the air and the silence among the fourth graders puzzled me.

While having my MA classes at Çağ University, I had a chance to study what an action research was and learned how advantageous it would be for me to conduct one in my classes. So I got to work on doing this research. But some steps in the research should have been enlightened beforehand:

1. Why do I do this research?
2. What data can I get during the research?
3. What can I do according to the data?
4. What modifications will I make in my teaching strategies as an output of self-reflection?

To tell the truth, the research was quite compelling. As Xiaohong (2003) declared "In action research, researchers do research on themselves" (p. 2). Besides, teachers doing an AR are more critical and more meticulous about their own studies. Thus, they can contribute to their students' improvements while developing their own teaching strategies. Additionally, AR provides teacher an opportunity to a lifelong, individualistic and organisational learning. As McNiff & Whitehead (2002) admittedd that "action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self" (as cited in Xiaohong, 2003, p.2). The AR also enabled me to realize that I needed to modify my classroom strategies. Ernie Stringer noted that he is "a changed person as a teacher, researcher or professional practitioner" saying that he discovered the necessity for "engaging in practices thoughtfully" is very essential (Brydon-Miller et.al, 2003, Why Action Research).

One of the most important characteristic of the outcome of an AR is that it should be reflected among teachers' networks (Brown, 2005), conveyed into the classrooms and shared in teaching profession (as cited in Songsiri, 2007, p.9). After all, I decided to pass through my all experiences, hesitations and difficulties I had encountered during the research. Since this dissertation is my own story with my fourth graders, I would be fortunate if I could contribute to my colleagues.

Through years, I have realized there is no best teaching style that fits to every learner, and theories which were dictated to us at school cannot be put in practice easily. I have experienced teaching to various students coming from various ethnic, social, cultural and economic backgrounds. If you apply an unsuitable approach or method in a class without considering your learners' needs and backgrounds, as a teacher, you will not be able to get good productions at the end of teaching/learning process. You need to give a chance to every try. After having worked with high school students for nineteen years, in the very first day, I suddenly discovered that I needed to make some modifications or changes in my teaching strategies in secondary schools. I had the same understanding a year ago when I started to teach elementary students. Every classroom is unique, and you need to make up a different working team with your learners in every learning environment.

Facing new challenges made me improve my teaching skills, my teaching abilities, and my teaching strategies. I have learned how to initiate my learners' autonomy throughout my teaching career mostly by giving a chance to pace, by observing and listening to what they have experienced.

## 1.6. Aims and Research Questions

Learning a second language is usually limited within the classroom, and this limitation draws a frame around the production of language and puts a barrier to use the language as a communication tool. Learning a second language needs to be appealing and it should meet the needs of the learner. EFL teachers need to use varying and interesting materials to draw the learners' attention in the classroom so that the learners can be volunteers for learning a second language.

My purpose in this study was to conduct an AR in order to observe and examine the interest levels in English classes of fourth graders in an elementary school in Adana,

Turkey. I hope to contribute to language teachers, with my own story, to be a sample for how to conduct an action research in class, for how to enhance the levels of their learners' interests in the classrooms using several activities and materials. This study aims to reveal the evidences whether using different materials promote the class engagement of ESL learners in an elementary school within a specific context, though bearing in mind that the results cannot be generalized.

Throughout the study, my aim was to find an answer to this question:

How can I enhance young learners' interest in English courses?

As Burns noted it is difficult to determine a finishing point for the cycles in an action research; they could continue for as long as the individual or group feel that the research is producing curricular change and improvement in the course (Burns, 2000, The Language Teacher).

## 1.7. Context of the Study

The institution in the study was a diverse public elementary school, located in one of the central counties of Adana, a province in the south eastern Turkey. The school was opened in 2005 and located as a four storey building in a quite big garden. There were also an auditorium and a nursery school in the building. A principal, three deputy principals, three counsellors, an official, five servants, a security guard and fifty-five teachers worked in there. There were approximately a thousand students in total and four hundred fourth graders. Additionally, there was a double shift schooling which meant that third and fourth graders had classes from 7.00 to 12.00 in the mornings and, first and second graders had classes from 12.30 to 17.30 in the afternoons. However, the school was relatively well-equipped when compared to other neighbouring schools in the district. All classrooms had smart boards, picture projectors, laptops and air conditioners.

## 1.8. Operational Definitions

**Attitude:** Constant and arranged beliefs or emotions towards a certain person, object or situation.

**Classroom Investigation Task (CIT):** A deep examination or search done by the teacher in the classroom in order to discover facts or gain information about the students and courses.

**Course materials:** Specified textbooks, course packs and other educative supplementary items used in classrooms purposefully.

**Cycle:** Any complete round or series of occurrences that repeats or is repeated.

**Elementary/Primary School:** A formal Turkish educational institution in which the children between 6 and 10 years old attend for four years.

**Engagement:** Participation, inquisition, occupation, interest and relevance in something within a course.

**Foreign/Second Language:** Any language people speak apart from their mother tongue.

**Homework:** Experiences to be done by the students outside the classroom assigned and monitored by the teacher.

**In-class activity:** An educational process or procedure done in the classroom and intended to stimulate learning through actual experience.

**Interest:** The feeling of request to give one's attention to something or of wish to be involved with and to discover more about something.

**Motivation:** Internal and external factors that energize a person shape his/her behaviour and provide sustainability of that behaviour.

**Researcher:** In this study, the researcher is the instructor herself, both conducting the inquiry and teaching the fourth graders in the context.

**Short story:** A kind of fictional work of prose, usually focuses on one plot and can range from 1000 to 20000 words.

**Sorting Hat:** Originally the pointed wizard's hat of Godric Gryffindor. It was used in Harry Potter series, a blockbuster film in 2000s, and its function was to determine which of the four houses each new student would enter. Newcomers would place it on

their heads one by one and the Sorting Hat would loudly proclaim the suitable houses for the students.

**Sustainability:** The ability to maintain something at a certain rate or level.

In this study, the terms **"learner"**, **"pupil"**, **"student"** and **"children"** are used interchangeably, likewise, the terms **"teacher"**, **"tutor"** and **"instructor"**. Also **"classes"** and **"lessons"** are often used for **"courses"**.

## 1.9. Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes five chapters.

Chapter one contains the preliminary investigation, English Language Teaching in Turkey, background to the study, why I decided to conduct an AR, aims and research questions, the context of the study and operational definitions.

Chapter two comprises literature review.

Chapter three consists of the methodology, objectives of the study, justification of AR's use, research procedures, research phases, data collection and data analysis. It gives a brief summary of how this research was conducted.

Chapter four describes the events occurred in the classroom. It also includes the actions taken and practices done. Also the gathered, analysed and interpreted data, reflections made on the process are described in this section. This chapter provides how the practices were implemented in courses.

Chapter five includes the discussion and implication sections about the research.

**CHAPTER 2**

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Young Learners

Teaching a foreign language has been considered for the stand point of adults in Turkey for years. Yet, what children need or expect is totally different from adults. Harley and Singleton (1991) argue that teaching foreign languages needs much more time compared to that of adults (as cited in Şeker, 2007, p.54). Children need to be considered according to their interests, psychological and cognitive development. Bearing in mind that development is a complex process, we need to take into consideration that every child is different from one another and will not display the same rate of progress. Moreover, methods and techniques used for adults would not work out for children. Games, songs, rhymes and imaginary friends catch their attention. It is startling that they learn easily with activities full of fun, not caring about the rules, definitions, principles or grammar. Their interest to the activity leads to learning. Young learners have a very simple world but this does not mean teaching them is that much simple.

Abstract operations cannot be done in the stage between 7-11 years because they cannot be seen or hold (Piaget, 1952). Moreover, as Şeker (2007, p.54) asserted that young learners "rely on the spoken word as well as the physical world to understand the meaning, which makes them incapable of understanding abstract concepts". According to Piaget (1959), children can practice their logical competencies on concrete objects and experiences. They develop newly and extremely cognitive skills. Solving a problem is possible with concrete objects and instant situations like 'now' and 'here'.

As they develop cognitively, children realize the relation between cause and effect. They can foster new approaches to foreign language systematically. Nevertheless, they are in need of concrete practices to get started. Again according to Piaget, children avoid egocentricism in this stage and come to an understanding that everyone may have his/her own thoughts and this should be accepted with respect. Additionally, they make use of life challenges of real life heros with substantial characteristics. Yet, they develop deeper emotional linkages to knowledge and still proceed with their past experiences with imagination and fantasy. They are still in a

world of games and imagination. Teachers need to keep in mind that young learners want to live their childhood savouringly, even in learning a second language. Sitting in rows and following the course books is usually boring for them.

Foreign language instruction is compelling in the early stages because cognitively and psychologically, elementary students are not ideal language learners (as cited in Benedetti & Freppon, 2006, p.14). Young learners are disadvantageous in language learning. They are not able to determine what they would learn and they are unaware of their own needs. Şeker, again, stated that young learners understand in their own terms (Şeker, 2007, p.55). Pedagogues say that children need to learn the world in their contexts. By doing so, they can experience being safe and self-confident, manage to achieve in life on their own or with our support. In addition, this task falls to our share to provide them a learning environment in which they can comprehend that their thoughts and life courses are meaningful and precious.

Creating a safe and comfortable classroom climate is very important, otherwise, the students would not feel secure and would not take any academic risk. They still need support of adults. Young learners would be engaged and interested if they were treated with a consistent and gentle manner. However, young learners can work well in groups. Elementary education is the period in which children join into groups. Being a member of a peer group is both an obligation and a social need for them. Teachers need to take the advantages of group dynamics within these groups and create a democratic learning community. By doing so, it would be easier to teach them how to reach their goals with sharing knowledge and how to learn learning with peers. Group work would give a chance to reserved ones and they would be re-motivated to learn with the pleasure of sharing. Conversely, although they enjoy competition, young learners would be defeated when dragged into expectations. They do not like being compared to peers, they would prefer their previous and existing performances be assessed and their teachers be interested in only themselves.

When Rubin (1975), a Canadian researcher, made a survey to find out an answer to the question 'Who learns a language the best?' he found interesting results. Contrary to the foreseen, the best learners were not the ones who needed the most. The best learners were the ones who are most interested in the culture of the target language. There are some people around who should have been promoted in business life if they

had learned a foreign language, but they had not been able to. So, here we come face to face with a fallacy about learning a language: Needs trigger learning but relevance is the impulse that drives it. For this reason, we need to shift from a requirement-driven to an interest-oriented paradigm in schools (Bolat, 2013).

Yapıcı & Yapıcı (2003) indicated that the second most significant issue, primary school teachers encounter, was their students' being unmotivated during learning process. According to their research (as cited in Yerlikaya, 2014, p.791); 39, 4 % of the teachers stated that their students were unmotivated and unconcerned. As can be seen from the literature, learner's motivation is the key point that learning can only be provided by motivating the learner. Students can only learn effectively by participating in activities, taking action, doing and living voluntarily. Success is the sole outcome for students thus, we need to take measures to let them succeed and practise learning. Ones who succeed would be more motivated to study, concentrate and would dare to take new risks. For preparing students to be lifelong learners, it is highly significant to maintain their motivations.

## 2.2. Motivation

"Motivation is the study of why people think and behave as they do. Motivation is also the study of what pushes or pulls an individual to start, direct, sustain, and finally end an activity" (Graham, 2016, Motivation). However, there are various reasons for a person to be motivated or not to be and the motivation levels of people for the same subject are not to the same extent. As Carol Dweck (2002) points out, students' beliefs develop over time in conjunction with experience.

Motivation, is a concept directly linked to learning, because learning is a conscious and deliberate process that requires effort. Learning occurs when the learner really wants to learn, therefore the teacher needs to know how to motivate the learner to learn and use the teaching/motivating strategies consciously in the learning environment. It is an important issue even in second language learning as well as in some other disciplines. Language teaching process is not static, based on the appropriate precise rules and procedures. On the contrary, it is a dynamic and creative process shaped by the characteristics of student groups. Dörnyei defined motivation as one of the key factors that determine the rate and success of second language acquisition.

According to him, motivation "provided the impulse to initiate learning a foreign language and the determination to sustain learning process" (Dörnyei, 1998, p.117).

Behavioural psychologists (Pavlov, 1897; Watson, 1913; Thorndike, 1905; Skinner, 1936; Hull, 1943; Skinner, 1948; Bandura, 1963) argued that our behaviour is shaped by the award, that is, the individual is within the expectations of constant positive reinforcement and also stated that these expectations are sources of our previous experiences. According to behavioural approach, reinforcement plays a major role in motivation process. The cognitivists (Piaget, 1952; Bloom, 1956; Bruner, 1966) have more focused on the needs of individuals for motivation. They argued that these needs affect our decisions and behaviours. Ausubel (1960), one of the cognitivist representatives, argued that there are six needs formed basically to be motivated. Unlike other schools, constructivist approach (Dewey, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978), gave importance to social environment as well as they gave to personal preferences of individuals for motivation. According to this approach, each individual is motivated differently and the social environment cannot be considered apart from this motivational process. Concerning learning a second language, we can say that students have some psychological problems and create barriers against the target language. Motivation is very effective in the destruction of these barriers.

Hattie (2009) noted that student motivation is "highest when students are competent, have sufficient autonomy, set worthwhile goals, get feedback, and are affirmed by others" (as cited in Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010, p.17). Motivation leads to behaviour and behaviour leads to target. That's why highly motivated students develop a positive attitude to subjects. Besides autonomy-supportive teachers (giving feedback and allowing self-reflection) also have a positive power to motivate learners in classes. "Students are increasingly influenced by the feedback they receive, meaning that some change in students' beliefs and motivation is possible" (Dweck, 1999, p.101).

Additionally, in his study Peacock (1997) stated that students' motivation increase when authentic materials are used in classes (as cited in Carlson, 2008, p.13). Not only the content but also the materials need to be engaging in order to have the learners motivated for the acquisition of the second language. Then learning would be meaningful and life-long. However, exposing children lots of authentic materials does not serve the purpose for enhancing their motivation (Şeker, 2007, p.54). "Teachers

need to consider these key points and try to create such a setting in which the learners are motivated positively" (Deniz, Avşaroğlu & Fidan, 2006, p.64).

According to Dörnyei (1998), the basic issue of what motivation is, should have been overviewed, because there is not an absolute concept of it. Moreover, second language literature covers a limited knowledge on motivation whereas it should have been embraced very carefully. Researchers need to take the case into consideration without accepting the concept of motivation beforehand and with indicating "in what sense they use the term" (p.121).

## 2.2.1. Engagement

"Motivation is a term frequently used synonymously for engagement… However, motivation is more complex to unravel than engagement because it is internalized… To explore motivation is, to understand what sits behind the engagement of students and therefore what teachers can do to enhance this engagement" (Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010, p.17). Phil Schlecty (1994) defined three characteristics of totally engaged students, that is, "they find courses interesting, they go on studying despite difficulties and they have a great joy of accomplishing the work" (Strong, Silver & Robinson, 2015, Strengthening Student Engagement). Schlecty continues;

> There are four objectives that drive totally engaged students; success (need for predominance), curiosity (need for comprehension), originality (need for expressing oneself), and sharing (need for communication with peers). When delivered in exact amount for every student in accurate classroom conditions, these objectives would provide motivation and energy for a whole and productive learning.

"In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2015, Engagement). Educators have given a great importance to engagement. What is aimed, has been to provide a life-long and meaningful learning with improved engagement. Besides, we can interpret that engagement is perceived differently. Some teachers consider engagement as curiosity, motivation, optimism, enthusiasm or interest which may be called internal states and some teachers consider as attendance in listening, participation in discussions,

submission of the work on time or following the rules and directions which we may call as observable behaviours.

Moreover, researchers have witnessed that materials used in the classes play an important role on students' engagement (Dickinson, 2010; Foppoli, 2006; Kılıçkaya, 2004). On the other hand, the level of engagement differs according to the learners' past experiences. It is not that much easy to engage young learners unless they are curious, passionate or interested. Their past memories should be evoked by in-class activities, connections to their own lives should be established.

## 2.2.2. Interest

Another term which is used interchangeably with motivation is "interest". The great educator John Dewey wrote that interest operates by a process of 'catch' and 'hold'- first the individual's interest must be captured, and then it must be maintained. Interest is a cognitive and an affective state. It effectively turbocharges our thinking. "When we're interested in what we're learning, we pay closer attention; process the information more efficiently; we employ more effective learning strategies" (Paul, 2013, Mindshift).

According to Tsai (2008) and Harlen (2006), there are two types of interest and it has a very large impact on learning. It is also influenced by a variety of individual and environmental factors (as cited in Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010, p.18). The way the course is delivered, the materials used, classroom setting, resources, the topic, in-class activities, teaching strategies, students' prior knowledge let them have interest and the course become enjoyable. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that young learners tend to perceive interest in terms of 'enjoyment'. Therefore, teachers should make use of games, puzzles, songs and drama in which young learners participate voluntarily.

According to a seven-year-long study by Judith Harackiewicz of the University of Wisconsin and her colleagues, "interests powerfully influence our academic and professional choices". Besides, in general, writes Harackiewicz, "Research has found that interest is a more powerful predictor of future choices than prior achievement or demographic variables" (Paul, 2013, Mindshift). Nowadays, students are designing their career plans according to their interests. Because interest leads to effort and effort leads

to fulfilment. If support in learning is the ultimate goal, we need to stimulate our learners by enhancing their level of interests.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that catching interest is not enough for learning process, it should also be kept alive, because young learners may easily lose their excitement in any subject. Educators should expose students to a wide variety of topics, stimulate their imagination and support their feelings of competence and self-efficacy so that they can follow after their interests over a lifetime with strength and joy.

Language learning is very much related to learners' emotional conditions. However, researches have shown that wisely designed teaching strategies can release students' emotional block. Lin (2008) suggests that "students would not be able to absorb what they should learn in class because of their teacher's uncongenial manners or classmates' aggressive and competitive attitudes". Besides, Ni (2012) concludes in his study that in order to "develop positive and valuable concepts of self-efficacy with further effective learning" teachers should consider affective factors fully (p.1512).

## 2.3. Affective Filter

The Affective Filter (Emotional Filter) hypothesis by Krashen (1982) explains learning with connection to students' motivation. According to this hypothesis, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety play a major role in language acquisition. Krashen asserted that students with low motivation levels, high levels of anxiety and low self-confidence face with a wall in learning process and have been unable to show success when compared to their peers. Even people who are quite willing or motivated in other areas, lose their motivation in the field of second language, because they find it very stressful to learn a language in the classroom.

Krashen's "affective filter" hypothesis is very much related to three key words; "variables" as Krashen defined; motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. In order not to raise "the affective filter" and not to form "a mental block", safe learning environment should be created by the instructor and learners should be encouraged to take risks and feel free to learn from mistakes, regardless of their ages. Otherwise, it would not be possible to formulate an enjoyable and stress-free classroom for young learners in

foreign language education. Yet, the achievement level of the learners would not be raised.

Krashen (1981), highlighted the importance of emotions in language learning process and the fact that children resist learning when learning is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment. What Krashen importantly underscored is that students who have high motivation, self-confidence and positive point of view about self-improvement, and who are distant from an excitement close to anxiety, are more successful in language acquisition. Learners come to language classroom with varying emotional needs and it is unlikely that a single course book could address these varied needs.

## 2.4. Short Story

A novel or a short story may address the same topic as an informational book and will provide a different experience of the theme. There are still some limitations for the teachers to define and select their own teaching materials on their own because there are social, psychological, educational and economic factors that shape understanding of teachers for defining and selecting the materials. In addition, these materials may vary on what topic you are planning to teach, to whom you are planning to teach, and for what cultural features you are supposed to deal with.

