EXPLORING THE VALUE OF ANIMATED STORIES WITH YOUNG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) through animated stories bears many prospects for an effective and meaningful language instruction as animated stories can help to contextualize the new language providing audio-visual input along with the story narration. In this study, the role of animated stories in teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to Young Learners (YLs) was investigated. The potential role of using such an approach was assessed in terms of students' attitudes towards learning English. Five authentic animated stories were used as overarching themes into which some basic vocabulary, structures, and functions of the target language were integrated. On the whole, the outcome of the study is that students kept their initial positive attitudes towards learning English with animated stories. The study also proved that students' concerns related to learning English decreased through such instruction. The findings of the present research also suggest that animated stories offer teachers opportunities to present and recycle vocabulary, grammar, and functions of the target language in context through integrating many extension activities related to the story theme.

KEYWORDS: Animated stories, Teaching English to Young Learners, English as a Foreign Language

INTRODUCTION
The introduction of English language into primary classrooms has brought about the need for methods and techniques that are appropriate for YLs. Among all the English language learner groups, YLs are assumed to be a special group since they are in a period of their lives in which they go through a constant cognitive, emotional, and social change, and therefore, think and learn in different ways compared to older learners (Ur, 2012; Cameron, 2001; Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Halliwell, 1992). YLs frequently learn indirectly and holistically rather than directly (Cameron, 2001; Halliwell, 1992). In other words, YLs' minds seem to pick up the knowledge embodied in meaningful and purposeful language actively without focusing on the language itself. Therefore, in TEYL, instead of teaching in isolated chunks or breaking the language into its grammatical components; in other words, making use of rigorous grammatical analysis, it is necessary to present and use the language meaningfully and within a context that mirrors the real world discourse (Shin, 2007; Cameron 2001; Keddle 1997; Halliwell, 1992; Rixon, 1991).

Knowledge about the general characteristics of YLs may contribute to our understanding of how they differ from older learners and what type of instructional methods and materials should be involved in TEYL accordingly. First, YLs have short attention span (Brewster et al., 2002; Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Cameron, 2001; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990; Wood, 1988). Put differently, YLs are usually not capable of focusing on one task for long periods of time, and they get distracted quiet easily. Therefore, they need variety in activities and materials in the classroom. Secondly, YLs generally cannot stay inactive for long periods. Brewster et al. (2002) and Brumfit et al. (1991) emphasize that YLs need physical movement in the classroom due to their high levels of energy and it is important to teach them with methods and activities that leave place for physical movement in the classroom. Also, YLs learn by doing Slatterly & Willis 2001; Holderness, 1991; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). As a result, they need activity based instruction which would involve opportunities for language development while doing tasks and activities. Yet another important characteristic of YLs is that they learn fast and forget fast (Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Scot & Ytreberg, 1990). Therefore, it is often proposed that YLs need a lot of recycling for the consolidation of recently learnt knowledge (Slatterly & Willlis, 2001).

Another remarkable characteristic of YLs is their great ability to copy or imitate the sounds of the target language (Brewster et al.,2002; Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Listening to stories as well as songs and rhymes is specifically recommended for children to become aware of the rhythm, intonation and pronunciation of language (Brewster et al., 2002). In addition, YLs are enthusiastic and emotionally excitable (Brewster et al., 2002; Cameron, 2001). Children are willing to have a go and experiment in almost every activity which makes them good risk-takers (Brewster et al., 2002). Yet another characteristic that needs to be

mentioned here is the indispensable place of fantasy and imagination in the world of YLs (Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Halliwell, 1992). According to Halliwell (1992) imagination and stories which involve an element of fantasy help children make sense of the real world.

Finally, YLs are good at exploiting the contextual clues for the comprehension and interpretation of new language. To grasp meaning in L1, children make use of a variety of sources including body language, intonation, facial expression, gesture, actions, circumstances and the social context itself (Brewster et al., 2002; Halliwell, 1992). In order to draw on this skill in TEYL, teachers can make use of contextualization. It is essential to address the various senses, make use of non-verbal clues and the surroundings at school in order to contextualize language (Brewster et al., 2002; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

In line with the argument developed above, it can be claimed that the type of instruction appropriate for YLs needs to include indirect processes that offer meaningful and contextualized language. Since YLs are disposed to think and learn in ways that would be described as holistic, implicit and indirect, they need to be provided with opportunities that allow for the subconscious acquisition of language while their minds are engaged with the task itself (Halliwell, 1992). Thus, children need extensive and continuous exposure to language contextualized in meaningful and enjoyable ways (Cameron 2001; Halliwell, 1992). With their fun and interesting nature, stories are proposed as important tools to contextualize language instruction for YLs.

