

PERCEPTIONS OF TURKISH EFL TEACHERS ABOUT THE INSTRUCTION OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES*

Melek YOLCU¹, Meryem AKÇAYOĞLU²

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ABSTRACT

Given that it is the basis of any language, vocabulary is a fundamental component in learning a foreign language. This study aims at exploring the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers regarding how they value vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) and the extent of using them in their classroom practices. Another purpose is to unveil the most and the least commonly applied VLS by EFL teachers in the Turkish state secondary schools context. 26 EFL teachers from 15 different schools participated in this mixed-methods sequential explanatory designed study. The quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire based on Schmitt's taxonomy of VLS and analysed via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine teachers and the data were interpreted via thematic analysis. The findings revealed that EFL teachers place special emphasis on vocabulary learning and teaching. Besides, a significant relationship was found between the importance level and application level of VLS, revealing that EFL teachers mostly employed the strategies that they considered important. However, the most frequently applied strategy turned out to be the determination strategy group although the most important strategy group was perceived as memory strategies. Teachers seemed to have difficulty instructing the strategies they regard as significant. Such factors as intensive curriculum, insufficient course books, exam-oriented instruction, limited course hours, inadequate equipment, and indifferent learners were determined to restrain teachers from instructing different kinds of VLS.

KELİME ÖĞRENME STRATEJİLERİNİN ÖĞRETİMİ KONUSUNDA TÜRKİYE'DEKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ALGILARI

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ÖZ

Herhangi bir dilin temeli olduğu göz önüne alındığında, kelime bilgisi yabancı dil öğrenmenin temel bir bileşenidir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin kelime öğrenme stratejilerine (VLS) nasıl değer verdiklerine ve bunları sınıf uygulamalarında ne ölçüde kullandıklarına ilişkin algılarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Diğer bir amaç, Türk devlet ortaokulları bağlamında İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından en çok ve en az uygulanan kelime öğrenme stratejilerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu açımlayıcı sıralı karma yöntemli çalışmaya 15 farklı okuldan 26 İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Nicel veriler, Schmitt'in Kelime Öğrenme Yöntemleri taksonomisine dayalı bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmış ve Sosyal Bilimler için İstatistiksel Paket (SPSS) aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. 9 öğretmen ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve veriler tematik analiz yoluyla yorumlanmıştır. Bulgular, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin kelime öğrenimi ve öğretimine özel önem verdiğini ortaya koydu. Ayrıca, kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin önem düzeyi ile uygulama düzeyi arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur ve bu da İngilizce öğretmenlerinin en çok önemli gördükleri stratejileri kullandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Ancak en önemli strateji grubu hafıza stratejileri olarak algılansa da en sık uygulanan strateji belirleme strateji grubu olmuştur. Öğretmenlerin önemli gördükleri stratejileri öğretirken zorlandıkları görülmektedir. Yoğun müfredat, yetersiz ders kitapları, sınav odaklı öğretim, sınırlı ders saatleri, yetersiz donanım ve ilgisiz öğrenciler gibi faktörlerin öğretmenleri farklı VLS türlerini öğretmekten alıkoyduğunu belirlenmiştir.

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¹ Öğr. Gör., Alparslan Türkeş Bilim ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, myolcu@atu.edu.tr, ORCID:0000-0001-6098-808X.

² Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi, trmeryem@cu.edu.tr, ORCID:0000-0002-4761-4160.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a critical role in learning and teaching a foreign/ second language (L2) as being the cornerstone for all language skills, comprehension, and effective and meaningful communication. As Schmitt (2010) highlighted, effective and meaningful communication in L2 is contingent upon lexical items. Grammar knowledge does not assist language learners in making contact with others, reading or writing in the target language. As Lewis (1993,1997) also puts forward in the Lexical Approach, lexis and its components (e.g. words, collocations, phrasal verbs, chunks) are the basis of the language, since these chunks help the learners to perceive the patterns of the language known as “grammar”. He further suggests that developing learners' proficiency with lexis, words or word chunks is as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. In line with Lewis, Thornbury (2002) highlights that majoring in L2 necessitates comprehensive knowledge about lexis involving the lexical item's form, meaning, usage, pronunciation, spelling, and grammatical knowledge. Consequently, the number of research studies regarding vocabulary and vocabulary-related issues has arisen in recent years. In addition, vocabulary learning (VL) and vocabulary teaching (VT) has become a current focus in the field of English language teaching, English as a second language (ESL) pedagogy, and research (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Wei, 2007).

