

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY TURKISH 6th AND 8th GRADERS

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ABSTRACT.

Though the majority of research on language learning strategy use have focused on adolescents and adult learners, a growing number of researchers have dealt with the strategy use of children at the elementary school level in the last decade. The present study investigated the effects of grade level and gender on the use of language learning strategies of 133 Turkish elementary school students of English as a foreign language. Data collected by means of the Children's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) adapted from Gunning (1997) (based on Oxford's SILL, 1990) revealed a significant relationship between frequency of strategy use and grade level, but no significant effect of gender was found in the overall strategy use of Turkish elementary school EFL learners.

Key Words: Language Learning Strategies, EFL Learners, Elementary School Learners, Gender, Grade level.

ÖZET.

Dil öğrenme stratejileri üzerine yapılan çalışmaların çoğunluğunun yetişkin öğrencilerle ve ana dilin İngilizce olduğu ortamlarda yapılmasına rağmen, son yıllarda erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitimine verilen önem ve öğrenme stratejilerinin dil öğrenimi üzerindeki ortaya konması, çocukların strateji kullarımlarına ilişkin çalışmalara gösterilen ilginin artmasına neden olmuştur. Bu araştırmanın amacı ilköğretim öğrencilerinin kullandığı dil öğrenme stratejilerini belirlemek ve sınıf seviyesi ve cinsiyet gibi değişkenlerle, kullanılan stratejiler arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemini 6. ve 8. sınıfta öğrenim gören 133 ilköğretim öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Veriler öğrencilerin bilişsel, bilişüstü, duyuşsal, sosyal, telafi ve hafıza stratejilerini ne ölçüde kullandıklarını ölçmek için hazırlanan bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, sınıf seviyesi ile öğrencilerin strateji kullarımları arasında anlamlı bir fark

olduğunu göstermiştir. Ancak, cinsiyetin strateji kullanımı üzerine istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisi bulunamamıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Dil Öğrenme Stratejileri, İngilizcenin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretimi, Çocuklara Dil Öğretimi, Cinsiyet, Sınıf Seviyesi.*

Introduction

Since the late 1970s there has been a prominent shift from a predominantly teaching-oriented perspective, to one which includes interest in how the action(s) of learners might affect their language learning. In parallel to the new shift of interest, the last few decades have witnessed a vigorous growth in the research on language learning strategies. The most general finding of the investigation on language learning strategies is that the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency or achievement overall or in special skill areas (Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Oxford & Crookall, 1989; Cohen, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1993; Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito, & Sumrall, 1993), and enables students to take responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Thus, it seems highly important that teachers of a second or foreign language identify the strategies used by language learners and the factors affecting their choice.

Theoretical framework

Language learning strategies are defined as 'specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations' (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Stated another way, learning-strategies are 'measures that students can take to promote their own learning success' (Franklin, Hodge, & Sasscer, 1997, p.24).

Although most research on language learning strategy use was carried out with adolescent and adult second and foreign language learners (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Todesco, & Stern, 1978; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; O' Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), a number of researchers in the last decades have begun to look more closely at the learning strategy use of elementary school learners in a variety of ESL and EFL contexts along with the factors affecting their choice of strategies.

For example, in their study with students in French, Spanish, and Japanese elementary immersion programs in the United States, Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) investigated the learning strategies used by more and less effective young learners, and found a close relationship between strategy use and proficiency. More proficient foreign language learners in the elementary grades reported using more strategies than did average-proficiency or low-proficiency learners. The former group was also found to use more sophisticated learning strategies e.g., using background knowledge in a reading task, while low-proficiency learners generally depended on the strategy of phonetic decoding. In another study, Gunning (1997) investigated the strategy use of 107 fifth grade Francophone students learning ESL and similarly found significant differences in strategy use according to children's proficiency levels. Based on the results, Gunning indicated that helping children develop language learning strategies would reduce their language learning anxiety and increase their proficiency. In their study with a group of 379 sixth grade EFL students, Lan and Oxford (2003) explored the relationship among students' strategy use and three variables, namely gender, proficiency and attitudes toward learning English. Results of the study revealed that high-proficiency learners significantly exceeded both medium- and low-proficient learners in their use of strategies. Moreover, the researchers found a significant gender difference for overall strategy use, with girls using strategies more frequently than boys and suggested accommodating gender differences in strategy use in strategy instruction. Another finding of the study was that liking English made a significant difference in overall strategy use. Learners who liked English used strategies significantly more frequently than did those who thought English was just OK. Moreover, Kung (2003) in a study with 172 elementary school students investigated the correlations between young learners' vocabulary learning strategy use and their proficiency level. Using multiple instruments for the data collection, e.g., proficiency test, language learning questionnaire, and interviews, Kung found that the more proficient learners used vocabulary learning strategies not only more often than the less proficient ones but also made much more use of different resources, such as English story books and magazines for vocabulary learning, and therefore reported using more strategies for those situations. Finally, Hsu and Huang (2004) explored the relationship between elementary school students' learning strategy use in regard to gender and personality differences. One hundred sixty three sixth graders from six elementary schools in Taiwan participated in this study and data were collected by means of Oxford's SILL (1990), Lai's *Personality Assessment*, and a semi-structured interview. Results of the study again showed that gender differences existed in terms of strategy use, i.e., with girls using significantly more strategies than boys. In terms of personality traits,

