

## 54. Content analysis of research articles on teaching English to young learners in Türkiye

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### Abstract

Recently, Turkish education system has been subject to some new regulations which have induced an increase in the number of the studies conducted in the field of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in Türkiye. This study mainly aims to determine the frequency distribution of these studies with regard to their topics, publishing years, the number of their authors, their samples and research methods with the help of a document analysis of the articles indexed by ULAKBİM TR Index (National Index) database. 56 articles were chosen as the sample since they were identified to be content-specific in the field of TEYL. Article Information Rubric was chosen as a data collection instrument and the data was processed through Microsoft Excel. The main findings of the study are: (1) ELT researchers are mostly concerned about writing papers about 'Beliefs and Attitudes' and 'Methods and Techniques'; (2) there is an important change in the frequency distribution in terms of publishing years; (3) mostly in-service teachers have been chosen as the sample with purposive sampling method; (4) the studies mostly followed qualitative research with case studies, (5) researchers used interviews and questionnaires most as data collection tools and (6) the most frequently performed type of data analysis is content analysis in these studies. Suggestions for further research were provided at the end of the study.

**Keywords:** Teaching English, Young Learners, Content Analysis, ULAKBİM TR Index

## Türkiye'de çocuklara İngilizce öğretilimi ile ilgili arařtırma makalelerinin içerik analizi

### Öz

Son zamanlarda Türk eğitim sistemi, Türkiye'de çocuklara İngilizce öğretilimi alanında yapılan çalışmaların artmasını sağlayan bazı yeni düzenlemelere tabi tutulmuřtur. Bu çalışma temel olarak ULAKBİM TR Index (Ulusal Dizin) veri tabanı tarafından indekslenen makalelerin doküman analizi yardımıyla bu çalışmaların konularına, yayın yıllarına, yazar sayılarına, örneklemelerine ve arařtırma yöntemlerine göre sıklık dağılımlarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. 56 makale çocuklara İngilizce öğretilimi alanında içeriđe özgü olduđu tespit edildiđinden çalışma dokümanı olarak seçilmiřtir. Veri toplama aracı olarak Makale Bilgi Deđerlendirme Tablosu hazırlanarak, veriler Microsoft Excel üzerinden işlenmiřtir. Çalışmanın ana bulguları řunlardır: (1) İngiliz dili eğitimi arařtırmacıları çođunlukla "İnançlar ve Tutumlar" ve "Yöntemler ve Teknikler" hakkında makaleler yazmakla ilgilanmektedirler; (2) Yayınlanma yılları açısından frekans dağılımında önemli bir deđişiklikler vardır; (3) amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle örneklem olarak çođunlukla hizmet içi öğretilmenler seçilmiřtir; (4) arařtırmalar en çok vaka çalışmalarını ile nitel arařtırmaları izlemiřtir, (5)

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araştırmacılar veri toplama aracı olarak en çok görüşme ve anketleri kullanmışlardır ve (6) bu çalışmalarda en sık gerçekleştirilen veri analizi türü içerik analizidir. Çalışmanın sonunda ileride yapılabilecek araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** İngilizce Öğretimi, Çocuklar, İçerik Analizi, ULAKBİM TR Dizin

## Introduction

Since people live in a rapidly changing world with the impacts of globalism and multiculturalism, English has an essential role as a lingua franca all over the world. As Yangın Ekşi and Aşık (2015) state, the recent decades have observed the increasing significance of English as a lingua franca of science, technology, international communication, culture, commerce, and tourism, also leading its impacts in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). For this reason, there have been a great number of studies, articles, MA theses, and Ph.D. dissertations conducted on different contents with a variety of concepts, samples, subjects, research designs, and methodologies within the scope of ELT.

The extensive introduction of languages in primary schools has gained great importance and has been described by Johnstone (2009; as cited in Copland et al., 2014) as “possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education” (p. 738), and it has been popular among ELT scholars. Besides, as Bland (2015) states, English is becoming a core subject fast in the curriculum in primary schools worldwide, and this discipline is broadening rapidly. Considering the world’s swift growth as a bilingual and/or multilingual advancement centre, there has been a common agreement in the literature on the profits of learning English as an early start for the holistic development of the young learners and early development of positive attitudes toward Foreign Languages (Gürsoy et al., 2017). Regarding the importance of the early start of English in Türkiye, new regulations of educational systems in primary school education; in other words, a new type of education, named as “4+4+4” was offered by Ministry of National Education in 2012 (Dinçer & Koç, 2020). According to the new system, teaching English to young learners was enhanced, promoting second and third graders to receive English instruction for two hours a week, as well as fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to receive three hours of compulsory English language teaching every week (Arslan, 2012).