CONTEXTUALIZING LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH STORIES

Stories can be used as invaluable sources that could support children with contextualization in the language classroom (Brewster et al., 2002; Shrum & Glisan, 1994; Adair-Hauck, Donato & Cumo, 1994; Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Garvie, 1990). They not only provide familiar and comprehensible contexts to present new language but also fit very well in a holistic type of instruction. Stories account for a rich source of vivid language which students can learn subconsciously while pursuing meaning (Brewster et al., 2002; Wright, 2000; Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Garvie, 1990). Besides, with their appealing themes, plots, and characters they have great potential to nourish the linguistic and cognitive growth of YLs. Garvie (1990) indicates that remembering language, thought and experience are inextricably linked, "teachers should be able to offer the kind of experience within the school situation which will stimulate thought and feeling as well as train the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Story can be that kind of experience" (p.30). Furthermore, stories might constitute the starting point for a range of activities that might be designed. It is possible to incorporate language of the syllabus, follow-up games, songs and activities integrating the four basic language skills around story themes (Brewster et al., 2002; Cameron, 2001; Wright, 2000; Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Garvie, 1990).

Contextualizing language instruction with stories may also bring emotional and social advantages for YLs. The familiarity of students in their first language with the activity of storytelling as well as story themes and structure may help to create a familiar and hence, uninhibited language learning environment. Since listening to a story is not traditionally associated with 'learning', the 'affective filter' level is low, and learners would absorb and assimilate more than they would in a formal learning environment (Krashen, 1982).

Moreover, listening to stories in class is a social experience. A feeling of togetherness, besides a shared response of laughter, sadness, excitement, and anticipation is provoked by stories in classroom (Brewster et al., 2002), and this encourages social and emotional development. In addition, team-spirit and cooperation can be boosted through the follow-up activities based on stories (Zaro & Salaberri, 1995). It is possible to create a warm and happy atmosphere in which the teacher and students enjoy working together by using stories in the language classroom (Moon, 2000). With their fun, challenging and motivating nature, stories can help develop positive attitudes towards language learning and create a desire to continue learning (Brewster et al. 2002).

The numerous benefits of using stories in TEYL can be enhanced by benefiting from technology while presenting them instead of their traditional written and oral presentation. Recently, with the latest technological developments, it has become possible to present children's stories in fully multimedia format, with sound, music, and animation. Animations are a source of attraction especially for children due to the colourful characters and catchy visual presentations accompanied by enjoyable sounds and songs. They are accepted to be more likely to capture attention compared to static messages due to the innate tendency of human to respond to things that move (Schwartz, 2003). In addition animations serve as a mnemonic device and provide a framework for storing the message that is delivered verbally by guiding attention to the important concepts in the message (Chan Lin, 1998).

Using animated stories in TEYL holds potential to enhance language learning in several ways. Animated stories provide highly strong visual support and extra audio stimuli. Also, these stories could be stronger than a written

text or a story told by a non-native speaker teacher especially when they are dubbed by native speakers as they may provide learners with genuine samples of the pronunciation and intonation patterns of the foreign language. Using animated stories to contextualize YL language instruction may offer exciting prospects when they are supported with a variety of interactive, meaningful tasks and activities. In addition, they may contribute to more positive and confident attitudes towards learning English.

Yet research on the outcome of using animated stories in language teaching is rare. In a study conducted by Verdugo and Belmonte (2007), it was found that the participants' listening comprehension skills were improved with the exploitation of digital stories in language instruction. The researchers believed that the visual, interactive and reiterative character of digital stories had crucial effect on this result. In another study conducted on the effectiveness of using a multimedia storytelling website on language learning, it was found that the retention of words, phrases and sentences from storyline and the general story recall of the participants were increased (Tsou, Wang, Tzeng, 2006). The researchers indicated that the extra visual and audio stimuli received through the multimedia storytelling website may have facilitated story recalls and students' creativity in recreating stories.

It is important to note that an essential goal of teaching a foreign language at an early age is to instil in children the idea that language learning is a happy experience (Brewster et al., 2002; Cameron, 2001; Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Rixon, 1991). Animated stories used with enjoyable follow-up activities may create that enjoyable learning environment. However, the potential contributions of animated stories to a more positive learning environment in YL language classes have not been studied thoroughly. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate the effect of using animated stories on the attitudes of young EFL learners towards learning English. The following research questions guided the investigation.

1. What are the attitudes of young EFL learners towards learning English at the beginning of the study?
2. What are the attitudes of young EFL learners towards learning English at the end of the study?
3. Does language teaching through animated stories produce any change in young EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English?
4. What are young EFL learners' perceptions of language teaching through animated stories?

RESEARCH METHOD
Participants
The participants were 31 sixth grade students (14 female and 17 male) aged 11-12 in a rural area in Turkey. They had been learning English for two years in a schedule involving English lessons for two hours per week with their class teachers. The language learning materials they had been using at school comprised course books determined by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The students' English proficiency level was considered as 'novice high' according to the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency Guidelines (2004), which means that students were able to understand short, learned utterances and some sentence length utterances; particularly where context strongly supported understanding and speech was clearly audible. The students could ask questions or make statements involving learned material. They also had sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need.