extrovert students employed significantly more strategies than the introvert ones.

Though some research on language learning strategy use has extended to elementary school levels, it is still limited in number. The present study aims to extend the knowledge on the strategy use of young learners of English in an EFL context which has not been investigated in terms of the relevant issue before. Specifically, it aims to assess the use of language learning strategies of Turkish L2 learners at elementary school, and explore the effects of grade level and gender on their strategy use. Before discussing the methodology of this study brief information about the Turkish context will be provided.

Teaching English to young learners: The Turkish situation

The passage of law introducing the new 8-year compulsory education system brought significant changes to foreign language education in Turkey in 1997. Under this law it became obligatory for public primary school students to start studying a foreign language, generally English, from the fourth grade on. In 2000, foreign language education at the level of kindergarten and in the first three grades of primary education was officially permitted by the Ministry of Education, due to the increasing demand for learning English^{1,2}.

According to the regulations, English is taught two hours a week in the fourth and fifth grades, and four hours a week in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. English in public schools is generally taught by native speakers of Turkish and the course books used are written by the Ministry of Education.

Method

Participants

This research included 133 students (see Table 1 for the distribution by grade level and gender) learning EFL in a public elementary school in Istanbul, Turkey. None of the subjects had ever been to an English-speaking country and 12 of them indicated to have communication in English with native speakers once or twice.

¹ *Intensive English instruction, provided in private schools for decades, generally starts at the level of kindergarten.*

² *At kindergarten and in the first three grades English instruction is optional.*

Table 1. Distribution of subjects by grade level and gender

Grade Level	Gender		Total
	Males	Females	
Grade 6	30	34	64
Grade 8	35	34	69

Instruments

Data for the present study were collected by means of the Children's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) adapted from Gunning (1997) (based on Oxford's SILL, 1990). For the purposes of this study we kept Gunning's SILL structure but made sure that all items related to real-life experiences of Turkish children in public schools. The SILL contained 30 strategies grouped into six broad strategy categories, i.e., memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies aid in entering information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed, cognitive strategies are used for forming and revising internal mental modes, and receiving and producing messages in the target language, compensation strategies are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language, metacognitive strategies help learners exercise executive control through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their own learning process, affective strategies enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning, and social strategies facilitate interaction with others. The items in these six categories describe what learners generally do while learning an L2 and each has 5-point Likert scale responses, 5 being always and 1 being never or almost never.

The SILL was translated into Turkish by the researchers with special attention to issues of simplicity and comprehensibility. The translated version was checked by an expert and two English teachers for clarity, and the final version was pre-tested with 13 sixth graders and 17 eighth graders. Based on the feedback from the students and their teachers, the following modifications were made in the items: 'Link pronunciation between new/old word' was changed to 'Learn the pronunciation of a new word by repeatedly mouthing', 'Repeat new expressions learned' to 'Repeat new expressions through writing or oral repetition', 'Listen closely to English speakers' to 'Listen closely to English speakers (teacher)', 'Be interested in learning in American culture' to 'Be interested in learning American/British culture'. The reliability for the final version of the SILL was .84 (using Cronbach's).

Data collection and data analysis

Participants completed the SILL in class under the supervision of their English teachers in the second term of the 2004-5 academic year. The teachers were provided with a list of guidelines to help administer the survey, and students were assured that the results would not affect their grades and that their scores would not be made public.