Vocabulary learning and teaching is a time-consuming and challenging issue for language learners and EFL teachers. This process concerns not only learners but also teachers (Ölmez, 2014), because to be able to gain awareness about how to learn vocabulary and to promote their autonomy, learners should be guided and trained by their teachers. Besides, teaching vocabulary necessitates both teaching the lexical items and supplying the language learners with strategies that will help them improve their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, to manage this challenging process, vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are certainly a necessity because VLS are tools for reinforcing and facilitating language learners' lexical development. Suppose that language teachers introduce and apply various strategies suitable for learners. In that case, it will highly likely that assist language learners to gain autonomy, independence, and self-determination and also enhance their language development, so that they will be responsible for their own learning and become lifelong learners (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). In order to accomplish it, the teachers themselves should have a faith in the significance of VLS instruction and they should know about implementing VLS to reflect it to their students. At this point, strategy instruction is acknowledged as a crucial necessity for the efficient application of strategies. Strategy instruction can provide teachers to support learners to stretch their learning styles and to expand awareness of learning strategies so that learners can have the chance to check out a wider range of appropriate strategies other than their basic style preference (Oxford, 2003; Cohen, 2003; Anderson, 2005). Some researchers point out that if teachers are not informed about the vocabulary instruction or any other teaching practices for lexical items, vocabulary teaching and learning may become tough (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Actually, the beliefs and attitudes of teachers who are the instructor of the strategies are thought to determine the effectiveness of this instruction process (Oxford, 1990; Borg, 2003). Hence, particular VLS applied by teachers may reflect teachers' perceptions about the usefulness and effectiveness of those strategies.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the importance and application level of VLS among secondary school EFL teachers, to discover the most and least commonly employed VLS in their teaching context and to ascertain what the relationship is between perceived importance and application level of EFL teachers' VLS. Therefore, this study may shed light on the present situation and potential problems with VLS. Following this purpose, the study was done to find answers for these three research questions:

1. What are the most and least commonly used VLS among secondary school EFL teachers?
2. What is the relationship between perceived importance level and perceived application level of L2 VLS among secondary school EFL teachers?
3. What are the experiences and views of secondary school EFL teachers about L2 VLS?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus on language teaching has become more learner-based and interactive since the 1980s. So, assisting learners to supply their own needs and to take on more responsibility in their language learning is getting more prominent (Rubin, 1975; Cohen, 2003). Oxford (2003) confirms that capable teachers enable learners to create awareness about language learning strategies (LLS) which are described as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, more transferable to new situations." (Oxford, 1990). As a sub-category of LLS, VLS has become more of an issue not only for researchers but also for teachers, language learners and curriculum developers (Goundar, 2015) as they help to

enhance vocabulary acquisition (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Li, 2009; Goundar, 2015) and enhance learners to take control of their own learning (Nation, 2001). Although VLS has been defined differently by the scholars (Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Schmitt, 1997; Nation, 2001; Cameron, 2001; Intaraprasert, 2004; Catalan, 2003), Catalan (2003) employed a comprehensive definition. She defined VLS as

knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) used to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and (d) to use them in the oral or written mode. (ibid, p. 56)

Several scholars have suggested taxonomies of VLS (Gu and Johnson 1996; Schmitt 1997; Nation 2001). The present study is based on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of VLS, in which Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of LLS was taken as a basis and which is accepted as the most elaborate VLS taxonomy with a total of 58 individual items. His taxonomy includes five categories. *Determination strategies* (DET, 9 items) refer to learners' own attempts to discover the new word's meaning without the interference of anyone. *Social strategies* (SOC, 8 items) include interaction with others such as teachers, classmates, or any group to find and solidify the meaning of the novel word. Known as mnemonics, *memory strategies* (MEM, 27 items) embody the strategies used to relate the new words to the pre-existing knowledge to encode those words, retrieve them easily and provide permanent learning. *Cognitive strategies* (COG, 9 items) include deliberate language manipulation and transformation such as repetition strategies, rather than mental processing. *Metacognitive strategies* (MET, 5 items) refer to the strategies that enable learners to control their own learning, make conscious decisions and make an evaluation of their personal development in vocabulary learning.

Research Studies on the Instruction of VLS

A diverse range of studies related to VLS, including the instruction of VLS, the most and the least commonly applied VLS, the results of strategy instruction, the effects of VLS on vocabulary mastery have been carried out so far. As for the research studies investigating the instruction of VLS and EFL teachers' perceptions on this issue, Zheng (2012) conducted a study with Chinese EFL teachers and university students to get the participants' attitudes and views in terms of their vocabulary learning and teaching. The findings indicated that the majority of teachers believe that their VT is not very efficient and they still implement the traditional methods in vocabulary teaching although VT was believed to play an important role in language learning.

In an Iranian context, Amiryousefi (2015) searched for 392 EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of VLS, plus the effects of education level on strategy preference. The results showed that the participants believe the usefulness of some determination strategies. However, they reported being reluctant to use the mother tongue, bilingual dictionaries, and mnemonic strategies such as the keyword method and the loci method. Another important result is that differences in teachers' and learners' levels of education may lead to some changes in their beliefs about language learning and teaching.

Another study reporting the perceptions of Algerian EFL teachers about vocabulary teaching strategies (VTS) is conducted at the university level by Bouirane (2016). The results showed that EFL teachers have a low perception of VTS and they are not fully familiar with vocabulary teaching strategies. Moreover, the results obtained from the questionnaire about applied strategies contradicted the observation results, in which selected strategies were determined not to be used in the classroom.

Sa'd and Rajabi (2018) enquired about Iranian EFL learners' perceptions about VLS and their teachers' application of VTS. Results revealed that although teachers' vocabulary instruction centered on certain types of VTS, learners implied to use a good variety of VLS. Besides, it was stated that there are significant differences between females' and males' perceived VLS and their teachers' use of various VTS.