"Using authentic literature to supplement core materials is one way of motivating learners, though the task of reading a short story or novel in a foreign language can be very challenging for many pupils" (British Council, n.d., Motivating Pupils). The question here is how students' motivation in English language learning can be improved through teaching short-stories so that they can develop new learning strategies of their own and take responsibility of their own learning by constructing their own ways of critical thinking. Stories provide the ability to develop new responses to various situations, to be able to offer different solutions, the ability to develop options.

> Stories may bridge the gap between language study and language use and also link classroom learning with the world outside. Some of the activities do not always have a very large language element but are nevertheless important in creating a feeling among pupils that learning English means fun, activity, creativity and enjoyment" (Ellis &Brewster, 2002, p.17).

"Young learners really enjoy stories because they activate children's imagination and sense of enjoyment, are interesting for them, meet their emotional, cognitive and psychological needs and bring variety and change" (Malkina, 1995, pp.38-39). Stories are interactive because they are natural materials for children. Telling stories is usually natural for children owing to their natural relevance to acting, imagining and imitating. For this reason, it is important that we need to make use of stories because they catch attention, hinder resistance and nourish their imaginary world. "Children delight in imagination and fantasy. It is more than simply a matter of enjoyment, however, in the language classroom this capacity for fantasy and imagination has a very constructive part to play" (Halliwell, 1993, p.7).

Also, "stories provide a context that holds students' attention" (Cooter, 1991) (as cited in Safdarian & Ghyasi, 2013, p.81). New events and information learned while listening to the story, with a mental stimulus, past experiences and information are compared and meaningful connections are established between the old and the fresh. Coherence in stories eases learners to construct linkages between the new and stored input. Similarities and differences are identified and new mental encodings are made. This process is highly active and requires attention. With the help of using short stories, words can be presented to the learners as the building blocks of textual integrity rather than unrelated input.

Besides, stories can decrease nervousness because learners who are fully attending to stories are not in stressful situation. "Stories are capable of bringing reality to the language classroom because children can actively take part in dramatizing the stories they hear, extending and adding more details to them" (Ji, 1999). Cameron (2003,) offered to use differentiated tasks, provide remedial literacy skills, increase learner autonomy and adopt a different approach altogether for an effective learning (as cited in Safdarian, 2012, p.217). We hypothesize that introducing stories to the curriculum can create such condition and would bring a different approach. They "can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language, culture and language learning" (Ellis &Brewster, 2002) (as cited in Mart, 2012, p.104). Stories might be motivating, because children reading stories in their L2, would use all the resources available to try to make sense of, and to find out what happened in the end. Then children would have a sort of satisfaction that they achieved a goal by experiencing the foreign language. As Safdarian (2012, p.217) cited in Sivasubramaniam (2006) that

"motivation becomes synonymous with a process of engagement through a sense of involvement with the target language".

Stories throughout the history have been the first references in provision of religious teaching, transfer of scientific information and teaching of human values. Today, stories are still being utilized as a teaching and learning method. Colourful expressions, rich elements, symbols and theoretical information associated with daily life are embodied in the stories, thus information is stored in the memory easily and this provides persistence. Since the lively atmosphere and real life environment created by stories encourage students to talk and discuss with each other, stories increase interactional opportunities among students. In addition, stories lead them to solve problems, perceive relations, verbalise themselves and their environment.

A large and growing body of literature has dealt with the use of short stories in second language teaching and its advantages. It may contribute to learning as it can help keeping the very limited input in mind. The question 'Then what?' drives a positive impact on learning by keeping the audience's participation consistent and live. Descriptive texts are static, while story texts are fluid and dynamic.

"Stories, apart from being every young child's bedtime friend, can become every young learner's school time treasure" (Idinou, 2016, Teaching Young Learners). Andrew Wright; an author, illustrator, teacher trainer and storyteller, says:

> We are all stories. We prepare ourselves for our new story when we get up in the morning and get prepared for the day. Everybody needs stories, not just children… Stories are particularly good at helping learners to experience the meanings of language and not just study them. And stories are particularly good at offering an experience of a river of flowing and sustained language use as opposed to conversational turn taking in which the learner experiences only short bursts of language. Everybody wants stories. They give experience of language in use. They are free. (BBC, n.d., Stories ).

Children like listening to stories over and over again. At every turn, they hear new details and increasingly try to guess what will happen next in the story. Again, according to Ellis &Brewster (2002, p.17), this repetition of stories help young learners to learn key vocabulary and structures embedded in the stories. Besides, certain grammatical patterns are acquired permanently via this participative and reinforced repetition (as cited in Mart, 2012, p.104).

However, story texts can easily be converted to a simple dialogue and acted out in the classroom. This allows learners to develop not only receptive language skills (listening and reading), but also productive language skills (speaking and writing). Stories usually describe struggle between the 'good' and the 'bad'. 'Identifying oneself to' the hero of the story, may enhance participation of learner in story text processing.

## 2.5. Interactive/Reflective Diaries (Dialogue Journals)

Man is essentially the hero of a story, no matter he is faulty or incomplete. He, himself, writes his own story and gets involved in it. A Latin proverb "Verba volant, scripta manent" means "spoken words fly away, written words remain". Caius Titus of the Roman Senate suggested that spoken words might easily be forgotten, but written documents can always be conclusive in public matters in one of his speeches.

Scholars have indicated that writing is thinking and learning at the same time. Zinsser (1993) stated that "when writing, the learner is thinking aloud on paper". Additionally, Elbow (1994) asserted that writing is a powerful tool "to learn and understand, remember and figure out what you do not know". Also, as Murray (1985) suggested "the learner often does not know what he thinks until he writes it". Besides, Santa & Havens (1991) expressed that "comprehension typically increases when reading and writing are used together since they are complementary processes" (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007, Walking The Walk). According to Massi (2001), writing is a symbolic interaction between writer, text and reader, since it is an interactive process.

Actually every thing that is written falls as a note to the history. A lot of information learned from the past to the present are reported by written sources. Those little notes are both the testimony of one's own life, and a source of information for tomorrow. For this reason, men have kept diaries to convey their thoughts and feelings. Krishnan and Lee (2002) defined diaries as "first person observations of experiences that are recorded over a period of time". Some other researchers preferred to call them "journals" (e.g. Krishnan & Lee, 2002) or "records" (e.g. Jarvis, 1992) which is related with 'public' consumption, because they are designed to be read by others. According to Howell-Richardson & Parkinson (1988), students use diaries for many reasons, one of which is to record "how they feel in terms of learning-related issues and what they remember from their classes" (as cited in Yi, 2008, pp.1-9).

Reflective diaries are very personal. This means, it is essential that feelings, opinions, thoughts are recorded as well as factual events of the day. According to Allin & Turnock (2007), "experiences can be built upon and improved by reporting personal feelings following an event". According to them, again, there should be a balanced view of what has taken place and what experiences and achievements have been lived, in reflective diaries.

These journals have several advantages both for the learners and the teacher. First of all, they are "the form of an ongoing written dialogue between the teacher and the student" (Peyton and Reed 1990). Since journals are informal, students feel free to write without being worried about being corrected. What falls to teachers' share is that journals are the first hand "records about learners' views, beliefs, attitudes and motivation" related to learning issues (Brown, 1998, p.4). "By reading journal entries, teachers get to know students' anxieties, problems, excitements and joys and with this information, make plans tailored for their students" (n.d., Journals in the Classroom). Again as Shaaban (2001) suggested, "dialogue journals can help the teacher assess students' writing skills and improvement over time" (p.38). It is also an advantage for reserved students that it can function well to impel "students who are lagging behind and need to catch up". By doing so, they would be able to "think critically about the linkage between the course and themselves". Teacher diary is a self-reflection notebook since the teacher, after each lesson, writes his/her own reactions, feelings and observations. It serves the teacher to question what is being observed when it is written on a "regular basis with a certain discipline" (n.d., Reflective Teaching). As Dr. Francisca Sanchez (2010) referred, journals give students an opportunity to:

1. Learn that writing is communication.
2. Experience ownership of a product that they have written.
3. Develop fluency in a meaningful context.
4. Use the skills learned in language, literature studies, reading, writing, and spelling lessons.
5. Write on a daily basis and receive an individual reply from the teacher.
6. Develop a close personal relationship through writing.
7. Promote confidence in risk-taking.
8. Choose their own topics.
9. Experience literacy in its function and process.
10. Experiment with different formats, e.g.; poetry, letter writing, songs, tongue twisters, riddles.

11. Experiment with a second language in a meaningful context.

Journals give teachers an opportunity to:

1. Assess use of knowledge and skills that have been taught and learned in other content areas.
2. Have a setting where the conventions of writing can be modelled in the context of authentic use.
3. Learn about each child's interests and ideas.
4. Interact on an individual basis with each child each day, creating a close personal bond.
5. Obtain an easy-to-follow daily developmental record of each child's writing.
6. Individually intervene in facilitating the child's connection between oral and written language.
7. See when the child is transitioning into the second language (n.d., Journals in the Classroom).

## 2.6. Reward

Most of the teachers agree that a "well-designed and carefully implemented reward" would encourage the learner to achieve. Children would not feel motivated unless they are appreciated by adults, not caring how much they have accomplished. Learners would easily deal with problems related to learning issues and enjoy both incentives and learning process when they are rewarded properly.

According to Walberg & Bast (2014), there are some kinds of rewards that would be suitable for young learners, such as verbal praise, small tokens, stickers, parties, prizes, grades, art incentives, money (real or play) and student-initiated rewards. Although Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards* underestimated, rewards can help young learners perform their tasks successfully, internalise the specific knowledge and insights which meant to be "an essential step toward further learning".

As Filsecker & Hickey cited (2014), despite the controversy concerning the use of external rewards in education (Cameron, Pierce, Banko, & Gear, 2005), they have remained a common practice for supporting achievement, motivation and appropriate behaviour (Hoffmann, Huff, Patterson, & Nietfeld, 2009). Cognitive theorists have suggested that rewards are detrimental for individuals' intrinsic motivation and subsequent engagement by undermining their perception of competence and autonomy and/or by deviating the perceived source of motivation to external causes. On the other hand, the over justification hypothesis suggests that when an external reward is

introduced for an activity which was previously interesting, the individual subsequently attributes the basis for the activity to the external reward. As Cameron and Pierce (2002) explain, "external rewards are those that come from outside the person and are usually arranged by other people". Hundreds of studies have shown that "extrinsic" rewards direct attention away from intrinsically motivated learning, leading to diminished engagement once rewards are no longer offered (Tang & Hall, 1995, pp.136-148). According to Deci, Koestner & Ryan (1999), rewards have both controlling and informational qualities. If tied to performance standards, rewards are likely to be perceived as controlling, undermining the perception of autonomy and therefore reducing individuals' intrinsic motivation.

Many studies have shown that rewards can increase both students' performances and motivate them intrinsically when used appropriately (Cameron, 2001; Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Pierce, Cameron & Banko, 2005). Chen & Wu (n.d.) recommend that teachers and parents need to use rewards wisely in order to motivate young pupils effectively. According to them, rewards should be immaterial for they may change children's attribution to learning issues (p.2).

## 2.7. TPR (Total Physical Response)

Total Physical Response or TPR is a language teaching method developed by James Asher, a psychology professor from San Jose State University, California. "This method uses command forms as children respond physically before they respond verbally" (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Richards & Rodgers 2001; Asher 1981) (as cited in Pinsonneault, 2008). Students are given commands in the target language by the teacher. Verbs in imperative forms are mostly used in this method.

According to Asher (1981) use of imperative tense and movement correctly can lead the learner to acquire the second language. He states that within twenty four hours of training the learner would start speaking the target language. His method shows how children can at least be stimulated partially with TPR as a teaching model. TPR is not totally similar but it uses a stimulus-response method in learning a second language as behaviourism does. Demirel (1999) stated that TPR is more useful at the beginner level in foreign language teaching, adding that the method is directed by the teacher and students are the players. Three important hypotheses lying behind this method are; the bio-program, brain lateralization, reduction of stress.
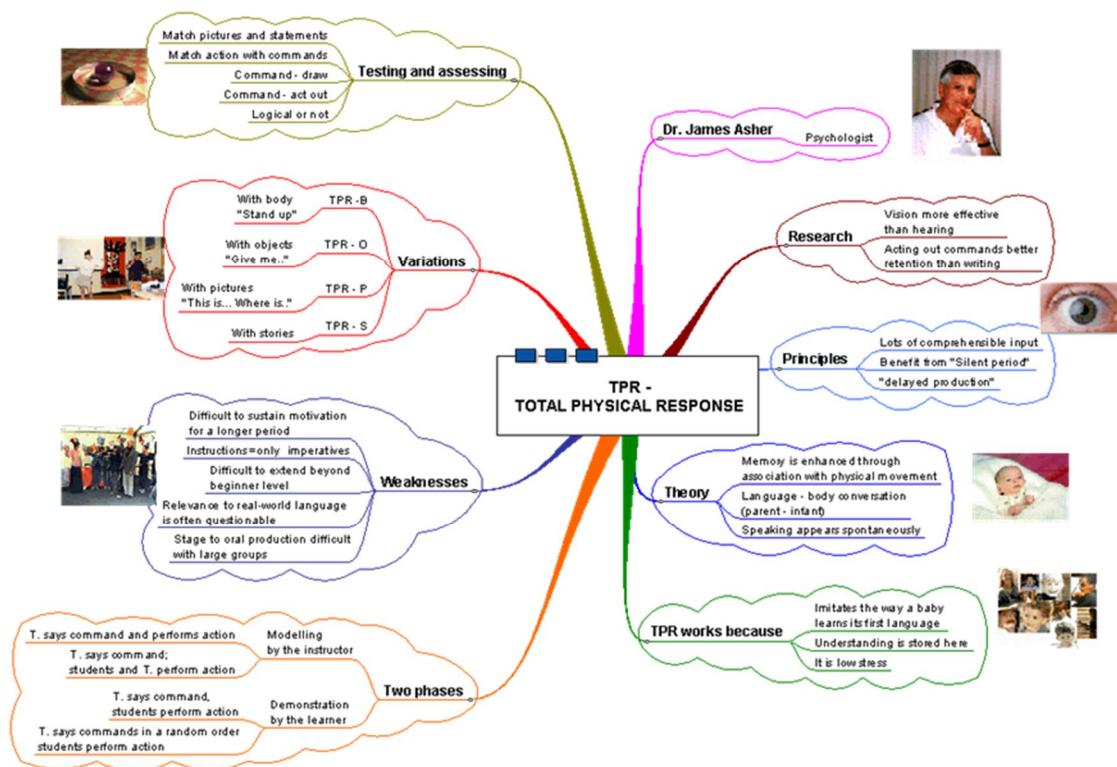
**Figure 2.1.** Total Physical Response (a sample Mind Map) (Retrieved from http://

www2.vobs.at/ball-online/Manual/TPR.gif)

Richards & Rodgers (2001) claimed that Asher (1981) compares the first and second language acquisition processes, assuming that pupils can learn a foreign language the same as infants learn their native language, listening skills are developed before speaking. Asher (2000) asserted that "skills are acquired as children respond physically to spoken language in the form of commands" since infants do not acquire speaking before comprehension. He, again, stated that physical movement accompanies listening skills in second language learning. Asher (2000) claimed that his method allows comprehension before speaking the target language. He added that his method is an alternative to direct translation method as it leads convincing classroom experiences.

Rhalmi (2009) points out the most remarkable features of the TPR as follows:

1. The coordination of speech and action facilitates language learning.
2. Grammar is taught inductively.
3. Meaning is more important than form.
4. Speaking is delayed until comprehension skills are established.

5. Effective language learning takes place in low stress environment.
6. The role of the teacher is central. S/he chooses the appropriate commands to introduce vocabulary and structure.
7. The learner is a listener and a performer responding to commands individuallyor collectively.
8. Learning is maximized in a stress free environment.

According to this method, language acquisition is concerned with the biological factors in the person's body, "it controls different learning functions of the left and right lobes of the brain" (Gür, 1995, p.24). This method, in which body language, gestures and facial expressions are actively used and complimented, however, uses the native language instructions at the beginning. Aiming the compatible match of speech and action in a mutual way in foreign language teaching, "the theoretical basis of TPR is the direct learning method" (Doğan, 2012). According to this method, there are a few components that conduce acquisition of foreign language succesfully or not. The method justifies that "learning would be unfavourable when individual is under pressure" (Gür, 1995) and for this reason, language teaching programme should be designed considering this feature.

> This theory supposes that the ability to learn language is inborn, that nature is more important than nurture and that the human brain has a biological program for acquiring any language spoken. The process is visible when we observe how infants internalize their first language (n.d., Use of TPR).

Since young learners prefer activities that involve movement, TPR would be convenient at the very first phases of second language teaching as they are not patient enough to sit in rows for long periods of time. This method works well when new vocabulary is taught because TPR does not force the young learner to speak the target language at the beginning. Thus, it lowers the affective filter and the classroom setting seems more stress-free. Learners are not forced to respond orally. Besides, Krashen (1981) explained that physical actions in L2 let learners make comprehensible input and minimize stress. However, he remarked the point that the effectiveness of TPR is "sketchy" and it typically deals with only the very beginning stages. Krashen suggested using TPR should be added to other methods (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) in the L2 classroom to incorporate the use of authentic materials. As can be seen in the literature, TPR is appropriate for elementary classes since young learners are used to learn in a variety of ways and enjoy movement.

**CHAPTER 3**

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of the research is with regard to the stand point of enhancing students' interests, class engagement and promoting a positive attitude towards English in an elementary public school. The data were collected with qualitative methods and gathered from multiple sources at various time points during the Spring Semester of 2014-2015 educational year. Qualitative analysis was used in order to gain insights into how English was perceived among fourth graders and what else was needed to be done for further progress. However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of research paradigm since qualitative methods might not be sufficient enough to make sense of social issues when used alone in researches.

The whole research was carried out within grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) called the process as "constant comparative method" since data collection and analysing are conducted together. As soon as the activities were completed and the data was collected, they were analysed immediately to be included in the next phases of the research. As written earlier, I did not start this survey with a hypothesis since this study is an action research. I determined what was going wrong with my fourth graders and why this disturbed me. Then I started to collect my data with various methods and identified the key points. These points were determined through reading students' diaries, observation field notes, coding semi-structured interviews done with both students, interpreting descriptive statistics. They were done with open coding, which means, "essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph is read in search of the answer to the repeated questions what this is about and what is being referenced here" (Borgatti, n.d.).

In order to be both scientific and creative, I often stepped back and asked questions to see if my data fits what I think or if I need to change my idea, which is very much convenient to the cyclical nature of the action research, I believe. Besides, I tried to maintain an attitude of scepticism. All theoretical explanations, hypotheses, and questions about the data should be regarded as preliminary, whether they come from the literature, experience, or making comparisons. They should always be checked out against the data and never accepted as fact. Designed Research Model was depicted in the light of the thoughts above (See Figure 3).

**2014-2015 EDUCATIONAL YEAR**
**SPRING SEMESTER**

TIME

STAGE

I  HOW CAN I ENHANCE YOUNG LEARNERS' INTEREST?