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was applied to the data collected by means of the SILL to see the variation in the means of overall strategy use, in each of the six categories and individual strategies (dependent variables), and grade level and gender (independent variables).

In the present study, Oxford's (1990) key to understanding the mean scores on SILL-based instruments was used when referring to the frequency of strategy use. The groups of frequency levels are given below:

High use: 4.5 to 5.0 (always used) and 3.5 to 4.4 (usually used),

Medium use: 2.5 to 3.4 (sometimes used),

Low use: 1.5 to 2.4 (usually not used) and 1.0 to 1.4 (never used).

Results

Results of the data analysis are presented in terms of variation in strategy use by grade level and gender under three headings: overall strategy use, use of each strategy category, and use of individual strategies.

Overall strategy use and grade level and gender: Regarding the overall strategy use of the Turkish EFL learners, the ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant effect for grade level ($p < .000$) but not for gender (see Table 2). Mean scores for Grade 6 and Grade 8 students were 3.31 (s.d.=.44) and 2.97 (s.d=.50), respectively. These figures showed that Grade 6 students reported significantly higher frequency of strategy use than did Grade 8 students, yet, the fact that both means fell within the medium range (2.5-3.4) demonstrated that Turkish EFL learners at different grades of elementary school 'sometimes' used language learning strategies.

As for gender differences, means for girls and boys were 3.18 (s.d.=.49) and 3.09 (s.d.=.51), respectively, indicating no statistically significant difference between the groups ($p < .402$) in their overall strategy use. This result is consistent with that of Gunning's (1997) investigation which similarly did not identify significant gender differences in the use of learning strategies of Francophone ESL learners. However, as mentioned before, in Lan and Oxford's (2003) study with Taiwanese EFL learners a significant gender difference for

overall strategy use was found. These discrepant results may be the result of comparing SiLL studies that collected data from different L2 learners, at different proficiency levels, and in different language learning settings.

Finally, the ANOVA findings suggested no significant interaction between grade level and gender in terms of overall strategy use ($p < .055$) (Table 2).

Table 2. The effect of grade level and gender on overall strategy use

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	p	Comments
Grade level	1	3.764	3.764	16.96	.000	G6>G8
Gender	1	.157	.157	.708	.402	
Grade level*Gender	1	.834	.834	3.75	.055	

Note.

a. G 6= Grade 6, G 8= Grade 8

b. R-squared = .143 (Adjusted R-squared = .123)

Use of each strategy category and grade level and gender: As presented in Table 3, significant variation was found in the use of three strategy categories, namely, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive, by grade level, all favoring 6 graders, i.e., sixth graders reported higher frequency of use of these three categories than did eighth graders.

Regarding the frequency of use, memory strategies were reported as the most frequently used strategies by sixth graders whereas compensation strategies were reported as the most frequently used ones by the eighth graders. In both grades social strategies were the least used strategies.

In comparing the use of strategy categories between their sample of Taiwanese sixth-grade EFL learners and Gunning's (1997) fifth-grade ESL sample from Québec, Lan and Oxford (2003) suggested that the ESL environment 'stimulates-or demands greater strategy use than does the EFL context, largely because the former offers more opportunities and /or more requirements for language practice and use' (p. 356), as the Canadian ESL learners had three of the six strategy categories (compensation, affective and metacognitive) in the high-use range, while the Taiwanese EFL learners had medium use of all six strategies. The Turkish group, however, did not show a uniformity in their strategy use. Sixth-graders had two of the six strategy categories (memory and metacognitive) in the high-use range and three (cognitive, compensation and affective) in the medium-use range whereas none

of the strategies used by the eighth graders fell in the high-use range. In both grade levels social strategy category was in the low-strategy-use range.

With regard to the effect of gender on the use of strategy categories, no statistically significant difference occurred for any of the categories. The ANOVA yielded significant interaction between grade level and gender in memory, cognitive, compensation and metacognitive strategy categories.