Consequently, these new regulations lead to the increase of the studies conducted in the field of Teaching English to Young Learners; therefore, this study aims to seek what kind of topics related to “Teaching English to Young Learners” have been studied and what kinds of articles, research methods, sample sizes, sampling groups, research designs, data collection tools, data analysis techniques have been used in Türkiye with the help of an overall analysis of the articles published in the journals which are indexed in the national database in Türkiye.

## Literature review

Educational research has its significant role by means of informing educational practice. While some of these published studies have been the core of educational reform, the others have been conducted by following these reforms (Göktaş et al., 2012). Educational research makes use of what has been done previously in order to improve their own theoretical and conceptual frameworks, as well as promoting qualitative (e.g., content analyses) and quantitative (e.g., meta-analyses) reviews of the related literature from which key findings are summarized (Karadağ, 2009). Since several studies are conducted independently of each other, with the increase in the number of research studies, researchers, especially

newcomers to the fields, face a new problem by means of accessing all the studies and papers in a specific field of study. Even if they are able to access the studies, they may confront some challenges when attempting to read and/or descend so many of them (Göktaş et al., 2012).

Content analysis was defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278). Therefore, it is suggested to be used to summarize large number of published studies in specific areas. Jenkins (1997), for example, used content analysis to analyze 4918 studies in school psychology, which were published in five different journals between the years of 1964 and 1995 to make clear conceptual themes and research topics in this field. When it comes to the field of ELT, several research studies, which make use of content analysis, have been conducted as well.

As for international research studies, Chaiyasook and Jaroongkhongdach (2014) utilized the content analysis to explore the recent interests of research themes and methods of ELT master's theses which were conducted between 2003 and 2011 in Thailand. They collected 194 theses and dissertations from 7 different universities for content analysis, and while analysing the data, they used a coding system consisting of 6 different categories. Their findings showed that the majority of ELT master's theses in Thailand place emphasize on the student performance in undergraduate level (60.82%). Furthermore, the results displayed that most of the theses made use of human quantitative research design (61.34%). Another study by Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) made use of content analysis for investigating gender bias in Iranian high school English textbooks. They first selected the textbooks and studied these books in depth. As a content analysis design, they divided the textbook contents into various divisions such as social activities, occupational roles, home chores, etc. After analysing the contents, they chose different categories for investigation, following the counting process of the frequencies of each category in the form of this content analysis. Their results showed that the frequencies of male visibility outnumbered the female visibility in the pictures of the textbooks. Male visibility was nearly three times as much as that of females (76% vs 24%). Moreover, Lin and Cheng (2010) conducted a study on research trends in selected master's programs of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) with the help of content analysis of master's theses which have been written between 2003 and 2007 in Taiwan. They first selected TESOL programs in seven different national universities and then studied on the theses produced between these years. Then, they conducted coding based on the categories, and they selected 20 percent of thesis abstracts from each of the seven TESOL programs and their contents were coded independently. After analysing the contents of these theses, they revealed that the plurality of TESOL master's theses was put forward in high school settings. Furthermore, at the end of their topic analysis, their results showed that the master's theses mainly emphasize on a few popular topics such as Language Skills and Materials, Curriculum, and Teaching Methods.

In addition to the international studies reviewed above, there have been several studies carried out in Türkiye. Content analysis can be seen in Saban (2009)'s study, which was conducted to examine the studies on Multiple Intelligences Theory indexed by the Higher Education Council's National Thesis Center and ULAKBIM TR Index between the years of 1999 and 2007. In his study, Saban identified 97 research studies, (71 master's theses, 8 doctoral dissertations, and 18 research articles) by utilizing the content analysis and the study revealed that most of the studies were conducted in master's thesis form (73.2%), in 2006 (44.3%), in Ankara city (28.9%), by female researchers (60.8%), with an empirical research design (63.9%). Another study carried out by Bozdoğan (2012) also utilized the content analysis to examine ELT students' digital stories for young learners. In her research study, Bozdoğan made use of content analysis to determine the topic, moral values creation, and character of ELT pre-service