Implementation
As proposed by Brewster et al. (2002), stories can provide the starting point for all kinds of related language learning activities and can be used as short basic syllabuses in their own right. Thus, in this study, animated stories were used as overarching themes into which some basic vocabulary, structures, and functions of the target language were integrated. Five animated stories were used in this study with integrated activities for four English language lessons per week over a ten-week period. The animated stories used in this study, namely, Eeny, meeny, miny, mo, I want to whistle!, The enormous turnip, The three bears, and Where's my hat?, were retrieved from the official website of BBC (2007). The stories were in fully multimedia format, with sound, music, and animation.

While choosing the stories used for the purposes of this study, the criteria proposed by Brewster et al. (2002) as well as Ellis and Brewster (1991) was taken into consideration. A number of characteristics including the level and variety of language in the stories, the suitability and relevancy of their contents, and their authenticity among others were paid special attention. Also, features like whether the texts involved natural repetition, and were interesting and amusing were taken into consideration. Lastly, the researchers tried to select the stories which had potential to help to develop positive attitudes towards the target language, target culture and language learning in general.

Also, while designing and choosing the integrated materials and activities, the objectives of the curriculum and the developmental level of the students were paid special attention. A variety of materials and activities were provided under the story themes in order to make students familiar with the content of the story, concepts in the story or teach and/or revise some of the key language taking the related literature into account (Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). The materials and activities included in line with story themes consisted of worksheets, acting out stories, class surveys, preparing food, games, among others. Also, in the implementation, realia, pictures, flashcards, and power point presentations were additionally used to present the main characters, concepts and vocabulary in the stories.

The conditions of the implementation were confined to the physical circumstances of the school. Even though the stories selected for the purposes of this study were originally prepared for a multimedia environment to be used individually by a child, and required interface skills (e.g. listen, watch and react by clicking on arrows; click on the arrows to follow the story; click on parts of picture, etc.), they were shown on a computer with the help of an LCD data projector and a screen by the teacher since the school could not provide computers for each participant. In the implementation, students viewed each story for three times doing related pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities and worksheets. Some of these included retelling the story, acting out the story, TPR activities, songs, interviewing classmates, conducting a survey, and making a poster among others. Students were also introduced to the related vocabulary and structures present in each story. These vocabulary and structures were presented under the story theme and further practiced with extended activities.

Data Collection
A mixed-methods research technique was adopted for the purposes of this study. Thus, qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments were used to acquire a detailed picture of the perceptions of the particular group on language teaching through animated stories. In order to maintain reliability and validity, multiple data collection tools were used to measure the attitudes of the participants. Berg (2001) suggests that triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data but the attempt to relate them. Thus, for triangulation purposes, data were collected using four data collection tools, namely, a structured attitude questionnaire, an open-ended attitude questionnaire, interviews and lesson evaluation forms.

First, to investigate students' attitudes towards learning English at the beginning and the end of the study, and to find out about potential changes in their attitudes, data were acquired from a structured attitude questionnaire developed by Kara (2003). The tool was a structured five point-Likert- type scale which asked the participants to rate the items from 1= strongly disagree, to 5= strongly agree. The reliability of the measuring instrument was high (Cronbach Alpha 0. 71). It consisted of 58 items and was made up of four parts namely, love of English, interest in learning English, desire for and expectations from learning English, and concerns about learning English. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning and at the end of the study.

In addition, an open-ended attitude questionnaire which was designed by the researchers and given at the beginning and at the end of the study helped to search for the attitudes of the participants towards learning English through animated stories. The questionnaire involved open-ended statements inquiring whether students liked or did not like learning English and students' reasons for finding English lessons difficult or easy.

Furthermore, data collected through a semi-structured interview was conducted. Following Patton (2002) who suggests that semi-structured interview helps to inquire about the interviewees' individual perceptions and experiences through their own judgements and terminologies, the interview was conducted at the end of the study so as to investigate the perceptions of students about instruction through animated stories and the potential changes in their perceptions. The interview, prepared by the researchers, comprised 10 questions related to the students' attitudes towards learning English, animated stories, integrated activities and materials, and their concerns about English lessons. The interview questions were piloted, and necessary modifications concerning the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions were made. Nine participants were selected purposively following non-probability sampling described by Merriam (1998). The interview participants were selected from a mixed sex group and comprised three good, three average, and three below average language learners so as to collect data from a range of participants with different experiences. For reliability purposes, the participants were interviewed by a specialist other than the class teacher. The interviewer was a lecturer involved in English language teaching. The interviews were carried out at the end of the study and were audio recorded for analysis purposes.