Table 3. The effects of grade level and gender on strategy categories

Strategy category	Grade Level				Gender				P			Comments
	Grade 6		Grade 8		Females		Males		Gr.	Gen.	Gr & Gen.	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd				
Memory	3.74	.65	3.01	.75	3.44	.74	3.28	.84	.000	.291	.30	G 6>G 8 G6×F>G8×F G6×M>G8×M
Cognitive	3.25	.49	2.97	.58	3.13	.55	3.07	.56	.004	.656	.035	G 6>G 8 G6×F>G8×F G6×M>G8×M
Compensation	3.39	.57	3.33	.69	3.32	.58	3.40	.69	.623	.529	.031	G6×F>G8×F G8×M>G6×M
Metacognitive	3.51	.63	2.87	.74	3.24	.74	3.11	.78	.000	.427	.031	G 6>G 8 G6×F>G8×F G6×M>G8×M
Affective	3.37	.77	3.12	.81	3.30	.80	3.17	.80	.066	.307	.137	
Social	2.31	.60	2.49	.70	2.48	.68	2.33	.63	.111	.180	.158	

Note.

a. G 6= Grade 6, G 8= Grade 8

b. F= females, M=males

Use of individual strategies and grade level and gender: As presented in Table 4, 18 (60 %) out of 30 SILL items showed significant variation in use by grade level, 15 (83%) favoring sixth graders and only 3 (17 %) favoring eighth graders. The three strategy items that Grade 8 students used more frequently than Grade 6 students were as follows: 'Imitate native speaker pronunciation' (cognitive), 'Analyze my own mistakes' (metacognitive), and 'Be interested in learning American/British culture' (social). An interesting finding of the study was that 'Practice outside school' and 'Practice with classmates' were the least frequently used strategies of learners in both grades. Moreover, of the 30 SILL items, 6 (20 %) showed significant gender difference; 4 (67 %) in favor of female students and 2 (33 %) in favor of male students. The two strategies used more frequently by male students were 'Mime to remember' and 'Read English books/play computer games'. In the piloting stage of the SILL we had learned from male students that they were spending most of their free time in playing computer games in English, thus, the use of this strategy was expected.

Table 4. The effects of grade level and gender on the use of individual strategies

Strategy Items	Grade Level						Gender						D			Comments
	Grade 6			Grade 8			Female			Male			Gr.	Gen.	Grade & Gender	
	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd				
1. Link new words with old ones (Mem)	3.66	.94	3.10	1.20	3.50	1.08	3.23	1.14	3.07	1.32	.004	.207	.172	G6>G8		
2. Draw mental or paper picture of words (Mem)	3.62	1.14	2.66	1.24	3.17	1.25	3.07	1.32	3.07	1.32	.000	.866	.000	G6>G8 G6>F>G8>F G6>M>G8>M		
3. Learn/review pronunciation of vocabulary by mouthing. (Mem)	3.95	1.03	3.28	1.32	3.88	1.13	3.32	1.26	3.32	1.26	.002	.010	.784	G6>G8 F>M		
4. Mime to remember (Mem)	3.99	.86	2.57	1.48	2.88	1.33	3.26	1.30	3.26	1.30	.000	.048	.667	G6>G8 M>F		
3. Review often (Mem)	3.86	1.01	3.42	1.27	3.79	1.06	3.50	1.26	3.50	1.26	.018	.197	.356	G6>G8		
6. Repeat new learned words through writing or oral repetition (Cog)	4.15	.87	3.43	1.30	3.94	1.85	3.61	1.28	3.61	1.28	.000	.136	.204	G6>G8		
7. Imitate native speaker pronunciation (Cog)	2.28	.76	2.82	1.14	2.95	1.09	2.56	.93	2.56	.93	.002	.963	.006	G6>G6 G8>F>G6>F G8>M>G6>M		
3. Practice sounds of English alphabet (Cog)	2.93	1.23	2.47	1.42	3.03	1.44	2.38	1.16	2.38	1.16	.056	.010	.706	F>M		
9. Watch TV, listen to music in English (Cog)	3.28	1.10	3.60	1.41	3.61	1.19	3.27	1.95	3.27	1.95	.132	.123	.048	G8>F>G6>F G6>M>G8>M		
10. Read English books/play computer games (Cog)	3.87	1.04	3.49	1.24	3.44	1.03	3.92	1.22	3.92	1.22	.038	.010	.139	G6>G8 M>F		
11. Find chances to practice English outside school (courses) (Cog)	3.62	1.14	2.86	1.24	3.17	1.25	3.07	1.32	3.07	1.32	.000	.866	.000	G6>G8 G6>F>G8>F G6>M>G8>M		
12. Practice with parents (Cog)	2.09	1.00	1.66	.99	2.21	1.02	1.75	.93	1.75	.93	.199	.007	.045	F>M G8>F>G6>F G8>M>G6>M		