II  DIARY- INTERVIEW-TEACHING JOURNAL

STUDENTS

III  DATA

IV  ANALYSIS

V  CONCLUSIONS
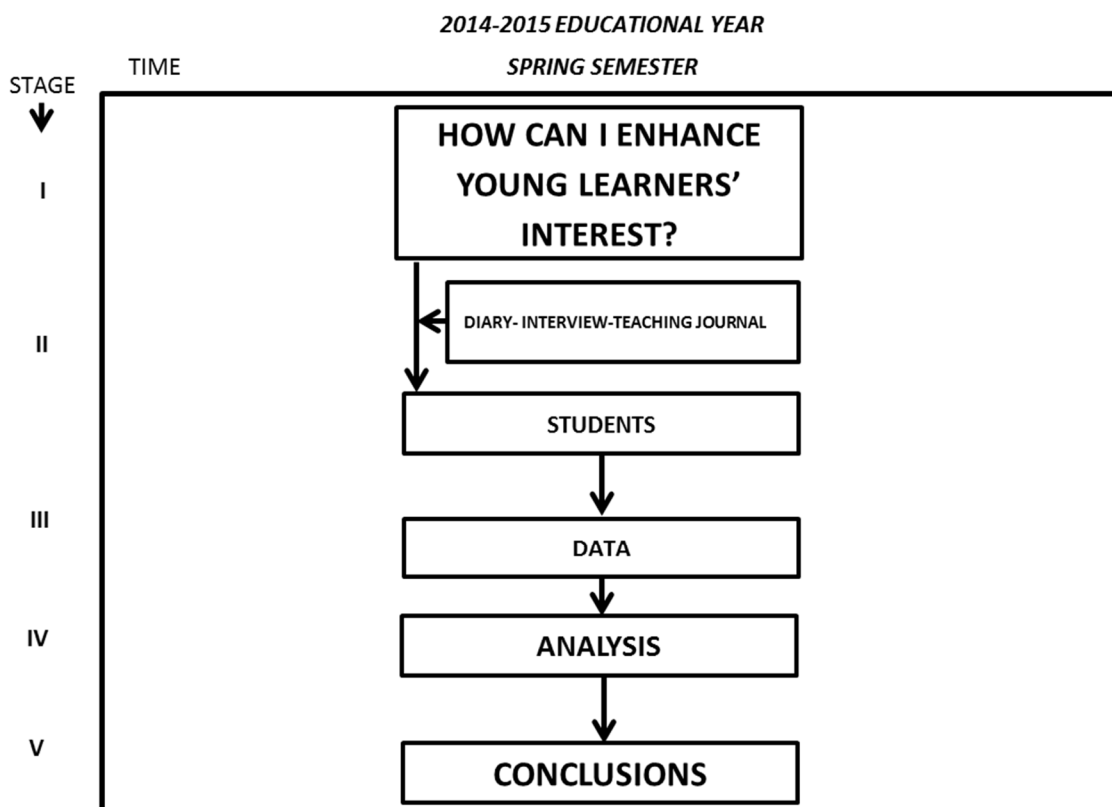
**Figure 3.1.** Research Model

## 3.1. Objectives of the Study

This dissertation seeks to address the following question:

How can I enhance young learners' interest in English courses?

## 3.2. Research Design

It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was Action Research (AR) since this study was edited on a Classroom Investigation Task (CIT) in which the teacher conducted a classroom-based research in order to develop in-class implementations. This action research was the product of a personal effort out of which the researcher explicated inferences based on the data gathered from her students, bearing in mind that action research was a prevalent and favoured research method by teachers, advisors and directors in the field of education ( Özkan, 2011, p. 39 ).

## 3.2.1. Rationale for Action Research

Bob Dick (1993), a psychologist, wrote a document on preparing a paper on qualitative evaluation and supervised his colleagues who want to do an action research

thesis and to conduct and report action research, including a beginner's guide to the literature. In his document, Dick, intimately said:

> The purpose in action research is to learn from your experience, and apply that learning to bringing about change (p. 19)). As the dynamics of a social system are often more apparent in times of change (Lewin, 1948), learning and change can enhance each other. Practitioners, people who work as agents of change, can use it as part of their normal activities. Mainstream research paradigms in some field situations can be more difficult to use (p. 8). In most forms of action research, the relevant literature is defined by the data you collect and your interpretation of it. That means that you begin collecting data first, and then go to the literature to challenge your findings (p. 11).

In other words, action research is learning by doing. It is a survey done for many reasons to find solutions to emerging issues in any field and a process set on practitioner's own study. Action research is designed to bring change for the better and all people participating in the study will benefit as 'stakeholders' (Dick and Swepson, 1997). AR usually depends on critical and practical experiences of the stakeholders about the issue which is being held (Köklü, 2001, p. 35). A higher education is redundant in order to conduct the survey since an AR focuses on local issues. Furthermore, the researcher is a stakeholder in the context. Researcher can work more flexible when compared to other methods in planning and conducting processes. Since s/he works in a designed sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), personal experiences and opinions of the researcher are accepted as the data. For this reason, results are rarely generalized (Glanz, 1999).

According to Cohen & Manion (1996) AR can be used in discovering new methods based upon learning instead of traditional ones, adopting a holistic approach in teaching and learning, improving existing assessment methods, supporting positive attitudes to teaching occupation or changing value system of students according to necessities of life, improving teachers' teaching competencies and creating a higher level of self-awareness (as cited in Beyhan, 2013, pp. 78-79). Sagor (2000), pointed out that AR improves teachers' competencies, thereby, they can contribute to students' development. Hopkins (1993) stated that AR is appropriate for teachers who can detect existing issues in their own implementation processes and want to pace for solution (as cited in Beyhan, 2013, p. 81).

Action Research is very important for educators in terms of self-development and self-knowledge since a teacher can watch himself/herself from a critical point of view, determine the problems in the class, collaborate, find solutions with new techniques (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 3), evolve dialogue among students and contribute to colleagues by sharing his/her experiences. AR in education means conducting a survey in order to comprehend, evaluate and change educational implementations afterwards (Köklü, 2001, p. 36). There are several purposes of action research for development such as school-based curriculum development, professional development strategies, in pre-service and graduate courses in education and in system planning and policy development (Beverly, 1993, p. 1). Besides, action research focuses on solving fresh problems on school basis (Wiersma, 2009, p. 12). While research is usually done by an academician, action research is carried out by teachers, managers, consultants, coaches and other training groups (Rossman & Marshall, 2006, p. 165).

Stephan Corey (1953) was one of the researchers, who used AR in educational field, believed that scientific methods would shift attitudes of educators both in searching and practising the knowledge (as cited in Beyhan, 2013, p. 69). The key issue in AR is that of teachers being a researcher. English educator Lawrence Stenhouse was the first who used the term 'teacher as a researcher'. Stenhouse (1975) asserted that teachers can be researchers and develop their implementations. Eliot & Adelman improved his ideas later and stated that research and implementation are not separate but contrarily interwoven, supporting one another (Ekiz, 2009, p. 182). This type of research has been popularized nowadays among teachers and moreover, it has been supported by British Government since 2001 and teachers have been promoted and sponsored for doing research (Ekiz, 2009).

Although action research is criticized for being more imprecise than others with regard to the design of method (Borg, 1987, p. 284), it can produce beneficial and qualified data for local observers (Wiersma, 2009, p. 13). Additionally, AR creates a belief for a life-long commitment to personal or organisational learning and guides informed activities. However, results may be shared at local, national or international conferences and added to the literature (Burke & Christensen, 2004, pp. 10-11).

### 3.2.2. Key Elements of Action Research

There are three main elements in a good action research: a good story; rigorous reflection on that story; and an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from the reflection on the story. These three questions seek to address:

1. *What happened?* As action research is about real time change, its core is the story of what takes place.

2. *How you do make sense of what happened?* This involves not only providing an analysis of what you think, but also of how you are making sense of it as the story improves (Weick, 1995).

3. *So what?* This is how the action research project is contributing theory or usable knowledge (n.d., Understanding Action Research).

> Good action research is like good social consultancy or community or organisational change. It draws on the same skills and procedures. It offers the same satisfactions. The costs are that it takes time, energy and creativity. The virtue of action research is its responsiveness. It is what allows you to turn unpromising beginnings into effective endings. It is what allows you to improve both action and research outcomes through a process of iteration. As in many numerical procedures, repeated cycles allow you to converge on an appropriate conclusion (Dick, 1993, p. 13).

Action research involves not only identifying and investigating problems in teaching, but may also include engaging learners as equal partners in the inquiry process (Burns, 2000). According to Warrican (2006, p. 2) the core goal of action research is to create sustainable learning capacities and give participants the option of increasing control over their own situation. Besides Burns (2002, p. 5) stated that action research is an activity associated with the idea of reflective teaching. As action research is usually participative, it requires a partnership between me and my students. For some purposes it may also be more occupationally relevant (Dick, 1993).

AR can include all types of data gathering methods. Qualitative and quantitative tools, such as interviews and surveys are commonly used. These tools need to be clearly integrated into the process. Besides, the action research paradigm requires its own quality criteria and should not be judged by the criteria of positivist science. The dual outcomes of action research are some level of improvement and the development of

self-help and competencies out of the action and the creation of new knowledge from the inquiry (n.d., Understanding Action Research).
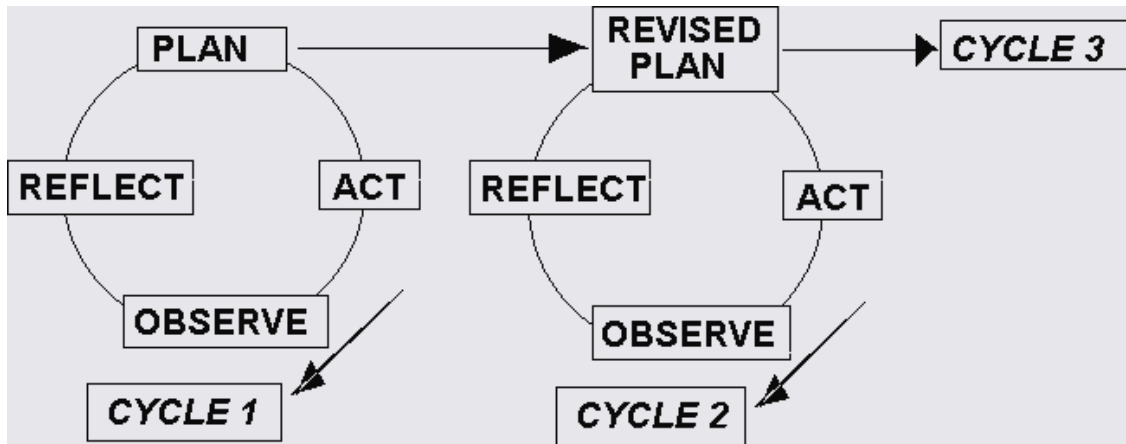


**Figure 3.2.** Steps in the Action Research Cycle

(Retrieved from http://www.informationr.net/ir/1-1/paper2.html)

## 3.3. Procedure of the Study

In this section, procedures of action research phases and the research instruments are described. As written earlier, this study was conducted during eight weeks in the spring semester of 2014-2015 educational year, between 5th March and 30th April, 2015.

### 3.3.1. Planning for the Research

After having completed the first semester of 2014-2015 educational year, I gave a start to the research in the second semester. First, I prepared a story book for each student, including a lot of visual images and a diary section, blue cover for boys and purple cover for girls. The story diaries also included picture dictionary sections for each of four short stories.

Sorting hat was another material used in story book sessions. TPR was a method of which I had taken the advantages. Finally, as soon as the practices were completed, I made semi-structured interviews with some of fourth graders. Interviewees were asked to respond five questions about the practices applied in English classes and their concern were tried to be evaluated through content analysis. The 12th version of MaxQDA, a social science data analysis program was used for coding and categorising the semi-structured interviews with students.

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### 3.3.2. Action and Observation for the Research

Questions to discover students' evaluations about the short stories were embedded in their story diaries. Moreover, students' reflections were asked to be written in diary sections after each session. I, as the instructor, read and wrote in a response to all my students' reflections, aiming that my students and I used the diaries interactively.

The 'story diary practice' lasted for eight weeks, every two weeks were reserved for a short story. New vocabulary was introduced via picture dictionary, TPR and acting. I tried to stick to the grammatical structures taught within the curriculum while explaining the new vocabulary because my fourth graders had only learned simple tenses. I rewarded the students that responded the comprehension questions correctly.

Those who were reserved had much more speaking anxiety and it was really hard for me to integrate them into the practice. Then, I found a life saver, the Sorting Hat. I was walking around in class carrying the hat and laying down the hat on top of a student's head all of a sudden. Children could not wait trying on that bright red hat with shining stars on. They were waiting prepared for giving the answer while I was trying to choose the answerer.

I tried not to use native language in classes, use of imperative tense and movement helped me to teach, especially, the new vocabulary. Moreover, my students enjoyed body language, gestures and facial expressions used in TPR method. They responded physically to my commands. The students were asked to write their opinions, feelings in diaries after each session.

### 3.3.3. Reflection on "Story Diary Practice"

Story Diary was an unusual practice for my students. For that reason, I needed to explain beforehand in details what we were going to do on Thursdays for eight weeks. I delivered each student his/her own story diary that I had prepared on the first Thursday before the class began. They turned pages quickly and glanced at their story diaries as soon as they got them. Children were very excited about the short stories, colourful pictures and images. Some of the students looked puzzled as they were wondering about what sort of in-class activities were going to be done for the day. However, students' first reactions to story diaries were better than I expected.

### 3.3.4. Revision for the Research

After we had completed studying the short stories, experiencing varied practices and being exposed to several instruments and materials in English classes for eight weeks, I wanted my all students to think back what they had experienced during the study process. It was crucial for me to hear their reflections holistically after the task had been done. Since their story diaries would be one of the sources to determine my path leading to new teaching strategies, I asked them to write their reflections at home. I also required that they thought what they would have done if they had participated in the activities again and what else could be added to the class activities for a coming cycle. I wanted them to determine which activities they favoured or did not favour and informed them that I would make interviews with some of them the following week.

### 3.4. Participants

The participants in this study were a class of fourth graders, 38 in total, 12 female and 26 male students, coming from almost the same background, in the means of families, socio-cultural and economic status. Most of the students resided in apartments around the school and very few came to school by school bus. Almost half of them attended to external study group centres, which were located near the school. The students had classes at school from 07.00 to 12.00 and attended to external study courses for three hours a day in the afternoons on weekdays. Their mother tongue was Turkish. Their parents were of middle-class, aged between 28-35, fathers were mostly employees and mothers were housewives. The average number of children in the families was three and siblings attended the same school.

Moreover, the class teacher of these students was such a prudent teacher that he had led his students to be taught English by providing them an English instructor two hours a week since they were in the first grade. The class teacher had had a good contact with parents and assured them that their children had to be taught English since it was a global language. Thus, the English level of these students, in general, was better when compared to other fourth graders at the same school.

The researcher in the study was the instructor. The researcher had been teaching English for 24 years to various grades in various types of public schools. She was brought up and educated in big cities in reputable schools and institutions. The researcher had graduated from the department of English Language and Literature. She

had her undergraduate from international affairs, as well. At the time of the study, the researcher was having her MA in ELT and Psychology and has been teaching to fourth graders for a year. Most of her teaching career had been devoted to older learners, 19 years of teaching English to high school students. In her 24 years of teaching experience, she had taught thousands of students in ten different cities of Turkey, including the South-eastern, Eastern, Western, Mediterranean, Black Sea and inner regions of Anatolia.

## 3.5. Data Collection for the Research

Data collection procedures were carried out during a semester. Different instruments were used in qualitative data collection for triangulation.

Story diaries of students were the first data for this study. The diaries were delivered at the beginning of each session and collected back by the researcher when the session was over. This procedure was done for the researcher could read and write back her responses to each student in their diaries. This was done for the sake of interaction between the researcher and the participants to observe and interpret children's attitudes towards in-class activities in English classes.

The second source in data collection was the researcher's observations from her teaching journal. The researcher had taken field notes after each session using her observation checklist, adapted from Yang (2009):

1.  What evidence was there that the students found the story interesting/boring?
2.  Did the students participate actively in the lessons? Why/Why not?
3.  What evidence was there that the tasks and activities helped students to understand and enjoy the story?
4.  Were the aims of the lessons achieved? Why/Why not?
5.  What were other things, if any, could have been done to motivate the students in the lesson?

Since it was a direct participatory observation, the approach was flexible and the researcher in the study had the opportunity to feel free to focus on different events and shift her point of view according to emerging unexpected incidents.

The third instrument for data collection in the study was the semi-structured interviews made with randomly chosen participants. There were thirty-eight subjects in the sample. Since there was a time constrain, almost one thirds of the participants were selected randomly for the interviews.

## 3.6. Data Analysis

The data collected from students' reflections in the diaries were browsed and specific ones were analysed descriptively. As Kızıltepe (2008) suggested content analysis was one of the relevant techniques "when a researcher wanted to study on who said what, to whom, about what, how and why" (p. 263). The observations of the researcher were analysed with content analysis to process the data more deeply and discover the themes accordingly. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews were recorded, translated into English, transcribed, coded and analysed with 12th version of MaxQDA social science data analysis program.

## 3.7. Summary

This study aimed to reveal the evidences whether using different materials promote the class engagement of ESL learners in an elementary school within a specific context. I decided to carry out the study with fourth graders by using various instruments to check how they work in English classes and whether they enhance the interests of already enthusiastic students. Doing an AR was really challenging. However, the AR let my students and me have a deeper and better understanding into ourselves, learn from mistakes and regain the opportunity to organize ourselves according to various situations. I really made use of the cyclical feature of the Action Research, for I had the chance to turn back whenever I need to.

Different tools were used for triangulation. Selected short stories, rewards, TPR method, sorting hat, learning diaries, direct participatory observation and semi-structured interviews were used in the study. The research was conducted in the spring semester of an educational year. The extract below, taken from Nunan, would summarize well what I had tried to do during the research, I guess (as cited in Songsiri, 2007, p. 62)

> Classroom action research occurs when teachers reflect critically about the teaching situation, identify learning or instructional problems and institute methods to solve them. The basic steps include exploring and identifying a problem in the classroom, collecting data and reflecting on the problem, thinking about something that will possibly fix the problem, developing and instituting a plan of intervention, and reporting on the final results.

# CHAPTER 4

## 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Data Analysis of Story Diaries

After having completed the short story practices, I collected back the story diaries of the students and read what they had written in order to categorize their reflections, thoughts and feelings about the activity. Then writings in the diaries were coded and analysed descriptively. Except for one student, participants wrote their reflections in Turkish and they were translated into English by the researcher for this chapter. The participants were free to write in Turkish for I believe that one can express himself/herself better in native language and my fourth graders had not mastered in their second language.

The idea of preparing a story diary for my students came to my mind just in a few seconds while we were talking with parents at the meeting. One of the parents talked about her experience about a story diary which her older son's teacher had once used diaries for her students to write summaries of selected short stories. That sounded nice and as soon as I got home, I started to prepare them. I did not know that the diaries would function as a messenger among us. My students and I liked the way that we respond each other over them. They were so interactive that they took the form of an ongoing written dialogue between me and my fourth graders. Their informal expressions provided me hints about their beliefs, attitudes and feelings.

### 4.1.1. Fun and Enjoyment

"People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing" (Dale Carnegie).

Little (2014, Mind Tools) in his blog says that "one of the key aims is to improve learner engagement – notably with learning materials – as well as build knowledge and experience". In order to make my young learners engaged in English classes, I used some selected short stories. Because we all know that hearing one's story attracts our attention and children love stories. Here are some extracts from diaries:

*"I enjoyed the story. It was fun." (S1W2  12/03/2015)*

*"It's one of the funniest story I've read."  (S2W1  05/03/2015)*

*"Today, our English teacher read us a funny story."  (S12W1  05/03/2015)*

*"Reading stories and looking at pictures are fun. I like it." (S17W4  26/03/2015)*

*"I enjoy reading stories. I hope my friends liked, too." (S18W1  05/03/2015)*

Psychologists define enjoyment as an affective state of pleasure. According to researches (Remedios, Lieberman, & Benton, 2000), at least one dimension of assessment of enjoyment turns out to achievement. Therefore, lack of enjoyment means one of the reasons of failure to learn.