Lastly, to investigate students' perceptions about the instructions through animated stories, data were acquired from lesson evaluation forms administered to students at the end of each week during the study. The lesson evaluation forms were used to collect detailed information about the process, the perceptions of the students on

instruction through animated stories, activities, materials, as well as their own involvement in the language learning through the implementation. This instrument was prepared by the researchers and inquired what aspects of the lessons the participants liked or did not like. Participants' perceptions of their own learning and possible reasons for failing to learn were also investigated through these forms. 305 lesson evaluation forms in total were collected from the participants through the study.

Data Analysis
To find out about students attitudes towards language teaching through animated stories, descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS 15.0 for the quantitative data collected via the structured attitude questionnaire. The mean and standard deviation values were analysed for the aforementioned four parts in order to describe the overall picture of how the students rated their perceptions on learning English at the beginning and at the end of the study. Data findings were interpreted on the basis of the maximum and minimum mean values each part in the questionnaire could get.

1. Love of English: In this part there were 10 items that assessed the extent to which participants liked learning English. The part was appointed minimum 10 and maximum 50 points on Likert scale. Higher points indicated a greater degree in students' love of English.

2. Interest in Learning English: This section included 17 items which focused on the extent to which participants were interested in learning English with minimum 17 and maximum 85 points on Likert scale. Higher points indicated a greater interest in learning English.

3. Desire for and Expectations from Learning English: This section consisted of nine items which focused on the participants' desire for and expectations from learning English with minimum nine and maximum 45 points in Likert scale. Higher points indicated greater desire for and expectations from learning English.

4. Concerns about Learning English: This section consisted of 22 items which aimed to identify the participants' concerns about learning English with minimum 22 and maximum 110 points on Likert scale. Higher points indicated greater concern about learning English.

In addition, Paired Samples t-Test was conducted for each part in the structured attitude questionnaire to find out if there were any statistically significant differences between the pre-test, post test mean values; in other words to see whether the students' attitudes towards learning English changed from the beginning to the end of the study.

Data collected through qualitative instruments were analysed and interpreted through qualitative analysis techniques. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the task of qualitative analysis involves "working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learnt and deciding what you will tell others" (p.153). Thus, qualitative data were analysed accordingly.

First, following Berg (2001), data acquired from the open-ended questionnaire was content-analyzed and reappearing themes were identified through repeated readings so as to investigate the students' attitudes towards language teaching with animated stories at the beginning and at the end of the study. The identified themes were reexamined to isolate meaningful patterns and they were tabulated. Likewise, the interview data were transcribed verbatim and codes were analytically developed and transformed into categorical labels as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). The data were reexamined by the two researchers for interreliability purposes and final decisions were reached for meaningful patterns. The findings were presented by relating it to findings acquired from the other tools used in the study. Furthermore, following Berg (2001), data gathered through the lesson evaluation forms were content analyzed. For this purpose, data were coded and divided into categories. After resorting data by these categories, meaningful patterns were identified and conclusions were drawn in light of the previous research and literature.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The data acquired from several research tools including a structured five point-Likert- type attitude questionnaire, an open-ended attitude questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and lesson evaluation forms led to certain findings about students' perceptions of language teaching through animated stories. In this part, the findings and related discussion are presented on the basis of the research questions.

The first and second research questions investigated the attitudes of young EFL learners towards learning English at the beginning and at the end of the study. Also, the third research question investigated whether language teaching through animated stories produced any changes in young EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. The data acquired from the structured questionnaire led to certain findings related to these questions as presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Students' Attitudes towards Learning English at the Beginning and at the End of the Study

Category	Pre-test $\bar{x}$	Post-test $\bar{x}$	t	df	p
Love of English	45.62 (2.64)	46.31 (2.83)	-1.583	29	0.125
Interest in Learning English	75.26 (7.80)	77.44 (8.11)	-1.638	29	0.114
Desire for and Expectations from Learning English	41.60 (3.85)	43.03 (2.95)	-1.646	29	0.110
Concerns about Learning English	56.11 (28.52)	42.11 (19.08)	3.707	29	0.002[*]

Note 1. [*] = $p < .05$, Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.
Note 2. N= 30

The data acquired from the structured questionnaire revealed that students had positive attitudes towards learning English at the beginning and at the end of the study. As shown in Table 1, the findings revealed that a considerable majority of students expressed positive perceptions regarding their love of English ($\bar{x}$ = 45.62 at the beginning of the study, $\bar{x}$= 46.31 at the end of the study), interest in learning English ($\bar{x}$= 75.26 at the beginning of the study, $\bar{x}$=77.44 at the end of the study), desire for and expectations from learning English ($\bar{x}$=41.60 at the beginning of the study, $\bar{x}$=43.03 at the end of the study) both at the beginning and at the end of the study. The results indicated that the students kept their positive attitudes with respect to their love of English, interest in learning English, desire for and expectations from learning English.