Strategy Items	Grade Level						Gender						p			Comments
	Grade 6		Grade 8		Female		Male		Gr.	Gen.	Grade & Gender	Gr.	Gen.	Grade & Gender		
	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd								
13. Find similarities between English/Turkish (Cog)	3.31	1.12	2.94	1.23	3.05	1.26	3.18	1.21	.086	.574	.006	.086	.574	.006	G6>F>G8>F G8>M>G6>M	
14. Avoid word-for-word translation (Cog)	3.43	1.00	2.75	1.16	3.23	1.09	2.93	1.18	.001	.134	.859	.001	.134	.859	G8>G8	
15. Figure out rules of English grammar (Cog)	3.50	1.24	3.71	1.27	3.60	1.24	3.61	1.26	.343	.966	.985	.343	.966	.985		
16. Guess meaning from context (Gomp)	3.43	1.00	3.04	1.24	3.08	1.18	3.38	1.09	.043	.125	.208	.043	.125	.208	G8>G8	
17. Use gestures to express oneself (Comp)	3.00	1.12	3.21	1.19	3.23	1.14	2.98	1.17	.249	.185	.249	.249	.185	.249		
18. Ask for help when not understanding (Comp)	3.84	.71	3.85	1.06	3.65	.85	3.84	.97	.917	.926	.226	.917	.926	.226		
19. Find a different way to say something (Comp)	3.28	1.01	3.21	1.34	3.11	1.11	3.38	1.27	.747	.214	.170	.747	.214	.170		
20. Organize time to study (Meta)	3.12	1.00	2.24	.96	2.64	.91	2.69	1.22	.000	.592	.078	.000	.592	.078	G6>G8	
21. Look for chances to use English in the classroom (Meta)	3.84	.94	2.68	1.19	3.29	1.16	3.18	1.27	.000	.784	.067	.000	.784	.067	G6>G8	
22. Listen closely to English speakers (the teacher) (Meta)	3.87	.98	2.95	1.26	3.61	1.13	3.16	1.28	.000	.041	.061	.000	.041	.061	G6>G8 F>M	
23. Check own progress in learning English (Meta)	3.59	1.06	2.79	1.24	3.26	1.22	3.09	1.22	.000	.489	.894	.000	.489	.894	G6>G8	
24. Analyze own mistakes (Meta)	3.15	1.29	3.66	1.30	3.41	1.28	3.44	1.39	.024	.916	.278	.024	.916	.278	G8>G6	
25. Relax if anxious in speaking English (A)	3.46	1.25	3.24	1.28	3.99	1.30	3.30	1.24	.315	.742	.383	.315	.742	.383		
26. Take risks in practicing speaking English (A)	3.43	1.03	3.37	1.34	3.61	1.17	3.15	1.17	.840	.600	.000	.840	.600	.000	G8>F>G8>F G6>M>G8>M	
27. Self-reward for succeeding (A)	3.21	1.17	2.73	1.25	2.91	1.25	3.03	1.22	.025	.575	.012	.025	.575	.012	G6>G8 G6>F>G8>F G8>M>G6>M	
28. Ask speakers (teacher) to slow down, repeat & clarify (S)	2.29	1.00	2.65	1.24	2.48	1.20	2.47	1.09	.073	.897	.637	.073	.897	.637		

Strategy Items	Grade Level						Gender						P			Comments
	Grade 5			Grade 8			Female			Male			Grade Level	Gender	Grade & Gender	
	M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD					
29. Practice with classmates (S)	2.12	.76		1.84	1.13		2.05	.78		1.89	1.14		.095	.330	.795	
30. Be interested in learning American/British culture (S)	2.53	1.09		3.00	1.45		2.91	1.34		2.63	1.26		.039	.218	.017	G8>G6 G6\F>G6\F G6\M>G6\M

Conclusion and educational implications

The present study aimed to find out the strategy use among Turkish EFL learners at elementary school along with the effects of gender and grade level on it. Findings of the study have shown that there was a significant difference between the two grade levels in terms of the overall strategy use and in the use of five strategy categories, all favoring sixth graders.