Garwan and Priyanti (2021) conducted research with English language teachers teaching 7th graders and their students to find out VTS used by the teachers and to get students' perception about the vocabulary strategies their teachers use. The results showed that presentation, translation, memorization, playing game, action, body movements, realia, and media sources are commonly used by the teachers and the students are found to be content with vocabulary teaching strategies.

In an Ethiopian context, Dekabo (2021) investigated the VTS implemented by EFL teachers at high school. The results of this mixed-method study indicated that EFL teachers mostly apply limited, shallow VTS such as definition and translation which result in surface learning .

In a Turkish context, Demirtaş (2014) examined secondary state school EFL teachers' views regarding teaching VLS and revealed the most and the least popular strategies in terms of usefulness and teaching practice among teachers. Accordingly, it was found out that the majority of teachers apply VLS that they consider useful in their teaching practice. While the most popular VLS were revealed to be memory strategies, metacognitive strategies were stated to be least popular among other strategy groups.

In her mixed-method study, Kılıç (2018) searched the VLS that Turkish EFL instructors prefer implementing in their teaching process, their views towards VTS and whether these strategies make a meaningful difference according to participants' age, gender, and graduation field. It was determined that their perceptions about VT, reviewing, recalling, and using strategies are very high. Another significant finding revealed that the more degree or experience EFL instructors have, the less VLS are implemented by them.

Another study was conducted by Güreş (2019) to determine the VTS that EFL instructors employ and also their perceptions about their students' VLS. The study indicated that the instructors use VTS with some weaknesses even though some of them were not aware of the students' VLS.

A recent study in a Turkish context was carried out by Seis (2020) to investigate the relationship between EFL lecturers' views about VT and the strategies they apply in vocabulary instruction. The findings demonstrated that the lecturer's perceptions are in line with their practices. The lecturers were determined to highly benefit from social and memory strategies, as well as clear and explicit instruction in VT. Besides, such factors as gender, age, educational background, and year of experience were stated not to have a significant influence on VT practices of teachers.

Consequently, noteworthy studies about teachers' views and practices on vocabulary instruction have been conducted in different contexts, resulting in different consequences. However, the majority of the studies were done at the university level. Examining the perceptions and applications of EFL teachers in terms of vocabulary instruction at the secondary school level, thus, this study provides an extensive analysis to fill the research gap.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method sequential explanatory design was used in this study, in which quantitative research was conducted and analysed at first, and then qualitative data were collected and analysed (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative data were obtained via a structured questionnaire and analysed via SPSS; qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 26 teachers and analysed through thematic analysis. Later, qualitative and quantitative data were incorporated in the phase of interpretation of the study (Tashakkori, Teddlie & Teddlie, 2003).

Participants

26 EFL teachers (n=9 male, n=17 female) from 15 different public secondary schools in Hatay took part in this study in the Academic Year of 2018-2019. Convenient sampling was adopted to select the participants because it is based on collecting information from participants who are readily available to the researcher (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). All of the participants were teaching English to 8th graders at that time or had taught before at least once. 16 of the participants were a graduate of English Language Teaching, six of them were graduates of English Language and Literature and one of them was from other departments. All of them had only a bachelor's degree. The majority of them had teaching experience between 6 and 10 years. Almost all of them did not have training on VLS. In the beginning, all the participants were enlightened about the aim of the study, its voluntary basis, confidentiality, and ethical issues. Nine participants (n=1 male, n=8 female) volunteered to take part in the qualitative data collection part. Table 1 below presents detailed demographic information about the participants for the quantitative data collection part.

Table 1. Demographics of Teacher Participants for the Quantitative Data

Variables	Number (Total = 26)
Age	
20-29 years	6
30-39 years	19
40-49 years	1
50 years and more	-
Sex	
Female	17
Male	9
Major	
English Language Teaching	16
English Language and Literature	9
American Culture and Literature	-
Translation and Interpreting Studies	-
English Linguistics	-
Other	1
Graduation Degree	
BA	26
MA	-
PhD	-
Teaching Experience	
Less than a year	-
1-5 year(s)	5
6-10 years	15
11-15 years	6
16 years and more	-
Teaching 8th graders	
In 2018-2019 academic year	22
Before	26
VLS training	
Received	2
Not received	24
Volunteer for Interview	
Male	1
Female	8

Data Collection

The data were obtained via a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. With a total of 58 items, the questionnaire is a validated questionnaire adapted from Ölmez's (2014) study. It had been developed in the light of Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of VLS. After the piloting, Cronbach's Alpha score of the final version of the questionnaire was determined 0,94. Five strategy groups were included in the questionnaire: determination strategies (9 items), social strategies (8 items), memory strategies (27 items), cognitive strategies (9 items), and metacognitive strategies (5 items). It was applied in English and had two main parts. In the first part information about participants was obtained. The second part contained two kinds of five-point Likert scales, one of which showed the importance level of VLS (1: not important at all, 2: somewhat important, 3: important, 4: quite important, 5: extremely important) and the other demonstrated the application level of VLS (1: never apply it, 2: rarely apply it, 3: sometimes apply it, 4: usually apply it, 5: always apply it). The participants were kindly asked to sign the consent form at the beginning and asked if any volunteer participants would like to take part in the interviews.