As mentioned above, the third research question investigated whether language teaching through animated stories produced any changes in young EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. Paired-samples t-test was conducted for each part in the structured attitude questionnaire to find out whether the differences between the pre-test post-test results were statistically significant. It was found out that language teaching through animated stories produced some changes in students' attitudes towards learning English only with special reference to their concerns about learning English. As Table 1 shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' concerns about learning English at the beginning and at the end of the study ($t_{(29)}$=3,707, p<0.05). The mean values show that there was a decrease in students' concerns about learning English. Whereas the mean value of student's' concerns about learning English was $\bar{x}$= 56.11 at the beginning of the study, it dropped to $\bar{x}$= 42.11 after instruction through animated stories.

The decrease in the participants' concerns about learning English is important in that teaching English through animated stories seems to have helped to create a learning environment that is free of imaginary barriers and apprehension for learners. The relationship between anxiety, learning and classroom performance of students have been pointed out several times in teaching EFL. Krashen (1982) in his affective filter hypothesis states that in order to acquire the "comprehensible input", the affective conditions of the learners should be optimal, which means that the acquirers are motivated, they have self-confidence and a good self-image, and their level of anxiety is low. Also, in TEYL, the importance of a supportive and relaxed learning environment and its contribution to the motivation and learning of YLs is frequently emphasized (Cameron 2001; Halliwell, 1992; Rixon 1991; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). In this study, results seem to indicate that language teaching through animated stories helped to decrease the concerns of most learners in English lessons and thus created a favourable language learning environment for YLs.

Although it was found that students kept their positive attitudes towards learning English and their concerns about learning English decreased at the end of the study, interestingly enough, qualitative findings acquired from the open-ended questionnaire revealed that the number of students who perceived English lessons easy decreased from 24 to 15 at the end of the study. Students' reasons for finding English lessons easy are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of the Students' Perceptions of the Easiness of English Lessons at the Beginning and at the End of the Study

I find English lessons easy because…

At the beginning of the study	f	At the end of the study	f
English classes are fun as songs and games are involved.	5	I understand better when I see images from the story on screen.	3
I love learning English.	4	it is exciting and fun to learn new words.	2
I listen to my teacher carefully, revise, and do homework.	6	stories and acting out the stories are easy.	2
My teacher teaches well.	2	we used the course book last year, but this year we learned by watching stories.	1
		I like English and do my best to learn it.	1
		it is easy when I study.	1
		I like reading and writing in English.	1
		English lessons are fun.	1
		it is easy once you listen carefully.	1
		we hear English from the stories.	1
		I am getting used to pronouncing English words.	1
		we play games and act out stories.	1
		my teacher does revision and I also revise.	1
Total	**17**	**Total**	**17**

As Table 2 shows, while giving reasons why they found English lessons easy, at the beginning of the study, five students cited that English classes were fun as songs and games were involved. Four students stated that they loved learning English that is why they also found it easy. Six students expressed that they listened to the teacher carefully, revised, and did homework that is why English lessons were easy. Lastly, two students cited that their teacher taught well. However, the reasons put forward by the students at the end of the study were different in nature from those stated at the beginning. As indicated in Table 2, at the end of the study, the students' reasons for finding English lessons easy included understanding better through seeing images on screen (cited three times), the excitement of learning new vocabulary (cited twice), the ease of watching and acting out stories (cited twice), learning through watching stories instead of the course book (cited once), finding English lessons fun (cited once) and hearing English from the stories (cited once) among others. It can be stated that, at the end of the study, students' reasons regarding the easiness of English lessons were more related to the method, the activities and materials used in English lessons as compared to those put forward at the beginning of the study. In this respect, findings from the interviews support findings from the open-ended questionnaire. This is clearly illustrated in the following two statements.

Extract 1:
"When I do not understand English in the stories, the pictures make it clear… acting out helps me understand more easily."

Extract 2:
"English lessons this year are so different from those last year. We watch stories, act out and play games this helps me learn and remember vocabulary items better."

Lastly, the fourth research question investigated the perceptions of the participants with regard to language teaching through animated stories. The lesson evaluation forms were especially valuable in providing insight into how exactly students perceived the animated stories, activities, and materials. Data acquired through these forms were also valuable in revealing students' perceptions of their own involvement in the language teaching

contextualized through animated stories. In other words, students' perceptions of their own learning and possible reasons for failing learning were investigated through the lesson evaluation forms.

Table 3 shows students' perceptions with respect to the animated stories used through the implementation. The aspects that the students liked and did not like about the animated stories in particular are presented below.

