



The effect of short stories on teaching vocabulary to very young learners (aged 3-4-year): A suggested common syllabus¹

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Abstract

In recent decades, teaching and learning English has gained importance not only for adults but also even for very young children. Therefore, games, songs, art-craft activities and short stories have proved to be practical instruments for very young learners; especially, short stories are great tools to teach vocabulary as words are best acquired in a meaningful context. This study, hence, focuses on exploring whether very young learners can learn English effectively through a short story-based syllabus or not. This study was carried out in a preschool in Ankara, Turkey and the participants of the study were 28 preschoolers aged 3-4. The children were chosen randomly and they were classified into two groups as the experimental and the control groups. The units designed on and around short stories were used just in the experimental group; in those units, songs, cartoons, realia were also used to enhance the learning process; but the main focus was kept on short stories and story-based activities. The same vocabulary items were also used in the control group and it was aimed to teach those vocabulary items in both groups in 7 weeks in this study. Pre and post tests were designed and used, and permanence observations were carried out after the study to determine the recall rate of the participants. At the end of the study, the results showed that children in the experimental group could remember more vocabulary items than the others since they learned them in a meaningful and enjoyable short story-based context.

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1. Introduction

Age has often been considered as a major, if not the primary, factor determining success in learning a second or a foreign language. Children are generally considered to be capable of acquiring a new language easily and with little effort. Therefore, there has been an increasing demand in foreign language education in kindergarten; and a great number of kindergartens have begun to give courses in English so as to meet the demand, because it is believed that young children put far less effort to learn new languages compared to that of adult learners (Halliwell, 1992; Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1981).

In this period, teaching very young learners requires a new perspective in comparison to teaching adults. The mood of very young children tends to change even each minute, and they find it extremely

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difficult to sit still. On the other hand, they can show a greater motivation to learn a foreign language than most adults do. In order to be effective in teaching English, the teacher has to be inventive in selecting interesting materials and activities and also s/he should provide a great variety of these materials. For example; cartoons, realia, songs, flashcards and games are suitable means to foster young learners' imagination and fantasy (Sert, 2004; Pinter, 2006; Arıkan & Ulaş-Taraf, 2010; Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011). Additionally, brightly colored visuals, toys and puppets are quite effective to keep very young learners engaged in activities (Linse & Nunan, 2005). According to Harmer (2007), since children are curious and love discovering things and using their imagination, they may well be involved in puzzle-like activities, creating new things, games, physical activities and songs. Furthermore, tongue twisters, riddles and storytelling are effective activities to attract young learner's attention and make learning process enjoyable as well (Damar, 2009).

Although the importance of teaching English to very young learners is a well-known fact, there is not a specific curriculum or syllabus for teaching English to very young learners in Turkey, so, in this study, a sample syllabus is designed and the main aim of this study is to determine whether very young learners can learn English effectively through a short story-based syllabus or not. As considering all of these activities and materials that can be used to teach English to very young learners, this syllabus is organized with short stories-based activities; because, nowadays, short stories have come a universally acknowledged and exploited fundamental learning tool in teaching/learning English (Krashen, 1982; Collie and Slater, 1991; Ellis and Brewster, 1991; Wright, 1995; Slattery & Willis, 2001; Wajnryb, 2003; Cameron, 2005; Pardede, 2010; Sariçoban and Küçüköğlü, 2011; Mart, 2012) as a foreign language. And for this reason, short stories can be used to teach English to very young learners in an effective way.

1.1. Review of Literature

1.1.1. Who are "Very Young Learners"?

The term, "Very Young Learners", has a wide variety of definitions; one of the earliest of these definitions was made by Montessori in 1900s. To Montessori, the first six years of life are the most important years of a child's growth when unconscious learning gradually emerges to the conscious level (Mooney, 2000). Additionally, the term, "Very Young Learners", is defined by Reilly and Ward (2003) as "children who have not yet compulsory schooling and have not yet started to read" (p.5). This definition underlines the illiteracy of very young learners, and according to Reilly and Ward (2003), very young learners are not in the school age, yet.

In addition, there have been an abundance of theories and classifications in relation to the term, 'very young learners'. One of the most important theories about very young learners is the *Critical Period Hypothesis* which was firstly introduced by Penfield in 1959 (Singleton, 2007) and this hypothesis emphasizes the importance of early childhood in human life. The term, 'critical period', in a formal education, especially in language acquisition, refers to a period of time when learning a language is easier and effective than the other periods of human life.