In the second stage of the study, semi-structured interviews were implemented with EFL teachers in their native language (Turkish) to get an in-depth understanding and supplementary data to elicit teacher participants' experiences and perceptions in detail. The semi-structured interview included five main questions which had been adjusted after piloting. Nine teachers participated in the interview voluntarily. The interview with each teacher lasted about 10-15 minutes.. All the interviews were applied at an available time for both the researcher and participant at the schools. After the permission was received from the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded without distracting the respondents.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) edition 22 was used to analyse the quantitative data. The researcher benefited from different statistical methods including correlational statistics, descriptive statistics, and frequency analysis to report and interpret the data. The quantitative data were also presented in tables and figures.

To analyse the qualitative data, thematic analysis was utilised. First of all, the sound recordings of interviews were written verbatim by the researcher. Then, all the transcribed data were revised to check for any inaccuracy. After the data were transcribed, certain codes, recurring themes, and strategies mentioned by the participants were categorised in line with the research questions.

FINDINGS

The results of quantitative and qualitative data are demonstrated successively in this section. First of all, the importance and application level of VLS are illustrated and the correlation between the importance and application level is provided. Then, the data obtained from semi-structured interviews are discussed under separate themes and sub-categories. Each interviewee is given a number so that the anonymity of the participants is ensured.

Quantitative Data Analysis Findings

The results demonstrate that teachers attached the greatest importance to memory strategies among all the strategies ($M=3.77$) and cognitive strategies are ranked the second most important strategies with little difference in mean ($M=3.72$). Determination strategies were perceived as the third most important strategy group which was followed by social strategies ($M=3.46$). The least important strategy group was found to be metacognitive strategies ($M=3.3$) (Figure 1).

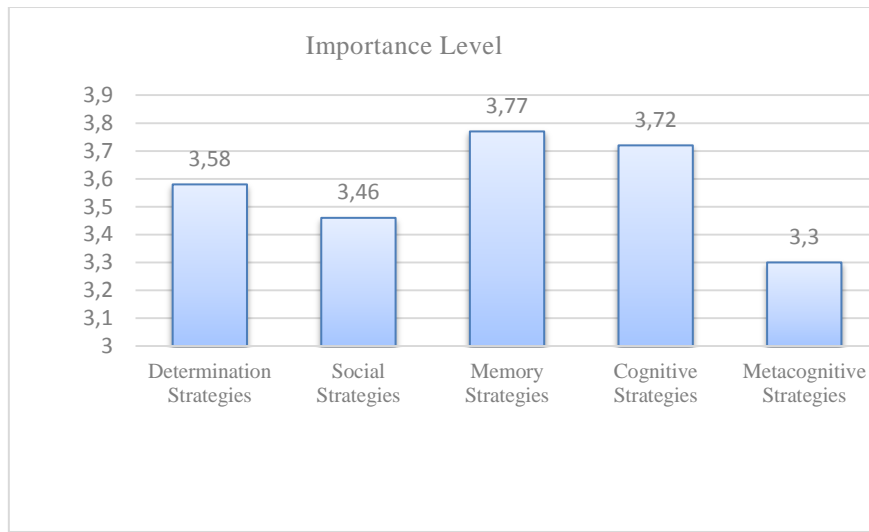


Figure 1: The Distribution of VLS Importance Level for EFL Teachers

When it comes to the application level of VLS, preceding the memory and cognitive strategies, determination strategies were found to be the most commonly applied strategy group ($M=3.59$) although it was ranked the third most important strategy. The second frequently applied strategy was turned out to be cognitive strategies ($M=3.53$), which is followed by memory strategies ($M=3.49$). The least commonly applied strategy group was identified to be metacognitive strategies ($M=3.08$) which is also given the least importance (Figure 2).

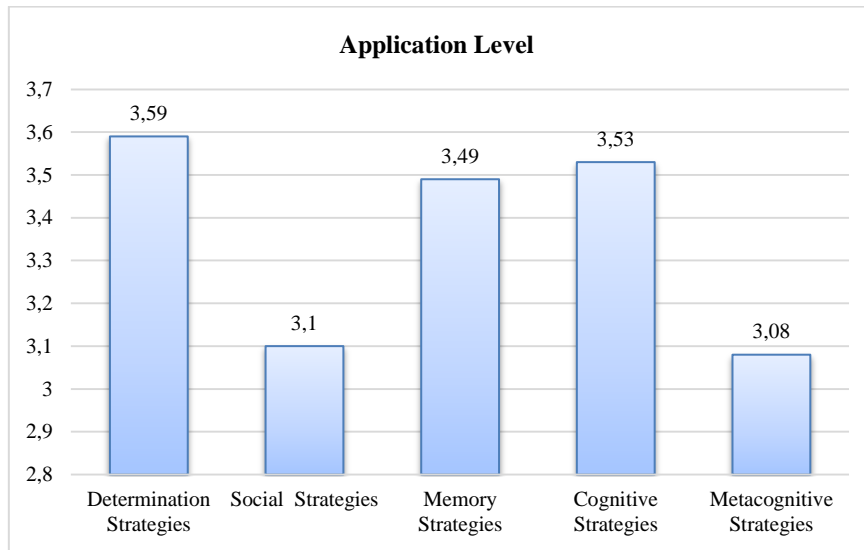


Figure 2: The Distribution of VLS Application Level for EFL Teachers

Table 2 demonstrates the correlations between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of strategy groups. To analyse the association between variables, a nonparametric measure of correlation -the Spearman's rank correlation- was used since the number of participants was insufficient (N=26). The results of correlations indicated a statistically significant relationship ($r_s=,662$, $p<0,05$). According to the results, there was a moderate positive relationship between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of Determination Strategies.

