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Assessment of Young Language Learners: Perceptions and Practices of Turkish EFL Pre-service and In-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Reporting on perceptions and practices of Turkish EFL teachers regarding young language learners' assessment, this study addresses the deficiency in the body of knowledge of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' understandings regarding young language learners' assessment and the lack of clear guidelines in the assessment of 2nd and 3rd graders. It holds two main purposes; a) to explore fourth-year pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about the assessment of young EFL learners; b) to understand the nature of young learners' assessment at 2nd and 3rd grades. A qualitative research paradigm was adopted to analyze 13 Turkish EFL teachers' responses to semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed insights and comparisons of how the young language learners' assessment was viewed by pre-service teachers and how it was being tackled in reality by in-service teachers. With this respect, related suggestions and comments have been presented.

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Assessment is characterized as series of actions that involve collecting data for a particular aim (Linse, 2005). In an educational context, assessment is actualized within different groups of learners. Assessment of young language learners (YLLs hereforth), for example, is different from assessing adult language learners because of specific characteristics of children (McKay, 2008). Firstly, YLLs are at the stage of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. They also have not yet fully developed their literacy skills in addition to being more sensitive to critique or failure than older learners and adults. The problems posed by the YLLs' assessment can also include difficulty of quantifying the slow progression and of making the construct definition of their low proficiency (Nikolov & Mihaljevic, 2011) as well as lack of training and interest of teachers and teacher candidates (Hill, 2000). Despite the problems, in many European countries, foreign language instruction starts at elementary school during very early grades (Bayyurt, 2014; Brumen, Cagran & Rixon, 2009). Thus, more and more teachers have to deal with the arduous tasks of teaching and

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assessing young language learners without having sufficient expertise to sustain an early foreign language teaching trend (Hasselgreen, 2005).

In 2012-2013 school year, the education reform “4+4+4” started to be implemented in Turkey. With this reform, the grade of learning a foreign language (thus English) at state schools decreased to the 2nd grade. Therefore, during their primary education, students are required to learn English for three years throughout the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades. Within a year following this reform, the regulation of Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) on pre-primary and primary education institutions effectuated in June, 2014. This regulation mandated the assessment of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grader elementary students to be carried out “according to their participation in classroom activities and in accordance with their developmental stages as well as the assessment principles stated in the curriculum” (see the related item in *Ministry of National Education Regulation on Pre-Primary and Primary Education Institutions, Chapter 4, Item 2: http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/ilkveokuloncyon_0/ilkveokuloncyon_0.html*). Another novelty about assessment of young learners pertained to the marks of students on school reports. Previously, students were being evaluated between the range of “1” to “5”: “5” meant very satisfactory and pass while “1” indicated failure. However, with the recent regulations, students now see three descriptions on their school reports about their language abilities that are: ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘needs improvement’. Nonetheless, neither the curriculum report nor the new regulation do clearly outline any procedures related to how these assessment suggestions would be applied by Turkish EFL teachers.

As for the scientific reports on the assessment of YLLs, there is a huge deficit in the body of research concerning how EFL teachers assess YLLs in Turkey and how (if ever) they are equipped with necessary knowledge and skills in their pre-service teacher (PST, henceforth) training. In Turkish context, even so, some previous studies concentrated on teachers’ awareness of teaching young learners (e.g., İşpınar, 2005), young learner English teacher profile from teachers’ and students’ perspectives (e.g., Doğan, 2009), prospective teachers’ evaluations about teaching English to young learners (e.g., Şad, 2010) and preschool EFL teachers’ self-reports on early childhood foreign language teaching and related challenges (e.g., Bezicioğlu-Göktolga, 2013). Yet, contrary to a number of recently and officially introduced amendments about teaching and assessing YLLs, a research gap concerning this learner group’s assessment principles and procedures as well as in-service and PSTs’ perceptions and practices regarding the assessment of this group still exists.

Therefore, the initial problem addressed by this study is the deficiency in the body of knowledge about pre-service and in-service EFL teachers’ perceptions, understandings and practices regarding YLLs’ assessment. The following problem addressed is the lack of clear guidelines in the assessment of 2nd and 3rd graders which would help in-service EFL teachers at elementary schools. To address these research problems, the current study holds two main purposes;

- a) to explore fourth-year pre-service EFL teachers’ perceptions about the assessment of young EFL learners and their teacher training program in a Turkish state university,
- b) to discover the nature of young EFL learners’ assessment (2nd and 3rd graders) in some Turkish elementary public schools and how the language teachers perceive and treat the YLL assessment while making their evaluative decisions.

2. Review of Literature

Language learners who learn foreign/second language throughout the first six or seven years of formal education (i.e. primary and secondary schools) are defined as *young language learners*, and the age of young learners, therefore, range from five (5) to twelve (12), (MacKay, 2008; Slatterly & Willis, 2001). There are several certain features that make the YLLs’ case particular. They, namely, include “growth, literacy and vulnerability” which are the three characteristics of YLLs specified by McKay (2008, p. 5). Concerning growth, it should be remembered that YLLs’ characteristics consist of a relatively shorter attention span, a

slowly developing notion of past and future as well as meta-language. Furthermore, they rely on concrete experiences to learn such as visualization and use of realia. With regard to their literacy skills, it should be noted that YLLs learn how to read and write (decoding and coding written language) both in their L1 and L2 simultaneously. This is likely to be an extra challenging condition if teachers directly employ anything that is commonplace for the older learners (Nikolov & Mihaljevic, 2011), and if they do not select their tasks and make their decisions about YLLs' progress accordingly. When it comes to vulnerability, it seems that YLLs have a particular susceptibility to feedback, reactions and/or interactions with peers and teachers. Therefore, language teachers should be more careful about and tender with YLLs so that all the pupils can, at least occasionally and up to a point, feel that they are accomplishing and their learning is worthy of effort and interest.

Table 1.

Main Features of YLLs' Foreign Language Learning (Cameron, 2001).

Age	Cognitive, social, physical and linguistic development of children are to be considered.
Content	Speaking skills and expanding vocabulary are foregrounded.
Methods of teaching	Commonly resorting to stories, riddles, games etc...
Aims	Social and cultural development beside linguistic progress.
Learning theories	Being able to linguistically develop with the help of others through social engagement.

As seen in Table 1, among the conditions that make YLLs peculiar in terms of assessment are several distinct features of their foreign language learning situations (Cameron, 2001) that are age, content, methods of teaching, aims and learning theories. Likewise, Hasselgreen (2005) compiles the essential characteristics that YLLs' assessment practices should bear, that are:

- Given their social and physical growth, assessing tasks should cater to YLLs' age characteristics.
- The tasks and feedback should be organized in such a way that a certain degree of achievement should be provided with the learners.
- The teachers themselves must have necessary and fundamental endowment regarding the YLLs' assessment.

As the above lines indicate, there are some perceptible characteristics related to YLLs themselves as well as their foreign language learning environments and assessment procedures. In addition to these characteristics, the literature highlights some particular issues about pre-service and in-service EFL teachers.