In this study, the term, "very young learners" refers to children at the age of 3 and 4; they are not literate or they are not given any special education for literacy. Additionally, they are supposed to be curious, egocentric, energetic and active both in social and educational life. These children have a very limited attention span and they are willing to learn new and different concepts about environment and general life (Mooney, 2000). As their abilities and capabilities change and improve monthly, in this study, children between 36-48 months are determined as the target "very young learners" group.

1.1.2. Teaching instruments in English language teaching to very young learners

In their first five years, children develop various foundation skills such as language, thinking, motor skills, emotional, and interpersonal ones which are necessary for their whole life. Children are born with an innate capacity and need to discover and explore, and these innate capacity and need should be supported by educators, families and social environment in order to facilitate a more successful and fruitful academic life in advance for very young learners (Reilly & Ward, 2003; Pinter, 2006). When supporting these skills, different activities, methods and instruments enhance the process of learning in early childhood. The use of various teaching activities to teach a foreign language has a great influence on these learners (Çakır, 2004). Mixed activities, chants, poems, songs and rhymes can help students to develop their speaking abilities while also making their pronunciation better; at the same time, their awareness of the language can improve easily (Klancar, 2006).

Additionally, very young children, like adults, have a combination of intelligences and learning styles. According to Gardner (2003), there are eight main “intelligence” types; Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Bodily Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Musical, and Naturalist intelligences. Howard Gardner has maintained that all children possess all eight types of the intelligences; though some intelligence types may be stronger than others. This accounts for why children have a preferred learning style, different interests, likes and dislikes (Morrison, 1997, p.309). In the light of this theory, in foreign language teaching to very young learners, activities and teaching instruments should be chosen carefully and organized by the educators for each types of intelligence.

Briefly, using different teaching instruments and activities in English language teaching to very young learners is very important in foreign language learning and teaching process. For this reason, this study covers a variety of different teaching instruments such as games, songs, realia and some different techniques and activities for the children.

First of all, game is one of the most important and useful teaching instruments for very young learners. Because of the ages, grades and characteristics of very young learners, games are thought to be indispensable parts of early childhood education. Froebel, known as the father of kindergartens, states that play is the work of a child (Riley, 2003). John Dewey, also, believes that children learn while playing and that children’s engagement in playing can be associated with everyday activities (Morrison, 1997). Piaget, another important name in cognitive development, emphasizes that play promotes cognitive knowledge and thanks to games, children construct knowledge or their world (Morrison, 1997). Like Piaget, Vygotsky believes that much learning takes place when children play. He states that language and development may improve each other. When children play, they constantly use language (Mooney, 2000). Vygotsky views the social interactions in play is essential to children’s development.

Additionally, art and craft activities make children be aware of the personal development and they help them to improve different language skills effectively. These are specifically helpful for developing the conceptualization of colors, shapes, and numbers and vocabulary items in early childhood education. These teaching instruments provide a meaningful context for children; and also, they can motivate them to use language skills effectively in their learning environment.

Also, in language learning environment, children have to hear as much their target language as possible, because it is not easy for them to hear a foreign language out of the classroom. Jalongo (2007) claims that listening is a language skill that is used the earliest and it continues throughout life. For this reason, in the classroom, the courses should be enriched by using different listening activities. One of the most important listening activities for very young learners is song and music. Ward (1980) states that in language learning and teaching, songs and music have an important role.

In addition to these instruments, literary works in language acquisition process for very young learners can enrich the classroom environment in terms of using different and meaningful activities.

After examining the characteristics of very young learners and language learning environment, it is clear that many kinds of literary works suitable for children such as, dramatization, chants & rhymes, poetry and storytelling are to enhance the teaching and learning process both for the teacher and the students. These should carefully be integrated into education programs and then the context of each course can be designed on and around them. Among many genres of literary works, the benefits of using short stories in foreign language classes are undeniably overwhelming; therefore they can widely be used as teaching materials in the classroom of very young learners. Wright (2004, p.3) aptly states that “stories are particularly important in the lives of our children: stories help children to understand their world and share it with others.”

In this sense, the benefits of using short stories are categorized by Collie and Slater (1991) into four groups; first of all, short stories are practical as their length is suitable to be used in the classroom environment; secondly, short stories do not consist of complex matters for the learners to work on their own; thirdly, short stories have a variety of choices for different needs and interests; and finally, short stories can be used for all levels all ages and all classes (morning, afternoon, or evening classes).