teachers' stories of young learners. She collected digital stories of participants and coded the categories of these stories. The collected data showed that most of the stories ( $f=15$ ) indicated the significance of friendship via sharing and helping. The places of the stories were mainly forest ( $f=16$ ), or home ( $f=7$ ). The hero of these stories, most of the time, was a male child or an animal. Similarly, Kırmızı (2012) conducted a research study with the aim of investigating the most utilized themes and frequent contents of MA theses which have been written between 2005 and 2010 in the field of ELT from different universities of Türkiye. The data for this study was categorized under 9 headlines of common topics as in the following areas of the study: "teaching method, learner factors, materials or curriculum design and evaluation, teacher factors, language skills, linguistics, computer-assisted language learning, literature and culture, and psychology" (p. 4691). The results of this study revealed that language skills area is the top arena studied in 59 theses. Among the universities, Gazi University was the first ranked university to conduct research studies with 17 theses in total.

Yağız et al. (2016) carried out a research study to examine the articles in ELT field. They conducted a research study by utilizing the content analysis to investigate the articles published in the field of ELT between 2005 and 2015. Their purpose in this study was to obtain the broad sight of the distributions of subjects, methods of the research studies, research designs, data collection tools, sample sizes, sample size groups, procedures for data analysis in the articles in Turkish ELT context. They chose 274 articles written by Turkish authors from 15 different journals which were indexed by the ULAKBIM TR Index. The findings displayed that the common themes in these studies were "language learning", "language teaching", and "teacher education". Additionally, a quantitative research design was utilized more frequently than the other research designs. Also, achievement tests, questionnaires, and scales were found to be the most preferred data collection tools. Moreover, the selected participants in the studies were undergraduate students and teachers. Also, Solak (2014) aimed to investigate the common current trends in research studies about foreign language teaching in Türkiye. With this purpose, 189 research studies published between the years 2009 and 2013 and indexed by ULAKBIM TR Index and SSCI were analysed. The study identified the common topics covered in these studies, distribution of languages and authors, research designs, data collection tools and data analysis, types of sampling and sample sizes. The results displayed that 2003 was the year in which most of the studies were conducted, whereas 2010 was the year in which the least number of papers were published. When it comes to the authors and languages, the study reveals that most of the studies are written in English and the authors are mostly Turkish. Furthermore, the topics of concept analysis, teaching and learning were the top ones. Further research study was carried out by Dündar and Merç (2017) with utilizing content analysis to investigate the general characteristics of studies which were conducted on the field of curriculum development and evaluation in ESL/EFL contexts. They searched 86 papers and analysed them by means of their contents, sample types, sample sizes, data collection tools, and data analysis techniques. The findings showed that studies on curriculum evaluation were more popular than the ones which were about curriculum development. The results also indicated that the studies were mostly about primary and secondary levels, and they have mainly implemented semi-structured interviews and Likert-type scales, and descriptive statistics have been frequently applied in the studies. Cesur et al. (2018) also published a study which made use of content analysis to examine what new trends in ELT field had been with the aim of providing an overall analysis of 234 articles' abstracts retrieved from ULAKBIM TR index. Modifying Yağız et al.'s (2016) rubric, they examined the abstracts of the published articles about their distribution of themes, years, article types, authors, research designs, research methods, types of sampling, sample sizes, data collection tools and data analysis processes. The findings of the study indicated that most of the researchers of the studies intended to conduct studies after the year 2011. Besides, "teacher education", "curriculum and teaching materials", and "language teaching" topics were

among the commonly covered ones in these studies. Additionally, the number of articles written by 3 or 4 authors was much less than the ones which were written by 1 or 2 authors. Also, the number of “book review” and “review article” types was very low and as for the sampling, university students were the most utilized participants in the research studies.

It can be understood from the review of literature that several studies have been conducted with the help of content analysis to obtain not only overall information of the research papers by means of the distribution of their topics, publication years, authors, research designs, sampling types, sample sizes, languages, and authors but also to gain in-depth insights about all these variables of the studies. What makes this research study significant is that there is no research study, examining the research articles published in the field of “Teaching English to Young Learners”.

All in all, the study aims to look for the answers to the following research questions by investigating 56 research articles published in different journals indexed by ULAKBIM TR index database in between 2003-2020.