Table 3: Students' Perceptions of Animated Stories

Aspects that the students liked	f	Aspects that the students did not like	f
Content of the stories	63	Content of the stories	7
Fun element	31	Problem in the sound quality	3
Audio-visual features	23	Speedy narration	2
Vocabulary	8	Vocabulary	2
Learning a lot from the story	4	Boring elements	1
Interesting elements	4		
Total :	**133**	**Total :**	**15**

As Table 3 shows, students had positive perceptions about the animated stories. The aspects that they liked were cited a total of 133 times compared to the aspects that they did not like (cited 15 times). While expressing their perceptions of animated stories, the most frequently favoured aspect was the content of the stories (cited 63 times). When the students referred to the content of the stories they mentioned for example, characters, important events, elements and objects, themes, conversations, or happy endings in the stories. Another significant feature of animated stories emphasized by students was the fun element they involved (cited 31 times). Furthermore, the audio-visual features of the stories were cited for 23 times. Other aspects that the students liked involved the vocabulary in the stories (cited eight times), learning a lot from the stories (cited four times), and interesting elements in the stories (cited four times). As for the aspects that the students did not like, the content of the stories (cited seven times), problem in sound quality (cited three times), the speedy narration (cited twice), the vocabulary in the stories (cited twice), and boring elements (cited once) were noted in the lesson evaluation forms.

As revealed above, the aspect of the stories that the students liked the most is their content. This finding is congruent with what Ellis and Brewster (1991) point out related to the features of stories that should be used in YL classes. According to Ellis and Brewster (1991), the content and subject matter of stories that we use in TEYL is very important in that the story should interest pupils and should be relevant to their needs. In this respect, the reactions of a great majority of students to animated stories show that stories used in this study were appropriate in terms of the content and amusing elements they involved. However, it should also be noted that a comparatively small number of students cited the content as a point that they did not like about the stories. Even though very few students expressed their dislike of the content of the stories, these remarks may be important in showing that individual differences need to be taken into consideration in YL classes. Each language class involves students with different interests, needs and expectations as frequently suggested in literature (Cameron, 2001; Slatterly & Willis, 2001; Halliwell, 1992). It is possible to identify these differences by conducting short surveys or small conversations with children and make adaptations in the design and selection of the materials accordingly.

As revealed by the findings, the fun element involved in the animated stories was ranked the second by the students while expressing their positive perceptions of the stories. This finding is also favourable in that the animated stories selected for the purposes of this study were appropriate for the particular learner group as they were amusing and motivated students by appealing to their sense of humour as suggested by Ellis and Brewster (1991). Data acquired from lesson evaluation forms also revealed that the fun element in the lessons was perceived favourable by most students. In the lesson evaluation forms, when asked to specify what they liked about the particular lessons of that week, students cited a total of 102 times in 305 forms that they liked the lessons because they were fun. These findings consolidate the importance of fun in TEYL. It has been frequently emphasized that YLs take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990; Cameron, 2001; Slatterly & Willis, 2001). Hence, results in our case support the general view that fun is an important component of children's lives and needs to be involved in YL language lessons.

Students' perceptions of language teaching through animated stories were further investigated with specific reference to the activities. Data acquired from the lesson evaluation forms are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of the Activities

Things that the students liked	f	Things that the students did not like	f
Completing worksheets	89	The lesson was noisy.	2
Acting out stories	71	I could not follow because my friend talked too much.	2
Singing songs	50	We did not spend enough time.	1
Competitions, races and games	46	I'd rather act out the story than sing.	1
Watching stories on the screen	39		
Presentation of vocabulary through PowerPoint presentation	34		
All the activities	29		
Matching pictures to sentences.	18		
Fun	3		
Total :	**379**	**Total :**	**6**

As Table 4 presents, the students' perceptions of the activities were quite positive. The aspects that the students liked about the activities were cited a total of 379 times compared to the aspects that they did not like (cited six times). The most frequently favoured activity was completing worksheets (cited 89 times). The other most favoured activities were ranked as acting out the stories (cited 71 times), singing songs (cited 50 times), competitions and games (cited 46 times), and watching stories on the screen (cited 39 times). The participants also cited that they liked watching PowerPoint presentations, which were used to present and practice vocabulary and structures, 34 times. Students stated that they liked all the activities 29 times. Also a total of 18 times, students expressed that they liked matching pictures to sentences. Students mentioned three times that activities were fun. As for the aspects of activities that students did not like, twice, students expressed that the lessons were noisy, and twice, they could not follow them because their friends talked too much and once that more time is necessary for the activities. Lastly, a student stated his/her preference for acting out the story rather than singing a song.

While expressing their perceptions about the activities, students cited completing worksheets as their favourite. When the students referred to the activity of completing worksheets, they cited listening to the stories or songs and completing the related worksheets, matching the vocabulary and pictures in the worksheets as well as doing exercises related to the target structure in the worksheets. Students' interest in doing worksheets might indicate that they felt more active with worksheets as they received them step by step with integrated extension activities that were related to the story theme. Furthermore, when compared to compulsory course books, students might have found completing worksheets given as hand-outs for each story more enjoyable as it may have provided hands-on experience.