While using literary works of art in teaching vocabulary to very young learners, a teacher should be very careful about the genre; novels are not appropriate because of their length; drama is not suitable because of its hardness and complex characterization and plot; poetry is not easy because of its complicated and figurative sentence structures; but short stories can be used effectively as they are short, easy and understandable for very young learners (Lau, 2002). So, if it is determined carefully in terms of the cognitive abilities of very young learners, using short stories in early childhood education is an attractive and creative teaching tool in the vocabulary teaching process (Lau, 2002; Loukina, 2006). In this study, thus, short story-based activities are used to teach vocabulary to very young learners. This study aims to investigate whether the very young learners can effectively learn the vocabulary items presented in the short story at the recognition level and whether the learning at recognition level is permanent or not.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

In this study, the twenty-eight participants who were the preschool students in Ankara were chosen randomly and they were randomly separated into two groups as experimental and control group. The participants were at the age of 3-4 and they were at that preschool for four months. According to the results of interviews with their parents, it was understood that these children didn't have any English courses or lessons before their preschool life and also the native language of all participants was Turkish. For this reason, in this study, there was no need for an English proficiency level determination because all of the participants were true beginners.

2.2. The research method

This study was formed as an experimental research design; and the randomized pretest- posttest-control group design was used in this study. One of the most important reasons to determine this kind of experimental research design was to identify the effects of short-story based syllabus and activities on teaching English to very young learners and determine the success of treatment used in this study. The study is carried out just for the participants in the experimental group, and the control group is just observed. The results of the pre-post test were analyzed via video recordings and observations for two groups. In order to reach more valid and reliable results, the students were observed two and six weeks after the main study and these results were also compared for two groups.

2.3. *Data collection instrument*

The data collection instrument in this study was an observation checklist form purposefully designed for very young learners for this study and video recordings of the lessons. Observation is one of the most widespread data collection instrument in the field of teaching vocabulary to very young learners (Reed and Edelbrock, 1983; Nock and Kurtz, 2005; Malderez, 2003). While designing the observation checklist, due to the lack of a specific curriculum or syllabus for foreign language teaching to very young learners in Turkey, literature in this field was used while preparing some items on teaching a foreign language (English) to very young learners. The observation checklist was prepared in three main sections which were under the title of “Knowledge and Understanding (12 items)”, “Language Skills (10 items)” and “Attitudes and Values (5 items)” and there were 27 observation items in this checklist (see Appendix A). The items were formed as whole sentences and there was not any kind of open-ended question or phrases in the main concepts. Additionally, this observation checklist was designed in English to avoid language and concept misunderstandings that may have occurred owing to possible lack of terminology on some of the vocabulary items, also some examples were given in brackets. For the aim of supplying consistency of the checklist, the main sections and items and the complete checklist were controlled and approved by two experts in the field in English Language Teaching Department.

2.4. *Data collection procedure*

The present study was carried out in a private preschool in Ankara and it took place in February and March during 2012-2013 Spring Semester. The participants had twenty minutes of English courses each day for eight weeks, and the data was collected by means of regular classroom observations in the classroom environment by the researcher. The observations were concluded under the similar classrooms for the learners in control and experimental groups. The main aim was to evaluate the number of vocabulary items learned by the learners and to observe whether the learning was meaningful and permanent or not. Lessons in the study were recorded in order to have an opportunity to analyze each section in detail after the observation sessions.

Before starting the study, two units related to children’s interests were designed by using short stories (see Appendix B). These units were implemented in control group. There was not any kind of short story based activity in their syllabus. Since the main aim of the study was to teach vocabulary items by using short stories, 30 vocabulary items about the units of “toys” and “body parts” were selected in accordance with children’s interests. In the first week, the same activities were used in both groups in order to supply an equivalent environment and the results of this week were used as the pretest. While getting information in the first week, the observation checklist designed for the study was used as a data collection instrument. During the following seven weeks, the study was carried out by using the designed syllabus and activities for two groups. In order to supply equivalent conditions, the courses in both groups were maintained by the researcher. As they were very young learners, the participants were not expected to produce language, but they were just supposed to acquire the vocabulary items. Therefore, if they had acted the vocabulary item out or had given physical responses to the researcher, it was assumed that they had already learned this vocabulary item. During the study, the courses in both groups were recorded. For the sake of validity and reliability, these recordings were watched and checked out by the researcher and two other experts in the field in English Language Teaching Department. Both researcher and the experts ticked the observation checklist by watching the video recordings. At the end of this process, the data collected from the checklists of the researcher and the experts were used as the posttest of the study and analyzed in terms of vocabulary items.