As for the relationship between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of Social Strategies regarding 26 EFL teachers, the results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables ($r_s=,657$, $p<0,05$). There was also a moderate positive relationship between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of Social Strategies.

The correlations between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of Memory Strategies regarding 22 EFL teachers indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables ($r_s=,763$, $p<0,05$). It is also remarkable to manifest that there was a strong positive relationship between the variables.

As to Cognitive Strategies regarding 25 EFL teachers, the correlation indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables ($r_s=,891$, $p<0,05$). It is noteworthy to highlight that there was a rather strong positive relationship between the variables regarding Cognitive Strategies, whose correlation coefficient was identified to be the highest value among all the strategies ($r_s=,891$).

The correlation between the perceived importance level and perceived application level of Metacognitive Strategies regarding 23 EFL teachers demonstrated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables ($r_s=,806$, $p<0,05$). It is also remarkable to note that there was a strong positive relationship between the variables.

Table 2: The Correlations between the Perceived Importance and Application Level of Strategy Groups

		App. DET	App. SOC	App. MEM	App. COG	App. MET
Imp. DET	Correlation Coefficient (r _s)	,662**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000				
	N	26				
Imp. SOC	Correlation Coefficient (r _s)		,657**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000			
	N		26			
Imp. MEM	Correlation Coefficient (r _s)			,763**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			,000		
	N			22		
Imp. COG	Correlation Coefficient (r _s)				,891**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)				,000	
	N				25	
Imp. MET	Correlation Coefficient (r _s)					,806**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					,000
	N					23

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 illustrates the perceived most important and most commonly employed strategies. The most important determination strategies were reported to be *teaching students to guess the word’s meaning from the text/context in which the word appears* (M=4.57) and *teaching students to deduce the meaning of the word from flashcards and posters* (M=4.07). In terms of social strategies *asking students to use the new word in interactions with native speakers* (M=4.11) and *getting students to discover the meaning of a new word through group work* (M=3.69) were found out to be given more importance. As for memory strategies, *teaching students to use new words in sentences* (M=4.32) and *teaching students to connect the new word to its synonyms and antonyms* (M=4.30) was reported to be the most important in this group. *Teaching students to take notes about the word in class* (M=4.19), *taking notes about the word in class* (M=3.92), and *teaching students to put English labels on physical objects* (M=3.80) were perceived as the most important cognitive strategies. Concerning metacognitive strategies, *teaching students to test themselves with word tests* (M=4.16) and *teaching students to follow and use English language media for vocabulary learning (e.g. songs, films, newscasts.)* (M=4.15) were the most important strategies in this group.

The findings showed that the most commonly applied determination strategies were partly in line with the most important determination strategies which are *teaching students to guess the word’s meaning from the text/context in which the word appears* (M=4.57), and *asking students to check for an English-Turkish cognate (linking the English word to a Turkish word. e.g music-müzik.)* (M=4.07). *Getting students to ask me for a paraphrase or synonym of the new word* (M=3.50) and *getting students to ask me for a sentence including the new word* (M=3.42) were the most frequently employed social strategies. With regard to memory strategies, *teaching students to connect the new word to its synonyms and antonyms* (M=4.23) and *teaching students to use the new word in sentences* (M=4.00) were found out to be commonly applied strategies. As for the cognitive strategies, *teaching students to take notes about the word in class* (M=4.19), *teaching students to keep a vocabulary notebook* (M=3.80), and *asking students to use verbal repetition of the word* (M=3.69) were ranked as the most adopted strategies. *Teaching students to test themselves with word tests* (M=3.88), *teaching students to follow and use English language media for vocabulary learning (e.g. songs, films, newscasts.)* (M=3.50), and *asking students to continue to study the word over time* were the most commonly applied metacognitive strategies (Table 3)

Table 3: The Perceived Most Important and Most Commonly Applied Strategies By EFL Teachers

