

# *İngilizce Öğrenen Suriyeli Öğrencilerin Kullandığı Dil Bilgisi Öğrenme Stratejileri\**

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## **Öz**

İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen birçok öğrenci için dil bilgisi öğrenmek zordur. Bazı öğrenciler dil öğrenirken farklı dil bilgisi öğrenme stratejileri kullanırlar. Dil bilgisi stratejileri kullanmak dil öğrenme sürecini kolaylaştırır ve etkin dil öğrenimine katkıda bulunur. Bu çalışmamın amacı İngilizce öğrenen Suriyeli öğrencilerin dil öğrenme sürecinde kullandıkları dil bilgisi öğrenme stratejilerini araştırmaktır. Çalışmada nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın verileri anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bu çalışmaya İstanbul, Türkiye’de İngilizce öğrenmekte olan 36 Suriyeli öğrenci katılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların dil öğrenme sürecinde çeşitli dil bilgisi öğrenme strateji kullanımının öneminin farkında olduklarını göstermiştir. En çok kullanılan dil bilgisi öğrenme stratejileri sırasıyla şunlardır: detaylandırma ve karşılaştırma; hedef dil ve ana dili karşılaştırma ve kıyaslama; öğrenilen yapıyı detaylarıyla inceleme; tahmin etme; öğretmenden tekrar ve / veya açıklama isteme; not tutma; altını çizme; kaynak kullanma; öğrenilen yapıyla cümle kurma ve öz izleme. En az kullanılan dil bilgisi öğrenme stratejileri ise sırasıyla şunlardır: akran iş birliği; öğrenilen yapıyı gözden geçirme; evde pratik yapma; görselleştirme ve risk alma.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** İngilizce öğrenme, Dil bilgisi öğrenme stratejileri, Öğrenci görüşleri.

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## **Grammar Learning Strategies Used By Syrian Students in Learning English**

### **Abstract**

Learning grammar is not an easy task for many English language learners. Learning grammar might be easier for those students if they are exposed to explicit grammar learning strategies. Research have shown that using grammar learning strategies help students to learn language easily and contribute to language learning process. The aim of this study is to elicit the learning strategies that are employed by Syrian students in learning English. Quantitative research method was used in collecting the data of the research. The data of the research was gathered through a questionnaire from 36 Syrian students studying in Syrian schools in Istanbul, Turkey. The outcomes revealed that the students are aware of the importance of using different types of learning strategies when they learn grammar structures in the process of language learning. More specifically, the findings of the present study revealed that the most frequently used grammar learning strategies by the majority of the learners are respectively: elaboration and association with previous knowledge to represent information; analyzing the components of the target language with components of the first language to identify the differences and the similarities; breaking down the new structure into parts to understand the whole expression; using the information to predict the meaning to fill the gap; to ask a teacher of English to repeat and/or further explanation; taking notes; highlighting; using resource materials; practicing by writing new sentences using the new structures and self-monitoring. The least used grammar-learning strategies are: peer-to-peer co-operation; reviewing the newly learnt grammar structures; practicing at home; visualization and taking risks.

**Keywords:** Learning English, Grammar learning strategies, Students' views.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the last few decades, researchers have directed their focus away from the teacher-focused perspective to learner-focused perspective. Learner-centered approach emphasizes the importance of raising the learners' awareness on the importance of language learning strategies. Consequently, language learners improve their learning by using specific techniques to learn grammar. These techniques are known as grammar learning strategies. Grammar learning strategies aim to improve the learners' perception and awareness of grammar and help them to learn the language in an easy and rapid way.

Many English language teachers have been looking for ways to teach English to assist their students to become proficient language learners. Additionally, English language teachers need ways of understanding what their students are doing in the process of learning the language. Teaching grammar in Syrian schools tend to be traditional and the students as well as the teachers are seemingly unaware of the importance of employing grammar learning strategies inside and outside of English classrooms. For these reasons, there is a need to conduct research on the grammar learning strategies that help students in EFL learning. Following this line of thought, the current study aimed to identify the grammar learning strategy types that EFL students employ to learn English language grammar. The following were the research questions that framed this study:

1. What grammar learning strategies are used the most by the students?
2. What grammar learning strategies are used the least by the students?