Two and six weeks after the main study, the same children in the study were re-observed in order to evaluate permanency of the teaching and as a result of the weeks, result were getting from the data gathered via observation checklist. The results of these two permanence observations can well lead to better evaluation and interpretation of the effect of the short story based syllabus. The previously used observation checklist was used for the same children in order to determine the permanence of the study. After two weeks from the study, children were observed for the same vocabulary items taught in the study and they were recorded, and these recordings were analyzed by two experts again by using the observation checklist. After six weeks from the main study, the same syllabus and the same observation checklist were used again for the same children. Again, the courses were recorded and analyzed with the help of two experts. The results were compared and the permanence level of vocabulary learning through short story based syllabus was determined with the help of these repeated observation sessions.

3. Results

In this study, first, a private preschool in Ankara was chosen randomly. The participants were 28 preschoolers aged 36-48 months in the study. They were classified into two groups as the experimental and control group. Then, the observation checklist was formed by reviewing the literature in the field and this checklist was used as both pretest and posttest data collection tool for the study. The main aim of the study was to determine the effectiveness of short story-based syllabus on vocabulary teaching to very young learners. So, short story-based activities were designed and this syllabus was implemented just in experimental groups for seven weeks. This process was recorded and those recordings were analyzed with the help of two experts in English Language Teaching Department. After analyzing the video recordings, the observation checklist designed for the study was filled by these two experts and the researcher.

The results of the study were analyzed for each week and it was found out that there was a mean difference between the first and last week of the participants in terms of vocabulary learning. At the beginning of the study, it was seen that there was not a mean difference between two groups in terms of language skills, knowledge in vocabulary items and attitudes towards the foreign language learning environment. Since the ages and grades of the children were supposed to be equal to each other, their recognition levels for these titles were almost at the same level. Additionally, as they were very young, they all liked songs, games and art-craft activities, so they could be easily motivated for English language learning; that is, they enjoyed the lessons and they could learn nearly all of the vocabulary items covered in the study for the first week. Therefore, it is observed that there was not a mean difference between two groups for the first week, and they could learn easily even if there was not a meaningful context. As there were three main sections in the observation checklist designed for the study, the results for each week were analyzed under these three sections and the results of the first week are given in terms of main titles of the checklist in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the first week in terms of vocabulary teaching

Sections in the Observation Checklist	Control Group	Experimental Group
Title	Results of Pretest	Results of Pretest
Language Skills	43.8%	47.3%
Knowledge and Understanding	41.6%	39.7%
Attitudes and Values	59.5%	52.8%

After the first week, the units designed with short story-based activities were used in the experimental group and some basic vocabulary teaching activities without short stories were used in control group. All the lessons were recorded in the study and those video recordings were observed by two experts and the researcher. The results of the last week were used as posttest data in the study. The main aim of this analyzing was to reveal whether there was a significant effect of using short story-based syllabus on enhancing vocabulary teaching for very young learners or not. The data gathered from the last week of the study was analyzed as the posttest of the study.

At the end of the study, it was observed that children in both groups had a progress in terms of learning the vocabulary items. However, ‘Language Skills’ were the most highly pointed part in the observation checklist. As the development of language skills are the pillars of foreign language teaching, activities and materials were designed in order to improve these skills in the study; for this reason, the results of this section in the checklist were pointed out mostly. The section under the title of ‘Knowledge and Understanding’ is the second highly pointed section in the study. Because the understanding level of children has a key role in vocabulary learning process, their understanding abilities and knowledge were analyzed in the study. Finally, ‘Attitudes and Values’ of children in terms of foreign language teaching process were designed to determine the positive or negative reactions of very young learners towards the foreign language learning environment by observing the children in the classroom environment.

In the first section of the observation checklist, listening and speaking abilities of children were studied in detail. According to the pretest results, it is obvious that children in both groups were successful almost at the same level; 47.3 % of children in the experimental group and 43.8 % of children in the control group were at the recognition level for this section. As there was a character, named “Bubble”, purposefully developed for children in the experimental group, the children in this group were more motivated and they could be more successful in involving the activities throughout the study. Yet, at the end of the study, there was not a meaningful difference between the language skills levels of the children, because children in both groups got accustomed both to the researcher and the teaching style in the lessons.