More recent analyses in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century in both England and the US suggest that an absence of enjoyment is one of the foundational reasons for young people failing to achieve their potential (Goetz, Nathan, Hall, Anne, Frenzel, & Pekrun, 2006; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). "Enjoyment could therefore be conceived as a precursor, a parallel experience, a result of learning or all three" (University of South Hampton).

The expressions of the students who explicitly experienced enjoyment and effective learning together in classes can be seen below:

*"I liked the story because there were a lot of animals. I couldn't understand the whole story at first but then I enjoyed when you acted it out." (S24W2  12/03/2015)*

*"Stories are enjoyable and I can easily comprehend." (S27W2  12/03/2015)*

The students were both enjoying and acquiring desirable behaviours. Whenever the sorting hat was put on someone head, this meant he/she was to reply. Wearing a pointed wizard's hat in an English class may seem weird, but it helped me to have the fourth graders unified. First, it provided an atmosphere of peace, because all class was sitting in a deep silence and watching me wandering in search of a candidate to reply. The second and maybe the most important contribution of the hat was the sense of joy it brought. Children were excited and this provided to keep their attention alive. Here are some extracts:

*"English class was fun because teacher put the sorting hat on our heads before we replied her questions." (S30W4 26/03/2015)*

*"Today was fun, because teacher put the sorting hat on my head and asked questions. I am very happy because I answered correctly." (S3W2 12/03/2015)*

**4.1.2. Vocabulary**

According to Piaget's theory of curiosity (1952), children are very capable to learn new words and learn quickly because they are curious and they like to imitate. This feature is to be taken into consideration and this was the reason behind that I

considered the stories as an advantageous classroom material to teach new vocabulary. This was the power of storytelling that you could link the new words to the pattern of the story masterfully and made them easily recalled. Vygotsky's social-cognitive theory (1978) assumed that learning is easier with effective cognitive processes, and new information can be stored in the memory for a long time. According to Vygotsky, adults are "scaffolding" children to arrange a task by transmitting the culture. He defined it as "cooperative or collaborative dialogue", that the child tries to understand the actions or instructions provided by an adult and then internalizes the information. I used the "reciprocal teaching" application of Palincsar (1982) to improve my students' abilities to learn from text in collaboration and practising literal skills. They had written about new words such as:

*"We've learned new words. This is good." (S1W4  26/03/2015)*
*"I learned some words that I haven't learned so far." (S6W7  16/04/2015)*
*"This activity helped me learn lots of words and phrases." (S27W5  02/04/2015)*
*"I've learned new words such as wander, reply, pack, think, extinct." (S12W7 16/04/2015)*

The context of a new word in the story was often enough to guess the meaning. Besides, Picture Dictionary was very helpful because visuals are very important for they can help the brain anchor and place the word. One of the participants had written:

*"Dear Diary,*

*We reviewed the first story this week. It was a nice story. Picture dictionary was very useful. I liked the pictures and the activity." (S32W7  16/04/2015)*

Reading in the target language helps children expand their language skills rapidly because according to several learning theories, the child must be exposed to the language for acquisition. According to Dr Sulzberger from Victoria University, New Zealand, "our ability to learn new words is directly related to how often we have been exposed to the particular combinations of the sounds which make up the words" (2014, language learning). Learners cannot acquire the target language unless they are exposed to it, in other words; the more exposure they receive, the faster they learn. This would be possible by supplying input through extensive reading designed with selected short stories tailored for the child's grade as recommended by Krashen (1989). These studies

were reviewed by Elley (1991) and proved that reading serves second language acquisition. You can see in following lines what they thought:

*"I've learned how to spell baby tooth." (S2W3  19/03/2015)*

*"I've learned that a word may have more than one meaning, for example; second. It means two and time." (S9W3  09/04/2015)*

*"I think 'Lost & Found' is the best story, because we've learned a lot of new words. My favorite word is 'giggle', because it makes me laugh. " (S13W3  19/03/2015)*

*"I've learned which animal lives where and what they do. For example, a rabbit lives in a burrow and it can jump. A frog lives in a pond and it can leap about." (S35W1 05/03/2015)*

*"I've learned a lot of words and I think I can use them while talking with Mom to practice my English." (S15W6  09/04/2015)*

### 4.1.3. Real Life

Children's curiosity is a reserve that we should take into consideration to teach them strategic thinking skills, so that they can apply them in the real world. Many educational programmes are designed to instruct children how intelligence is used to solve real-world problems. The question was always in my mind: How would I ground the content I teach in real-life experiences? I needed to teach them to transfer knowledge in real situations. From Thorndike's connectionism (1932) to recent researches, it has been proved that transfer does not happen unless we make connections with reality. See what reflections my fourth graders made:

*"We've learned clothes in Lost & Found. I think, we can remember easily these words in everyday life." (S7W5  02/04/2015)*

*"We've learned to talk about the weather. It is just the same as the previous unit in our course book; What's the Weather Like Today?" (S9W7  16/04/2015)*

*"I liked the story, because Donna likes swimming like I do. I've learned some new words about sea and I will teach my brother." (S21W4  26703/2015)*

*"I've learned how to pack a suitcase for the beach. I need to be careful about sunglasses!" (S22W5 02/04/2015)*

*"We've been competing in an egg contest for a few weeks. Today's story was about a dinosaur egg. That's a nice coincidence!" (S10W6 09/04/2015)*

*"I can use these new words in my daily life and I like it." (S2W4 26/03/2015)*

Some of the extracts were about the messages hidden in the short stories. In fact, what a child gets from a text differs to the child's perception of life and alters to his/her intellectual skills. Because there is a significant distinction between learning and application of it in the real world, I believe. Besides, it falls to our share to instruct children how to use similar elements in different contexts. Stories provide important opportunities for children to learn information about the real world that cannot be experienced directly (Ganea, Pickard & DeLoache, 2008). Here are some examples on the messages of the stories:

*"Stories are improving. They include messages from real life. They remind us importance of friendship and that there's a time for everything." (S2W6 07/04/2015)*

*"The first story was contributing, because it told us what friendship meant." (S30W6 09/04/2015)*

*"I think, we all need to learn a lot from the stories to be a good person in future." (S31W7 16/04/2015)*

*"The story advices us not to be prejudice in life." (S32W1 05/03/2015)*

### 4.1.4. Learning New Things

Children are naturally curious and curiosity is the base for learning. Learning new things excites children and this excitement never ends. Senge (1990) defined learning as a "recreation of oneself" and argued that an individual alters his perception towards the world and rearranges his relations through learning. Moreover, newly learned things are meaningful as long as they can offer the child possibilities to expand his previous knowledge and power to explain something (Cohen, McLauglhlin ve Talbert, 1993). As my students are aged between nine and ten years old, they had, of course, desire to learn new things:

*"We are learning new things and this is enjoyful."* *(S1W7  16/04/2015)*

*"We are very lucky because we are learning new things everyday."*  *(S3W6 09/04/2015)*

*"We are both learning and doing activities happily. This is nice."* *(S20W4  26/03/2015)*

*"New things we've learned are educative, I think."* *(S17W7 16/04/2015)*

*"I've learned new phrases such as 'I've found' and 'I think'."* *(S21W3  19/03/2015)*

Some of the fourth graders were curious about other cultures and nations. I could obviously realize how excited they were while sharing their past experiences with foreigners. Some preferred to talk about cousins living abroad. One of the short stories was purposefully chosen in order to make them comprehend the cross-cultural differences. Since English is considered to be a global language, I have to make them realize that a great majority of people are learning English as a second language. However, it is my task to instruct them about the cultural components of the target language. These sentences are from their point of views:

*"I liked learning something about children from other countries. We were informed about baby / adult teeth and what other children do when they lose a tooth."* *(S14W4 26/03/2015)*

*"I've learned what other children do about a lost baby tooth."* *(S27W7  16/04/2015)*

**4.1.5. Interaction with Teacher / Diary**

A diary does not have to be neat and tidy or interesting for other people. I believe in my students' sincerity because every author has an audience. This was the way that some tried to get in touch with me, I guess. I would like to remind you that there were thirty-eight students in my English class, sitting in rows and trying to communicate with me. A forty minutes session was not enough to touch each of them. Most of their expressions were directly addressed to me, indicating their appreciation. To be honest, I felt happy. Young learners, especially girls, used to compliment a lot. I often caught tens of eyes carefully examining my hair, outfit, even my make-up in class. I got used to hear such compliments verbally about my physical and moral beauty but this was totally different. This made me think that I've achieved to create a safe, anxiety-free class environment, which reminded me Krashen's (1982) "affective filter". Otherwise it would not be easy for them to write what they felt or thought. They would

not feel free to write if they had been criticized or corrected by the teacher. They would not have the sense of belonging to the community. Here are some sentences written in sincerity:

*"I thank to my teacher that she had prepared a beautiful diary for me."  (S1W1 05/03/2015)*

*"I like English classes, because you do different and funny things, teacher. I like learning and I listen to you very carefully in order not to miss anything. I love you, my teacher!"  (S17W8  30/04/2015)*

*"I would like to thank you, my teacher. Because you try hard and prepare such activities for us. This makes us learn more."  (S19W8  30/04/2015)*

*"You are so smart and good-hearted. We are so lucky that we have such a good teacher like you. Thanks for teaching us English."  (S20W8  30/04/2015)*

*"Thank you, teacher. I know better than before."  (S26W6  09/04/2015)*

*"Luckily, there you are and you teach us English well, my teacher."  (S34W8 30/04/2015)*

*"My Dear Teacher,*

*Today was fun. I wish I had answered all the questions correctly. Activities were educative. I hope we never stop learning English. We can strengthen our knowledge with these activities and they may help us for the exam. I am so happy. Thanks a lot. See you next Thursday with a new story."  (S31W2  12/03/2015)*

One of my students called attention to his desire to be realized. This was a complaint of a ten year old boy. I think, I need to be more careful about their feelings since any behaviour done unintentionally, might have been perceived far different.

*"I raised my hand to answer, but you did not see me."  (S8W2  12/03/2015)*

Some of the expressions were directly addressed to the diary, itself. They were sharing their in-class experiences with their diaries as if it was a close friend. Besides, this was a repetition of the class because they remembered again what they had been exposed to during the activities while writing to the friend. This share might have been

interesting and enjoyable. This was, again, a self-evaluation, a self-dialogue since it offered important insights into individual learning and motivation. This motivation may be defined as intrinsically (Deci & Ryan, 1985) as the writing activity is done for inherent satisfactions, for a sense of relief, to liberate feelings towards a confidant. Here are some extracts:

*"Dear Diary,*

*Our English teacher made a surprise today. It was you. I was very excited. I couldn't wait reading your stories. I think, we'll be good friends."* *(S20W1  05/0372015)*

*"Dear Diary,*

*We reviewed the first story this week. It was a nice story. Picture dictionary was very useful. I liked the pictures and the activity."* *(S32W7  16/04/2015)*

*"Dear Diary,*

*Suddenly, the teacher put the sorting hat on my head. I was excited, but I could answer the question correctly. I got the reward, a lovely key hanger!"* *(S27W5  02/04/2015)*

Young learners are motivated through rewards. Extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2001a) is one of the most used theories in language learning. Outside influences such as teacher praise, a good grade or some other type of reinforcement that a teacher might offer extrinsically motivate students. As it is seen below, some of my fourth graders were very much concerned about the rewards I offered during the activities:

*"I want to be the Prince of the day. I am very excited. Please, teacher, let me reply and win the mask!"* *(S13W2  12/0372015)*

*"I don't bother if I didn't get a reward but I liked the Princess Mask TOO MUCH!!!"* *(S15W2  12/03/2015)*

*"Thanks for the reward, teacher. I'm very happy. I hope everyone gets a reward."* *(S5W4  26/03/2015)*

Below, an example can be seen that diaries took the form of an ongoing written dialogue between me and my fourth graders. Student 6 gives an affirmative answer as if I had asked a close-ended question:

*"Yes, repetition helped me understand better, teacher."* *(S6W2  12/03/2015)*

### 4.1.6. Rewards

I have observed that a sense of competition always existed among my fourth graders. In order to have my students involved in the learning process fully, I needed to increase their engagement in English classes. One of the ways to reach my goal seemed to boost them to achieve since my experiences with young learners showed me that they responded well to rewards from teacher. Wilson (2006) suggests "Rewards can come in the form of verbal rewards (telling someone "good job!"), physical rewards (a pat on the back), or tangible rewards (giving someone money, food or a medallion)". So, I decided to reward my students in order to see whether I could use rewards as an interest promoting instrument. Obviously, it worked well. See what they thought about rewards:

*"I wondered what the teacher brought as a surprise. She said she would reward us." (S13W2  12/03/2015)*

*"I like reading stories in English class. The teacher rewards us when we reply correctly." (S35W6  09/04/2015)*

*"English teacher gave us gifts." (S8W1  05/03/2015)*

Wilkins (1972) claims that "Reinforcement, to be effective, should follow the response as quickly as possible. I informed them that the student who gave the right answer would be rewarded. They were very excited when they heard the word "REWARD":

*"Hooray! I've been chosen as the princess and I got the mask!"  (S4W2  12/03/2015)*

*"I answered three questions correctly and I won the prize."  (S9W2  12/03/2015)*

*"This is the happiest day in my life. I got the reward in today's English class!"  (S23W7 16/04/2015)*

*"My teacher gives us surprises and chooses the Prince and the Princess."  (S9W1 05/03/2015)*

Some of them were really competitive and ambitious about the rewards. This made me think that I needed to be careful about rewarding. Because rewarding may be tricky and I did not want to teach learners who were driven by them. Some minds were busy with rewards, indeed:

*"Blimey! Not this time, again. I always raise my hand to reply. All got rewards except from me!!! I hope I got the next time."* (S13W4  26/03/2015)

*"I will get a reward the next time!"* (S1W1  05/03/2015)

*"I got the reward this time!"* (S1W4 26/03/2015)

Almost all of them were interested in tangible rewards. Since they were in concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1954), young learners prefer tactile objects and materials. So I chose bright coloured pens, key hangers, masks, notebooks, painting kits, balls, badges and stickers. Only one of them, Student 11 seemed to appreciate verbal rewards:

*"Today, my English teacher patted on my head and said 'well done' because I'm doing better."* (S11W2  12/03/2015)

### 4.1.7. Attitudes towards English Classes

We need to create a secure atmosphere for young learners first. It is really hard for a ten year-old child to communicate in a foreign language who has not progressed his/her own native language yet. That's why we need to show some obvious reason for using English. We need to help them form positive perceptions of communicating with foreign languages. They are in need of a positive experience while learning a second language. Learning is a long process, not a race. During this process, some children will do better than the others. As a teacher, I knew that I needed to boost their interest with varied activities. The extracts below were examples of how my in-class applications were corresponded on their side:

*"I liked the activity because English is my favorite subject."* (S3W3  19/03/2015)

*"My English is improving. Activities are contributing to my knowledge."* (S4W6 09/04/2015)

*"I liked the stories in English class, because our reading skills are improving."* (S31W3  19/03/2015)

*"Stories made me feel OK in English classes, because I'm learning new things."* (S12W5  26/03/2015)

*"I like reading stories, they ease learning and motivate me to learn more."* *(S34W5 02/04/2015)*

*"I like reading because it is easier than writing."* *(S36W2 12/03/2015)*

Some of them were not satisfied:

*"Teacher should have asked more questions about the story."* *(S5W2 12/03/2015)*

*"I am waiting for the teacher to put the sorting hat on my head, but she does not."* *(S33W4 26/03/2015)*

One of them gave me advice sincerely with a sense of innocence:

*"I like English and I love my teacher. I think, we should have much more in-class activities at school."* *(S19W2 12/03/2015)*

Some of the students were so alert that they could easily discover what was going on in class. Integrating extensive in-class activities with the curriculum is both a duty for teachers and an education policy. Because for an effective and long-term learning, children need to make connections between what is being taught and what has been taught. Here are some examples:

*"I've discovered that the story we read and the things we learned happen at the same time. We learned Simple Present Tense, and this week we found out the verbs in Simple Present Tense in the story. Repetitive drills help me improve my English."* *(S21W2 12/03/2015)*

*"What we've learned in stories are just the same in our English course book."* *(S7W7 16/04/2015)*

Building rapport is important when you teach a young learner and it should be developed for the benefit of the child through a positive interaction, not threatening. Their expressions were very worthwhile, so I decided to reflect the information back to the child for accuracy. By doing so, I would be helpful to teach them how to create learning strategies. These extracts are their own reflections about their English:

*"Today, the teacher wanted me to read the story loudly in class. I was nervous. My pronunciation in English needs improvement!"* *(S25W3 19/03/2015)*

*"English is hard. I don't understand anything."* (S23W1 05/03/2015)

*"English is not that much hard. I think, I can overcome."* (S23W5 02/04/2015)

My motto, as an instructor, is that my students will enjoy if I, myself, enjoy the classes. A non-stop teacher talking more than a few minutes will build a barrier between us. It is unfair to expect young learners sit still in silence, I believe. A little touch of fun creates harmony:

*"English class is full of surprises today."* (S5W1 05/03/2015)

*"The class was different today. Teacher was holding a hat and she put it on our heads before we answer her questions."* (S33W3 19/03/2015)

The most astonishing aspect of this practice was that two students seemed not to understand what we were doing with the story diaries. As stated before, I used to collect back all diaries after each session to respond and deliver to students the next session. I wrote back and asked Student 28 and Student 36 to write their reflections about the activities. I do not know, but for some reasons, they kept on using the diaries as an ordinary one rather than a learning log. They were continually writing about their daily routine. See what they had written:

*"I got up early and had breakfast. Then I checked my backpack and came to school. We have English today. I am waiting for teacher's surprise."* (S36W4 26/03/2015)

*"I got up and got dressed. I went to school. We had activities in English class. Teacher rewarded students but I couldn't get one."* (S28W2 12/0372015)

### 4.1.8. Interest

Interest, one of the key words of this study, is often used in terms of engagement and motivation in the literature. For this reason, I tried to consider the issue carefully and approached meticulously while analysing the expressions of my students. Unfortunately, little research has been done for interest and engagement whereas a great amount can be found about motivation. According to Hidi (1990), personal interest influences motivation in two ways. First, it determines selection and persistence of information by the student. Second, it influences the goals the student sets. In other words, the child would set a goal if he /she values the input (Elliot & Dweck, 1988) and

would carry it on for a long time (Csickszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993). My fourth graders were interested, indeed:

*"Reading stories increases my desire to learn. Learning English is good." (S8W6 09/04/2015)*

*"Activities enhance my interest in English." (S5W5  02/04/2015)*

*"English class was fun. I'm looking forward to next Thursday." (S29W2  12/03/2015)*

*"I liked reading aloud all together in English class." (S30W3  19/03/2015)*

*"Teacher asked questions and friends replied. Although I knew the answers, I did not reply. Friends may laugh if I can't say the right words. The lesson was interesting, though." (S16W5  02/04/2015)*

In order to persist their interest, fiction is one of the best ways; because children still live in a world of fantasy. Activities designed for using imagination lead them think about the world of possibilities and stories can help in this sense. Here are some extracts about stories:

*"The story is interesting. I wish I had found a dinosaur egg in our city!" (S12W5 02/04/2015)*

*"My favorite was the dinosaur story because it was interesting." (S35W7 16/04/2015)*

*"A dinosaur egg was a very interesting story. It made me think what if I had found it." (S33W4  26/03/2015)*

A great amount of my students were motivated by the rewards, as stated before. Here is an example, showing how extrinsic motivators go hand in hand with young learners. Student 13 is specifying both his preference and opinion:

*"I like reading stories in English classes, because there are rewards and story diaries." (S13W3  19/03/2015)*

Changing their attitude to something about schooling is not that much easy when we deal with young learners. Gardner & Lambert (1972) developed an attitude scale and defined attitude as a response to a specific object or concept based on the individual's beliefs and ideas.  Because, in the means of cognitive development, their previous

beliefs need to be shifted for a change in attitude. They may produce resistance to change. For this reason, we need to consider their values and be patient. You can see how attitude changed:

*"Activities enhance my interest and rewards motivate me. I would never have thought that I would like English classes. To be honest, I didn't use to care about English." (S18W8 30/04/2015)*

Teaching young learners requires acting skills because they have loads of energy and we should take the advantage of it. Using body language, altering the tone of voice, teaching songs or chants, playing games that involve movement will boost their interest. Thus, effective learning will occur since meaningful contexts have been presented within physical activity. They really enjoy movement:

*"Enacting these stories in class sounds interesting. I think, it will be useful." (S10W5 02/04/2015)*

*"My English teacher is reading stories and she is acting in class. This makes me engaged. I like English classes more than before." (S14W2 12/03/2015)*

*"English classes are more interesting. Teacher speaks English and we do what she says, it's funny!" (S15W3 19/03/2015)*

**4.2. Reflection on Short Stories**

**4.2.1. The First Short Story: Elephant and his Friends**

The first story was "Elephant and His Friends". At the beginning, the new vocabulary was given via pictures, images and body language. They were as parts of a game, though. The movements revitalized the class and the atmosphere seemed to be quite amusing. Then I started to read the story slowly in order to be certain about that all of the students could hear how I pronounced the words. We examined the whole story paragraph by paragraph. Students learned names, habitats, acts and characteristics of many animals as the short story included a lot of animals living in the forest. Instead of clarifying every word, I let them comprehend the clauses holistically. The meaning in the story was tried to be given within phrases and chunks. Comprehension questions were often addressed to students in order to be sure about whether they had understood or not.