Findings from the interviews also revealed that students felt positive about the activities involved in the language teaching through animated stories. In the interviews, five out of nine participants pointed out that activities related to the stories like acting out, working with worksheets, working with pictures, singing, playing games were sources of fun and facilitated their learning. The following extracts illustrate some students' perceptions with respect to activities.

Extract 3:
"We do a lot of activities, I like acting out the stories best, because acting out the stories helps me learn better, and after I study my part, I keep those words better in my memory."

Extract 4:
"Activities are very good. Acting out helps us understand the story better. Once we played a game and glued pictures, it was really fun."

In addition to the participants' perceptions of the animated stories and activities, their perception of the materials and aids used with the animated stories was also investigated. Data acquired revealed through the lesson evaluation forms are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Students' Perceptions of the Materials and Aids

Things that the students liked	f	Things that the students did not like	f
Audio-visual aids	187	The volume is too loud.	4
Worksheets	133	The screen is too high.	1
Materials used for drama	100		
Realia	64		
Materials used for vocabulary / grammar teaching	62		
Pictures	54		
Board	45		
Materials used for games	11		
Total :	**656**	**Total :**	**5**

The overall results indicate that students generally had positive perceptions related to the materials and aids used in the language instruction through animated stories. As Table 5 shows, the aspects that the students liked were cited a total of 656 times compared to the aspects that they did not like (cited five times). The audio-visual aids were the most favoured materials and aids by the students (cited 187 times). Other materials and aids favoured by the students were worksheets (cited 133 times), and materials used for drama (cited 100 times), which involved crowns, jewellery, costumes, masks, hats, all kinds of toys used for drama activities. These were followed by realia (cited 64 times), materials used for vocabulary and grammar teaching (cited 62 times). Also, pictures (cited 54 times), the board (cited 45 times) and the materials used for games (cited 11 times) were noted by the students as favourable aspects. As for the aspects that the students did not like, only two aspects, the loudness of volume (cited four times) and the height orientation of the screen (cited once) were noted by the students.

Among the materials and aids used through the implementation, audio-visual materials and aids, namely, the computer, screen, projector and speakers, were the most favoured ones. It has been frequently emphasized that audio-visual materials and aids are not sufficiently used in language classes in Turkish primary schools; however learners express desire for their use (Aküzel, 2006; Atak Damar, 2004; Mersinligil, 2002). In our case, many activities like viewing stories, learning songs from the video clips, viewing and practicing vocabulary and structures through power point presentations among others brought about the involvement of audio-visual features in the English lessons, and it is clear that using audio visual-aids in English language classes was greatly favoured by YLs.

The audio-visual aspect of the lessons was also a frequent theme raised by the students in the interviews. Six students out of nine referred to the audio-visual aspect while explaining the improved gains and learning outcomes in English lessons. Students expressed their contentment with the use audio-visual materials and aids in English lessons and explained how it improved their understanding of English as in the extracts below.

Extract 5:
"Last year English lessons were not so much fun. We didn't have stories, we mostly learned from the book. This year, we learn better. Seeing everything on the screen is better and I can understand more easily."

Extract 6:

"I like English lessons more this year. We did not watch anything on the screen last year; we followed the course book. That is why this year is better….I understand better through stories than books. I can see stories on the screen but there are not many visuals in the course books …. I did not understand much English last year. This year the teacher teaches through stories. That is why I understand much better."

As revealed through the findings reported above, while explaining the improved gains and learning outcomes students frequently referred to the visual aspects of the lessons. The visual aspects involved activities like viewing stories, learning songs from the video clips, viewing and practicing vocabulary and grammar through power point presentations. The perceptions of students verify the importance of seeing for understanding and learning as emphasized by Halliwell (1992), who pointed out that "seeing as a source of understanding is central to language work" (p. 132).

This result further seems to support the idea that contextualisation through the visual clues provided by animations can facilitate the comprehension of stories. Animated stories provide YLs with an integration of two basic senses; seeing and listening, which results in improved understanding of the spoken language. As Halliwell (1992) states the integration of seeing and listening can be a basic source for indirect learning. Also Pinter (2006) suggests that incorporating various senses makes learning memorable. Especially the data acquired through the interviews show that animated stories increased students listening comprehension and story retention. Other studies conducted in second language comprehension in listening also show that appropriate digital stories can prove to be very useful in developing children's listening skills and comprehension, due to their visual, interactive, and reiterative features (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007; Tsou, Wang & Tzeng, 2006).