2.1. Studies on EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of YLLs' Assessment

To date, several research has investigated the assessment literacy of PSTs (e.g., Leighton, Gokiert, Cor, & Hefferman, 2010; Lukin, Bandalos, Eckhout, & Mickelson, 2005; Mertler, 2003; O'leary, 2008; Volante, & Fazio, 2007; Wang, Wang, & Huang, 2008). Mertler (2003), for example, measured PSTs' assessment literacy against the one of in-service teachers via the classroom assessment literacy inventory. In comparison with PSTs, in-service teachers achieved significantly higher in 5 of 7 competency fields, which indicates the requirement for a quite more consideration on the place of assessment training in PST education-programs. The author also declared that even in-service teachers "often believe that they have not received sufficient training in their undergraduate preparation program in order to feel comfortable with their skills in making assessment decision" (p. 22). Also, Volante and Fazio (2007) examined the primary/junior teacher

candidates' assessment literacy development. The findings from the cross-sectionally (from year 1 to 4) administered study revealed PSTs' low levels of self-efficacy in each year. The participants of the study indicated the necessity for more knowledge about assessment practices, developing instruments, grading etc. in addition to demanding particular course(s) of evaluation and assessment.

One another research study of Xu & Liu (2009) addressed a different concept that is assessment knowledge. The researchers explored a preservice EFL teacher's assessment knowledge and practices through narrative inquiry and argued "three structural conditions of teacher knowledge (i.e., temporality, sociality, place), and their effects on teachers' knowledge construction of assessment" (p.1). The results of the study suggested that the agency of teachers should be identified in assessment practice and teachers should negotiate with reform policies. They also required some professional development related to the assessment theories and practices. A similar notion to assessment knowledge is specified as assessment capacity about which a range of research have been conducted (i.e., McMunn, McColskey, & Butler, 2004; Towndrow, Tan, Yung, & Cohen, 2010). McMunn, McColskey and Butler (2004) aimed to add to the existing knowledge about teacher professional development and formative assessment practices via two case studies. As a result, school-embedded teaching learning communities were suggested to be used as a model of professional development. Although it was again conducted in another discipline (i.e. physics teacher education), Ogan-Bekiroglu (2009) investigated preservice physics teachers' attitudes towards assessment. At the end of mixed-methods study, it was found that teacher candidates' attitudes were mainly associated with difficulties in the knowledge of related subject and with their self-efficacy in assessment practices. However, it can be argued that these researches fail to indicate foreign language teachers' perceptions and/or conceptions about assessment despite the evidence that marking teacher beliefs and conceptions is quite important in times of educational reform (e.g., Vandeyar & Killen, 2003), and it is almost impossible to obtain durable changes in classroom practices without taking teacher perceptions and beliefs into consideration.

2.2. Studies on EFL In-Service Teachers' Perceptions and Actual Practices of YLLs' Assessment

Linse and Nunan (2005) warns the teachers of YLLs in terms of their assessment by asserting four general principles of assessment in YLLs. Firstly, YLL teachers should not have high expectations from the students. For instance, if the pupils can introduce themselves in a few words in their L1, then it should be enough for them to be able to do the same in L2. Second, teachers of YLLs should wait for a reasonable time before correcting a student or passing to another one, especially while making on-the-spot assessments during any given task or activity in the classroom. Third, YLLs should be supplied with an opportunity of a smooth kind of passage into the L2 and assessment from L1, for example, whereby some chants, riddles or small talks with a puppet etc... Fourth, according to Linse and Nunan (2005), instructions also gain a particular importance in YLLs' assessment in that they should be divided into brief and simple sentences in a language suitable to the pupils' proficiency.

Butler (2009) explored how EFL teachers in three East Asian countries – South Korea, Twain and Japan- handle with the task of assessing their YLLs and concluded that teachers in three countries alike needed more concrete and evident outlines and procedures for the assessment of YLLs. Butler (2009) went on stating that governments in Korea and Twain were to a greater extent posing teacher-based assessment practices, which were comprised of "interviews, classroom observations, portfolio assessments, self-assessment, peer-assessment and so forth" (p.7). The problem in these countries is, however, that the teachers are still seriously lacking of essential qualities needed to assess YLLs although the teachers, especially in Korea and Twain, have been lately supplied with some in-service training targeted at professional development to more successfully teach and assess YLLs (Butler, 2009). Similarly, in the opposite edge of the globe, Brumen, Cagran and Rixon (2009) also studied the teachers' procedural routines

of YLLs' assessment in three East European countries – Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovenia. In Czech Republic, teachers were found to have not been guided in any way in terms of formative assessment, although they were provided with a 5-point scale of marks, which were not particular to foreign language teaching or YLLs but rather applicable to all learners of all ages. Czech EFL teachers of YLLs were still mostly relying on their own classroom observations though not guided (Brumen et al., 2009). In Slovenia, the YLLs were found to receive some definitive written explanations beside marks ranging from 1 to 5, however, the Slovenian teachers, unlike their Czech colleagues, had been provided with some basic guidelines in terms of observation and other alternative or teacher-based assessment practices for YLLs (Brumen et al., 2009). Likewise, in Croatia, teachers were encouraged to mostly observe their YLLs' progression through their oral performances and dialogues (Brumen et al., 2009).

McKay (2008) writes that “sharing information about current assessment practices” (p.66) is one of the goals that YLL assessment research aims to achieve. Therefore, by examining how EFL in-service teachers perceive and practice YLLs' assessment, we can further explore the effect of assessment on various stakeholders (e.g. learners, teachers, parents) in subsequent research. Also, as one half of the current research took place in a four-year degree program of ELT at a state university in Turkey, it had been assumed that discovering PSTs' perceptions of YLLs' assessment could make teacher trainers and program developers foresee the probable needs of the program in question: whether it makes teacher candidates perceive the difference between assessing young and older learners, whether teacher candidates are equipped with some necessary assessment practices to be used in their own classrooms, and how they perceive their training program in terms of preparing them to assess YLLs. In the light of the related literature and the stated research purposes and problems, our study is governed by the following two research questions;

1. How do fourth-year pre-service EFL teachers at a state university in Turkey perceive YLLs' assessment?
2. How do fourth-year pre-service EFL teachers at a state university in Turkey perceive their teacher training program in terms of YLLs' assessment?
3. What are the in-service EFL teachers' perceptions and current practices pertaining to assessments of 2nd and 3rd graders in several Turkish elementary public schools?

3. Method

3.1. Sampling, Participants and Research Context

In this study, the researchers made purposeful qualitative sampling through which they designedly chose the participants and their sites (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) suggests a variation of purposeful sampling one of which is called snowball sampling. In the snowball sampling, as described by Creswell (2012) and Seidman (2012) and that we employed in this study, the researcher does not have much acquaintance with the participants and sites, therefore, the sampling begins simultaneously with the data collection. Similarly, the researchers visited the sites (i.e., primary schools and university), contacted the probable participants, invited them to the sampling, and also requested for some recommendations for others to be included in the study. As a result, a total of thirteen language teachers participated in the current study.