There were a few familiar students raising their hands and seemed to be eager to respond. At that moment, I decided to connect another instrument in order to see whether a change in their attitudes would be seen or not. I announced that I would reward the ones who gave the right answers to the questions, clarifying that I would choose a prince and a princess of the day out of them. Towards the end of the class, a boy and a girl were chosen and rewarded with richly ornamented masks. Some other pupils were also rewarded with brightly decorated pencils. What is surprising for me was that most of the children seemed more concerned as soon as I announced the rewards. From that moment, I declared that different rewards would be presented in next sessions but I, intentionally, did not mention what I would bring into the class as a reward. That was the second time when children were boosted by the word 'reward'. Just then, I wanted all my students to write in their story diaries whatever they wanted concerning the short story we had read during the session. When they finished writing I told them that the session was over and I collected the diaries back. I let them out saying that we would meet the next Thursday with new surprises.

I get started reading the diaries as soon as I reached home, because I was curious about what they had written. Students had written mostly the same things such as; they had enjoyed doing the practice, surprises were appealing, they had fun while doing varied activities in English classes and so on. Some of the students were more ambitious about the rewards, affirming that they would earn the coming rewards in the next sessions.

I wrote back in all diaries because I wanted all my students knew what they had written were precious for me. Making them convinced that I took any effort into account was very important for me. To me, they needed to know that we were all participating the whole learning process side by side. Otherwise, the class that I applied different practices would be the same as a traditional English class. Any little change observed in their attitudes to English classes would be of great significance on my side.

### 4.2.2. The Second Short Story: Lost & Found

As soon as I entered into the class I noticed that my fourth graders were eager about the activities. The story diaries worked well, because pupils waited wondering what I might have written in when I started to deliver their diaries before every class on Thursdays. Thank to those diaries because my fourth graders would read what I had

written as soon as they opened the story diaries and commented on them with peers. That was a time I believed I had strengthened the rapport with most of my students. The diary functioned as cement among us.

The second story was "Lost & Found". Before starting the short story, I showed a bag and told them that the rewards were in it. They could not guess what the rewards might be. With growing excitement and curiosity, we started to read the second story. I followed the same steps in reading and examining the story like I had done with the first one. The main difference was that I did not let them to raise fingers to respond, contrarily, I would choose the student to answer. While choosing the answerer, I used the "Sorting Hat". I was walking around in class carrying the hat and laying down the hat on top of a student's head all of a sudden. Children could not wait trying on that bright red hat with shining stars on. It was originally the pointed wizard's hat of Godric Gryffindor and used in Harry Potter series, a blockbuster film in 2000s, and its function was to determine which of the four houses each new student would enter. Newcomers would place it on their heads one by one and the Sorting Hat would loudly proclaim the suitable houses for the students.

The students seemed excited while I was walking around and whispering "Who is the next?". They could not wait in silence and they were raising their hands to respond although I had warned them not to raise their hands. What is surprising for me was that one of the reserved students was very eager to respond one of my questions. So I decided to give a chance and put the hat on his head. Surprisingly, he answered the question correctly and I rewarded him with an illustrated English notebook. His friends applauded him loudly and he was very happy to speak in English class. He had not said a word until then. He would usually sit in silence, did not remember to bring his course materials and did not participate in activities. His class teacher had once told me that the student preferred to lean on his desk doing nothing. I was also happy to hear him but I was not sure whether the rewards or the sorting hat encouraged him to talk. It was a triumph both for him and for me, though.

My students liked this story more than the first one. According to them, it was funny and I think they had an opportunity to identify themselves with the characters in the story. Girls performed Donna's (the female character in the story) and boys performed John's (the male character in the story) parts easily and joyfully. I instructed

pupils to underline the verbs for third person singular in the simple present tense as a grammatical exercise. It was not difficult for most of them because I had been teaching them the subject for a month. They were more careful about stress and punctuation. Their intonations were more natural and they managed to be moderate while reading. The students who did not want to read a passage earlier, were then seemed to be eager.

Since the vocabulary of this story is parallel with the 8th unit as "My Clothes" in our curriculum, children liked it. Their levels of perception and comprehension were higher than the first story. It made easier that I could ask more detailed questions. The story, again, coincided with the phrase, "What is the weather like in summer?" from the 8th unit in their course books. One of the girls in the class asked me, "Is not this a floppy hat, teacher?" indicating an image from the course book. "Floppy hat" was the accessory that Donna was wearing in the short story. Those coincidences contributed them to strengthen and maintain their new information, I guess.

I had witnessed many fingers raised in the classroom. One of the silent pupils in the class wanted to respond three questions and, surprisingly, he was the only one who remembered the word "laundry basket". I had thought that he did not care what was happening in class. Just before the session was over, I reminded students to write in their diaries. We said goodbye. It was a little weird, but I, also, was looking forward to be in class the next Thursday like my fourth graders.

### 4.2.3. The Third Short Story: A Dinosaur Egg

I did not bring rewards for the students that time when we started studying the third short story, because I was not sure whether they were motivated by the rewards or the activities stimulated them. That was a challenge for me but I wanted to test. Some of the students met me at the door of the class asking what sort of gifts I had brought for them. Then I told the class that I forgot the rewards in the trunk as I was in a hurry that morning. Some of them grumbled with disappointment.

Then we started reading the story. It was a very short story about a kid who found a dinosaur egg and took it to the museum. However, it was fun. Children liked the story because some patterns in the story were familiar for them. For about a month, we had been carrying on an event. The students were carrying raw eggs and they were responsible for keeping the eggs safe. The student whose egg was broken would be

eliminated and the winner who kept his/her egg unbroken would be rewarded with a genuine foot, basket or volley ball. There was a hard competition in the class because all wanted to be the winner. Some children had painted their eggs and clothed them like dolls. Moreover, most of the children were carrying eggs in small boxes covered with cotton and they took them in their pockets wherever they went because some naughty ones were trying to crack the eggs.

New vocabulary in the story was easily acquired that time. Students could match "dinosaur" and "extinct" very quickly, for instance. They seemed more interested in the word "dinosaur". Moreover, some pupils wrote sample sentences about dinosaur species:

1. A Brontosaurus eats plants.

2. A Carnotaurus eats meat.

3. An Oviraptor can fly.

I wanted to know what they would have done if they were Riley. Riley was the kid in the story. Almost all of them wanted to respond because all had something to say about eggs!

There was still something that disturbed me during the course. A few students were still insisting on making translations and using mother tongue. Although I knew they all comprehended the stories, that did not make a sense. I wondered what the reason was beyond this behaviour. I decided to question this issue later. At the end of the session, I had reminded them to write in their diaries before I collected back, as usual. What is pleasing in that week was the written examination results. There were nine students who got A's, and seventeen students who got B's out of thirty-eight children. Even academically unsuccessful students had got higher grades. Activities we had done during the practices let my students to develop a different understanding towards English classes, I guess. Or at least, activities helped my fourth graders discover how to approach English as a subject in school life.

## 4.2.4. The Fourth Short Story: Maxwell Looses a Tooth

The story was about a boy who had lost his tooth and shared his experience with his class mates. The main reason to choose that story was because of its cross-cultural feature since the students in the story were sharing their cultural beliefs about a lost

tooth. There was a diversity in class meaning that children came from different cultures and countries such as Austria, Mexico and Japan. The teacher in the story let her children share their traditional baggage with each other upon a lost tooth. That teacher impelled me that I should teach my fourth graders that there were a lot of children who speak English in the world although they were not English. I needed to expose that English was a global language, knowing English would be an advantage for them to communicate with other children all around the world. We had studied countries and nationalities in the first unit of our course book and the exercises were mostly related to grammatical patterns such as where a person was from or what the person's nationality was. However, the story was telling children from different nationalities were studying in the same class and speaking English as a common foreign language.

My students liked the story and they had something to talk upon things through life because it was not a long time they had lost their teeth. They were nine or ten and they had experienced loosing a tooth. They knew what it meant and they had heard some legends upon a lost tooth. They enjoyed sharing their experiences. A brilliant student tried to convey his story within a few sentences, totally in English, without my assistance. After studying the short story, I asked comprehension questions and the students responded. Rewards such as painting kits, stickers and key hangers were given. Students wrote in their story diaries and the session is completed.

**4.3. Data Analysis of the Observations**

One of the sources for data gathering in this study was, the observations done by the researcher, being the instructor of the sampling group simultaneously. They were direct participatory observations, as participatory action research occurs when a researcher is a member of the community being studied (McNicoll, 1999). However, data analysis of the observations was descriptive since I was guided by the general question "What was going on there?", and every attempt was made to observe as much as possible (2015, Oxford).

Additionally, field notes taken by the researcher were used for data analysing for in search of apprehending the true perspectives of the subject being studied. There are no rules as to how field notes should be gathered, but it is important that the researcher finds a style which fits with the needs of the research. Sanjek (1990) and Emerson et al (1995) discussed on rough notes and Sanjek defined these as "scratch notes" whereas

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Emerson et al called them "jottings". Since I was both the instructor and the researcher, writing extended notes at the time of observations was not possible for me. I tried to compose what I had noted as soon as possible, keeping in mind that they were useful to the extent that they could be remembered.

My analytic field notes included my impressions about my observations. It was a continual and long process since the field research analysis went hand in hand with my observations. I dealt with the iterative process of open and focused coding in the patterns across the notes. This was crucial, for I needed to reflect upon what I had written in my teacher journal.

As mentioned before, the inductive analysing process of this research is referred to as grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I was engaged in "a systematic process whereby the researcher lets the data guide him/her rather than guiding the data by preset hypotheses" (Blackstone, 2012). As I was arranging my notes, I periodically tried to make reflections in order to categorize the most common cases during the observations. I tried to describe both verbal and non-verbal expressions, attitudes and conversations between peers.

Content analysis requires that all data is converted into codes, descriptive information and categories. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2006), there are two ways this might be done. I preferred the second way, that is; "the researcher becomes very familiar with the descriptive information collected and allows the categories to emerge as the analysis continues" (p. 474).

**4.3.1. Anxiety**

I had informed my students about the research and they knew that they would be the subjects of the study. However, I could still observe the sense of tension in class although we had spent five months with my fourth graders as seen below from my field notes:

*Still some of them seemed anxious during the sessions. I was not certain whether this was because they did not feel secure or they were worried about being made fun of by peers. I needed to clarify the issue. Maybe they did not comprehend what they would do during the sessions. What if they thought they would be assessed through this project? (05/03/2015)*

Being a good observer is not enough. I needed to reflect back on what I observed to make meaningful interpretations. Here is an example:

*I asked why they seemed to be stressed the previous class. I wanted them to talk about their opinions and feelings about the practice. One of the brilliant students, a hardworking girl, raised her hand and told that she did not feel worried about the practice but some of her friends were worried about my speaking English. For your information, I was determined not to use mother tongue, Turkish, during the sessions. (06/03/2015)*

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) argue that students may feel anxious when they are asked to speak in second language although they feel competent in native language. I questioned why some of them did not participate:

*I knew that some of them were worried because they did not have good memories about English classes. Because when I wanted to learn why he did not participate in the activities, one of the reserved students told me that he had unpleasant experiences with peers. He told me that some of his classmates used to ridicule him if he could not pronounce the words correctly. Another boy told me that he could not remember the words and that's why he did not raise his hand to speak. Some told me that they could not understand while I was talking in English, adding that I should have talked more slowly because it was hard for them to follow my speech. I should decelerate my speech pace! And more importantly, I needed to do something to increase their self-efficacy!!!(12/03/2015)*

According to MacIntyre (1998) language learning anxiety is "the worry and negative emotional reaction arouse when learning or using a second language". Since anxiety is a psychological state, it might threaten the child's self-concept. One of my students explained his concern:

*Student X had never participated in the activities. I could not encourage him for a talk. He kept on saying that he did not want to talk in front of people, adding that he did not want to be mocked. (02/04/2015)*

### 4.3.2. Belonging

McMillan and Chavis (1986) argued the sense of psychological community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another… and … commitment to be together" (p. 9). Here are two examples that I had doubt about their sense of belonging:

*I think they behave as rivals!? Competing is good, it energizes kids, but this is something different that does not make sense. Could there be a strife for rewards? They should have learned that they were the members of a team. We are here to learn through interaction and collaboration. Do rewards minimize the importance of activities? (19/03/2015)*

*Student Y (a boy) snitched that a group of girls were cheating to get the rewards. They were challenging boys! Could this be true? In fact, girls were better in accomplishing the activities. (26/03/2015)*

In order to reach our goals we need to focus on learning. According to Ellis, (1985) "The successful language learning depends as much on the type of interaction that takes place in the classroom as on the method used". I, sometimes, could feel the lack of a sense of unity within the classroom, and I noticed that this was a great barrier for our learning community. I think, the core problem was that students were unwilling or unable to work well with peers, as seen in my notes:

*Some students do not like learning with others. But what if they fall behind the peers who have mastered? Moreover, I am to cover the course content within a certain time. How am I going to arrange additional time and support for low achieving students? I think, preparing worksheets with extra drills will be a good idea for those students. I need the collaboration of parents. (19/03/2015)*

### 4.3.3. Positive Feedback

Wentzel argued that "... teachers who are well liked by students… provide positive encouragement and feedback" (Wentzel, 2003). The lack of positive feedback is a real problem because it puts a barrier in front of students' learning. Think about a teacher who only focuses on correcting errors instead of giving positive feedback to his/her students about what they are doing well. This type of instructors would always

be inhibiting students' progress in language learning. See what I've written in my journal:

*In most of my teaching carrier, I have felt that the students thought of English as a problematic issue beyond their limits. I could see the same look in my fourth graders eyes at the beginning of the project. They seem more confident now. They do not hesitate to raise hands for answering. Praising the whole class sincerely at the beginning of every session was a good idea. I'll keep on doing this. They seem more eager to learn when I talked about what they had done well the previous class or what they had written in their diaries. (26/03/2015)*

Developing technologies force the coming generations to be more competent in every field in order to cope with the world. According to Kan & Kohnert (2005), "young children learning L2 are one of the fastest growing segments of the global population". As English is the global language for communication, we need to expose our children to the language. It should be experienced naturally and positively. Here are a few sentences on this concern from my notes:

*Today, I told my own journey in language learning. I was at their age when I started learning English. They seemed engaged. Having the same experiences, I think, made them have interest. I told them that they were not the racers in the learning process adding that this was a reciprocal and natural procedure. I was there in the class to make things easier for them, not to test them or push them hard. I told them that being able to speak English was not an extraordinary thing, everyone could do it if s/he wanted. There was no need to worry about it. They were doing well and would achieve one day like I did. (02.04.2015)*

Kondo & Gardner (2004), argued that students find it worthwhile to receive written commentary from the teacher, as they do not have confidence in their products. Additionally, Ferris (2007), in her study, briefly reviewed research that demonstrates that students, contrary to popular myth, are far more likely to read, consider, and attempt to apply teacher suggestions than to ignore them (p. 173). I have noted how my fourth graders feel about my feedback:

*They do consider what I have written back in their diaries. They look curious about my response and they are in a hurry to check out as soon as I deliver them the diaries at the*

*beginning of the sessions. This makes me happy when I see them smiling and sharing with peers what I had written. Some of the interviewees had told me that they had felt valued when they saw my feedback in their diaries, because this meant "consideration" for them by the teacher. (09.04.2015)*

Ferris (2003) pointed out that students will be disappointed, anxious, or even resentful if teachers withhold giving feedback. She continued,

> ...teachers need to remember that written commentary, rather than being a tedious burden, is a critical instructional opportunity for both teacher and student. Reading a student paper and giving feedback that meets the student's needs allows the instructor to make a personal investment in each student's progress and to provide or reinforce instruction given in class. Bearing this in mind, the instructor needs to see the process of reading the paper, identifying and selecting key feedback points, and constructing comments in ways that communicate clearly and helpfully to the student as a dynamic, creative, cognitively demanding process (p. 123).

Moreover, Ferris expresses that "teachers must struggle to find the correct balance between intervention (helpful) and appropriation (harmful)". There should be "a balance between encouragement and constructive criticism and the need to consider feedback as an ongoing conversation between a teacher and each individual student" (2007, p. 168). I would wholeheartedly agree:

*I remember my teachers who had been using red coloured pens to correct our errors. Our papers seemed as if they were bleeding. How irritating, how scary those papers were for us. Not a word of comment on what we had done well, just a long red line and a question mark near it. What should we to get from it? That's why I never use a red coloured pen while writing on my students' papers. Now, I choose pink for girls and purple for boys. They like the colours. I am drawing flowers for "a good job "and little hearts for "an excellent effort". I prefer to write positive softeners such as "what about writing ... instead of ...?" It takes time but I enjoy reading they are addressing to me through the diaries. (26.03.2015)*

Praising our learners with positive comments through a tactile contact may function as well as a word of praise for motivating them effectively, avoiding frustration. Touching is one of the most powerful forms of non-verbal communication. Gueguen and Fischer-Lokou (2003) show how it influences the other person. A pat is generally comforting when on the head, encouraging on the shoulder, and

congratulatory on the back. It is a sign of "I care for you". It is usually associated with the recognition of an accomplishment, or reaching success in a certain area of life (Angie Neik, Appreciative Gesture across Cultures). Chanelle (2014) defined the pat as an "invisible applause". Erev, Haruvy & Perry (n.d.) argued that "informal rewards, also known as pats on the back, are shown to be extremely effective rewards in some settings" (The Pat on the Back Paradox). Here, an example can be seen:

*I was not certain at the beginning whether it was a good idea to touch them or not because my teaching experience with teenagers more than twenty years had told me that I should not approach them too closer. However, as the weeks passed by, I have realized that my fourth graders prefer a closer contact. They would like to walk with me arm-in arm in the school yard or especially the girls would give a morning kiss when we met in the aisles. They feel happy when I pat on their heads or backs. Boys prefer "giving a five" (clicking hands or bumping fists). They like movement and I like it. They keep me energized! (09.04.2015)*

### 4.4. Data Analysis of the Semi-Structured Interviews

The third data collection method in the research was a semi-structured interview. Ten students were chosen for semi-structured interviews and five questions were addressed to them. The interviewees were chosen according to their academic achievements, three who had mastered well, four who were average and three who needed extra support. The interviewees were invited into a classroom at school and questions were addressed one by one. The interviews were made in Turkish and the instructor translated them into English. All interviews were recorded to be transcribed later. Transcriptions were categorized in six groups and attached as Word documents to 12th version of MaxQDA social science data analysis program. The reason for grouping transcriptions in six different document was to make a deeper analysis, because a hundred and fifty-four segments were coded through thirty-four codes and sub codes in total. First, all interviews were coded together in order to have a general evaluation, in order to see the big picture of the community that was being studied. By doing so, nineteen codes emerged in document "maxqda metin" (See Table 4.3). From now on, the document will be called as Group 6.