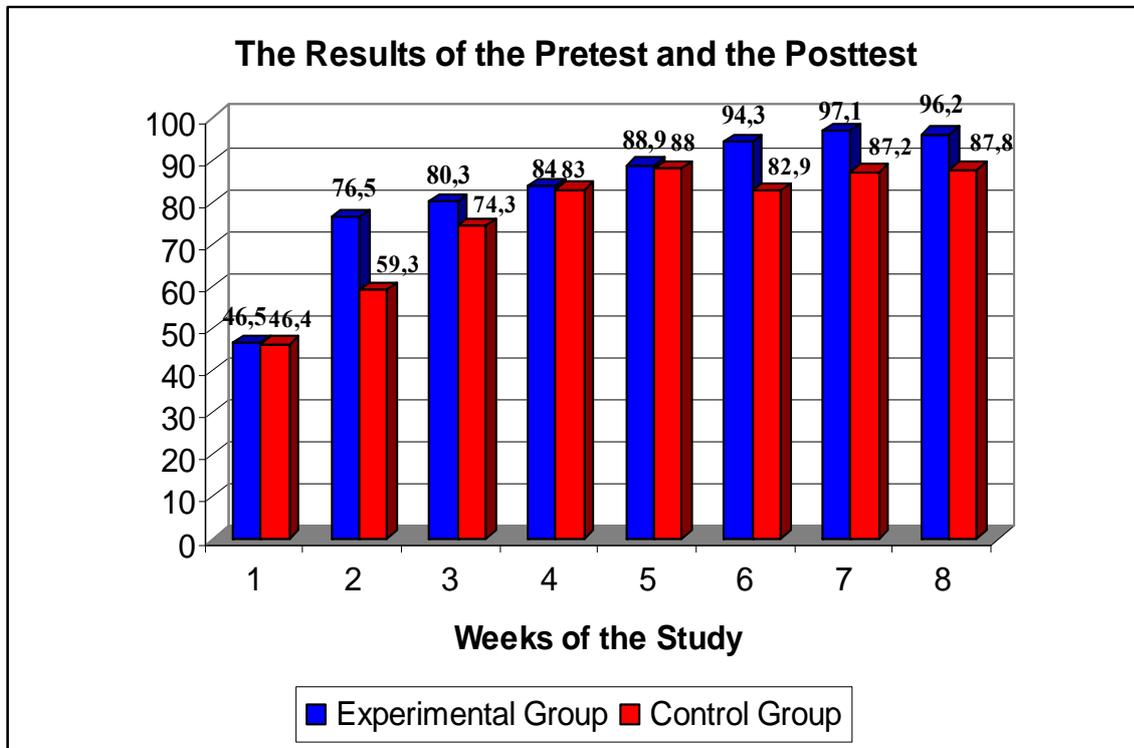
In the second part of the checklist, knowledge and understanding levels of the children were analyzed in detail. In this part, 39.7 % of children in the experimental group and 41.6 % of children in the control group actively participated in the lessons according to the results of pretest. At the end of the study, as seen in Table 1, the control group had 80.9% of recognition level, while experimental group had 97.6% of recognition level for the same section; this means that there was a meaningful difference between two groups in terms of vocabulary learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that the short story-based syllabus has an important effect on improving the understanding capacities while learning vocabulary items and it can be effectively used for teaching vocabulary to very young learners.

In the last section of the observation checklist, children’s attitudes and values were discussed in terms of the language learning process and the learning environment. According to the pretest results given in Table 1, 52.8 % of children in the experimental group and 59.5% of children in the control group could react positively in the classroom environment. Yet, at the end of the study, control group had 90.4% of recognition level, while experimental group had 93.8% for the same section; this means that there is not a meaningful difference between the attitudes and values levels of the children in both groups and children in both groups have a positive attitude toward the foreign language teaching lessons and the learning environment. To make clearer the effectiveness of short story-based syllabus on teaching vocabulary to very young learners, the results gained in the first week of the study and posttest (the last of the study) were compared and the results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The comparison of the results of the first week and the last week

Sections in the Observation Checklist	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	First Week	Last Week	First Week	Last Week
Language Skills	43.8%	95.9%	47.3%	95.7%
Knowledge and Understanding	41.6%	80.90%	39.7%	97.6%
Attitudes and Values	59.5%	90.4%	52.8%	93.8%

In terms of the general points in the study, Graphic 1 was designed to be helpful to analyze the general results of the pretest and the posttest of the study. The weekly results of the study and the level of children in both groups are generally shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** General results of groups in the study

In general, the short story-based units are found to be effective according to the results given in Figure 1. According to the results of the study, total points for all weeks in control group was calculated as 80.5 % of general points, whereas this results was seen as 88.2 % for the experimental group. From these results, it can be claimed that there is a little difference between two groups at the end of the study in terms of vocabulary learning. That is, at the end of the study, children in both groups progress in foreign language learning, but in experimental group, there is a rapid and consistent learning environment.