Lastly, the participants' perceptions of their own learning in the language teaching with animated stories were investigated. Students' perceptions acquired from lesson evaluation forms are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Students' Perceptions of What they Learned in English Lessons

I believe that I have learned something this week, for example	f	I do not believe that I have learned something this week because	f
Vocabulary	240	my classmates made a lot of noise.	6
Structure	159	it was boring.	2
Listening skills	14	the vocabulary was difficult.	2
Singing in English	13	I could not concentrate on lessons.	1
Culture	5		
Speaking	4		
Total :	**435**	**Total :**	**11**

As Table 6 shows, the students' perception of their learning outcomes is very positive. The items that the students claimed to have learned were cited 435 times. On the other hand, students expressed that they did not learn anything during that week and cited reasons for that for 11 times. The most frequently cited aspect of language that the students claimed to have learned was vocabulary (cited 240 times). Also, students cited 159 times that they believed they had learned particular structures, noting down, for example, "My favourite colour is yellow"," He likes cherries", "I can run" among others. In addition, the participants referred to improving their listening skills 14 times. They used expressions like, "I understood what I listened to" or "I listened to and learned stories". In addition, students expressed 13 times that they learned singing in English. The least frequently cited aspects were culture (five times) and speaking (four times). On the other hand, some students also gave reasons for failing learning in these lessons. The noise created by the classmates (cited six times), finding the lesson boring (cited twice), finding the vocabulary difficult (cited twice), and being unable to concentrate were raised as the reasons why some students failed to learn in the lessons.

As revealed through the lesson evaluation forms, students noted down many vocabulary items, structures or other aspects of the language that were targeted in language teaching contextualized through animated stories. Obviously, the learning outcomes can best be evaluated through testing procedures. As the students' language proficiency was not assessed in the study, the findings do not necessarily indicate that the course objectives were

completely reached. Yet, it might imply that students believed they comprehended and learned a lot during the contextualized language instruction through animated stories.

Data gathered through the interviews also indicated that the participants perceived that they learned a lot more and comprehended much better in language instruction through animated stories compared to the previous year's English lessons. Five students out of nine referred to increased learning outcomes in English compared to the previous year. They relate their reasons for increased comprehension and retention to the elements involved in language teaching through animated stories. For example:

Extract 7:
"Last year we mostly used the course book. The teacher very rarely brought different things to class. This year we do not use the course book at all but we use the computer…. Watching on the screen is better because we can understand by seeing pictures….We also act out. I learned a lot more this year."

Extract 8:
"We did not watch stories in English lessons last year but we do now. It is better because we can keep the things we learned in our minds easily…. When the teacher does exams and asks about the stories we can tell about them and even rewrite them. My exam results are better this year."

CONCLUSION
The overall findings have shown that animated stories may serve as important tools to contextualize the target items of language in natural and meaningful ways not only with their strong text structures but also with the visual and audio stimuli they provide. In addition, they could serve as a background and starting point for the follow up activities, giving children the chance to practice language in contexts linked to the story themes. Last but not least, they could help to create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment. The study appears to prove that students' concerns related to learning English decreased with language teaching contextualized through animated stories. Rixon (1991) proposes that one of the main objectives of primary school language learning should be to "promote the formation of a positive attitude to language learning in general" (p.35) and language instruction through animated stories seem to have helped in fostering and maintaining such positive attitudes.

This particular study has certain limitations. First, it should be noted that the study was conducted with a group of sixth grade students of a primary school in Adana, Turkey. Therefore, conclusions need to be verified by conducting similar studies with students from different grades, across different countries with different cultural backgrounds. Also, the study aimed to investigate the role of animated stories on the attitudes of students. The language development of the students was not within the scope of the study. Thus, a further study that aims to investigate the effect of language teaching through animated stories on learners' language proficiency would be beneficial.

Despite these limitations, some implications for practice can still be drawn from the results of this study. First, the necessity to create a learning environment in which children get both aural and visual support in meaningful contexts should be emphasized in TEYL. Animated stories offer an invaluable way of contextualizing and introducing new language by providing audio-visual input and authentic story narration. These stories offer teachers opportunities to present and recycle vocabulary and grammar in context as well as integrating many extension activities related to the story theme. Thus, curriculum developers and teachers should remember that with animated stories, they can exploit audio visual clues and advantages of story narrative for contextualizing target language effectively.

Lastly, variety in materials and activities is crucial to increase and maintain the interest of YLs throughout English language lessons. Rather than relying on the course book as the sole teaching material, teachers should supplement and enrich their classroom practices by using materials appropriate for YLs. Materials such as pictures and realia help not only to attract students' attention but also to make learning contextualized. Moreover, incorporation of technological devices, like computers and projectors, for viewing stories, as well as activities like learning songs from the video clips, viewing vocabulary and grammar power point presentations not only maintain contextualization and variety but also help to support and facilitate comprehension.

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