Table 2.
Related Characteristics of Participants.

<i>Number</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age (M)</i>	<i>Year of Study</i>	<i>Teaching Experience</i>
9 Preservice teachers	Female (<i>n</i> = 7) Male (<i>n</i> = 2)	23	4 th year	-
4 In-service teachers	Female (<i>n</i> = 2) Male (<i>n</i> = 2)	34 (32 – 35)	-	12 years (11 – 13)

Nine of the participants (seven females and two males) were fourth-year preservice EFL teachers who were majoring in a four-year degree program of English Language Teaching at a state university in Turkey. As the requirements of their program, during their undergraduate education, all students were supposed to attend some skill-based compulsory courses related to teaching English to young learners, language testing and evaluation on their fifth (i.e. Teaching English to Young Learners I), sixth (i.e. Teaching English to Young Learners II), and eighth semesters (i.e. English Language Testing and Evaluation). The participants of the present study had already taken the first two of these courses and had been attending the last one in that semester (2014-2015 academic year). The rationale of choosing this group as participants of the study was that they had already attended all of the three courses in the program, and therefore, they were ready to discuss the issue of teaching and assessing YLLs, and to evaluate the existing curriculum based on their existing knowledge about courses. The remaining four participants were in-service EFL teachers teaching 2nd and 3rd grades at several Turkish public primary schools in Eskişehir. The teaching experience of these in-service teachers ranged from eleven to thirteen years, which was a worthwhile experience period. Two of the teachers were male, while two of them were female between the ages of 32 and 35.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

In the current study, case study research was employed (Creswell, 2007) since it gives the opportunity to obtain specific comprehension or insight into the examined and investigated situation/case which is generally a present-day phenomenon. The qualitative data was collected both from pre-service and in-service teachers through semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A and B for interview questions). The interviews were video-recorded and transcribed by the researchers. Also, consent from participants was obtained by making them complete an informed consent form. The participants were informed that their voluntarily participation in the research was valuable and they were free to decline participating.

To analyze the transcribed data, the researchers employed a thematic content analysis as outlined by Weber (1990). To do the content analysis, the procedures suggested both by Weber (1990) and Creswell (2012) were followed. First of all, the researcher extensively read the transcribed data more than once by taking many margin notes which could later be the codes appointed to persistent or interesting categories. The codes were constantly resolved and amended during iterative readings, and they were sorted based on the content they represented to establish the larger categories under which the codes were accumulated. Then, the codes and categories were tabulated. Lastly, a thematic approach was used as the form of qualitative reporting, which included comprehensive discussion about broad categories using large-scale of quotes and details to reinforce them. While reporting the authentic statements of participants, PSTs were labelled with pseudo names, and in-service teachers were labelled with letters from A to D. As for the validation of findings, an external audit technique was conducted to provide the evidence of accuracy of information in qualitative report.

4. Results

4.1. Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about YLLs' Assessment

The first research question guiding the study was related to PSTs' perceptions about the assessment process of young language learners. Firstly, participants' overall perceptions about assessment have been investigated. It was found that, most of the 4th year preservice English teachers (44.4%; $f = 4$) did not regard assessment as *a top priority for language teachers*. Also, most of them identified assessment of young learner foreign language as *a challenging process for teachers* (33.3%; $f = 3$). With a lower proportion, they, on the other hand, identified assessment as a requirement for YLLs (22.2%; $f = 2$). The related quotations of the participants were stated below about the three main issues mentioned respectively:

...I think we do not have to assess. When I put myself in their shoes, I would always and nervously think about the grade I would take. Honestly, I cannot focus on learning when I am assessed. There is currently an examination called TEOG. When we try to teach something, the students only consider whether the item would be included in the TEOG exam or not. The other things I would teach, if not included in the exam, do not mean a thing for them. Even if they are interested in the learning item, if it is not in the exam, they do not care about it. Thus, we should not assess for them to focus more on learning... (Duygu)

...The first thing that comes to my mind is that it [assessment] is difficult. The items we teach for young learners are not easy to be assessed. It can be more difficult to prepare and manage an assessment procedure for young learners... (Deniz)

...I think we should engage in assessment in Turkey's conditions because I do not suppose that the students would themselves think about their own progress and reflect upon it if they are left unguided. I think [assessment] is particularly necessary for young learners because I do not think they have the potential or maturity to assess themselves. They regard their teachers as role models, so teacher assessment can be more effective... (Burak)

Table 3.
General Perceptions about Assessment of YLLs

Categories	f	%
Not a top priority for language teachers	4	44.4
A challenging process for teachers (3)	3	33.3
Assessment as a requirement for YLLs (2)	2	22.2
Assessment as a feedback (1)	1	11.1
Assigning a grade/mark (1)	1	11.1

One of the participants also matched the concept of assessment with feedback (11.1%) and she produced the category of *assessment as a feedback* by stating her following opinions below:

...Assessment is the feedback given to a student's achievement or performance. As a result of this feedback, the students would consider their flaws or strengths and accordingly this feedback or assessment can influence the students' next steps. In fact, assessment to me is a type of feedback... (Sevgi)

One other participant also related assessment with the concept of *assigning a grade/mark* (11.1%) putting her past learning and assessment experiences forward:

...What we understand from assessment and what has been imposed on us since our childhood about assessment is taking grades. In Turkey the perception and situation about assessment is very much like this: score anxiety, teachers who test, who is going to take a higher grade, and things like these... (Banu)

Table 4.
Components of Assessment

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Basic functions / classroom language / commands	4	44.4
All four skills in different order	3	33.3
Vocabulary	3	33.3
Speaking	2	22.2
Pronunciation	1	11.1
Classroom participation	1	11.1

The present study also examined PSTs' perceptions about what to assess in a language classroom. The findings revealed that mostly *basic functions, classroom language and commands* (44.4%; $f = 4$) could be assessed in language classrooms as suggested by Hayat:

...Classroom language at least can be taught. Can a student express his/her wish to go out or drink water, for example? The very basic and easy stuff... I test whether they learn these simple but basic language. You know language functions should be at work. More functional things and what they can make use of at their ages... (Hayat)

When we look at the findings we can see that different number of participants focused on different skills and/or components of foreign language. While 33.3% ($f = 3$) of them supported the idea of assessing *all four skills in different order*, some others favored to assess only *vocabulary* (33.3%; $f = 3$), *speaking* (22.2%; $f = 2$) and/or *pronunciation* (11.1%). From a different point of view, Öykü claimed that *classroom participation* (11.1%; $f = 1$) level of young learners needed to be one of the components of language assessment: "...Participation in the activities. Are they eager to participate in the lesson? Are they active or passive or silent during the lesson?... " (Öykü).