1. What is the distribution of years of published articles, numbers of authors and numbers of articles published in different journals?
2. What is the distribution of article types and themes of the studies?
3. What is the distribution of samples, types of sampling, and sample sizes of the articles?
4. What is the distribution of research methods, research designs, data collection tools and data analysis processes of the articles?

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

This study made use of content analysis as the research design since it mainly aims to display the contents of the selected articles in terms of the variables in research questions. Considering the significance of systematic analysis for document analysis, Yađız et al. (2016) pointed out that this type of systematic analysis transforms qualitative data into quantitative data. Therefore, to obtain objective and systematic data, descriptive content analysis design was utilized in the study.

### **Data collection**

While selecting the articles as samples, the main criterion was to identify whether the studies on “Teaching English to Young Learners” had been indexed by ULAKBIM TR index or not. As a result, 56 articles related to the above-mentioned field were selected as the document to be analysed. The analysis of collected documents was challenging for interpreting and evaluating, which necessitated the use of a rubric to obtain reliable and precise data. For this reason, “Article Information Rubric” modified by Yađız et al. (2016) into ELT field was implemented as data collection instrument. All the selected articles were examined with the help of this rubric under certain categories. To analyse the articles published, “Teaching English to Young Learners” query was searched by the search engine on the web site of ULAKBILIM TR Index. As the study was carried out in 2021, the search results displayed 88 articles about Teaching English to Young Learners published between 2003 and 2020. After filtering the results

carefully together with two experts in the field, only 56 of them were identified to be content-specific in the field of TEYL. Through a content analysis, similar titles were given the same name as a preparation step for the frequency analysis (Berg & Lune, 2017). At the end, 56 articles were agreed to be examined with the help of Yağız et al.'s (2016) rubric.

### Data analysis

After implementing the specific categorizations, the data were analysed by means of Microsoft Excel as it made comparing and analysing large amounts of data easy and effective (Meyer & Avery, 2009). After transcribing all the information about the articles, analysis and the results were displayed on Microsoft Excel 2010. Using the rubric as an instrument, each article was analysed considering the headlines shown in the rubric and the collected data was coded on Microsoft Excel program. The descriptive results displayed in the tables were provided using content analysis, which assisted the researcher detect similar themes, concepts, and topics, together.

Data was double-checked by two more experts in the field of English language teaching for the validation of the data analysis. To achieve validity and trustworthiness, the researcher utilized peer debriefing which “is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored... This procedure is best used over time during the process of an entire study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). After having discussions on their results, the coders changed some themes and they agreed on the final version of the codes and themes before reporting the findings of the study.

### Findings

RQ1- What is the distribution of years of published articles, numbers of authors and numbers of articles published in different journals?

Table 1 indicates the frequency distribution of years in which articles were written. As seen in Table 1 the largest frequency distribution belongs to the years 2018 and 2020. Also, in 2012 and 2019, six articles were published in each year. Till 2012, there had been only one or two articles published in the field of teaching English to young learners.

**Table 1. Frequency distribution of Years**

Year	<i>f</i>	%
<b>2018</b>	12	21.42
<b>2020</b>	12	21.42
<b>2012</b>	6	10.71
<b>2019</b>	6	10.71
<b>2015</b>	4	7.14
<b>2017</b>	4	7.14
<b>2011</b>	2	3.57
<b>2013</b>	2	3.57
<b>2016</b>	2	3.57
<b>2003</b>	1	1.79
<b>2007</b>	1	1.79
<b>2008</b>	1	1.79

<b>2009</b>	1	1.79
<b>2010</b>	1	1.79
<b>2014</b>	1	1.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

It is inferred from Table 2 that among 56 articles, authors mostly prefer to work either by themselves or with a colleague. There are fewer research articles written by more than two authors.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Number of Authors

Number of Authors	<i>f</i>	%
2	25	44.64
1	23	41.07
3	6	10.71
4	2	3.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

It is inferred from Table 3 that the Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies is the one which has the most frequently ( $f=12$ ) published articles related to teaching English to young learners from 2003 to 2020. Elementary Education Online is in the second place as it is directly related to young learners.