Table 4.1.

Code Matrix for Semi-Structured Interviews.

| Code System | question 1 | question 2 | question 3 | question 4 | reason for story | maxqda metin | SUM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| difficulty | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| get help | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| increase in interest | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| homework | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| acting | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| sorting hat | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| activities | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| diaries | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| stories | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| games | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| reward | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| interaction with teacher | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| other preferences | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| learning new things | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| similarity to curriculum | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| fun & enjoyment | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| need for business life | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| need for real life | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| need for collaboration | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| message of story | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| enjoy story | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| improves vocab. | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| dinosaur egg | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| elephant & friends | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| maxwell's story | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| all stories | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| need for gaming | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| need for communication | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| need for daily life | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| games | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| stories | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| activities | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| fun | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| be interested | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| ∑ SUM | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 19 | 34 |
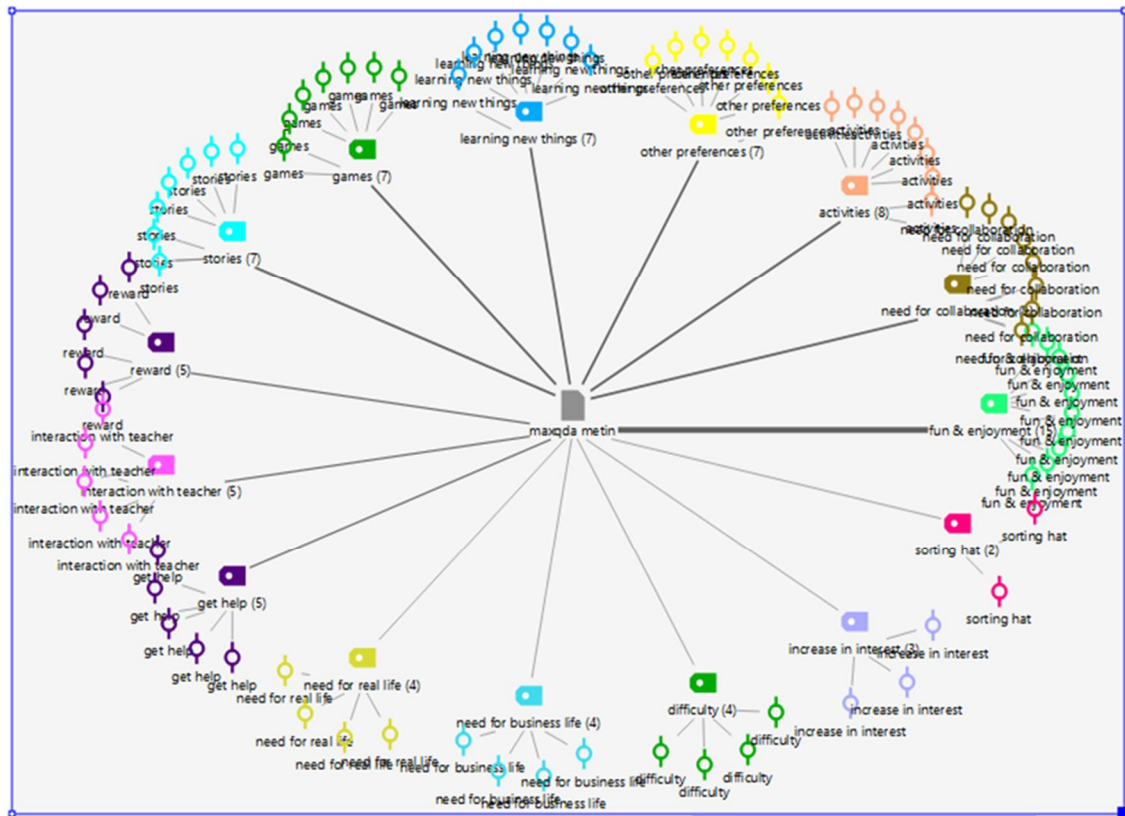


**Figure 4.1.** Codes for semi-structured interviews in Group 6.

### 4.4.1. Group 6 / Document

Only fifteen codes can be seen (in Figure 4.1) as they were analysed according to their frequencies. Four of the codes could seen only for once in the document and were not considered in the diagram.

As it can be seen in the diagram, "fun & enjoyment", with 15 times, was the most repeated code in the document. This data, again proved that fourth graders are still in the age of game which Piaget says (1972) it affects children's mind and language development in a positive way. Fun occupies a large space in their lives. Most of them mentioned words related to fun in the interviews while talking about the activities. They kept on talking about how they enjoyed games we had played in classes. Particularly, I have to say that my fourth graders were using the Word GAME, in fact, instead of FUN. I have checked several times if they really meant THE GAME or THE FUN, and most of the time I was convinced that they used both words interchangeably. The proportion of the coded segments would have been larger if we had evaluated both of them. Therefore, it was a difficult job that required attention and I scrutinized while coding and categorizing the segments. Moreover, "game" was one of the third most repeated codes. To me, the word GAME was loaded with more than one meaning among my fourth graders. It was sort of understanding of emotions and motives related to the life. Because life was still miniaturized in games which form the basic proficiency in effective personal relationships. However, the code "need for collaboration" was one of the second most repeated codings in the segments. By a careful examination, it could clearly be seen that a great amount of the interviewees stated the necessity of learning or using English for collaboration, in sense of communication with other children in online computer games. They were aware of the necessity of interacting via language but their strongest motive was game, indeed.
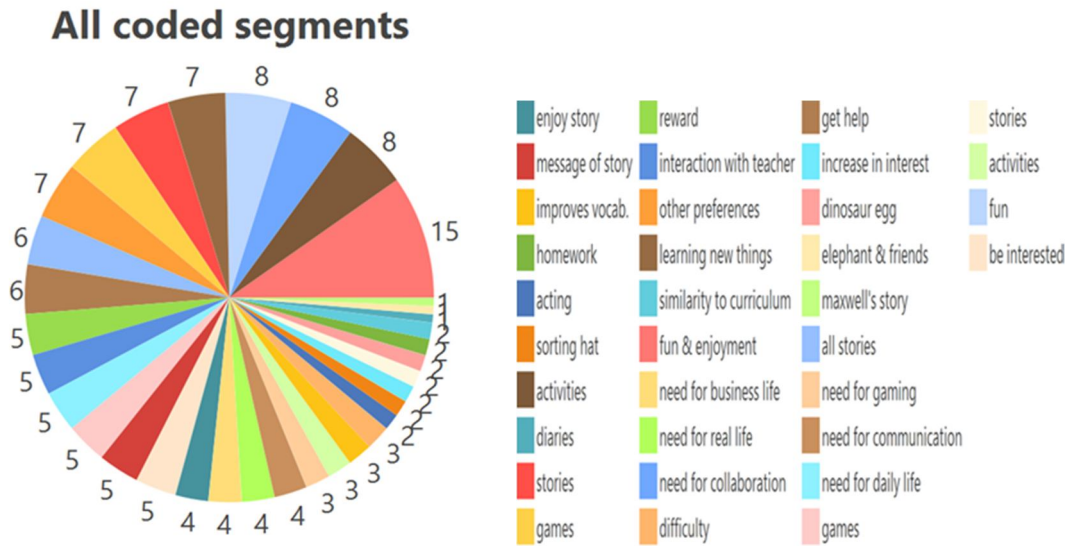
## All coded segments



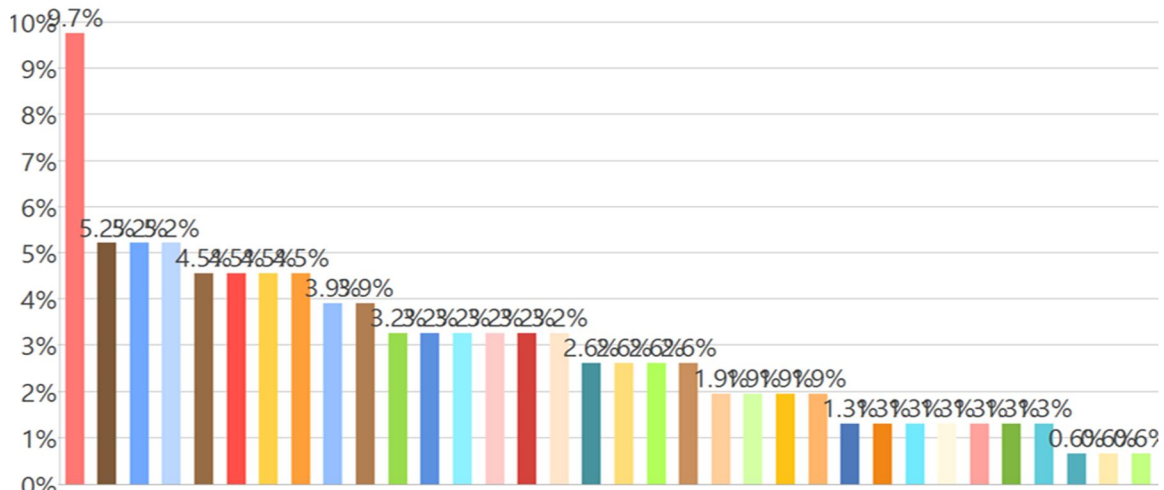**Figure 4.2.** Pie-chart for codes with frequencies



**Figure 4.3.** Statistic of document codes with coverage percentages

One of the second most repeated code in the document was ACTIVITIES. While talking over English classes, participants referred a lot about the activities we had been doing during the sessions. According to them, the activities were enjoyable because they were different from a traditional language learning process in which the teacher teaches and the class repeats mechanically. Our activities were sort of group games in which the children were totally involved. Not only their minds but also their bodies were activated through activities. As Yavuzer (2003, p. 29) states that group activities facilitate being able to look from someone else's viewpoint, organize their own behaviours and adapt to the environment. Group activities help increase their cognitive development and social skills. The word ACTIVE means taking part in an activity, so,

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in order to participate with peers in class, the children were forced to be active by using their second language. Being able to recognize what you see, keep them in memory and count them with their names is not an easy exercise. These can be acquired by a child within participation in group activities (Sel, 1983, p. 25). Learning with interaction in a group activity seems easier, more engaging and long lasting for young learners because most of the interviewees expressed that they could easily remember and recall what they had experienced in the activities.

The following codes were for "stories", "learning new things", and "other preferences" with a number of seven hits. Selected short stories within diaries were one of the in-class materials used in the study to get participants' attention and four short stories were appraised. In fact, stories were chosen, on purpose, according to their contents in order to test whether contexts similar to the curriculum were appreciated by the students. However, we cannot infer that fourth graders were eager or aware of the parallelism between the stories and units of the course book, since only two of the interviewees had talked over the similarity during the interviews. Besides, "learning new things" was also an important issue for the participants in the study. Learning something new and sharing it, is really fun among young learners since being curious is a characteristic of young learners. It keeps their mind active and helps them to be more creative, more enthusiastic. While talking over what other practices might be applied in English classes, "other preferences" emerged as another code. Two participants indicated that they would like to have outdoor activities owing to their joyful aspect while two other participants favoured writing their own stories. However, three participants were excited about spending more time playing games, which was a natural characteristic of fourth graders.

While the investigation continued, I had had the idea that "reward" would be the most concerned issue, because whenever I announced that a reward would be given in an activity, my fourth graders would compete toughly. Surprisingly, it was not the case. Reward was motivating, as I had observed during the sessions, but it was not on the top of the code list. It was repeated for five times in coded segments. After having analysed the story diaries of the participants, I had doubt about the types of rewards I had presented. I had tried to offer different types of reward equally as Wilson (2006) suggested. Although there was a lot of emphasis on tangible rewards in the diaries, only

half of the interviewees mentioned rewards. But still we cannot ignore the fact that children are driven by rewards, regardless of what type you present.

Another code, I would like to mention here, was "get help". The "help" was defined as the support of an older sibling or parents (mostly mothers) and peers. Participants, who talked about it, clarified that they needed help mostly with homework. There was a great amount in the literature (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001) dedicated to parental help with homework and besides I had personally experienced in the first cycle of the study that fourth graders still needed guidance and support with their homework. Additionally, only one participant talked over help from peers. That help, again, was related to homework. Another code, "interaction with teacher", was repeated for five times, too. According to Barnes (1976) a child's participation in lessons includes his/her individual characteristics and the effects of his/her attempts to understand the teacher and the teacher's attempts to understand him/her. Interaction is a social relationship as it is explained in Vygotskian Theory and according to Pappamihiel (2004), "their English development can be negatively altered when students withdraw from interactions with peers and/or teachers because of anxiety" (p. 347). I have observed that using interactive diary activity strengthened the interaction between us because a few fourth graders had written that they liked the way I responded back. They had mentioned that they felt valued. Besides, my consideration about their preferences deepened our interaction. This mutually trusting environment helped me to build a rapport and provide a maximum student involvement in the classroom activities.

All participants agreed that English was necessary but the rationale for the necessity was different for each of them. Some believed that English was crucial in business life for living and working abroad whereas some other discussed that English was essential in real life as it was a global language. English Language has dominated the World as Torres & Es (2015, English as a Universal Language) explain some details:

> English is, without a doubt, the actual universal language. It is the world's second largest native language, the official language in 70 countries, and English-speaking countries are responsible for about 40% of world's total GNP. English can be at least understood almost everywhere among scholars and educated people, as it is the world media language, and the language of cinema, TV, pop music and the

computer world. All over the planet people know many English words, their pronunciation and meaning.

The codes "need for business life" and "need for real life" were repeated for four times in Group 6, just as the code "difficulty". Most of the expressions related to "difficulty" were about doing homework and sentence structures, for some of them still felt themselves grammatically incompetent. The difference between sentence structures in Turkish and English languages make them experience difficulties in grammar, I think. A few students still insist on writing the verbs at the end of the clauses, as verbs come at the end in Turkish.

The lowest frequencies in Group 6 were for the codes "increase interest", "acting", "sorting hat", "homework", and "similarity with curriculum". Since we have mentioned earlier about the last two codes, we will briefly discuss the other codes. My fourth graders, just as the other children at the ages of 9-10, would move as much as they could, therefore games that involved movement, use of body language, making faces and changing the tone of their voices were welcomed by the participants. Some of them told me that they would comprehend the stories well and enjoyed them when we acted. As mentioned earlier, Sorting Hat was a pointed wizard hat which I used during the activities as an identifying instrument to choose the student for answering the questions. The course had nothing to do with it and it was just an interesting object to attract participants' attention. Most of the time, children seemed interested in the hat, could not wait for trying it on. However, only two of the interviewees must have found it noteworthy to talk over the hat. All in all, all the materials used and activities done in English classes were for one purpose that was increasing my fourth graders' interest towards English courses. Considering the lowest frequencies, it should be kept in mind that the semi-structured interviews were not the only source to suggest an idea about an increase in their interest.

**4.4.2. Group 1 / Document**

Group 1 was the document in which the answers given to the first question were collected and coded. The first question was what their opinions were about English courses. As it can be seen (Figure 4.4.); all the activities, practices, materials, techniques and methods used during the study in English courses were evaluated by the participants in the sense of interest and fun. There were ten interviewees to reply the questions, and

as a result of the analysis it is obvious that three of them took both fun and interest into account. Something should be clarified here that increasing interest towards English and being interested in English courses are different things. As mentioned at the end of analysis for Group 6 document, the frequency for "increase interest" were low, but here, in Group 1 document, the frequency for "be interested" were high. Consequently, we can say that my fourth graders they like to put everything through the filter of fun and interest.
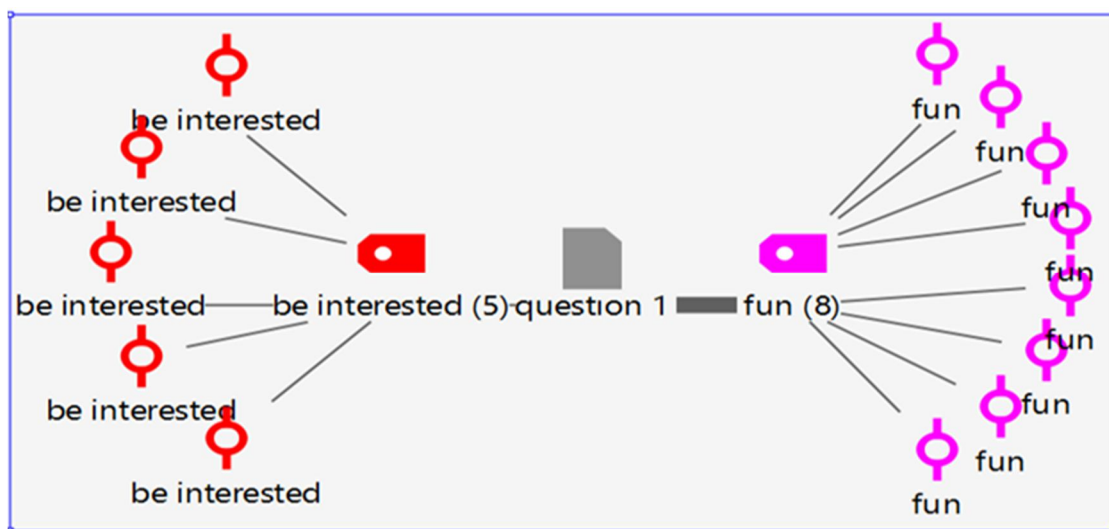


**Figure 4.4.** Codes of the answers given for the first question in interviews.

### 4.4.3. Group 2 / Document

The second question was which practice they liked the most. As it is shown (Figure 4.5.), three of them liked activities and two of them liked stories whereas five of them liked games. The activities included exercises on writing, reading, listening and speaking skills as well as miming and acting. The interviewees expressed that the activities provided them opportunities to test their skill competencies in second language. The participants who favoured the selected short stories stated the reasons for their interest which is the subject of another group document. "Games", as you can imagine, had the highest frequency in this document.
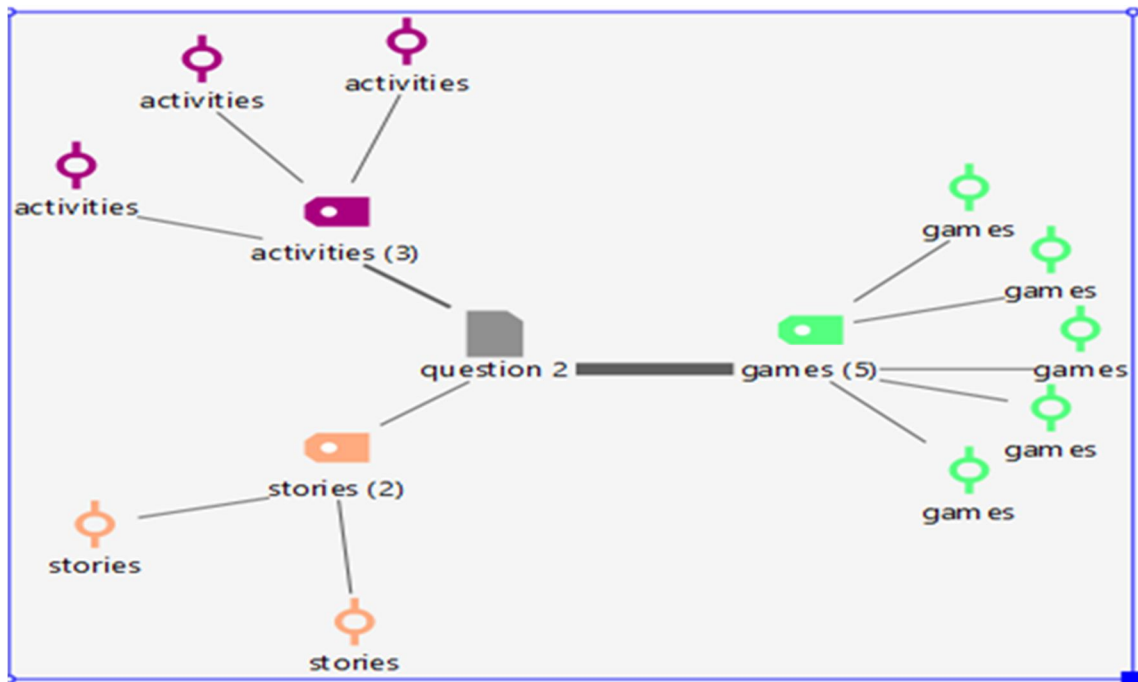
**Figure 4.5.** Codes of the answers given for the second question in interviews.