Table 5.
Assessment Tasks/Activities and Mediums

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Classroom observation	6	66.6
Alternative grading systems and materials	4	44.4
Selected-response tasks (Matching)	2	22.2
Games	2	22.2
Mini talks/dialogues and role-plays	2	22.2
Portfolio / File keeping	2	22.2
Classroom tests (quizzes, paper-pencil)	2	22.2
Assessment criteria/checklists	2	22.2
Storytelling	1	11.1
Limited-production tasks (Fill-in-the-blanks)	1	11.1
Drama	1	11.1
Extended assessment tasks (homework, games)	1	11.1
Project-works	1	11.1
Question-answer tasks	1	11.1

Under the dimensions of first research question, PSTs' perceptions about possible assessment tasks, activities and mediums that can be used in foreign language classrooms with young learners were investigated. *Classroom observation* (66.6%; $f = 6$) was found to be the most preferable assessment medium by the participants which was followed by integrating some *alternative grading systems and materials* (44.4%; $f = 4$) such as stickers, specific progression categories, class-books and real objects into the assessment

process. The following quotations provide some more details about both classroom observation and alternative grading systems and materials:

...In fact, there must be observations in classroom. But observations for assessment should be realized after teaching and practicing. In other words, the activities used and observed for assessment should be different from the activities used for teaching and practicing. Therefore, everything in classroom should not be a component of observation... (Deniz)

...For example, assessment should not be limited to paperwork. What I mean by materials...For example, when we teach vocabulary about fruits and vegetables, we can bring realias to the classroom to assess if they remember the vocabulary or not... (Sevgi)

In order to assess the language of YLLs, respondents suggested some more particular assessment tasks and activities such as *selected-response tasks* (22.2%; $f = 2$) which refers to picture-matching tasks, *games* (22.2%; $f = 2$), *mini talks/dialogues and role-plays* (22.2%; $f = 2$), *portfolio / file keeping* (22.2%; $f = 2$), *classroom tests* (22.2%; $f = 2$) such as quizzes, paper-pencil exams in addition to specific assessment measures like *assessment criteria* and *checklists* (22.2%; $f = 2$). Moreover, *storytelling* (11.1%; $f = 1$), *limited-production tasks* that can be exemplified as *fill-in-the-blank tasks* (11.1%; $f = 1$), *question-answer tasks* (11.1%; $f = 1$), *drama* (11.1%; $f = 1$), *extended assessment tasks* (11.1%; $f = 1$) including homework and games as well as *project-works* (11.1%; $f = 1$) were determined as the many more specific alternatives that were valuable to use according to the preservice English teachers participated in the study.

Table 6.

Assessment Procedures and Principles

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Encouraging and motivating assessment	6	66.6
Process-oriented assessment (6)	6	66.6
Following a parallelism between assessment and curriculum (5)	5	55.5
Assessment embedded in a teaching cycle (4)	4	44.4
Assessment followed by feedback (2)	2	22.2
Focus on (real) language production (2)	2	22.2
No-paper pencil testing (1)	1	11.1
Ongoing diagnosis leading to decision making about teaching (1)	1	11.1
Whole-class assessment (1)	1	11.1

As a last point regarding the first research question, the respondents indicated some assessment procedures to apply and principles to follow while assessing the foreign language of young learners. According to 66.6% ($f = 6$) of PSTs, assessment firstly should be encouraging and entertaining as proposed by Sevgi and Simge respectively:

...My motive is that they should have fun and go through an unconscious process of assessment. I think announcing a formal test can frighten them at that age. Thus, it should be unconsciously and in the form of games and play...(Sevgi)

...I do not think children should be forced too much. This time, we can cool the children down. Simple, simple, then slowly... Children are aware, too... Instead of forcing, we should make an appropriate assessment of their level without notice. More exposure can be wasted by exposure to speech. They can also get used without notice. As they get exposed to speech, there may be more in the minds of children. They can also get used without notice... (Simge)

The second main principle suggested by the respondents was doing *process-oriented assessment* (66.6%; $f = 6$) instead of product-oriented one. One of the participants reflected his rationale for this suggestion taking affective factors into consideration and stated that:

...Normally we have a goal and product-oriented assessment but when it comes to young learners we should implement an assessment that is based and oriented more on the process itself. As far as I know it is more suggested. Let's say we give a test at the end of the semester. They can get very anxious at the time of test. Young learners can get more easily anxious. For example, a normally very successful student can do so bad at the test due to anxiety. Therefore, a more process-oriented assessment should be implemented; did the students come to the class, did they listen attentively, how did the general process go on?... (Burak)

As exemplified in Banu's statement, almost half of the PSTs (55.5%; $f = 5$) stated that language teachers should conform with a parallelism between assessment and curriculum: "It should be in parallel with the teaching, it should be like this in each and every course. We should ask what we cover, we should not ask more than what we covered in the lessons." Following that 44.4% ($f = 4$) of the respondents indicated a kind of assessment which was *embedded in a teaching cycle*, and Simge provided some details about how to do this integration:

...A 5-year-old child cannot make any meaning out of a formal test. He/she would treat the test as a game. 5-year-old students are constantly engaged in activities; thus, their performances can display their knowledge. I do not think tests are useful before age five, they cannot even understand what it is all about. If we sequence our activities properly, we can track our students' development during the activities. There is no need for other kind of assessments... (Simge)

The following procedures and principles were mentioned by fewer respondents compared to the ones above. For example, 22.2% ($f = 2$) of them stated that each assessment should be followed by feedback. In addition, while assessing the foreign language of young learners, the focus should be on (real) language production (22.2%; $f = 2$). One of the respondents claimed that teachers should never use paper pencil testing (11.1%; $f = 1$) since young language learners were still learning and developing their first language and their literacy skills. Also, it was revealed that assessment procedures should serve as an ongoing diagnosis which leads to decision making about teaching (11.1%; $n = 1$). The last point indicated by PSTs was that language teachers should avoid individual assessment practice. Instead, they may prefer whole-class assessment (11.1%; $f = 1$), in other words, all the questions should be asked, all the tasks and activities should be done via whole-class participation as suggested by Sevgi:

...For example, we divide the classroom into two; one side is happy, the other side is sad. There are 20 students at most in kindergartens. It is not very crowded like it is in primary schools. For instance, we can choose one students to ask what a specific item was, whether s/he could remember it or not. Then, I can ask other students about whether the answer is right or wrong, or if they agree or disagree. Like an implementation of peer-correction... (Sevgi)

4.2. Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about Teacher Training Program

The second research question guiding this study was related to the PSTs' perceptions about their training program in terms of assessment of young EFL learners. The data have been a source of two main categories regarding the second research question that were: 1) Perceptions about teacher training program and assessment, and 2) Suggestions about training PSTs on YLL assessment.

Table 7.