The perceived most important strategies	M	SD	The perceived most commonly applied strategies	M	SD
DET: Teaching students to guess the word's meaning from the text/context in which the word appears	4.38	.8979	DET: Teaching students to guess the word's meaning from the text/context in which the word appears	4.57	.5778
DET: Teaching students to deduce the meaning of the word from flashcards and posters	4.07	.8910	DET: Asking students to check for an English-Turkish cognate (linking the English word to a Turkish word. e.g music-müzik.)	4.07	.8449
SOC: Asking students to use the new word in interactions with native speakers	4.11	.9519	SOC: Getting students to ask me for a paraphrase or synonym of the new word	3.50	.8602
SOC: Getting students to discover the meaning of a new word through group work	3.69	.8840	SOC: Getting students to ask me for a sentence including the new word	3.42	.9021
MEM: Teaching students to use new words in sentences	4.32	.8021	MEM: Teaching students to connect the new word to its synonyms and antonyms	4.23	.8152
MEM: Teaching students to connect the new word to its synonyms and antonyms	4.30	.7884	MEM: Teaching students to use the new word in sentences	4.00	.9129
COG: Teaching students to take notes about the word in class	4.19	.8953	COG: Teaching students to take notes about the word in class	4.19	.8494
COG: Teaching students to keep a vocabulary notebook	3.92	.9348	COG: Teaching students to keep a vocabulary notebook	3.80	1.200
COG: Teaching students to put English labels on physical objects	3.80	.8494	COG: Asking students to use verbal repetition of the word	3.69	.9703
MET: Teaching students to test themselves with word tests	4.16	.6880	MET: Teaching students to test themselves with word tests	3.88	.7810
MET: Teaching students to follow and use English language media for vocabulary learning (e.g. songs, films, newscasts.)	4.15	.7317	MET: Teaching students to follow and use English language media for vocabulary learning (e.g. songs, films, newscasts.)	3.50	1.104
			MET: Asking students to continue to study the word over time	3.50	1.272

Table 4 shows the perceived least important and the least commonly applied strategies by EFL teachers. The results demonstrate that *teaching students to analyze affixes and roots of the new word when guessing its meaning* (M=2.84) and *asking students to learn the word through English-Turkish word lists* (M=2.92) are the perceived least important determination strategies. *Getting students to ask me for a Turkish translation of the English word* (M=2.50) was reported to be the least important strategy among social strategies. As for memory strategies, *teaching students to underline the initial letter of the word* (M=2.84); as for cognitive strategies, *asking students to write the word several times* (M=2.96) was reported to be the least important strategies among these groups. *Asking students to skip/pass the new word and ignore it* was perceived as the least important among metacognitive strategies.

Concerning the perceived least commonly applied strategies, it was found out that they are partly in line with the perceived least important strategies. *Asking students to look up a monolingual dictionary to find out the word's meaning* (M=2.07) and *teaching students to analyse affixes and roots of the new word when guessing its meaning* (M=3.03) have the lowest application mean scores among determination strategies. As for social strategies, *asking students to use the new word in interactions with native speakers* (M=1.65); for memory strategies, *teaching students to link the new word to another word that rhymes with it (like "two is a shoe"*,

“three is a tree”, “four is a door”.) were reported to be employed least frequently. The perceived least commonly used cognitive and metacognitive strategies were determined to be the same as the perceived least important strategies in these groups (Table 4).

Table 4: The Perceived Least Important and Least Commonly Applied Strategies by EFL Teachers

The perceived least important strategies	M	SD	The perceived least commonly applied strategies	M	SD
DET: Teaching students to analyse affixes and roots of the new word when guessing its meaning	2.84	.96	DET: Asking students to look up a monolingual dictionary to find out the word’s meaning	2.07	1.09
DET: Asking students to learn the word through English-Turkish word lists	2.92	.84	DET: Teaching students to analyse affixes and roots of the new word when guessing its meaning.	3.03	1.03
SOC: Getting students to ask me for Turkish translation of the English word	2.50	1.06	SOC: Asking students to use the new word in interactions with native speakers	1.65	.68
MEM: Teaching students to underline the initial letter of the word	2.84	1.21	MEM: Teaching students to link the new word to another word that rhymes with it (like “two is a shoe”, “three is a tree”, “four is a door”.)	2.69	1.08
COG: Asking students to write the word several times	2.96	1.24	COG: Asking students to write the word several times	2.88	1.33
MET: Asking students to skip/pass the new word and ignore it	1.62	.82	MET: Asking students to skip/pass the new word and ignore it	1.79	1.06

Qualitative Data Analysis Findings

The qualitative data derived from nine EFL teachers through semi-structured interviews are presented in this part. The findings will be demonstrated under specific themes.

Perspectives of EFL Teachers about the Significance of Vocabulary Learning

As a result of the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with EFL teachers, it was ascertained that all participants attach particular importance to vocabulary learning in the language learning process. Vocabulary learning was reported to be significantly important in that vocabulary is necessary for communication and comprehension, besides it forms the basis of the language. Some of the teachers highlighted that it is vocabulary that forms the basis of a language, so it should be given great importance. Moreover, more than half of the participants (N=5) put forward that learning vocabulary is much more significant than learning grammar.

EFL Teachers' Awareness of VLS

According to the participants' responses, it was found out that most of the participants are familiar with several vocabulary learning strategies which were mostly basic strategies such as *using wordlists (English-Turkish)*, *using the word in a sentence*, *using flashcards*, *filling the gaps*. Yet, some of the teachers stated that they are familiar with variant strategies including *connecting the word to a familiar place (Loci Method)*, *using a Turkish or Arabic³ keyword with a similar sound to learn the new word*, and *connect the English word to this Turkish/ Arabic Word (encoding words)* and *using a vocabulary box*. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 stated that they don't know how to define the terms of VLS they know, but they are generally classical strategies. Teacher 8 expressed that she knows the VLS that she used to apply while learning vocabulary. Teacher 2 and Teacher 9 specified that they are familiar with the VLS that they usually use in the classroom. Table 4 shows the stated VLS known by EFL teacher participants.