### 4.4.4. Group 3 / Document

The third question was what their opinions were about English. Generally, the interviewees considered English language in the sense of a necessity, but their motives were different. As it can be seen (Figure 4.6.), the interviewees must have given more than one answer. Three of the interviewees specifically defined that they needed to know English as a tool for playing computer games on the Internet whereas the others mentioned "need for daily life" and "need for communication". They expressed that they practised English within friends chat and they would be using the language in their future lives for university education, business world and the possibility of living abroad. These can be interpreted as my fourth graders had an awareness about the necessity of knowing a foreign language.
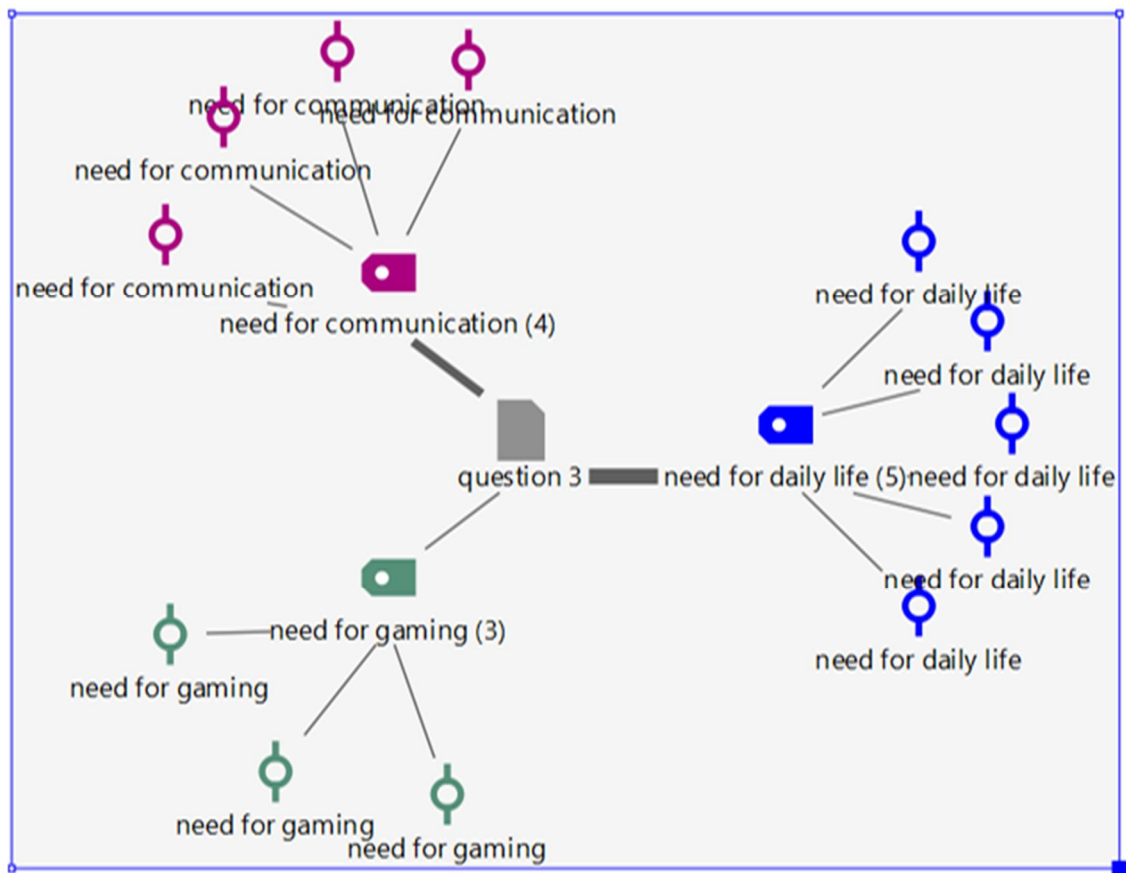
**Figure 4.6.** Codes of the answers given for the third question in interviews.

### 4.4.5. Group 4 / Document

The fourth question was about their favourite short stories. Most of the interviewees stated that all the stories were appraised, as the frequency for "all stories" was six. They added that they liked reading short stories and acting some scenes from stories was interesting. Besides, they told that story diaries were the other facilitator factor for comprehension since diaries provided opportunities for reflection. Writing reflections in diaries were sort of self-talk and sharing emotions for my fourth graders. As it is obvious in the diagram (Figure 4.7.), "dinosaur egg" and "Maxwell' story" had the frequency for two whereas only one interviewee preferred "elephant & friends". Bearing this data in mind, we can conclude that young learners are interested in short stories, though their preferences may vary.
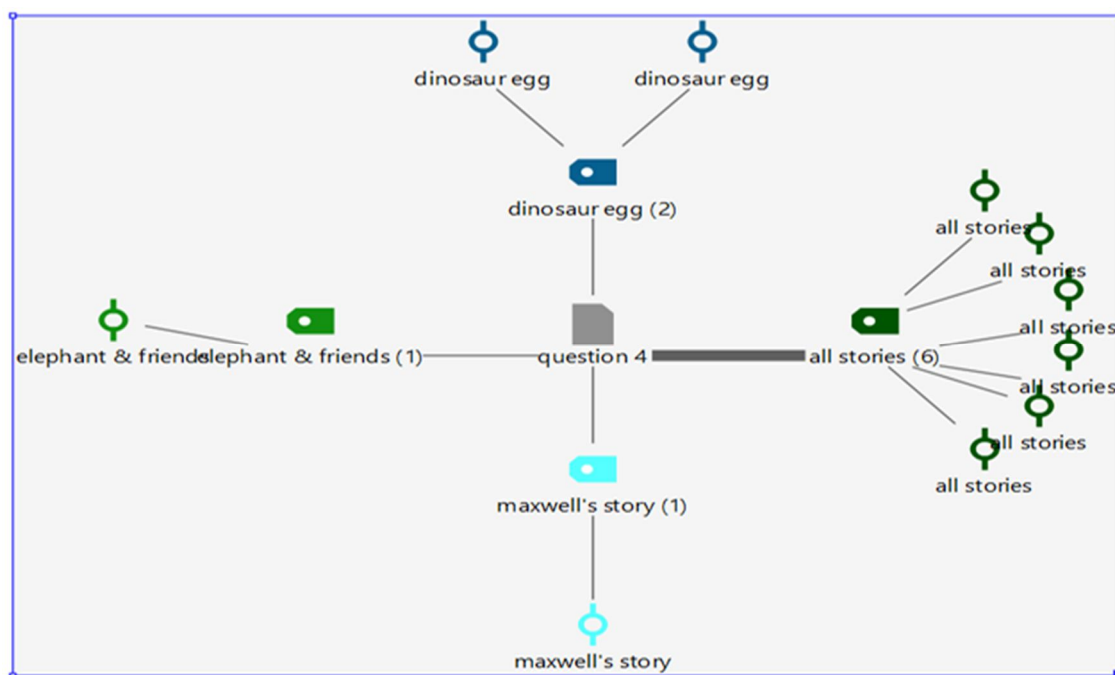
**Figure 4.7.** Codes of the answers given for the fourth question in interviews.

### 4.4.6. Group 5 / Document

The fifth question was about preferences of the stories. I asked them why they had favoured a certain short story. As it can be seen below (Figure 4.8.), the data again leads us to "fun" because six interviewees pointed out that they liked the stories as they were enjoyable. This data, also, may be interpreted that my choice of stories were confirmed as they were welcomed with enjoyment among my fourth graders. Three interviewees stated that the reason behind their appreciation was "the message of the story". Those children were, for sure, the students who had mastered well in English courses with competencies in four skills. Having those competencies allowed them to get a different taste while studying the stories in sessions, they had a chance to go deeper into the stories and discover the messages. Two other participants expressed that the stories helped them improve their vocabularies, as they were learning new words according to the contents of the selected story. They added that picture dictionaries were also helpful for improving the vocabulary.
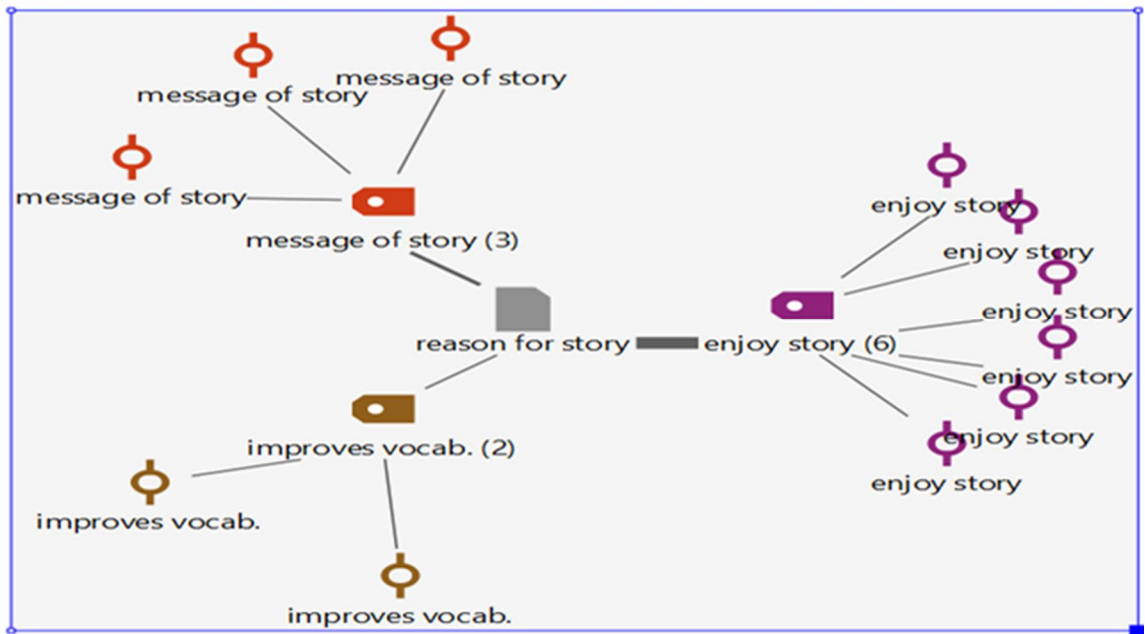
**Figure 4.8.** Codes of the answers given in interviews for preferences of the stories.

# CHAPTER 5

## 5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1. Reflections

#### 5.1.1. Walking in Their Shoes

I would like to clarify that I taught English for two semesters to the sampling group. The analysis I wrote here belongs to my observations done during the research, in the second semester of the educational year of 2014-2015. However, in order to give a description of the big picture, I would like to give details about what I had experienced with my fourth graders after having passed time for 23 years with older teenagers from the very first moment. Building rapport with them, and even with parents, teaching them that I was not a teaching machine, was a real challenge for me. I was a stranger to them. They did not know anything about me.

An Indian proverb says, "If you want to understand a person, you should walk in his shoes until three moons grow old in the sky." Empathy is not just a feeling, it is also accepted as understanding, thought, feeling and conduction. Empathy is a psychological bridge between people. Walking in someone else's shoes means having empathy, a deep insight and saying "What I might have done if I were this person".

In my twenty-four years of teaching career, I had taught teenagers, but meeting a class of ten year old children was really a scary experience, to be honest. Having two brought up sons as a mother does not mean that you all remember what they did at those years. It has been ages that I have not touched a child. I remember the very first moment I stepped into the classroom. Almost all kids were standing, there was a great noise. A few boys were chasing after a girl, some were throwing paper planes to each other, two girls were looking out of the window calling their friends in school yard, a group of boys were yelling to another group. I walked towards the teacher's desk, left my bag on it. Thoughts were running through my mind very quickly at that moment. "Oh, God! What am I going to do?"

A boy, then I learned that he was the president, yelled "Shut up! Teacher's come!" There started a whirl, children tried to find a seat. Sounds decreased, but they continued mumbling. The president was standing by me in the middle of the classroom,

warning his friends with eyes wide open. I heard someone chuckling. Two boys were pushing each other at the back row. There was a big silence in a few seconds. "Oh, God! What am I going to say now?"

The day passed and I went home bewildered. I thought what I had experienced at school over and over again. I suddenly realized that I needed to know what it was like to be ten years old, because "knowledge is power" (Francis Bacon). Walking in someone else's shoes takes skill, but it is the first and foremost knowledge (Palmer, 2013, the human teacher). I had to stop the stereotyping about "students" and it was time to modify my point of view and try to walk in a ten year old kid's shoes, for kids learn from what we do, not from what we say.

I decided to take action and reviewed the literature on young learners, especially, "affective filter hypothesis" of Krashen (1982) and "developmental theories" in every aspect (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978; Freud, 1932; Kohlberg, 1958; Ericson, 1950). Then I took notes on fourth graders, how they behaved, what they liked and did not like, how they thought, what they really meant when they talk, what their body and gestures taught, what I needed to boost them.

**5.1.2. What Have I Learned?**

"To understand is hard. Once one understands, action is easy" (Sun Yat Sen).

This action research was an opportunity to observe my own teaching practices. This process helped me gain a better understanding of myself and my practices.  It helped me focus on issues which took place inside my own classrooms to determine what was currently happening. I have learned to dig deeper, as there is no one best way to see what is hidden below the surface.

As a teacher I have become aware of the need of children for having choices in their studies. By doing this research, I learned what students liked and what they did not. This helped me attempt to accommodate students' needs, if possible. I need to know how to expand my knowledge and skills to benefit every child. I learned that, as a teacher, I needed to ask more questions, inquire about my students and about how and what to teach.

Words like 'might', 'possible' and 'why' are more common to my vocabulary than ever before. In addition, action research gave me a chance, as Ferrance (2000) asserted, to reflect on my own practices and the proficiencies of my students with an eye toward what works and what does not. What is more, this action research project taught me that my previous thoughts might not always be correct. I think I need to be careful about the assumptions I bring into the classroom. This study allowed me the opportunity to review my teaching philosophy during the inquiry process.

The path I walked during this research was tiring and tough but the experience I have gained was priceless. I have learned how to determine a problem in my classes and find a solution through research cycles. I hope that my story will make contribution to the efforts in the field of education.

### 5.1.3. Successes and Difficulties in the Research

I would admit that carrying out an action research is really rigorous and challenging but who can ignore the possibilities that an action research provides a teacher for his/her professional development? The most significant concern in my research was the duration, for I had only eight weeks. I spent most of the time for gathering the data, a very limited time was left to analyse and type the findings. Also, most studies require that consent be obtained from parents, institutions to protect the confidentiality of the data as well as the privacy of the subjects. I spent a long period for that procedure.

Also, I had difficulties to make the content analysis of the interviews because there were a lot of interviewees in the study, so, I tried to sort and holistically code the data under a few headings which was really challenging. An action research may sometimes be frustrating, for the process is not linear. For this reason, I often needed to modify my action plan in the light of new information. However, I may say that my findings were appropriate with what was written in the literature, so I was convinced about the way that I had conducted the study properly. Besides, I could manage to display and sort the data according to the research questions. I also tried to word questions clearly to avoid misinterpretations. Finally, I would like to mention that this study was a sort of research in which the actions were planned to be taken rather than to be implemented for the fact that much more time was required for the practices.

There was really a fine line between infancy and puberty in the class that I could easily observe. They could be both cheerful and fragile at the same time. Fourth graders were in need of being accepted, the feeling of being worthy and appreciated. Most of the girls behaved in a sane manner. However, they could quickly burst into tears all of a sudden for no reason. Boys were more childish when compared to girls, and they did not care about serious matters. Boys still liked chasing one another in the aisles, not caring whether they bumped into some other pupils. On my very first day in elementary school, I remembered a commentary of an American teacher about his fourth graders in a blog. He seemed to have spoken out of me, saying that:

> Fourth grade is fantastic. I truly love the spirit and energy of fourth graders. They're in this magical time when they aren't really 'little kids' anymore, but they haven't hit adolescence either. They would unload their backpacks and coats in a frenzy (often dropping them unintentionally on the floor in their hurry), push through the door… When I taught this grade, I got used to students rushing down the hallways… (2015, Knowing Fourth Graders).

As mentioned before, life still meant fun for boys whereas girls were more mature. However, it was really challenging for a teacher to call a ten year old boy's attention and it was in vain to try to teach learning strategies in his very short span of concentration. A language teacher needed to be patient and consistent in classes while teaching the language. Moreover, sudden changes could clearly be seen in their mood. They could easily get excited. "Whether expressed as joy or anxiety, emotional intensity is a hallmark of fourth graders. Exclamation marks seem to pepper their language" would say an American teacher (2015, Knowing Fourth Graders).

## 5.2. Summary of the Study

My journey began in the fall semester of the year because students' non-participation and nonfulfillment of assignments often restrained the classes flow. Their lack of confidence and use of native language could be found in the mistakes in their written works and in their performances in examinations. They were not certain about what to accomplish. I decided that they should have been given chance.

This study, in fact, was the story of my own journey with thirty-eight fourth graders during a whole educational year. Moreover, I was an inexperienced researcher. My purpose in this study was to conduct an action research in order to observe and examine the interest levels of fourth graders in English classes. I really made use of the

cyclical feature of the AR, for I had the chance to turn back whenever I need to. Throughout the study, my aim was to find answers to this question:

How can I enhance young learners' in English courses?

The data were collected totally qualitatively and gathered from multiple sources at various time points in educational year of 2014-2015. The whole research was carried out within grounded theory since data collection and analysing were conducted together. The research was conducted during eight weeks in the spring semester.

The participants in this study were a class of fourth graders, 38 in total, 12 female and 26 male students, coming from almost the same background, in the means of families, socio-cultural and economic status. Their parents were of middle-class, average of age was 28-35, fathers were mostly employees and mothers were housewives. The average number of children in the families was three and siblings attended the same school.

Data collection procedures were carried out during eight weeks. Different instruments were used in data collection for triangulation. Story diaries of students, the researcher's field notes and semi-structured interviews were the data for the study. No statistical packages were used to analyse the results, they were interpreted over percentile ratios in order to present a general point of view to the reader with a holistic approach. Three different data were gathered and analysed. First, story diaries were browsed and specific ones were analysed descriptively. Then observations of the researcher were analysed with content analysis. Finally, semi-structured interviews with students were analysed with the 12th version of MaxQDA, a social science data analysis program.