Perceptions and Suggestions Regarding Current Training Program

<i>Codes and Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1.Perceptions About Teacher Training Program in terms of YLL Assessment		
1.a. No specific focus on assessment of YLLs	8	88.8
1.b. Interpreting the lack of training as a drawback	5	55.5
1.c. Suspicious about their understanding of YLL assessment	4	44.4
1.d. Shortage of teaching practicum regarding YYLs	2	22.2
1.e. Program trains enough about YLL assessment	1	11.1
1.f. Transferring the training about how to teach to assessment process	1	11.1
2. Suggestions About Training Preservice Teachers on YLL Assessment		
2.a. Integrating assessment issue into teacher training curriculum	5	55.5
2.b. Assessment practice as well as theoretical training	2	22.2
2.c. Teaching earlier grades in Community Services Course	1	11.1
2.d. Opening a new course in the program	1	11.1

According to the 88.8% ($f = 8$) of the participants, the current teacher training program provides no specific focus on the issue of young language learner assessment. The participants discussed this issue below:

...Our only course towards young learners' assessment was Teaching English to Young Learners, and continued two semesters long. Honestly, in those courses, we only touched on what we could include in our teaching, what we could use in teaching to young learners. But we did not cover anything regarding the assessment part... (Sevgi)

...Unfortunately, I think we are not qualified at assessment. Because, here, we only learn how to manage a course from the beginning to the end. I need to say that we have not received any training of how to make an assessment at the end of each course. We are currently taking a course about testing and evaluation however in this course we touch on assessing the course books and units. There is nothing about assessing [testing] for example a language skill in our degree program. There is a need for such a course... (Reha)

One interesting finding of the study was that 44.4% ($f = 4$) of the PSTs were *suspicious about their understanding of the assessment* of young language learners. This group of participants showed that they could not trust in their ideas and suggestions regarding this issue. Following that, some participants (22.2%; $f = 2$) indicated the *shortage of teaching practicum* when young language learners were concerned.

...Now I am telling these things to you but I do not know to what extent these things are right or wrong, either. These are my personal ideas and might be wrong according to some scholars for example... (Sevgi)

...I am telling these things but I am just making inferences at the moment. We have not learned that much certain things about assessing young language learners... (Banu)

Among nine respondents, just one of them stated that the teacher training program implicitly trained him about the assessment of young language learners (11.1%; $f = 1$):

...There is 'Teaching English to Young Learners' course, not only teaching but also assessment is somehow covered in this course, though I do not remember much. There is also 'Language Acquisition' course where assessment is somehow included. Perhaps none of the courses specifically focus on the assessment but we somehow learned that young learners' assessment should be process-oriented. We can conclude this from the knowledge and training we get from all our courses. We have no particular way of assessing YYLs however we can blend our knowledge to find the right way... (Burak)

Lastly, the participants proposed some suggestions about how to train PSTs on YLLs' assessment. The most frequently stated suggestion was about *integrating assessment issue into teacher training curriculum* (55.5%; $f=5$). This suggestion was followed by *providing assessment practice to the preservice teachers in addition to theoretical training* (22.2%; $f=2$). The respondents claimed that getting only theoretical knowledge would not be enough in the assessment of young language learners. This phase should also be followed by small practices related to assessment. One another suggestion was related to Community Service Course. According to the 11.1% ($f=1$) of the respondents, in this course of the program, PSTs could teach earlier grades in addition to their last year teacher practicum. As a last point, opening a new course in the program such as? (11.1%; $f=1$) was claimed to be a good alternative in the training of teacher candidates.

4.3. In-service Teachers' Perceptions and Current Practices

Table 8 below summarizes the categories drawn from the related codes labelled in the transcription of our interviews. As can be seen, we managed to break the whole data into four main categories in line with our research question 2. Two categories named as Convenience of Teaching YLLs and Teachers' Attitudes towards YLLs'. Components of Assessment and Methods of Assessment appears to address to the other line of our second research question which questions the EFL language teachers' current practices pertaining to foreign language assessments of 2nd and 3rd graders. The following part of this section will discuss the categories in detail with verbatim quotations.

Table 8.
In-service Teachers' Perceptions and Current Practices

Codes and Categories	<i>f</i>
1. Convenience of Teaching to YLLs	
1.a. Rapport with YLLs	4
1.b. Enthusiasm of YLLs	4
1.c. Decrease in the workload of teaching	2
1.d. Joyful Teaching	1
2. Components of Assessment	
2.a. Manner and Preparation	4
2.b. Attendance	2
2.c. Consultation with the Class Teacher	1
3. Methods of Assessment	
3.a. Homework	7
3.b. Competition Whereby Awards	7
3.c. Informal Evaluation with Tests/Quizzes	6
3.d. Deliberately Mistaken Teacher Output	2
3.e. Internet Applications	2
3.f. Observing Class Performance	1
4. Teachers' Attitudes towards YLLs' Assessment	
4.a. It shouldn't be discouraging	5

4.3.1. Convenience of teaching to YLLs

Four participant teachers stated that they were having some advantages of working with the 2nd and 3rd graders. Although not straightforwardly related to the assessment of YLLs, we still prefer to include these advantages since they are quite salient in all interview data. Among the reported conveniences comes, for example, the rapport that is easy to be established with the YLLs, put differently, the innocence,

sinecures and cute nature of children appeal to our teachers. This appealing side of working with young language learners are stated in the following quotations:

...Apart from the extra burden of workload, I am fascinated by the young learners' sincerity and amiability... (Teacher A)

...Primary school students are innocent. There is no evil in them. Innocent. Believe me, if you go out of the classroom by leaving the exam papers on the table and do not come back for one hour, no one sees the papers. You can easily count on them that they do not try to see the exam papers... (Teacher B)

The participating teachers report that the young language learners are often very enthusiastic about language learning and that they are very open to new learning experiences. YLLs are viewed to quickly grasp the new information with ease, which is one of the reasons why our teachers prefer to work in primary schools with YLLs as demonstrated in the quotations below:

... children are very open and they learn with ease at these early ages, I mean you can give whatever is needed and take back the results in return... (Teacher C)

...They are very good. I mean they are very enthusiastic about learning English. They are open to learning it. They are happy since they are learning a new language. Their happiness makes me happy... (Teacher D)

...When you go to the 2nd graders, if there are 20 students, believe me, 20 of them are very eager and enthusiastic about learning a new language... (Teacher B)

Teacher A mentions a different advantage of working with YLLs in terms of a decrease in the extra school chores imposed on the teachers while working in the secondary or high schools. For example, as teacher A states, being a class teacher in the secondary level and preparing written exam papers and grading are all examples of additional chores. Teacher B also indicates another convenience that she finds in teaching to YLLs different from the other three teachers, that is, the opportunity to include joyful teaching activities in the classroom as quoted below:

...At these levels, what we most try to do is to make the children love English. In primary school you do not have much extracurricular workload like we have at high schools. All we do is teaching that is only between you and the learners. There is nothing stressful or time consuming... (Teacher A)

...Our activities are much of speaking, listening, games and play, singing, jumping, hopping...our activities are much like these. Our learners find it extremely funny to "draw, cut and paint" activities. I always consider myself lucky to be working with young learners... (Teacher B)

4.3.2. *Components of assessment*

This category refers to the components of the evaluative decisions made in YLLs' classrooms. The findings suggest that students' well and appropriate behavior and their preparation, namely bringing their daily learning materials to the classroom, is of great importance for the teachers:

...We give grades according to some criteria such as, for example, bringing their materials, preparing for the lesson, homework, complying with classroom rules... (Teacher A)

...Behaviors, surely... For example, we consider how they behave to their friends and some classrooms are very cooperative. For example, I say 'do not speak without raising your hands' and everybody follows the rule... (Teacher B)

Teacher C records that she attaches a great sum of importance to the enthusiastic efforts. Thus, the teacher takes the attendance and engagement of each student into consideration to make her decision on the grades. On the other hand, Teacher B says that he consults with the class teacher before he decides on

his grades. Teacher B explains that he validates his decisions through this consultation, in other words, the opinions or the success rate of the students in other subject areas are also taken into consideration as another component:

...To me enthusiasm and willingness are very important. The student may not succeed, learning a foreign language requires a particular talent like music or painting I guess. But if the student is enthusiastic and endeavoring, I will give him high grades... (Teacher C)

...I have always been consulting the class teacher while grading a student. I mean I ask the class teacher about a student's progress and general temper. Generally, we agree on 99% with the class teacher. If a student does not bring his stationary materials to my classroom, he probably does the same in other courses too... (Teacher B)

4.3.3. *Methods of assessment*

As for the methods of assessment, giving and grading homework have been found as one of the most commonly used methods applied by the four teachers to assess the students. Teachers report that they frequently resort to homework of different types suitable to the abilities of young language learners such as picture painting, paper cutting or copying given sentences. Only Teacher D states that she does not give homework to her young learners:

...For example, we studied fruits, numbers and 'have' structure. I write the sentence 'I have three apples' and ask the students for doing the same with the fruits they see. Thanks to this homework, they practice three subjects at the same time. They unconsciously practice their language" (Teacher A)

...From time to time I give homework. What is the type and content of this homework? It might be the repetition of the subjects we have just covered or spelling the new vocabulary items, or painting. I mean I try to give homework that is suitable to their ages" (Teacher C)

...Mostly cutting and painting activities with 2nd and 3rd graders... for example a painting activity has an English instruction and the students are supposed to paint accordingly. I check whether they painted correctly or not." (Teacher B)

Some teachers also state that they often prefer giving some kinds of awards to their students in turn for doing their homework, following class rules or behaving themselves in the classroom. These awards might be stickers bearing a smiling face, a piece of chocolate, star signs or elaborated signatures written on the first pages of the students' notebooks or sometimes minuses for bad behaviors accumulated to be considered at the end of the semester. Teachers additionally explain that they create a competitive environment in the classroom through these awards both to motivate and to compare the students for assessment purposes. We should note that teachers keep the records of every award in form of evaluation lists to be used later on to decide on the school report grade:

...I divide the class into three; window row, middle row and wall row. I announce that the row which will be the best-behaved will win the most star and I draw a star figure on the board accordingly... (Teacher B)

...Yes, you can draw a smiling face. But I draw my smiling face figures to everyone... (Teacher C)

...Of course, I also draw a star figure on their notebooks. I also give stickers they like them. I always check the homework... (Teacher D)

Teacher C says that she gives her small gifts to every student without any discrimination, which we will discuss later under the category of *Teachers' Attitudes towards YLLs' Assessment*. Another method of assessment our teachers specified in the interviews is very familiar, which namely are tests or quizzes:

...There some small tests I employ on a weekly and monthly scale, and I also take the classroom participation into consideration. I blend all of these to grade my students... (Teacher D)

...I prepared and employed a mini test of 20 multiple-choice questions. A student answered all the questions correctly and I was not even aware of him/her since she/he was not very talkative... (Teacher B)

As Teacher B informs, these kinds of informal assessments such as tests or quizzes might help teachers get to know some introverted but successful students in the classrooms. An interesting way of assessing YLLs is proposed by Teacher A. He writes or pronounces words or sentences deliberately wrong in the classroom and the students who catch the mistakes are awarded as quoted below:

...I always ask a disguised question in the lesson. I purposely write something ungrammatical on the board. If a student can realize it, I will award him/her. If no one sees the ungrammatical point, then I put a minus to each student... (Teacher A)

Sometimes an internet application can be used to trace the students' progress and keep the records of the awards. These applications, however, function online and those who do not have internet application at their home cannot reach the application, thus follow their own progress. On the other hand, if there is internet connection at students' homes, even the parents can check how their children were evaluated;

...Their families also check their children's progress, which points they got, which points they lost and why...The system records the whole progress and I can check the progress retrospectively... (Teacher A)

...It is an application which has tests and lecturing and activities. I make so much use of it... (Teacher D)

Teacher C reports that she continuously observes the students' engagement level into the classroom activities in order to get some impressions which will be used for assessment afterwards:

...We grade them according to their classroom performances. What are they? For example, do they use the newly taught vocabulary items? Or do they sing the song you have just taught?... (Teacher C)

4.4.4. Teachers' attitudes towards YLLs' assessment

Lastly, what we could draw out of the data pertaining to the attitudes that teachers hold towards the assessment of young language learners. Our participating teachers believe that the first year of English instruction should serve as a motivating introduction to foreign language learning. Three of the teachers indicate that they are mild and indulgent in their assessment approaches. The teachers state that their assessment should never discourage the young learners at the very start of their learning experience, instead, should support their enthusiasm:

...We should not discourage our students. They will lower their spirits when they will not get any smiling face figures and create a bias towards language learning. I want to overcome this bias... (Teacher C)

...We are in fact trying our best not to discourage our students. What happens when you give a low grade to a 2nd or 3rd grader? I will only demotivate them... (Teacher B)

...I try to give higher grades to those who ever shows some enthusiasm... (Teacher A)

...They are real children until 4th grade. They have the right to be spoiled up to a degree. Therefore, I show tolerance to them in terms of grades. And when they cross the limits I warn them and solve the problem... (Teacher A)

5. Discussion

Recently, foreign language learning of YLLs and their assessment has gained broad interest worldwide. Turkey with other European Union countries, likewise, show this interest, and therefore we are supposed to educate a growing number of YLLs, which generates the demand to be aware of this learner group's particular characteristics and needs. As a result, different stakeholders should be able to determine and address YLL needs, specify their foreign language levels, identify their strong and weak sides as well as journalize their language acquisition processes and progresses. Decidedly, one of the sources that can play a crucial role in collecting all the information stated in the previous lines would be language assessment (Shaaban, 2001; McKay, 2008).

Assessment of YLLs is an issue that has been remarked by some Turkish scholars with the new educational reform. In her book chapter which offers recommendations on the curriculum used to teach YLLs and on the reorganization of training programs of PSTs to make them qualified enough to give these lessons, Bayyurt (2014) raised her concern about the following points regarding the new curriculum program launched in the 2012-2013 academic year (p. 119-120):

1. Developing and implementing a curriculum for students' age groups,
2. Training teachers with the formation to teach foreign language to YLLs within the new educational reform,
3. Developing and evaluating course materials for needs of students who will start learning foreign languages from 2nd grade in the context of the new curriculum,
4. Developing measurement and evaluation tools for the students who will start learning languages early within the new curriculum.

As suggested in item (4), developing measurement and evaluation tools for YLLs is one of the issues needed to be considered within the new curriculum program. This study specifically focused on the assessment of YLLs. Hence, the perceptions and understandings of pre-service and in-service teachers about the evaluation of YLLs are taken, and the real practices of in-service teachers are tried to be-exposed. Our analysis showed that assessment of YLLs has been considered as a critical issue for PSTs. They are aware of the importance of the assessment itself and eager to find out how it should be carried out. According to our participating PSTs, YLLs' assessment should be given a 'top priority' as it is a 'challenging process' due to 'the lack of a focus on the issue during teacher training and lack of specifically designed outlines', yet it is 'a necessary element that should not be ignored'. However, despite its credited significance, PSTs can show a low self-efficacy regarding YLLs' assessment as indicated by the study of Volante and Faizo (2007) on primary school teacher candidates. Although our participating PSTs are well aware of the importance of assessment knowledge and literacy regarding YLLs, they seem to be lacking the necessary skills and training to deal with the assessment of this learner group, particularly due to lack of related courses and enough focus on the issue in their ELT degree programs since almost every PST thinks that their teacher training program has no specific focus on assessment of YLLs. This lack of training is additionally interpreted as a drawback by PSTs, and they expressed their obvious suspicion on their understanding of YLL assessment. Moreover, only one teacher candidate states that the program trains them well enough about YLL assessment. This forms a supportive argument for the inadequateness of teacher training program on providing competence on YLLs' assessment to the PSTs.

Another point is that although participating PSTs are quite enthusiastic to discover the necessities of YLLs' assessment, in-service EFL teachers hold a rather tolerating and flexible attitude towards the issue. In-service teachers are quite responsive to their young learners' enthusiasm and believe that assessment should never discourage their willingness to learn. Our findings from in-service teachers showed that they mostly favored students' interests by seriously considering their age and enthusiasm and by trying not to discourage them with assessment. This finding is in accord with Linse and Nunan (2005). They suggested

several principles for teachers to apply in the assessment of YLLs. First, they warn teachers not to have high expectations as our in-service teachers also stated that they treat their students' assessment in a fairly flexible manner. Our in-service teachers told that they were mainly using small scale competitions and games to assess their students as using chants, riddles and small talks, which is also recommended in Linse and Nunan (2005).

PSTs also believe in an encouraging and motivating assessment, however, there is a huge gap in the body of knowledge alike among pre-service and in-service teachers about the real practice of YLL's assessment. Although PSTs mention more number of assessment tasks, activities and/or mediums than in-service teachers, these tasks, activities and/or mediums were generally stated by one or two participants, which means that each participant holds different ideas about this issue assembled mostly under the category of "classroom observation" but without any criteria. This finding supports the conclusion of Butler (2009) where EFL in-service teachers in three East Asian countries were shown to be seriously deprived of essential professional qualities needed to assess YLLs. Likewise, Brumen et al. (2009), in three East European countries, found that EFL in-service teachers did not have any sort of guideline or evident outlines to assess YLLs, rather they basically relied on their own classroom observations.

When it comes to the Turkish context, in her study on foreign language education and teacher qualifications in primary schools, Haznedar (2012) has revealed that foreign language teachers are not qualified enough to teach English to children at early ages, and of the 533 primary school English teachers participating in the study, 49% ($n = 261$) were unaware of language teaching methods and approaches to younger learners. The study of Haznedar (2012, p. 51) has also revealed that primary level English teachers giving lessons in Turkey have limited information specified in the following topics: a) second language acquisition in childhood and its relation to linguistic development in the first language acquisition, b) measurement and evaluation methods for primary school students, and c) child development.

Along with Haznedar (2012), our study is also in line with Brumen et al. (2009) in that our in-service teachers also heavily rely on their classroom observations and homework as well as competitions, small tests and quizzes. Although less than half of PSTs suggest the assessment of language skills (i.e. all four skills or speaking/pronunciation) and one language component (i.e. vocabulary), in-service teachers do not even speak of these skills and components, and instead refer to manner and preparation, attendance and teacher consultation. In the following two studies, Butler (2009) and Brumen et al. (2009), we can see that from Czechia to Japan, and additionally in Turkey as put forward in the current study, EFL teachers are not equipped with necessary training during their teacher training programs, and consequently have to assess YLLs quite intuitively without having specifically designed protocols. It has also been observed that the main focus is on formative, as opposed to summative, classroom assessment and some formative assessment actions are more common than others (e.g., classroom observation, competitions and quizzes).

Due to some reasons, foreign language teachers are observed as less skilled in YLLs' assessment. One possible reason can be the absence of professional development opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers as indicated by Edelenbos and Johnstone (1996) and Nikolov (2000). In addition to the truth that we do not draw the attention of PSTs to the evaluation of children during formal university education, in-service teachers seem to be depriving of in-service training to close the gap related to YLL assessment. This situation can be resulted from the fact that the four year-old education reform is still immature. However, there have been, so far, successful attempts to bring standardization into language assessment in the world such as TESOL (TESOL, 1997) and the Australian Language Levels (Scarino, Vale, McKay and Clark, 1988). Though not sufficient and only premature, we also witnessed some pioneering steps in the case of YLLs' assessment as well, like the EVA project in Norway (Hasselgren, 2000) where assessment tasks were specifically designed to meet the YLLs' needs. Needless to say, assessment of YLLs continue posing some crucial questions such as what the current and real classroom applications are like and how 'system-wide' procedures could be developed (McKay, 2008). Therefore, the inclusion of YLLs'

assessment into teaching training programs and its implementation in in-service practice is one phenomenon which is never to be underestimated and needs further attention.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined perceptions and practices of Turkish EFL pre-service and in-service teachers regarding young language learners' assessment. All in all, our study proposed that both pre-service and in-service teachers of EFL seem unprepared for YLLs' assessment. PSTs, though enthusiastic about being more capable, seriously lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assess YLLs. They, on the other hand, are well aware of their deficiency and call for amendments in their teacher training program to eliminate the gap. As to in-service teachers, a similar sort of deficiency which is reflected in the real practice also insists. In the same alignment with the review literature, the current study concludes that in-service teachers are in an urgent need of clear guidelines to assess their YLLs as they do not possess the essentials of YLLs' assessment. Yet, in-service teachers have to assess their YLLs. However, there is not a unity of assessment practice and approach among teachers, which is very likely to lead to inconveniences and unfair cases for the YLLs.

As young language learners continue to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, conceptually and linguistically, English language teachers are supposed to be well-equipped, receiving the required formation. Regarding this, the place and importance of YLL teachers and teacher education programs need to be emphasized again for an ideal education. In this sense, the findings of the study call for curricular additions to the English language teaching degree programs to better equip teachers for young language learners' assessment. One another call can also be made for training, supporting and reinforcing in-service teachers on the same issue. When complicated nature of this learner group and newness of the educational reform are considered, these calls seem very natural. It is, therefore, imperative for stakeholders to consider the issue of YLLs' assessment, and to train current and future teachers for the YLL assessment.