## **LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

Learning strategies have been at the core of concern in the learning and teaching setting. According to Rubin (1975), who is a forerunner in this field learning strategies are "the techniques or styles that might be used by learners to gain knowledge" (p. 43). Moreover, to Paterson & Rosbottom (1995), learning strategies are "the unique habits or patterns adopted when involved in the process of learning" (p. 15). The strategies overlap and choosing one strategy or a variety of strategies rely on one's style of learning and the activity the learner is involved in (Brown, 2000).

Oxford (1990) addressed learning strategies in two groups: direct and indirect. Direct or cognitive ones include verification, clarification, tracking, guessing, memorization, inductive inference, deductive reasoning, and exercise. The next group of strategies on the other hand, is *indirect* that includes metacognitive, social and affective strategies. These strategies could help learners continue the conversation, having the ability to speak by using several techniques such as joining words to interact with other people and develop communicative competence in the target language. In addition, these strategies allow learners to depend on themselves and become autonomous and life-long learners also fostering certain attitudes to involve themselves in the language learning process (Oxford, 1990; 2003).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative research method was employed in order to collect the data of this study. The current research was conducted with 36 students, studying at Syrian schools in Istanbul, Turkey in 2018-2019 academic year. Their language proficiency level was intermediate. The age range of the students was between 13-17. The data for the current research was gathered through an adapted version of a questionnaire that was based on the study of Gurata (2008). The questionnaire used in this study consists of 18 closed-ended statements. The statements in the questionnaire are grouped under three categories: *Social Strategies*, *Metacognitive Strategies* and *Cognitive Strategies*. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point rating scale from Always (1), Usually (2), Sometimes (3), Seldom (4) to Never (5). The target participants were required to choose only one response for each statement. The statements are written in a short and simple way so that the participants could understand and respond easily. The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire was subjected to descriptive statistics.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The first research question of the current study was to find out the most frequently used grammar learning strategies. The findings revealed that the most frequently grammar learning strategies used by the majority of the participants are elaboration and association with previous knowledge to represent information, analyzing the components of English with the

components of the first language to define the similarities and the contrasting features, breaking down the new structure into parts to comprehend the whole expression, employing the information for prediction to fill a gap, to ask a teacher of English for repetition and explanation, taking notes, highlighting, using resourcing materials, practicing by writing new sentences using the new structures, and self-monitoring. Based on this finding, we may conclude that almost all of the Syrian EFL students who are involved in this study are conscious of the importance of the above-mentioned strategies in their various categorizations with regards to the social, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. This finding agrees with the finding of Gurata (2008) that revealed that the learners use various strategies in grammar learning. Moreover, these findings are in contrast with the work of Alsied et al. (2018) findings in relation to the cognitive strategies as they are less used by the Libyan EFL learners. On the other hand, they are line with the Alsied's findings in relation to the social strategies as they are less used. As the learners decided that the above-mentioned strategies are the most used strategies in their grammar learning in a language, it could be said that they believe these strategies are the most useful to them.

Regarding the second question, we concluded that the least used grammar learning strategies are: peer to peer co-operation, reviewing the newly learnt grammar structures, practicing at home, visualization and taking risks. This indicates that the learners show less interest in fostering the previous mentioned grammar learning strategies since they encounter some difficulties in using them. This finding likewise, supports the findings of Mereba's (2013) research on the exploration of English grammar skills and learning strategies fostered by Jimma University students. The final conclusions of this research revealed that there is a difference between the learners' perceived use of grammar learning strategies and their actual usage. The outcomes of the questionnaire illustrated that the respondents use three types of grammar strategies; however, they encounter some problems in adopting social strategies. This study indicated that even though most of the learners have information about the use of learning strategies, some of them did not have any information about learning strategy use. Additionally, the results of Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2008)

investigation conducted with Polish high school students revealed that they employ all types of grammar learning strategies. However, in this study, many students reported that they use modern technology to develop contacts with the native speakers apart from using traditional teaching tools and materials such as dictionaries and grammar books. The findings related to the overall achievements of Syrian EFL learners contradict with the outcomes of the study that was conducted by Yalcin (2005) in Turkey that attempted to investigate the use of grammar learning strategies and students' accomplishments of English language. Yalcin (2005) found out no considerable relationship between the students' achievements and the grammar leaning strategy usage. Likewise, Pawlak's (2009) study showed no evidence supporting the relation between the learners' grammar strategy use and their accomplishments.

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