3.1. *The first permanence observation for the study*

After the completion of the observation in 7 weeks, a permanence observation was conducted after two weeks from the main study in order to determine the permanence level of the syllabus used in the experimental group. The most important aim of this section was to determine the effectiveness and the permanence of the short story-based syllabus designed by the researcher in terms of vocabulary teaching to very young learners. For this reason, first, the vocabulary items taught in seven weeks by the researcher were listed and those were observed in order to indicate the permanence of the short story-based syllabus in teaching vocabulary. The same items in the observation checklist designed by the researcher were used as a data collection instrument. During this process, classroom environment and children were recorded with a video camera and at the end of the permanence study, these recordings were re-watched in order to fill in the observation checklist. Filled checklists were analyzed in the same way as in the main study and the percentages of this section were determined at the end of the observing process.

As a result of this observation, it was documented that children in both groups had the same level in terms of counting the numbers, categorizing the colors and singing the song. That is, children in both groups learned numbers, colors and songs in the same level even if different lesson plans were implemented in the classroom environment. Additionally, there was a mean difference between two groups in terms of matching the vocabulary items, recognizing the adjectives and touching the items. So, it can be claimed that children in the experimental group had more permanent language knowledge in terms of vocabulary items and also they were more successful in learning some emotional expressions and adjectives.

3.2. *The second permanence observation for the study*

Although children learn easily throughout an effective learning process, they can easily forget whatever they have learned if not repeated regularly in advance. For this reason, in this study, children were re-observed 6 six weeks after the main study. Again, vocabulary items taught in the study were listed and the same observation checklist was used. During this observation period, the classroom environment and the children were recorded and at the end of the second permanence observation, those recordings were analyzed in order to fulfill the observation checklist once more for the comparison. The filled checklists for the children were analyzed and the percentages of the study were determined.

As a result of the second permanence observation period, it was noted that children in both groups had the same level in terms of singing the songs. This means that children in each group could sing the song in the same level even if different lesson plans were used in the classroom environment. However, there was a mean difference between two groups in terms of matching, recognizing the adjectives, choosing the correct objects, drawing the pictures and touching the items. Therefore, it can be stated that the children in the experimental group acquired more consistent vocabulary items knowledge and also they were more successful in learning and remembering some emotional expressions and adjectives. Also it can be said that children in the experimental group were more willing to participate in the activities after six weeks from the study. They were more motivated and encouraged for the learning environment.

It is concluded from this study that even if almost all children included in this study could learn some vocabulary items, there was a mean difference between two groups in terms of permanence of the learned vocabulary items. Especially adjectives and physical emotions were not remembered by many children in the control group. To sum up, it can be said that children in the experimental group were more successful while remembering the vocabulary items related to the adjectives and 'Body Parts' even after 6 weeks. Thus it can be assumed that if the units, lesson plans and the syllabus used in the classroom

environment for experimental group could have been used for a longer span of time, the teaching could have been more effective and permanent while at the same time motivating and encouraging the children more in English language learning.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of teaching vocabulary to very young learners through a short story-based syllabus. It aims to determine the improvement in learning abilities, attitudes, values and language skills learning levels of very young learners by using an observation checklist following the use of a short-story based syllabus. A syllabus to cover the learning abilities of children according to the data gathered from the observation checklist is also suggested as Appendix A at the end of the study.

According to the main results of the study, it can be claimed that there is a difference between two groups at the end of the study in terms of learning the vocabulary items in English language. For this reason, it can be claimed that using a short story-based syllabus can supply a more permanent language learning process for very young learners. As it has been stated by Loukina (2006), children have a lot of chances to listen to different stories in their early childhood; for instance, in their family life, there might be a variety of people telling different stories and these stories lay a ground for further acquisition in advance in children's mind. Owing to these storytelling activities, children get accustomed to listening to short stories, thus, short stories can easily turn into one of the most useful and practical teaching tools in their school life. The benefits of using short stories are valid for young children; therefore, the teachers can integrate short stories in their curriculums.

This study has additionally marked that short story-based lesson plans (see Appendix B), as a means to teaching vocabulary to very young learners, are important teaching materials for children. The results support the general idea that children aged between 3-4-year-old do feel more comfortable and motivated in a classroom environment designed with a short story-based syllabus. As Wright (2004, p.3) aptly states "stories are particularly important in the lives of our children: stories help children to understand their world and share it with others." So, the results of this study suggest that the use of short stories integrated into syllabus can highly improve the motivation and imagination of very young learners and these kinds of activities can be used not just for young learners but for very young learners, as well.