## 5.3. Discussions and Implications

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that in-class materials and applications are very important for raising interest of young learners in English courses. Teachers need to keep learners' attention alive in order not to have the course that is transformed into a boring lecture. Besides, the "fun" factor should not be ruled out when you are talking about young learners. The so much observed emphasis on enjoyment in the research produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field.

In accordance with previous studies (Malkina, 1995; Cooter, 1991), this action research has demonstrated that stories are liked due to their alterative, transformative and recuperative impact. Teachers are mostly mistaken that they focus on learning content whereas form of transferring information is as important as learning content. However, stories might be effective and engaging to shift the 'boring' learning environment which is supposed to be the greatest handicap for a language teacher. With the stories, information can be saved and internalised easily, and as Ji (1999) pointed out, interaction in class can be increased.

Another important finding was that rewards facilitated to motivate students for positive behaviours and they were beneficial for students to be interested in the subject to be learned. However, the findings of the current study have indicated that sometimes, winning a reward may become the main goal of the student.

There are similarities between the strategies in this study and those described by Burden (1999). He expressed that making the course interesting and activating students' interest through using rewards could help to create an involvement of success. Students are more actively involved in lessons if they find them interesting. Taking this into consideration, teachers should plan in-class activities to ensure participation. An environment which is full of fun and competition can be created through more unusual activities. During the courses, games and acting can be used. Games can help students learn the facts and assess the existing options. Activities can motivate students to enhance their interest and provide interaction for the participation in the learning process.

**5.4. Limitations of the Study**

The group of participants in the study were selected among the classes at school in which the researcher taught English as a second language course. The reason behind this choice was, the preparedness of that group for English course. As the study had a time constraint, the researcher decided to conduct the study with that selected group of participants. Bearing this in mind, the study did not represent the whole population of fourth graders at the school.

However, since the study was designed as an action research, it introduced new and unexpected results during its course, and led to research taking new directions

because it was flexible. Also as Blakstad (2008) said, "there are no variables manipulated and there is no way to statistically analyse the results. In addition, the results of observational studies are not repeatable, and so there can be no replication of the experiment and reviewing of the results". Every researcher would find his/her own results in his/her own journey.

Data reported by the researcher (self-reported data) is also a limitation since it is impossible to verify it from external independent sources. My observations in field notes might include bias, language barrier and cultural beliefs that might lead to criticisms of the validity of the research process.

## 5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies

A larger scale study may be conducted according to multiple intelligences of young learners. It is also possible to infer from this study that variables such as gender is worth to consider in language teaching since female students had more interest in activities in English classes. Other different activities to be applied into the curriculum may be tested within further studies. Finally, peer feedback and colleague observations may be helpful for wider evaluations in the future.

## 6. REFERENCES

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**7. APPENDICES**

**7.1. Selected Short Stories**

**7.1.1. Short Story #1**

**Elephant and Friends**

One day an elephant wanders into a forest in search of friends. He sees a monkey on a tree. "Will you be my friend?" asks the elephant. Replies the monkey, "You are too big. You cannot swing from trees like me." Next, the elephant meets a rabbit. He asks him to be his friend. But the rabbit says, "You are too big to play in my burrow!" Then the elephant meets a frog. "Will you be my friend? He asks. "How can I?" asks the frog. "You are too big to leap about like me."

The elephant is upset. He meets a fox next. "Will you be my friend?" he asks the fox. The fox says, "Sorry, sir, you are too big." The next day, the elephant sees all the animals in the forest running for their lives. The elephant asks them what the matter is. The bear replies, "There is a tiger in the forest. He's trying to gobble us all up!" The animals all run away to hide. The elephant wonders what he can do to save everyone in the forest.

Meanwhile, the tiger keeps eating up whoever he can find. The elephant walks up to the tiger and says, "Please, Mr. Tiger, do not eat up these poor animals." "Mind your own business!" growls the tiger. The elephant has no choice but gives the tiger a hefty kick. The frightened tiger runs for his life. The elephant comes back into the forest to announce the good news to everyone. All the animals thank the elephant. They say, "You are just the right size to be our friend".

(Retrieved from http://www.english-for-students.com/Elephant-and-Friends.html)

**7.1.2. Short Story #2**

**Lost and Found**

Donna and her husband John go to the beach every Saturday in the summer. Today is no exception. Donna packs a picnic lunch. She packs the beach umbrella and sun lotion. She cannot find their beach towels. Donna always loses things. The towels are not in the laundry basket or dryer. They are not in the closet, either. She finally

looks in her beach bag. She sees the towels folded in the bottom. Of course, the beach towels are exactly where they should be.

Donna puts on her swimsuit and floppy sun hat. She is almost ready. She just needs her sunglasses. She thinks they are on the table by the door. Or maybe they are in the bathroom. They could also be in her purse. Donna sighs.

John puts the picnic basket, umbrella, and beach bag in the car. He checks his fishing poles and equipment. He places them in the car beside the picnic basket. Daisy, their dog, jumps in the backseat. She loves the beach! John is ready to leave. Where is Donna? She knows he likes to arrive at the beach before the crowds. John groans and shakes his head. Donna is always late!

Donna searches for her sunglasses. She cannot find them, and she knows John is waiting. He hates when she is late! She grabs her purse and locks the door. "You are late," John says as Donna gets in the car. Donna tells John that she could not find her sunglasses. John looks at her and laughs! He flips down the sun visor so Donna can see herself in the mirror. Donna looks in the mirror and laughs too. Her sunglasses are on top of her head. They were there the whole time! "It is always in the last place that you look," Donna giggles!

(Retrieved from http://www.really-learn-english.com/english-short-stories-level-05-story-08.html).

### 7.1.3. Short Story #3

**I Found a Dinosaur Egg!**

(by Riley Machell, Mallala Primary School – Australia)

On a sunny day, a boy called Riley is walking by a pond and goes for a swim. He feels something funny under his feet, so he goes underwater and he sees a dinosaur egg. He thinks that dinosaurs are extinct so he goes to the museum with the egg and says to the man at the desk, "Who do I see about the dinosaur egg that I have found?" The man replies "You can leave it with me".

So Riley leaves the dinosaur egg at the museum and goes home and thinks about what kind of dinosaur will hatch from that egg. Riley decides to go back and get the egg from the museum to see if he can get it to hatch.

Riley goes back to the museum and says the man at the desk "I want my dinosaur egg back please." The man replies "I don't have it anymore. When we took it inside, it hatched and now we have a baby dinosaur. Would you like to see it?"

It only takes five seconds for Riley to run through the door and look at the dinosaur. They name the dinosaur 'Riley', after the boy who found the dinosaur egg. (Retrieved from http://www.write4fun.net/view-entry/130820).


### 7.1.4. Short Story #4

**Maxwell Loses a Tooth**

Maxwell puts up his hand and waits for his teacher, Mrs. Gilbert, to notice him. "Do you have a question, Maxwell?" she asks. "It's more like a problem," Maxwell says. "I lost my tooth." Maxwell stands up and holds out his hand to show his class his baby tooth. "Congratulations," Mrs. Gilbert says. Then she asks the class if anyone has any advice for Maxwell. Keiko puts up her hand first. Keiko is from Japan.

"Is it an upper or a lower tooth?" Keiko asks. "A lower tooth," Maxwell says. He opens his mouth and shows the class the empty spot in the bottom of his mouth. "You should throw your baby tooth over the roof of your house," Keiko says. "Why should I do that?" Maxwell says. "Because then your new adult tooth will grow properly. When you lose an upper tooth you should put it under the floor."

Mrs. Gilbert thinks this is a good idea, but Frida disagrees. Frida is from Austria. "You shouldn't throw your baby tooth away, Maxwell. You should keep it and give it to your mother," Frida says. "Why should I do that?" asks Maxwell. "She will make it into a necklace for you to wear."

Jorge shakes his head and puts up his hand. He has some different advice for Maxwell. Jorge is from Mexico. "You should take your tooth home. Then you should put it under your pillow when you go to sleep," Jorge says. "Why should I do that?" Maxwell says. "Because then the tooth mouse will come. He will keep your tooth and pay you with good luck. Sometimes the tooth mouse even brings a small toy." Maxwell likes Jorge's advice the best. Mrs. Gilbert gives him a box to keep his tooth in. She doesn't want him to lose his tooth again.

"Whatever you decide, you should show your mother your tooth when you get home," Mrs. Gilbert says.

When Maxwell gets home he shows his mother the empty spot in his mouth. Then he opens the box and shows her his tooth. "Congratulations! What are you going to do with your tooth, Maxwell?" his mother asks. "I'm going to put it under my pillow," he says. And he does.

When Maxwell wakes up the next morning he looks under his pillow. The tooth has gone. In its place, Maxwell finds a one dollar bill. He also finds a letter. This is what the letter says:

*Dear Maxwell, Congratulations! You lost your first tooth. I will keep it forever. You should buy something nice for yourself with this money. Love, The Tooth Fairy.*

"I should tell my class about the tooth fairy," Maxwell thinks. "Everyone should lose a tooth!"

(Retrieved from https://www.englishclub.com/kids/s_maxwell.htm).

## 7.2. Interview Questions

### 7.2.1. Questions in Interviews with Students (English Version)

What is your opinion about English courses?

Which activity do you like the most?

What is your opinion about English?

Which was your favourite short story?

Why was that story your favourite one?

### 7.2.2. Questions in Interviews with Students (Turkish Version)

İngilizce dersleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsun?

En çok hangi etkinliği seviyorsun?

İngilizce hakkında ne düşünüyorsun?

En çok hangi öyküyü sevdin?
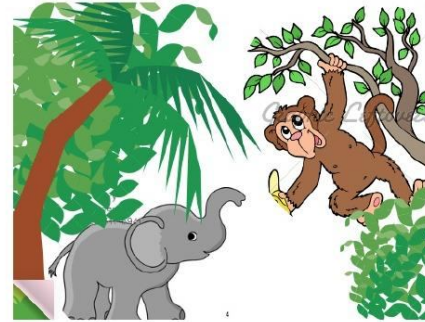
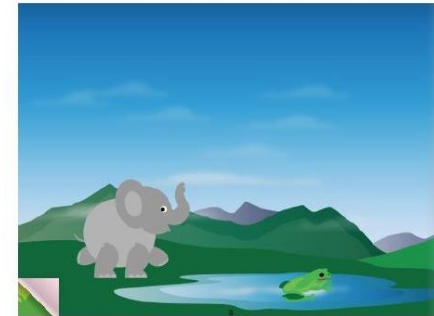Neden en çok o öyküyü sevdin?

# STORY DIARY
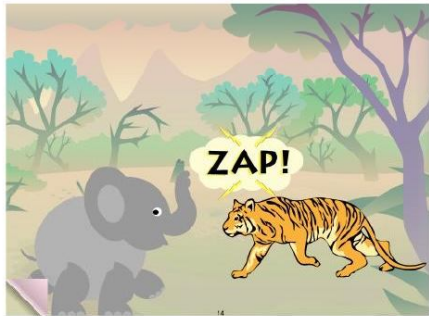
Name:
Surname:

## STORIES

# ELEPHANT AND FRIENDS



One day an elephant wanders into a forest in search of friends. He sees a monkey on a tree. "Will you be my friend?" asks the elephant. Replies the monkey, "You are too big. You can not swing from trees like me." Next, the elephant meets a rabbit. He asks him to be his friend. But the rabbit says, "You are too big to play in my burrow!" Then the elephant meets a frog.



"Will you be my friend? He asks. "How can I?" asks the frog. "You are too big to leap about like me."

The elephant is upset. He meets a fox next. "Will you be my friend?" he asks the fox. The fox says, "Sorry, sir, you are too big." The next day, the elephant sees all the animals in the forest running for their lives. The elephant asks them what the matter is. The bear replies, "There is a tiger in the forest. He's trying to gobble us all up!" The animals all run away to hide. The elephant wonders what he can do to save everyone in the forest. Meanwhile, the tiger keeps eating up whoever he can find. The elephant walks up to the tiger and says, "Please, 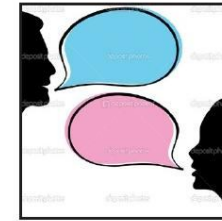Mr. Tiger, do not eat up these poor animals." "Mind your own business!" growls the tiger. The elephant has no choice but gives the tiger a hefty kick. The frightened tiger runs for his life. The elephant comes back into the forest to announce the good news to everyone. All the animals thank the elephant. They say, "You are just the right size to be our friend".
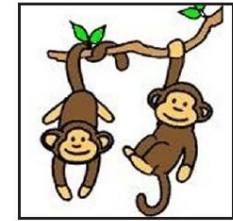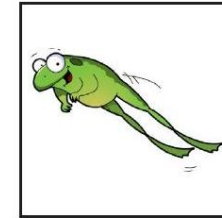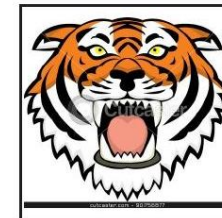
# ELEPHANT AND FRIENDS
## *"Picture Dictionary"*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| wander | reply | swing |
| burrow | leap | gobble up |
| Mind your own business! | growl | hefty kick |

# QUESTIONS

1. How did you find the story? Write a few sentences.

_____

_____

_____

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# LOST AND FOUND

Donna and her husband John go to the beach every Saturday in the summer. Donna packs a picnic lunch. She packs the beach umbrella and sun lotion.

She cannot find their beach towels. Donna always loses things. The towels are not in the laundry basket or dryer. They are not in the closet, either.

She finally looks in her beach bag. She sees the towels folded in the bottom. Donna puts on her swimsuit and floppy sun hat.

She is almost ready. She just needs her sunglasses. She thinks they are on the table by the door.

John puts the picnic basket, umbrella, and beach bag in the car. He checks his fishing poles and equipment. He places them in the car beside the picnic basket.. Daisy, their dog, jumps in the backseat. She loves the beach! John is ready to leave. Where is Donna? John groans and shakes his head. Donna is always late! Donna searches for her sunglasses. She cannot find them, and she knows John is waiting. He hates when she is late! She grabs her purse and locks the door. "You are late," John says as Donna gets in the car. Donna tells John that she could not find her sunglasses. John looks at her and laughs! He flips down the sun visor so Donna can see herself in the mirror. Donna looks in the mirror and laughs too. Her sunglasses are on top of her head. They were there the whole time! "It is always in the last place that you look," Donna giggles!

## LOST AND FOUND
### *"Picture Dictionary"*

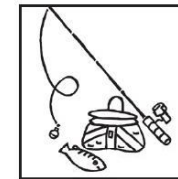| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| pack | lose | laundry basket | closet |
| folded towels | floppy hat | fishing pole | shake head |
| groan | search | grab | purse |
| lock | flip down | sun visor | giggle |
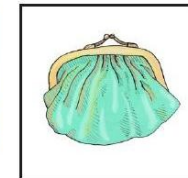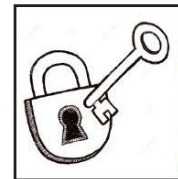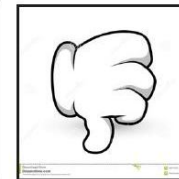
# QUESTIONS

1. How did you find the story? Write a few sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Did you like reading a story in class? Why/why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What would you do if you were Donna?

_____

_____

_____

_____

# A DINOSAUR EGG

On a sunny day, a boy called Riley is walking by a pond and goes for a swim. He feels something funny under his feet, so he goes underwater and he sees a dinosaur egg. He thinks that dinosaurs are extinct so he goes to the museum with the egg and says to the man at the desk, "Who do I see about the dinosaur egg that I have found?" The man replies "You can leave it with me". So Riley leaves the dinosaur egg at the museum and goes home and thinks about what kind of dinosaur will hatch from that egg.

Riley decides to go back and get the egg from the museum to see if he can get it to hatch.

Riley goes back to the museum and says the man at the desk "I want my dinosaur egg back please." The man replies "I don't have it anymore. When we took it inside, it hatched and now we have a baby dinosaur. Would you like to see it?"

It only takes five seconds for Riley to run through the door and look at the dinosaur. They name the dinosaur 'Riley', after the boy who found the dinosaur egg.

# A DINOSAUR EGG
## *"Picture Dictionary"*

pond

feel

funny
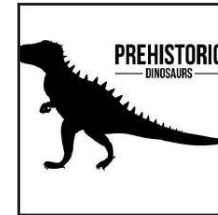
extinct

think

I have found!

hatch

second

## QUESTIONS

1.  What do you think about this activity?

_____

_____

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_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# MAXWELL LOSES A TOOTH

Maxwell puts up his hand and waits for his teacher, Mrs. Gilbert, to notice him. "Do you have a question, Maxwell?" she asks. "It's more like a problem," Maxwell says. "I lost my tooth." Maxwell stands up and holds out his hand to show his class his baby tooth. "Congratulations," Mrs. Gilbert says.

Then she asks the class if anyone has any advice for Maxwell. Keiko puts up her hand first. Keiko is from Japan. "Is it an upper or a lower tooth?" Keiko asks. "A lower tooth," Maxwell says. He opens his mouth and shows the class the empty spot in the bottom of his mouth.
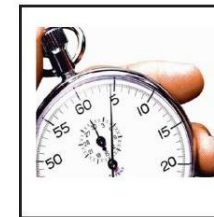
"You should throw your baby tooth over the roof of your house," Keiko says. "Why should I do that?" Maxwell says. "Because then your new adult tooth will grow properly. When you lose an upper tooth you should put it under the floor."

Mrs. Gilbert thinks this is a good idea, but Frida disagrees. Frida is from Austria. "You shouldn't throw your baby tooth away, Maxwell. You should keep it and give it to your mother," Frida says. "Why should I do that?" asks Maxwell. "She will make it into a necklace for you to wear." Jorge shakes his head and puts up his hand. He has some different advice for Maxwell. Jorge is from Mexico.

"You should take your tooth home. Then you should put it under your pillow when you go to sleep," Jorge says. "Why should I do that?" Maxwell says. "Because then the tooth mouse will come. He will keep your tooth and pay you with good luck. Sometimes the tooth mouse even brings a small toy." Maxwell likes Jorge's advice the best. Mrs. Gilbert gives him a box to keep his tooth in. She doesn't want him to lose his tooth again. "Whatever you decide, you should show your mother your tooth when you get home," Mrs. Gilbert says.

When Maxwell gets home he shows his mother the empty spot in his mouth. Then he opens the box and shows her his tooth.

"Congratulations! What are you going to do with your tooth, Maxwell?" his mother asks. "I'm going to put it under my pillow," he says. And he does.

When Maxwell wakes up the next morning he looks under his pillow. The tooth has gone. In its place, Maxwell finds a one dollar bill. He also finds a letter. This is what the letter says:

Dear Maxwell,
Congratulations! You lost your first tooth. I will keep it forever. You should buy something nice for yourself with this money.
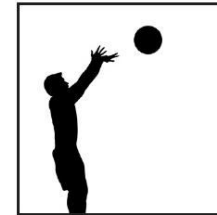　Love,
　The Tooth Fairy

"I should tell my class about the tooth fairy," Maxwell thinks. "Everyone should lose a tooth!"

# MAXWELL LOSES A TOOTH
## *"Picture Dictionary"*
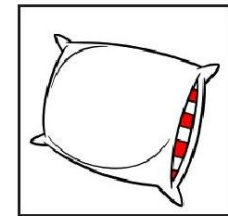
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Congratulations! | throw | baby/adult tooth |
| disagree | necklace | pillow |
| advice | empty spot | tooth fairy |

# QUESTIONS

1. How did you find the story? Write a few sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Do stories help increase your interest in English classes?

_____

_____

_____

3. Would you like to act the story out in the class?

_____

_____

_____

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**Date:**

_____

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_____

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**Date:**

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