**Table 3.** Frequency distribution of journals

Name of the Journal	<i>f</i>	%
Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies	12	21.43
Elementary Education Online (electronic)	5	8.93
IOJET	4	7.14
Novitas-Royal	4	7.14
Turkish Studies (Electronic)	4	7.14
Abant İzzet Baysal University Journal of Faculty of Education	2	3.57
Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal	2	3.57
Eurasian Journal of Educational Research	2	3.57
Hacettepe University Journal of Education	2	3.57
Journal of Theoretical Educational Science	2	3.57
Pamukkale University Journal of Education	3	5.35
Mediterranean Journal of Education Research	1	1.79
Bahkesir University Journal of Social Sciences Institute	1	1.79
Cumhuriyet International Journal of Education	1	1.79
Language Journal	1	1.79
Education and Science	1	1.79
Journal of Qualitative Research in Education	1	1.79
Electronic Journal of Social Sciences	1	1.79
Journal of Early Childhood Studies	1	1.79
Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics	1	1.79

Kastamonu University Kastamonu Education Journal	1	1.79
Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice	1	1.79
Selçuk University the Journal of Institute of Social Sciences	1	1.79
Söylem Journal of Philology	1	1.79
Trakya Journal of Education	1	1.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

RQ2- What is the distribution of article types and themes of the studies?

Table 4 shows that among 56 articles, 52 of them are original research studies while 4 of them are review articles.

**Table 4.** Frequency distribution of article types

Type of Article	<i>f</i>	%
Original Research	52	92.86
Review Article	4	7.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 5, ELT researchers are mostly concerned about writing papers about 'Beliefs and Attitudes' ( $f=17$ ) and 'Methods and Techniques' ( $f=5$ ). In general, the least frequent themes among 56 papers are related to assessment, theoretical aspects, and some other issues.

**Table 5.** Frequency distribution of Themes

Codes	Themes	<i>f</i>	%
Beliefs and Attitudes	Beliefs and Attitudes	17	30.35
	Practical Issues	Methods and Techniques	5
Practical Issues	Classroom Management	3	5.35
	Teaching Vocabulary	3	5.35
	Teaching Reading	1	1.79
	Teaching Listening	1	1.79
	Use of Games	1	1.79
	Teaching Speaking	1	1.79
	Practical Activities	1	1.79
Teacher Education	Preservice Training	2	3.57
	Teacher Training	2	3.57
Assessment	Assessing Writing	2	3.57
	Assessment Practices in 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1	1.79
Theoretical Aspects	TEYL in Türkiye	2	3.57
	Multiple Intelligence	1	1.79
Other	Curriculum Evaluation	2	3.57
	Evaluation of Educational System	2	3.57
	Classroom Interaction	2	3.57



Teachers Burn-out	1	1.79
Augmented Reality	1	1.79
Poetry and Communicative Approach	1	1.79
Bilingual Socialization	1	1.79
Unified Classes	1	1.79
Social Network Sites	1	1.79
Metacognitive Awareness	1	1.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

To illustrate, some of the studies were on teacher beliefs and attitudes such as teachers' beliefs about teaching English at primary school, their opinions on teaching speaking skills, their perceptions on the starting age of English language teaching, their attitudes towards curriculum in primary schools, and their knowledge about different age groups and their challenges. Some others were about students' beliefs and attitudes such as their ideas about corpus use in language learning, or students' opinions on the use of stories in teaching English to young learners.

RQ3- What is the distribution of samples, types of sampling, and sample sizes of the articles?

As seen in Table 6, in-service teachers are the most frequent sample ( $f=24$ ). Pre-service teachers ( $f=17$ ), primary school ( $f=6$ ), and preschool students ( $f=3$ ) are followed in order. There were some other research studies carried out with parents, school administration, etc.

**Table 6.** Frequency distribution of Sample

Sample	<i>f</i>	%
In-service teachers	24	44.44
Preservice teachers	17	31.48
Primary school students	6	11.11
Others	4	7.41
Preschool students	3	5.56
<b>Total (Overlapping within 52 Original Research Article)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

As the most frequent type of sampling is purposive (see Table 7 below), the researchers carried out their research works with the participants to whom they can access easier and from whom they can collect data more easily. Table 6 also reveals that rather than young learners themselves, the researchers conducted more research studies together with in-service and preservice teachers regarding teaching English to young learners.

**Table 7.** Frequency distribution of Type of Sampling

Type of Sampling	<i>f</i>	%
Purposive	35	67.31
Convenience	9	17.31
Random	5	9.62
Stratified	2	3.85
Snowball	1	1.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

As it can be seen in Table 8, the research studies were mostly carried out with 31-100 ( $f=17$ ) or 101-300 ( $f=15$ ) participants. There is only one research study in which there were more than 300 participants.