It is furthermore reflected in this study that the use of short-story in foreign language teaching should be focused on encouraging the learners to use what they have previously learned and/or experienced. By doing this, the learning process will be more meaningful and prolific for the learners (Pardede, 2011, p.18). In terms of language acquisition, Cameron (2001, cited in Harrasi, 2012) assumes that stories not only develop language skills but they also help children broaden their vocabulary knowledge, since the learners can hear many new words when they listen to these vocabulary items. For this reason, using short stories in foreign language development can be said to have a key role in the learning process. It can also be suggested by the findings of this study that, as children in these years are energetic, curious and egocentric, their needs and interests should have been taken into consideration while determining and designing the activities and teaching materials. Hence, short stories can be both enjoyable and meaningful for children; and also, they can be useful for both egocentric and curious children in these ages.

Finally, as it is stated by Pardede (2011, p.17) "since it is short, and aims at giving a 'single effect', there is usually one plot, a few characters; there is no detailed description of setting". Therefore, using short stories in the classroom as a teaching material is easy for the students to follow the story line of

the work and as a teaching material, short stories can be used to practice language, comprehend reading skills and improve aesthetic appreciation in foreign language teaching. In parallel with the statement of Pardede (2011), this study also signifies the idea that short stories and some short story-based activities can be used as a very effective and beneficial way in terms of foreign language learning process in order to be successful in teaching vocabulary to very young learners.

In conclusion, in this study, the interpretation of the observation checklists shows that a short story-based syllabus and some activities related to this syllabus can be used in order to motivate very young learners and make them involved in the learning process. For this reason, by examining the results of the pretest and reviewing the literature in detail, a syllabus consisting of 9 units was developed for very young learners and it was suggested as a common syllabus to teach vocabulary items in English to very young learners (See appendix B). All in all, short story-based syllabus and activities aim to address children's grades, needs and interests in foreign language learning process. Owing to this kind of syllabus, children can be more motivated, encouraged and involved in the foreign language learning environment and they can be active in this environment. Hence, it is an effective way to teach English to very young learners.

4.1. Suggestions for further researches

In this study, the observation checklists were analyzed and a short story-based syllabus was developed in order to supply a material in English courses of preschools in Ankara within the scope of the study. In this sense, it is possible to give out some suggestions for further researches.

First of all, the data collection tool of this study may be changed or multiplied in order to get more information about the children. Also, some pedagogic, mental, parental and cultural information or component about children can be added in other researches in determining the effects of demographic or social factors in teaching English to very young learners. Furthermore, it will possibly be helpful to conduct a study with larger sample groups to reach more advanced results in different contexts. Additionally, the duration of the study might be longer to follow up the improvement and the permanence in advance. Finally, instead of or along with short stories, syllabus can be enriched with other genres of literature such as poems, riddles and fairy tales; and another suggested common syllabus can be designed for very young learners.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. The Observation Checklist

CHILD EVALUATION									
Name:		Age: 36-48 months			Date: February - March				
Category	ITEMS	SESSIONS							
		Session 1		Session 2		Session 3		Session 4	
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	The child can match the words with the objects in his/her target language.								
	The child can choose the object which is verbalized by the teacher.								
	The child can touch the objects which are uttered by the teacher.								

Notes: -----

	The child can order the objects by listening to the short story narrated by the teacher. (listening)								
	The child is willing to listen to the short stories. (listening)								
	The child can make the puzzle about the taught vocabulary items.								
	The child can dance in accordance with the song in the classroom environment.								
	The child can draw pictures in accordance with the teacher's directions.								
	The child can color the pictures as listening to the directions of the teacher.								
ATTITUDES AND VALUES	The child can follow the teacher's directions in the classroom.								
	The child can sit in a circle with other children if teacher wants.								
	The child can carry out the directions of teacher about the classroom rules.								
	The child can react positively to the teacher and the learning environment.								
	The child can work well on both his/her own and other children in the classroom in different language activities and games.								

Appendix B. Sample Unit Plan

UNIT 1 - TOYS

The aims of this unit:

- to be familiar with toys
- to understand the names of some toys
- to be accustomed to a new language environment and the new toys
- to be able to say the names of toys in the target language
- to learn the main verbs (jump, sit, look, sleep, wake up etc.)
- to learn the main adjectives (happy, sad, big, small)
- be able to use their body language and be active in the classroom

Materials for this unit:

- Short stories
- ICT tools
- Masks
- Coloring pictures
- Face crayons
- Play dough
- Puppets
- Real Toys
- Songs
- Flash cards

The Teaching Style of the Unit

In this unit, children will learn the names of some toys. Since, in these years, children are egocentric; the items around them are very important and attractive for their learning process. For this reason, toys are indispensable part of their life and they like playing with toys. In this unit, teachers should use some real materials and pictures in order to introduce the toys.