According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989) years spent studying the foreign language has a significant effect on the use of strategies. That is, students studying the language for at least four or five years use strategies far more often than did less experienced language learners. However, in this study, similar to Lee's (2003) study with Korean learners, the use of strategies did not increase by year level. The main reason for this can be accounted to the Turkish educational system. At the end of the primary school, the eighth graders who want to pursue their secondary education at a private school or at an 'Anatolian' school, a type of public school, take a highly competitive entrance exam. The reason for the competition is that in both types of school the medium of instruction is a foreign language, generally English. The entrance exam consists of questions related to courses like maths, social science, Turkish and science. Eighth graders go to private courses and take private lessons intensively to be successful in this exam. As there are no questions in English, eighth graders may show less interest in studying English than sixth graders.

Another finding of the study was the lack of cooperative learning incorporated into classroom practice. Turkish learners of EFL indicated to work rarely with classmates to practice English. The strategies chosen especially by sixth graders, i.e., 'Listen closely to my teacher', 'Look for chances to use English in the classroom' may indicate that students are used to individual learning rather than cooperative one. Moreover, students in both grade levels reported not to have many opportunities to practice English suggesting that they experience a degree of linguistic and social deprivation concerning English.

Strategies like 'Repeat new learned words through writing or oral repetition' or 'Learn pronunciation of words by mouthing' were in the high-use range for the sixth graders. This finding was expected because Turkish children are usually taught to use traditional mnemonic techniques such as writing repeatedly, or mouthing words.

The frequency of overall strategy use reported by Turkish young EFL learners in the sixth and eighth grades fell within the medium range and the use of some categories were in the low-use range. It is also a well-known fact that Turkish students in public schools lack communicative fluency. Thus, a need arises for providing students, especially those in the eight grade, with further opportunities to practice a wide variety of strategies that are appropriate to

different instructional tasks and activities that consist an essential part of the classroom L2 learning experience. One way to do this can be through integrating strategy instruction into the regular lessons. The belief that language learning strategies are teachable and that learners can benefit from coaching in learning strategies underlies much of the research in the field (Atkinson, 1985; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Nunan, 1996; Cohen, 1998). Yet, the goal of developing students' strategic competence can only be achieved if teachers are convinced that the effective use of strategies contributes to success and that their provision of strategies-based instruction enhances student learning by empowering them to engage in self-directed, autonomous learning. This matter needs to be taken into account by Turkish teachers of English because students need to keep on learning English, even when they are no longer in a formal classroom setting. The strategy-based instruction should be incorporated in the English curriculum by inserting strategies into the language instructional materials. Since the Turkish Ministry of Education has embarked on developing new English text-books for government schools, the curriculum designers and course book writers can benefit from the findings of this assessment of learning strategies used by elementary school students.

Moreover, training in strategy instruction should constitute an essential component of teacher preparation programs. Prospective teachers should not only be provided with theoretical knowledge on strategies used for learning different skills in English but also on instruments to assess the strategy use of the learners in their future classes.

Finally, the means of strategy use was generally higher for girls than for boys, even for strategies for which the difference was not large enough to be significant. Boys reported only using two strategies at a frequency level that exceeded that of the girls. This consistent trend should be taken seriously by Turkish teachers of English.

In conclusion, as the current investigation into language learning strategies, grade level and gender of Turkish young learners was conducted with participants from one primary school in Istanbul, the ability to generalize the data is limited. Moreover, the present study only dealt with the learning strategies used by the learners at a specific period of time without taking the learners' previous learning experiences regarding the strategy use into consideration.

Thus, further research is needed to more fully explore a) patterns of learning strategy use, and b) the nature of the relationship between learning strategies, gender and grade level among Turkish EFL learners in a variety of educational contexts, and c) the effects of previous learning experiences on the acquisition of learning strategies. Moreover, the findings have shown a

significant difference between the grade levels, generally in favor of sixth graders. The explanation of this pattern should be facilitated by further exploration of the effect of individual socio-psychological variables, e.g., motivation, personality type, liking of and interest in English. Finally, further research should try to complement the self-report data collected by means of the SILL with data collected by interviews, think-aloud protocols and diaries, and evaluate the relationship between the use of learning strategies and different factors over time. Such studies would ideally explore how learners apply strategies in carrying out specific language-related tasks and would draw upon the perceptions of both teachers and learners concerning the effectiveness of various strategies.

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