**Table 8.** Frequency distribution of Sample Size

Sample Size	<i>f</i>	%
31-100	17	32.69
101-300	15	28.85
1-10	10	19.23
11-30	9	17.31
301-1000	1	1.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

RQ4- What is the distribution of research methods, research designs, data collection tools and data analysis processes of the articles?

As clearly seen in Table 9, the most frequently used research method is the qualitative research method ( $f=22$ ) among 52 original research articles. Meanwhile, the least frequently used method is the mixed research method ( $f=14$ ).

**Table 9.** Frequency distribution of Research Method

Research Method	<i>f</i>	%
Qualitative	22	42.31
Quantitative	16	30.77
Mixed	14	26.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 10 indicates that the most frequently followed research designs were case and descriptive ( $f=11$ ) studies.

**Table 10.** Frequency Distribution of Research Design

Research design	<i>f</i>	%
Case Study	11	18.03
Descriptive	11	18.03
Other (Qual.- Non-interactive)	7	11.47
Survey	6	9.84
Quasi-experimental	4	6.55
True experimental	3	4.92
Other (Qual.-Interactive)	3	4.92
Exploratory Quan.-Qual.	2	3.28
Explanatory Quan.-Qual.	2	3.28
Triangulation	2	3.28
Other (Quan.-Non-experimental)	2	3.28
Concept Analysis	1	1.64
Critical Studies	1	1.64
Grounded Theory	1	1.64
Phenomenology	1	1.64
Ethnography	1	1.64
Ex-post Facto	1	1.64
Correlational	1	1.64
Comparative	1	1.64
<b>Total (Overlapping within 52 original research articles)</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100</b>

The most frequently used data collection tools were interviews ( $f=25$ ) and questionnaires ( $f=19$ ). Observation and documents were also used to collect data. On the other hand, perception, attitude & skill tests, and alternative tools were the least preferred data collection tools as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Frequency distribution of Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Tools	<i>f</i>	%
Interview	25	31.64
Questionnaire	19	24.05
Observation	10	12.66
Documents	10	12.66
Other	7	8.86
Achievement Test	4	5.06
Perception, Attitude & Skill Tests etc.	3	3.80
Alternative Tools	1	1.27
<b>Total (Overlapping within 52 original research articles)</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

As understood from Table 12 below, the most frequently used type of data analysis was content analysis ( $f=21$ ). On the other hand, the least frequent type of data analysis performed by ELT researchers was non-parametric tests ( $f=1$ ).

**Table 12.** Frequency distribution of Data Analysis

Data Analysis	<i>f</i>	%
Content Analysis	21	25.00
Frequency, Percentage Tables	15	17.86
Qualitative Descriptive Analysis	10	11.91
Other	10	11.91
Mean/ Standard Deviation	7	8.33
t-tests	7	8.33
ANOVA	6	7.14
Graphic Display	3	3.57
Correlation	2	2.38
Chi-square	2	2.38
Non-parametric tests	1	1.19
<b>Total (Overlapping within 52 original research articles)</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

### Conclusion, discussion, and implications

In recent years, the attention given to ELT has increased all over the world since the English language was adopted as the Lingua Franca. Following the developments in information and communication technologies, English has become the common language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The use of English as a global communication tool ever-increasing by many countries and individuals in their cultural, political, and economic relations have brought a new understanding of the significance of teaching English in schools. Therefore, much attention has been given to studies on ELT. This study investigates the studies on teaching English to young learners under the categories of most frequently used topics, sampling methods, research methodology, data collection tools, data analysis tools, etc. According to the findings of this study, in parallel with the relevant literature, the number of research articles on teaching English to young learners has been gradually increased over the years. While the frequency distribution of the studies conducted in 2011 is 2, it became 6 in 2012 with a large increase. This tendency to conduct research on teaching English to young learners can be explained by the inclusion of language proficiency levels from the Common European Framework of Reference to the curriculum implemented in Türkiye in 2011 (Yücel, et al., 2017). For the first time after 2011, the objectives and content of the curriculum for ELT have been determined in line with these language proficiency levels, and more studies might be required in 2012 after this reform. Besides, with the 2012 reform implemented by the Ministry of National Education, foreign language teaching policy was redesigned to involve second graders in foreign language courses in the 2013-2014 academic year (Savaşkan, 2016). The increase in the number of articles after 2018 reveals that teaching English to young learners is becoming a trendy issue and the topic is getting attention of more researchers in Türkiye recently.