If there is a meaningful context, the learning process can be easier and effective. Children do not forget the meaningful items and they can acquire them easily. Therefore, in this unit, short stories which are special for them are used and there is a new character in these short stories. Thanks to this character, there is an adventure and also, there is a meaningful context for children. Also, in this unit, there are some songs and game-like activities which are related to these short stories.

SESSION – 1 (FIRST WEEK)**✓ LESSON 1****Activity – I**

For the first activity of this unit, there is a new character and the teacher introduces it to the children. S/he shows the pictures of this character and this new character gives some information about itself. Children meet this character and they say something about themselves to it.

Activity – II

The teacher uses the puppet of this new character “Bubble” and it -Bubble- introduces itself to the children. For instance:

- Hello, I’m Bubble, what is your name?

✓ **LESSON 2**

Activity – I

There is a greeting “Hello” song and the children sing it with the new character.

Activity – II

There is a short story about Bubble’s toys. The teacher, first, narrates this story (s/he doesn’t read it, but narrates and acts it out) when the story is narrated, the teacher shows the pictures of toys mentioned in the story. The teacher explains the story once more and children and the teacher try to act it out altogether.

THE SAMPLE SHORT STORY FOR THIS LESSON

Hi, I’m Bubble, I’m here for you. I’m in my room today. I have a red toy box. Guess what is in it? In my toy box, I have one blue ball. It can jump. I have two kites and they can fly. I have a biggg puzzle and it is on my table. I have a yellow train and it can run. I have a green teddy bear and it can sleep. I have one doll and it can sing. Every night, my toys and I sing together and then we say good bye and go to sleep. Do you want to hear the song?

Activity – III

The children listen to a song about Bubble and they try to sing it all together. The song used in the lesson:

I am a happy doll

I always play ball

I also have a kite

I fly it at night...

The teddy bear is white

It also has a kite...

My train is small

I love them all...

Okul öncesi eğitimi 3-4 yaş grubu çocuklara İngilizce öğretiminde kısa hikâye kullanımının Etkileri: Önerilen genel bir izlence

Öz

Son yıllarda, İngilizce öğretimi ve öğrenimi yalnızca yetişkinler için değil, aynı zamanda çocuklar için de büyük önem kazanmıştır. Oyunlar, şarkılar, el becerisine yönelik etkinlikler ve kısa hikâyeler, okul öncesi dönemdeki çocuklar için kullanılabilir eğitim araçlarıdır. Özellikle kısa hikâyeler, kelimeleri anlamlı bir bağlam içerisinde öğretilme imkanı sunduğundan, bu araçlar arasında en uygundur. Bu nedenle ötürü, bu çalışma, okul öncesi dönemi çocuklara kısa hikâyelere dayalı bir müfredat ile etkili bir şekilde İngilizce kelimeler öğretilip öğretilmeyeceği üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Çalışma, Ankara’da özel bir kreşte gerçekleştirilmiş ve çalışmaya 3-4 yaş döneminde rastgele seçilen 28 çocuk katılmıştır. Uygulamanın başında çocuklar deney ve kontrol grubu olmak üzere rastgele ikiye ayrılmıştır. Kısa hikâyeler ile tasarlanan üniteler sadece deney grubundaki öğrenciler için kullanılmış ve bu ünitelerdeki etkinlikler; şarkılar, çizgi resimler ve gerçek görsellerle desteklenmiştir; ancak esas odak noktası kısa hikâyelere dayalı etkinliklerdir. Bu öğrencilere öğretilmesi amaçlanan kelimeler aynı süre zarfında (7 hafta) deney grubunda da verilmiş ancak bu grupta her hangi bir kısa hikâye etkinliği uygulanmamıştır. Ön-test ve son-test için geliştirilen gözlem formu ile öğrenciler her hafta gözlemlenmiş ve çalışmanın ardından kalıcılığı belirleyebilmek adına tekrar gözlem yapılmıştır. Araştırma bulgularının sonuçlarına göre, deney grubundaki öğrenciler, anlamlı bir bağlam içerisinde öğrendikleri için, çalışmadan sonra kontrol grubundaki öğrencilerden daha fazla kelimeyi hatırlayabilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Okul Öncesi Eğitim Dönemindeki Çocuklar, İngilizce Öğretimi, Yabancı Dil Öğretiminde Edebiyat, Kısa Hikâye, Kelime Öğretimi.

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