EFL Teachers' Views on the Instruction of VLS

The participants' views about the instruction of the VLS, the vocabulary teaching strategies they commonly use in the language teaching process, the factors that restrain the instruction of VLS, and their views about VLS in-service training are presented in this part.

When they were asked about whether they instruct VLS or not, most of the teachers indicated that they don't teach VLS in particular. Teacher 5, Teacher 2, and Teacher 9 stated that the strategies they employed are those that they used to utilise in their own learning. Teacher 3, Teacher 7 ask students to share their ideas in the classroom about how they are learning vocabularies and the VLS they usually use, so that their friends can benefit from these strategies. Teacher 8 and Teacher 2 pointed out that they want their students to find their way in learning vocabulary. Teacher 4 stated that he never teaches VLS to 8th graders. Although they stated that they know some different techniques of VLS they use only a few of them. Moreover, they generally take the responsibility of presenting the vocabularies basically. They mostly apply VLS to let students discover the meaning of the vocabulary. *Wordlists, dictionaries, vocabulary notebooks, guessing the meaning* are principally employed determination strategies. Most of the teachers revealed that they provide a wordlist of the important vocabularies with Turkish meaning at the beginning of each unit. Teacher 5 and teacher 7 write the important words on the board letting students look up at the dictionary. Teacher 6 pointed out that she asks the students to go over the unit, write the unknown words down and look up the dictionary. Teacher 4 asks the students to find the new words' meanings as homework at the very beginning of each unit. Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 9 employ a common vocabulary box in the classroom and have a vocabulary contest which was stated to motivate and stimulate the students to learn. A few techniques that are about deeper levels of processing and help students consolidate or retain the vocabularies were noted to be used in the teaching process. In addition to these strategies, commonly employed vocabulary teaching strategies are "*Teaching students to use a Turkish keyword with a similar sound to learn the new word, and to connect the English word to this Turkish word*", "*guessing from pictures/ flashcards*", "*asking students to solve vocabulary tests*", "*using snap words*", "*asking students to keep a vocabulary notebook*", "*asking students to repeat verbally*", "*asking students to match the words with their synonyms*" and "*teaching vocabularies via word games like Jeopardy or Bingo*".

The participants who stated that they never instructed their students about the VLS or those who taught them a few strategies highlighted the factors that restrict the instruction of their VLS. Some of the participants stated that they don't have sufficient knowledge about the types of VLS, indeed. The factors such as intensity of the curriculum, insufficient coursebook, exam-oriented instruction to 8th graders, limited weekly course hours, lack of equipment, the indifference of the students to learning were reported to restrain the instruction of VLS. Nevertheless, all the participants asserted to be enthusiastic about in-service training on VLS and VLS instruction to broaden their horizons about different VLS and instruction of VLS.

DISCUSSION

The findings gained from the questionnaire and interviews revealed that EFL teachers put great emphasis on vocabulary learning/teaching because vocabulary knowledge was reported to serve the purpose of communication, comprehension and to constitute the basis of the language. This finding backs up Lewis's (1993) Lexical Approach. In accordance with these findings, teachers' application level of VLS was also noted high as

³ Most of the participants know the Arabic language which is widely spoken in Hatay.

in Ölmez (2014) and Asyiah's (2017) study. It was also found out that there is a significant relationship between application level and importance level of VLS. That is, the strategies that are given the most importance were identified to be employed significantly on a larger scale by EFL teachers, which is compatible with Demirtaş's (2014) findings. This finding also supports Borg's (2003) assertion that teachers' preferences and perceptions in the language teaching process influence their pedagogical practices. However, teachers seem to have difficulty in implementing the strategies that they consider more important. Some factors such as intensity of the curriculum, the coursebook that insufficient in meeting the needs, exam-oriented instruction to 8th graders, limited weekly course hours, lack of equipment, and indifferent learners to learning were determined to restrain teachers to instruct different kinds of VLS.