Emphasizing the qualifications of YLLs' teachers, Bayyurt (2014) also indicates that such courses as curriculum development and evaluation for early childhood, assessment and evaluation of YLLs, development of literacy in children, learning problems and language-speech disorders in children will also need to be integrated into the existing curriculum. As assessment and evaluation of YLLs is the focus point, the three crucial topics that are how to assess, what to assess and how to train language teachers about assessment will be at the top of the agenda. Outside of all other roles, perceiving assessment as an element of language use and characterizing it as a remedial element benefit language teachers and students in all circumstances and viewpoints. According to McKay (2008; p. 353), YLLs' "natural desire and need to use language" would be a promotive factor "to engage children in language use, especially when the environment is conducive to doing things with others and with things around them". For that reason, when YLLs are concerned, it would be an appropriate step to search for and determine the ways to turn assessment into a channel of motivation, diagnosis, remedy and language use, and to educate teacher candidates on ways to achieve this. These channels need to be associated with and encouraged by some other cornerstones of teaching and learning environments such as curriculum, institutional standards, developmental trainings for in-service and PSTs as well as teaching and learning activities in classrooms.

6.1. Implications

The current study attempted to examine perceptions and practices of Turkish EFL pre-service and in-service teachers regarding young language learners' assessment as well as PSTs' teacher training program. This study being short on number of participants and variety of teaching and learning environments humbly provides an insight to assessment methods, procedures and techniques applied in

YYL classrooms. However, what we also need is a kind of elaboration and standardization in the assessment of YLLs. In other words, what we need is some standardized procedures and richer assessment tasks applied (Brumen et al., 2009). In order to devise such various, reliable and valid assessment, studies which deeply probe into the current classroom applications of teachers are urgently required. Especially, with bigger number of participants and different learning environments, these studies will uncover current assessment tools or methods, and thus will shed light into the plausible and implausible applications just before drawing up the ideal ones. Therefore, these studies can also help to devise standardized criteria to assess YYLs in more high-stake tests in system wide scales. Moreover, in-service teachers' purposes to assess their YYLs' can also be studied with similar or different methodologies to discover what they aim the most by using assessment apart from the natural result of assessment which is to reveal their students' current knowledge and abilities.

The findings related to in-service teachers indicate that, in this study, we specifically focus on practical side of assessment from the perspectives of in-service teachers. Therefore, one another idea for further research can be to investigate what in-service teachers perceive and how they approach when YLLs' assessment is concerned. That is to say, beliefs and attitudes of in-service teachers can be explored in a more detailed way. The attitudes of teachers towards assessment is important and worth investigation in that some teachers, as the ones in England and Wales (Teasdale & Leung, 2000), may not approach YLLs assessment as a priority and may not include assessment among the steps to be taken in order to improve English language education. This situation may stem from cultural, personal and education system related factors. To explore these varied factors, more studies conducted with Turkish YYL teachers are needed.

As to PSTs, studies which will discover and define their needs for assessment of YLLs can be necessary. Three main points can be framed about these needs: what to assess, why to assess and how to assess. First to recite their missing knowledge and skills and then to substitute them would be an ideal path to follow while determining and addressing these needs. This could be done through small or large-scale need analysis studies. As a matter of fact, in our four-year degree program, the senior students go to practice teaching or "Teaching Practicum". University supervisors evaluate both their written lesson plans and observe their actual teaching performances in classroom. However, although many aspects of different language skills and language components are taken into consideration during planning, teaching and supervision, assessment is very often left highly overlooked. Therefore, in addition to needs analysis studies, experimental studies which emphasize the trials of assessment in Teaching Practicum are also needed. Through these kind of studies, both the real practices of in service YLL teachers and perceptions of PSTs can be uncovered.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions with in-service teachers

English Version (Children= Young language learners / 2nd and 3rd graders in this case)

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching English to 2nd and 3rd graders?
3. How do you feel about teaching to 2nd, 3rd graders?
4. What do you think of children's learning English at early ages starting from the 2nd grade?
5. What comes up to your mind when it comes to the assessment of young language learners?
6. How and through which methods should the young language learners be assessed?
7. How do you assess your 2nd and 3rd graders? Please specify the whole process to reach the score on the school report?

Turkish Version (Öğretmenlerle Yapılan Yarı Yapılandırılmış Görüşme Soruları / Çocuk = Young learner = 2. 3. Sınıf öğrencisi)

1. Mesleğinizde kaçınıcı yılınız?
2. Ne zamandır / Kaç yıldır 2. ve 3. Sınıfların İngilizce dersine giriyorsunuz?
3. Bu durumla ilgili nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Açıklayın
4. Çocukların erken yaşta (2. sınıfta başlayarak) yabancı dil öğrenmesiyle ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?
5. Çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi denince ne geliyor aklınıza?
6. Çocukların yabancı dili size göre nasıl veya hangi yöntemlerle değerlendirilmeli?
7. 2. ve 3. sınıf öğrencilerinizi siz nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Yani karneye kadar uzanan o değerlendirme sürecini anlatabilir misiniz bize?

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview questions with pre-service teachers

English Version

1. What does the word “assessment” remind you of?
 - 1.a. What does the statement ‘assessment of young learners’ remind you of?
(What does the statement ‘assessment of young learners’ language’ remind you of?)
(What do you think of assessment of young language learners’ language?)
 - 1.b. Do you think young learners’ language should be assessed? Why?
 - 1.c. (If yes...) How, do you think, should young learners’ language be assessed? Why?
(What should be assessed related to young learners’ language?)
(When should young language learners’ language be assessed?)
(Which methodology/technique/tool etc. should be used when young language learners’ language is assessed?)
- 2.a. What do you think about the place of young language learners’ assessment in the teacher training program?
- 2.b. How, do you think, should the teacher training program deal with assessment of young learners’ language?
- 2.c. How, do you think, should PSTs be trained for assessment of young learners’ language?

Turkish Version

1. Değerlendirme deyince ne anlıyorsunuz?
 - 1.a. Çocukların (young learner’ların) değerlendirilmesi deyince ne anlıyorsunuz?
(Çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi deyince ne anlıyorsunuz?)
(Çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?)
 - 1.b. Sizce çocukların yabancı dili değerlendirilmeli midir? Neden?
 - 1.c. (Evet ise) Sizce çocukların yabancı dili nasıl değerlendirilmelidir? Neden?
(Sizce çocukların yabancı diline dair ne değerlendirilmelidir?)
(Sizce çocukların yabancı dili ne zaman değerlendirilmelidir?)
(Sizce çocukların yabancı dili değerlendirilirken ne gibi yöntemler kullanılmalıdır? Neden?)
- 2.. Çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi konusunun, öğretmen yetiştirme programındaki yeri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
 - 2.a. Sizce öğretmen yetiştirme programı çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi konusunu nasıl ele almalıdır?
 - 2.b. Sizce öğretmen yetiştirme programı, aday öğretmenleri, çocukların yabancı dilinin değerlendirilmesi konusunda nasıl eğitmelidir?