As for the number of authors, it is revealed that the journals written by 1 or 2 authors are much more than the journals written by 3 or 4 authors. In this sense, more collaborative and cooperative research

studies may be conducted to increase the interaction between scholars and to achieve higher quality research articles at the international level. In addition, the Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies (JLLS) has the most frequently ( $f=12$ ) published articles on teaching English to young learners between the years of 2003-2020, which is an expected result as the JLLS is one of the professional and prominent international journals in ELT field and also a number of the articles published in the JLLS are indexed in the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) database.

In terms of article types, the number of original research studies ( $f=52$ ) is much more than the number of review articles ( $f=4$ ). In line with Cesur et al.'s (2018) study, teachers, teacher educators, and scholars should get more benefit from book reviews as they are effective sources of information for them. More specifically, most of the articles address beliefs, attitudes, methods, and techniques, with little attention paid to themes such as diversity issues, game use, portfolio development, and pre-service training. However, considering the need for integrating diverse cultures into the ELT practice, which is a platform for learners to become intercultural speakers, learners and educators' perceptions on this issue constitute a great importance (Chinh, 2013). Therefore, diversity should be much more investigated in ELT studies. Regarding the use of games, it can be said that students' motivation towards learning English language can be increased by using games and as a result, students can more easily develop their abilities and skills of learning (Sánchez et al., 2007). Thus, use of games should be among the most frequently researched topics in the field of teaching English to young learners. Another topic which is often ignored is the portfolio development. Portfolios ensure continuous observation of learners' progress and help educators to determine teaching strategies. Moreover, as an assessment tool, portfolios provide more dynamic and reliable data about the learners and utilizing this assessment method particularly among primary school students assures clear information about students and their weaknesses enabling teachers to plan their teaching progress (Birgin & Baki, 2007). As for the research studies on pre-service training, according to the findings, little emphasis has been given to training of ELT pre-service educators in the research while pre-service teaching has been increasingly involved in teacher education programs to improve language skills and provide real experiences (Anderson, 1998). As an implication to be drawn, these topics may be advised to be involved in the research studies to be carried out in the field of TEYL.

It is found that although the studies investigate ELT among young learners, mostly in-service teachers are chosen as the research sample with purposive sampling method which is the deliberate choice of participants according to their qualities (Etikan et al., 2016). This can be explained with the difficulty in ensuring reliability of the responses in questionnaires conducted among young learners (De Leeuw & Otter, 1995), as the surveys are one of the most utilized research designs in the studies. At this point, researchers may be advised to focus on young learners with different research instruments. Furthermore, there is only one study conducted with more than 300 participants. In accordance with the findings of other content analysis articles (Yağız et al., 2016; Cesur et al., 2018), most of the studies have a low sample size and that can probably be because researchers have problems in reaching many subjects and qualitative research articles (42.31%) pre-dominate over the quantitative studies (30.77%), which may affect the sample sizes. Thus, considering the number of studies conducted in Türkiye, academics reach a limited number of participants in general and larger sample sizes are required to obtain more reliable results.

Moreover, it is found that mixed research method, which combines quantitative and qualitative research, and helps researchers to both explain and explore, is not preferred in many research articles. However, more emphasis can be given to mixed research as it allows the researcher to obtain more

reliable findings through eliminating methodological weaknesses in a research model by utilizing the strengths of the other (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Regarding the data collection, interviews, questionnaires, observation, and documents are the most used tools in the ELT studies in accordance with other content analysis studies (Demir & Koçyiğit, 2018; Yağız et al., 2016; Solak, 2014) in which they were also found to be among the most frequently used data collection tools. Besides using interviews, questionnaires and observation among young learners, the researchers preferred collecting data by reviewing documents such as tasks, projects, or writings. As a result, content analysis, which is a data analysis method to review and compare documents, transcripts, or interviews (Karadeniz & Sözlü, 2016), is the most frequently used data analysis method in the research studies.

All in all, though the study is limited to 56 research articles indexed by ULAKBİM TR Index database, it provides valuable insights into the research in the field of teaching English to young learners. Further research studies can be carried out considering the themes not studied in this field.

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