Although memory strategies were perceived as the most important strategy group as in Demirtaş's (2014) study, the most frequently applied strategy was turned out to be the determination strategy group. This finding reveals that teachers are conscious about higher vocabulary teaching strategies that require active manipulation of information, however, they commonly implement the basic strategies in their teaching. The most important and the most frequently used strategies among the memory group were defined as *teaching students to use new words in sentences* and *teaching students to connect new words to synonyms and antonyms*. On the other hand, the commonly instructed determination strategy was found out to be *teaching students to guess words from the context* whereas the least important and the least frequently applied determination strategy was stated to be *teaching students to use English- Turkish wordlists*. This finding support Nunan (2011) who emphasised that instructing learners to benefit from context clues properly and providing them with various exposures to novel lexical item support independent learning, because it is not enough for students to simply memorise lexical items with meaning on the wordlists to incorporate it into personal vocabulary repertoire. Moreover, this finding is also in concordance with Amiryousefi's (2015) study, in which guessing from the context was found to be useful while bilingual dictionaries were hesitated to be used. However, this questionnaire finding regarding determination strategy contradicts the interview finding, in which most teachers stated to provide students with wordlists or new words with their meanings written on the board. Some teachers reported letting students *guess the meaning from context* or pictures before giving the meaning of it. However, giving a wordlist was stated to be more popular during the interviews. The teachers might prefer giving a wordlist because it was an efficient way of learning in a limited time. It goes along with Chamot and Rubin (1994) who based the selection of teaching strategy on such factors as the available time, context of the learning, the characteristics of learners, their proficiency level, the conditions that the strategy used in, etc. As the second most important strategy group was determined to be cognitive strategies which were also ranked the second most frequently employed strategy. Among cognitive strategies, *teaching students to take notes about words in class and teaching them to keep a vocabulary notebook* was perceived as highly popular strategies while *teaching them to write words several times* was the least instructed strategy. This finding goes in line with interview findings. It was found out that *writing words several times* is a technique that was not suggested by the teachers. This finding brings Schmitt's (1997) assumption into mind: Basic or shallow strategies might be used more than complex ones as learners are prone to utilise "mechanical strategies" such as repetition, rote learning, or memorisation. Dekabo's (2021) and Garwan and Priyanti's (2021) findings which revealed the implication of limited, shallow strategies by EFL teachers verify Schmitt's assumption, as well. As for metacognitive strategies, they were attached the least importance and they were identified to be instructed at least level, as in Demirtaş's (2014) study. However, among the metacognitive strategy group, *teaching students to test themselves with word tests* was the commonly instructed strategy. This indication may confirm an exam-based instruction with 8th graders in Turkey, not a communicative approach as they have an important exam called LGS (entrance to high school exam).

During interviews, teachers emphasised the significance of VL and VT when compared to other language skills, acknowledging that students are responsible for their own learning and students should implement the VLS in line with their interests and learning habits. While some of the teachers admitted that they instruct VLS that they used to implement in their own learning, some others claimed not to teach any VLS, but leave the rest to students' own efforts. In Kebiel's (2012) study, the majority of teachers and students were also reported not to have sufficient knowledge about VLS. As Nation (2001) highlighted, demonstrating and expressing a strategy to students and leaving the rest to the students is definitely not satisfying. Moreover, only a few teachers noted to look for effective strategies to apply, whereas most of them remarked to follow mostly basic strategies regarding repetition strategies such as wordlists, dictionary, vocabulary notebook, verbal repetition as in Zheng (2012) study, as well as several higher strategies such as vocabulary box, encoding words, guessing the meaning, asking students to take notes, vocabulary tests and games, synonyms, and antonyms of the words. This contradicts

Amiryousefi's (2015) results, where mnemonic strategies such as keyword method and loci method were not believed to be useful. Besides, the majority of those teachers were determined to supply the new vocabularies of each unit themselves. The stated underlying reasons are the limited weekly course hours, the intense curriculum, the course books that lack in meeting the needs of learners and teachers. Hence, the teachers apply the fastest and easiest way of presenting lexical items. However, the teachers who have smartboards or any technological devices in the classroom were found out to employ a variety of strategies like listening to videos, songs, using an online dictionary, and using educational websites especially EBA.

EFL teachers were determined to instruct mostly two elaborate and effective vocabulary learning strategies which are *connecting the new English word to a Turkish word having a similar sound (encoding word)* and *using a vocabulary box*, which was stated to be effective and motivating for learners. This indication conflicts with Amiryousefi's (2015) finding in which participants believed that the keyword method is not useful. However, it is in line with Sagarra and Alba's explanation (2006) who consider this keyword method to enhance learning and retention of the lexical items.

Another major finding of this study is that all the participant teachers in the interview showed great willingness to take part in in-service training to broaden their horizons about different VLS and instruction of VLS. In accordance with this, Aytekin and Güven (2013) also advocate strategy training for teachers. In addition, Cohen (1998) underlined the effectiveness of in-service training with this statement: "In-service seminars provide the most extensive and efficient means for training teachers for how to conduct their own strategy training in the form of strategies based instruction"(p.10).

CONCLUSION

This research reported how EFL teachers valued VLS and to what extent they used these strategies in their teaching process. Accordingly, it is indicated that Turkish EFL teachers attached great importance to vocabulary learning. Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between the importance level and application level of VLS which indicates that the strategies that are attached great importance are employed on a vast scale by teachers. While the least important and least frequently applied strategy group is metacognitive strategies; memory strategies were perceived as the most important strategy group, however, the most commonly applied strategy group was turned out to be the determination strategy. This study showed that the minority of EFL teachers look for efficient strategies to implement in the classroom while the majority of them apply basic strategies. It is concluded that EFL teachers are conscious about higher VLS, however, they frequently apply the basic strategies in their teaching practices because of such restrictive factors as the intensity of curriculum, unsatisfactory coursebook, insufficient weekly course hours, inadequate equipment, exam-oriented instruction, and unconcerned learners. Therefore, to dissolve these limitations away, necessary precautions must be taken. Noting that the vast majority of EFL teachers did not receive training on VLS and they are insufficient in strategy instruction, it can be inferred that there is a severe need for in-service teacher training on VLS.

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Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally.