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**A comparative study on the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction on the vocabulary development in 5<sup>th</sup> grade Turkish EFL classrooms**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research study is to examine and compare the effectiveness of implicit and explicit instruction on vocabulary development in fifth grade Turkish EFL classrooms. The study also attempted to find out the perceptions and feelings of EFL teachers about the implementation of these two instructional methods in their classroom practices. The participants were 89 fifth grade students and 2 teachers enrolled in a fifth grade English program at a private school in İstanbul, Turkey. The data were collected from pre- and post-tests as well as reflective journals. The findings of the study revealed that although there were no significant differences between explicit and implicit instruction on students' vocabulary development, teachers perceived implicit instruction to be more motivating, interactive and enjoyable in fifth grade EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** Implicit instruction, explicit instruction, vocabulary development, teachers' perception, EFL.

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## **Introduction**

English has become the most commonly used and taught language all over the world. Vocabulary plays a significant role in language learning and teaching as it is the foundation of receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills (National Reading Panel, 2000). It is therefore, an undeniable fact that vocabulary is one of the most crucial parts of English language teaching and learning. Over the past thirty years, vocabulary instruction has been a matter of longstanding concern for researchers trying to explore how new words can be learned more effectively, and how teachers can help learners to achieve this goal. Scholars are constantly developing new vocabulary teaching and learning strategies while keeping a record of the old ones (Oxford, 1990; Schmitt, 1997; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001). At the same time, teachers and learners adapt the best strategy for themselves according to various learning and teaching styles (Alemi & Tayebi, 2011; Brown, 1994; Cruz-Wiley, 2010; Eriksson, 2014; Harmer, 2001).

## **Literature Review**

Teaching vocabulary means giving the meaning of specific words which students should know, but there are different views about how to teach new vocabulary to the learners. English language has a great number of words, so it is important to select appropriate and useful target vocabulary in classrooms for teachers. Nemati (2009) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary instruction by showing the contradiction between teachers` considering vocabulary instruction easy while learners think that it is a challenging process as the newly learnt words might be forgotten easily. In spoken and written texts, there are some words which are used more often than others, and these are called high-frequency words (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2008). These high-frequency words are important because the likelihood of coming across with these words is very high, so it is significant to teach high-frequency words to the learners. So, it is a good idea for teachers to start by teaching high-frequency words, since learners have a higher probability of coming across with those words beyond the classroom (Yukselir, 2008). After selecting suitable high-frequency words, teachers should consider which will be the optimal ways to teach these words. Each person learns differently, so learners need to be exposed to new vocabulary in a variety of contexts and ways (Harmer, 2001). Nemati (2009) states that when there are new and unfamiliar words, learners need to acquire some information about those words; not only the teachers but also the learners should be aware of the process involved in mastering the vocabulary and the different strategies available to understand the whole function of a word.

In addition, Schmitt (2008) emphasizes the importance of combining direct and indirect learning strategies. He argues that words should be taught directly to the students, as they do not know anything at the beginning, but that those same words should also be distributed throughout the curriculum in a systematic way so that learners will also come across with the words in different contexts in an indirect way. Similarly, Hunt and Beglar (1998) think that it is necessary to teach vocabulary explicitly to the beginner learners, as they need to learn the meaning and how to use the words, and that implicit vocabulary instruction is applicable for advanced level learners. Nation (2005), in contrast, stresses the importance of using both ways together from the start, because at the beginning of learning a second

language, it is difficult to teach all of the words explicitly; therefore using the indirect way contribute to learners` vocabulary learning incidentally and slowly.

Finally, Rieder (2004) makes the distinction between incidental and intentional learning by concentrating on conscious operations. Intentional vocabulary learning occurs by analyzing the individual words, where and how they are used in different contexts, while incidental vocabulary learning occurs by extensive reading through guessing the meanings of the words.

Apart from the vocabulary teaching and learning methods, explicit and implicit methods are among commonly used instructional techniques in second/foreign language classrooms. As it is explained by Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), for implicit instruction, participants are expected to perform a task about some information without being told beforehand that they will be examined afterwards; on the other hand, for explicit instruction, participants of the study are told in advance about the future test that they will take. The following section provides detailed theoretical background about each instructional method.

### ***Explicit Vocabulary Instruction***

Explicit vocabulary instruction, intentional vocabulary instruction, direct instruction, and traditional instruction are terms that are used interchangeably. According to Dörnyei (2001), in explicit vocabulary instruction learners know that they are a part of the formal learning task. Explicit vocabulary instruction contributes to vocabulary development of learners (Hunt & Beglar, 2000; Zimmerman, 1997). Explicit teaching is not ambiguous and it is a direct approach with structured, systematic, and effective methodology (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Nagy (2005) states that the first thing that comes to one`s mind is that vocabulary instruction means teaching individual words, which requires intensive and rich instruction of vocabulary including both definition and contextual information. There are different views about the use of explicit vocabulary instruction. First of all, Rupley, Mraz, Nichols and Blair (2012) state that for effective vocabulary instruction, explicit instruction of words, different types of guided language activities and opportunities to read are important so that learners can visualize what they learn and make connections between their past experiences and new notions. From a similar point of view Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) purports that learners learn the meaning of vocabulary as a result of conscious attention and processing. Schmitt (2008) also expresses that for the beginner students it is necessary to teach the meaning of all words until they start making sentences, as they do not know enough words to make sentences. Hulstijn (1993) also believes that contexts are unreliable and distracting for low proficiency learners. Stone and Urquhart (2008) state the importance of teaching specific words explicitly by giving the results of a research which showed that students` success increased 33 percentile points when they were taught the key words to understand the context directly. On the other hand, Nation (2005) thinks that deliberate vocabulary instruction is one of the least efficient ways of developing learners` vocabulary knowledge, but it has a significant place in a well-balanced program. It is important to teach students vocabulary strategies because with deliberate vocabulary instruction, only a limited number of words can be taught to students, but through incidental vocabulary learning, more words can be learnt, as learning happens through numerous sources such as songs, reading, and games. Jurkovic (2006) points out the

importance of explicit instruction and emphasizes that it is important to state the value and the goal of learning strategies in addition to their potential use to the students. In his research, it is clearly stated that vocabulary learning strategies can have an important effect on improvement of lexical competence in an examined task. Dakun (2000) emphasizes that explicit vocabulary instruction also improves the efficiency of implicit learning in addition to its` positive effects on students` learning strategies, interest and motivation in learning words. Marzban and Kamalian (2013) formulate explicit learning as a process in which learners focus on the information to be learnt and have conscious operations about the learning process and its results. Additionally, students might learn about the analytic strategies to learn knowledge. In conclusion, through explicit vocabulary instruction, students acquire the target vocabulary consciously and instructors teach the target language items intentionally. In this way of instruction, instructors` purposes are clear, and they pick the most used words, which are also called high frequency words, carefully according to the learners` needs and interests.

### ***Implicit Vocabulary Instruction***

Implicit, incidental, contextual and indirect instructions are terms that are used interchangeably. Implicit vocabulary instruction is based on the assumption that learners absorb the new vocabulary incidentally as a result of exposure to different types of materials (Shakouri, Mahdavi, Mousavi & Pourteghali, 2014). Contextualized vocabulary instruction is the commonly agreed strategy by researchers and it gives learners the skills to guess the meaning of new words and analyze word parts and hints given in the contexts (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997). When students learn the words in a context which is well designed according to their background information and needs, they learn the target vocabulary quicker. When the context is meaningful for learners, they reinforce the words and with the help of the sentences in the texts they study, learners immediately start using new words. Researchers place incidental vocabulary learning under different categories, for example, Schmitt (1997) categorizes the contextual vocabulary learning strategy under the determination strategy, Nation (2001) places the vocabulary analysis and guessing strategy under the sources category, Gu and Johnson (1996) have a separate category called guessing strategies, and Oxford (2008) classifies contextual learning under the direct strategies category.

Implicit learning is explained in different ways by different researchers. Nation (2001) thinks that incidental vocabulary learning from context is the most important source of vocabulary learning as learners face the target vocabulary in many contexts, and learning happens inevitably; whilst Rieder (2004) defines implicit learning as a natural, simple, and unconscious process. Likewise Rieder, Richards and Renandya (2002) indicate that incidental vocabulary learning happens slowly as no attention is paid to the process of learning. Winter and Reber (1994) also have a belief in the idea that people learn new information or knowledge without being aware of the learning process. Pujol (2008) thinks that implicit vocabulary learning occurs as a result of repeated exposures to contexts which lead to acquisition of words unconsciously. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), in implicit vocabulary instruction, learners are exposed to words in different contexts, especially in reading texts; so that, learners can try to guess the meaning of the words that they do not know from the context. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), extensive reading

gives learners an opportunity to be exposed to the particular words repeatedly and multiple exposures to the words bring about incidental vocabulary learning. The finding of National Reading Panel has also been supported by Brown and Waring (2008) as in the following statement which is incidental learning happens through extensive reading and listening activities when learners read or listen for pleasure, and they unintentionally learn new vocabulary. It is also strongly emphasized that vocabulary learning happens fast through incidental learning because students are faced with so many words in many different contexts, which is not possible in explicit vocabulary instruction. Understanding the meaning of a word and placing it semantically is possible with context as there are many other words and sentences supporting the new, unknown word.

Rapaport (2005) expresses that when people read something and come across unfamiliar words, they may feel lazy about looking them up in the dictionaries or there may be no one to ask; this is when the contextual vocabulary acquisition happens as the readers try to guess the meanings of the unknown words from the context. Students make connections between the new words and the text where they appear, most verbs are acquired through incidental reading (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Different indirect learning activities have been suggested by different scholars. According to Cruz-Wiley (2010), one of the indirect vocabulary learning activities is to engage the learners in daily conversations because when learners get exposed to spoken language, they learn what they hear. Another activity is to read aloud daily to the learners as listening to a book gives an opportunity to the learners to relate their prior knowledge with the current vocabulary. And the last activity is to give some time to the learners to read on their own because learners will learn more when they read more. Contextual vocabulary knowledge develops through reading books or having adults read aloud in school or home (Cohen & Byrnes, 2007). As learners are provided with such indirect learning activities, they try to understand the unknown words from contexts, so contextual information plays a significant role for guessing and inferring the meaning of an unknown word (Bora, 2013). There are different views on implicit vocabulary instruction. Nation (2000) expresses that contextual vocabulary learning can be incidental or intentional depending on the awareness of students` being tested. Marzban and Kamalian (2013) formulate implicit learning as a process in which learners do not know about the target vocabulary, learning process and there are no conscious operations involving learners in the learning process. They are not aware of the results of the learning process and they do not learn about the analytic strategies.

Furthermore, Nation (2000) argues two aspects of incidental vocabulary learning. First aspect is that new vocabulary is not repeated in the context; only a small number of vocabularies can be learnt incidentally through a context; second aspect is that when the amount of reading is increased and more attention is paid to the new vocabulary, more new words can be learnt. As summarized above, implicit vocabulary learning happens gradually and unintentionally. Learners can learn new vocabulary through contexts, conversations, listening materials, books and games. Contexts have a great place in implicit vocabulary instruction and implicit vocabulary learning happens through extensive reading. Most researchers agree with the idea that vocabulary learning can be done through the contextual vocabulary learning strategy, but they name and categorize it differently. The main purpose of

educators, who use contextual vocabulary learning strategies, is to enable learners to learn the target vocabulary unintentionally, which means not being aware that they are taught those specific words. It can be concluded from the above literature review that both implicit and explicit instructional methods are commonly implemented in language classrooms to teach new vocabulary, and each has its own supporters.

Implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction has been also highlighted by many scholars in Turkish EFL context (Demir 2013; Demirel, 2007; Oğuz, 2012; Şahin, 2009). In his study, Demir (2013) attempted to provide insight into the understanding of teaching and learning vocabulary as well as explored the effective in-class vocabulary strategies to be used in 8<sup>th</sup> grade Turkish EFL classrooms. The results gathered from the post-test and retention-test reported that there was a significant difference between the vocabulary retention scores of the students who were instructed through in class vocabulary strategies rather than the ones who were given traditional instruction. Similarly, Demirel (2007) supported the importance of incorporation of the elements of incidental learning with those of intentional learning during vocabulary instruction.

In another study, Oğuz (2012) aimed to discover the effectiveness of implicit, explicit and blended types of vocabulary instruction on the fourth grade Turkish EFL classroom in terms of their retention level, gender differences and academic success. The results of the post-test and delayed post-test showed that the students who received explicit treatment statistically outperformed the other two treatment groups in both tests. The study also showed that there was not any difference in their academic performance in terms of gender.

On the contrary, according to Şahin (2009), explicit vocabulary instruction is based on the idea that words in the target language are shown to the learners directly through visuals, realia, definitions, synonyms, maps, and translations. It is very important to use authentic materials while instruction explicitly to increase learners' academic involvement and keep them interested. She also argues that there are some specific activities that can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. One of the activities of direct vocabulary instruction is to teach some specific words before reading the text; so that, learners understand the text better since they have already learnt the meaning of the words. The next activity is to enable learners to use the vocabulary they have learnt in different contexts so that learning becomes more durable. The last activity is to provide different types of sources, so learners can hear, read, write, and act the target words.

Finally, Sökmen (1997) argued that a good vocabulary learning program should be based both on implicit or explicit ways of vocabulary instruction. In other words, a balanced approach should be implemented with multiple vocabulary exposure, learning in rich contexts as well as task flexibility according to how vocabulary knowledge of students is assessed and evaluated.

Based on these overviews, the aim of this research is to find out which vocabulary instruction is more effective on the vocabulary development of fifth grade Turkish EFL learners; to explore if there is a significant difference between teaching vocabulary implicitly or explicitly on students' use of target vocabulary; and lastly, reveal teachers' perceptions and feelings about the implementation of two types of instructional methods in fifth grade EFL

classrooms. With these aims, the current study tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do the two methods of vocabulary instruction (implicit and explicit) have impact on the vocabulary development of fifth grade EFL learners?
2. Is there any significant difference between on the use of the target vocabulary by the two groups after the instruction of the two instructional methods?
3. What are the perceptions and feelings of the fifth grade EFL teachers about incorporating these two methods in their classroom practices?

## **Methodology**

### ***Setting and Participants***

The present study was conducted at a private school in Istanbul, Turkey. 89 (control group: 43 and experimental group: 46) fifth grade students participated in the study. They were all of Turkish nationality and their age range was between 10 to 11 years old. Based on their proficiency exam scores, their English level is equal in academic success. The already existing two classrooms were chosen as an implicit (experimental) and explicit (control) groups. While the first group received vocabulary instruction explicitly, the second group was exposed to implicit vocabulary teaching. The same course book which was A2 level was used in the two classes. Finally, the English hours of instruction were the same (11 hours main course, two hours Cambridge preparation and three hours native teacher, which is a total of 16 hours per week) for both groups.

Apart from the participating students, two female EFL teachers enrolled the fifth grade English program took part in this study. One of the teachers was 30 years old, holding her BA degree in English Language Teaching. She has 8 years of teaching experience in different EFL contexts, and has been teaching to fifth grades for five years. Besides, the second teacher was 38 years old and a graduate of American Culture and Literature. She received the teaching certificate (CELTA) and has been teaching English for 12 years at different grades. She has 6 years of teaching experience with 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

### ***Instruments***

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through pre- and post- tests and reflective journals. The following section describes each data collection tool in detail.

### **Vocabulary test**

For the purposes of this study, World Quest 2 book from Oxford University Press was used as the main course book in fifth grade Turkish EFL classrooms. The major purpose of this book is to teach grammar and vocabulary to the students with some reading texts and listening exercises by making them express themselves in written or oral tasks. The book brings together an episodic story and real world texts and topics through integrated skills since students are expected to talk about their own lives, experiences and interests. There are 12 units in this book in total, and an introduction part at the very beginning. At the end of the student's book, there are 6 projects on various topics, and a play to use at the end of the year.

Besides, there are revision parts after every two units which focus on grammar and vocabulary that are covered in these two units to check students' progress.

In World Quest 2, vocabulary instruction is managed through the presentation of the target vocabulary in episodic story and reading texts. There are "Look!" glossary boxes which explain the new words, but they are small and not available for all reading texts and new words. Vocabulary exercises include direct instruction exercises such as matching the new words with their definitions, completing the words with the vowels, and matching the pictures with the words.

For the purposes of this study, the revision test at the end of Unit 4 was administered to the two groups (implicit and explicit) before and after they were taught the target words either explicitly or implicitly. There were four parts in the test related to vocabulary practice. The first activity was a puzzle about natural wonders; the second one was an activity to complete the words about natural disasters, the third one was a fill in the blanks activity about technology, and the last one was a crossing the odd word out activity about natural wonders, disasters and technology. The purpose of using this revision test as a pre- and post- test was to examine and compare the effectiveness of two types of instructional methods on the vocabulary development of fifth grade EFL learners. Before the test was administered to the participants, it was piloted with 24 fifth grade Turkish EFL students. The reliability coefficient of the test was found to be .83 which shows high internal consistency among the items.

### Reflective journals

Reflective practice is one common approach to ascertaining the effectiveness of teaching. Reflection is considered as a process of monitoring effectiveness based on the assumption that practitioners should be thoughtful and analytic about their teaching (McAlpine & Weston, 2000). Considering the benefits of this particular approach, in this study, two fifth grade EFL teachers were asked to keep a reflective journal at the end of each lesson (10 days, 22 hours of instruction) expressing their perceptions and feelings about teaching target vocabulary either explicitly or implicitly in their classrooms.

### *Data collection procedure*

For the purposes of this study, data were gathered in a private school in Istanbul with the official permission of the head of the Department of Foreign Languages. The data collection procedure followed four major steps namely, administration of a pre-test to the participating students before they were exposed to the two instructional methods, implementation of the two different lesson plans (explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction), teacher reflective journals and administration of a post-test after both groups were exposed to the two instructional methods. The following part describes the data collection procedure in detail.

First of all, a pre-test, which was taken from the revision part of Units 3 and 4 of the main course book, was administered to 89 fifth grade students to check their existing knowledge before the two different lesson plans were implemented. The lesson plans covered 4 parts related to the target words in total. In the first part, the students completed a puzzle

with natural wonders vocabulary, and in the second part, they filled in the missing letters in the words. Part three was about technology about making sentences with the given words. Finally, the last part was related to the words covered in the unit and students were expected to circle the odd ones.

After the pre-test, two different lesson plans were prepared by the two 5<sup>th</sup> grade EFL teachers about the existing units (Units 3 and 4) in the course book and then, implemented for a period of 6 weeks in their classroom. While the first group received instruction explicitly, the second group was taught through implicit instruction. Specifically, while preparing the explicit vocabulary instruction lesson plan, the teachers covered the steps that were proposed in the book. Definitions of the target vocabulary were given and the teacher emphasized the importance of these words focusing on their meaning. There were activities such as matching the words with their definitions, completing the words with vowels, matching the words with pictures and finding the words in the text. On the other hand, for the implicit instruction, the teacher used activities to promote students' participation and interaction. To illustrate, there were four vocabulary games namely, drawing pictures, telephone game, word scramble and hangman. The students also watched videos related to the topic of the new words (natural wonders and disasters), did the word wizard activity and played online games. In brief, they were not explicitly taught the target vocabulary but rather they were asked to deduce the meaning from the given context. In the following table a weekly plans for the two vocabulary instructions is simply displayed:

Table 1

Weekly plan sample for implicit vs explicit vocabulary instruction

	<u>Week 1</u>	
	<u>Implicit Instruction</u>	<u>Explicit Instruction</u>
Day 1	Ss will... take the pre-test. watch videos. complete the word wizard. play the telephone game. play an online game.	Ss will... take the pre-test. match the meaning with new words. fill in the blanks, complete a word puzzle. make a list of new words.
Day 2	T will introduce the topic using a PPT and poster.	T will introduce the topic from the course book.
Day 3	Ss will... play a drawing game. play an acting game. study natural wonder online.	Ss will... match the meaning with new words fill in the blanks. make a word list.

Day 4	Ss will... play an online game. watch a video and talk.	Ss will... define the new words. complete the sentences.
Day 5	Ss will... play the telephone game. play hangman. take the post-test.	Ss will... answer questions using new words. circle the odd word. take the post-test

*Note:* Ss: Students; T: Teacher.

As illustrated in the table above, the lesson plan based on implicit instruction was designed in a way where students could actively participate and learn the target words unintentionally, whereas in explicit instruction lesson plan, the course book was the only source of information in the lesson and the students were involved in activities directly teaching the target words. At the end of each lesson, the participating teachers were asked to keep a diary reflecting their perceptions and feelings about teaching target vocabulary items using two different instructional methods in their classrooms. Finally, after the implementation of the two lesson plans, the participants were given a post-test to see if there was any difference in their vocabulary development.

#### *Data Analysis*

For the quantitative part of this study, data collected by pre- and post- tests were analyzed through a nonparametric test, Mann Whitney U test using SPSS (Statistical package for the Social Sciences) to examine and compare the effectiveness of implicit and explicit instruction on the vocabulary development in fifth grade EFL classrooms. According to Pallant (2007), this test is used to compare medians of two samples rather than their means, and changed the scores into ranks. As in this study, the data are ratings (ordinal data), this particular nonparametric test was administered.

Besides, the qualitative data were gathered by means of reflective journals about the incorporation of the lesson plans based on two different vocabulary instructional methods. Specifically, the analysis of the journals was based on the quality of evidence presented by the two fifth grade EFL teachers about their perceptions and feelings related to explicit and implicit vocabulary teaching. The obtained data were evaluated through content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process began with the open coding of the data followed by inducing categories from these codes, which were then gathered under the aspects of explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction and then, each category was compared with each other in terms of the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary explicitly and implicitly in two fifth grade classrooms.

The categories and themes were subject to the checking of inter-raters. To identify the degree of inter-rater reliability, two experts in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) identified themes from the codes. It emerged that the raters achieved 87% of agreement on the general themes apart from the different verbalizations of similar concepts.

## Results

### *Impact of explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction on the vocabulary development of fifth grade Turkish EFL learners*

In an attempt to investigate the impact of explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction on the vocabulary development of fifth grade Turkish EFL learners, the gained scores of pre- and post- tests were examined and then, compared for each instructional method. The following table reports the descriptive statistics and Mann Whitney U Test results for each type of vocabulary instruction.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and comparison for explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction and vocabulary development in fifth grade EFL classrooms

Vocabulary Instruction	Pre test		Post test						
	M	SD	M	SD	N	U	z	p	
Explicit	7.25	3.49	18.5	4.37	12	76.	-.082	.935	
Implicit	7.38	3.01	18.15	4.56	13	76.5	-.082	.935	

\*  $p < .05$

As displayed in Table 2, the pre-test scores showed that the two groups were close to each other before the implementation of the two different lesson plans (Implicit,  $M= 7.38$ ,  $SD= 3.01$ ; Explicit,  $M= 7.25$ ,  $SD= 3.49$ ). Additionally, the post-test scores revealed no significant difference on the vocabulary development of the participating students no matter of which instructional method, implicit or explicit was used while teaching and practicing target words in fifth grade classrooms (Implicit,  $M= 18.15$ ,  $SD= 4.56$ ; Explicit,  $M= 18.50$ ,  $SD= 4.37$ ). A Mann Whitney U test showed  $U= 76.5$ ,  $z = -.082$ ,  $p= .935$ . and the critical value of U at  $p \leq 0.05$  was 41. Therefore, the result was not significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that, as the means and standard deviations of both groups are quite close to each other before and after the implementation, it can be said that there was not a significant difference in the gained scores of 5<sup>th</sup> grade EFL students in pre- and post- test scores.

***Differences between explicit and implicit instruction in relation to the use of vocabulary between fifth grade Turkish EFL learners***

To find out whether any differences occurred between the explicit and implicit instructional methods on the use of target vocabulary by fifth grade Turkish EFL learners, the gained scores of the pre-tests for both instructional methods as well as the minimum and maximum scores were first estimated and then compared. The same analysis was done with the post-test scores (see Table 3).

Table 3

Comparison of explicit and implicit instruction on the use of target vocabulary by fifth grade EFL students

Instructional Method	M	SD	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Min	Max.
Pre-test Implicit	7.38	3.01	13	13.12	170.50	3	10
Explicit	7.25	3.49	12	12.88	154.50	3	13
Total			25				
Post-test Implicit	3.01	18.15	13	12.88	167.50	10	24
Explicit	3.49	18.5	12	13.13	157.50	12	25
Total			25				

For the comparison of explicit and implicit instruction on the use of target vocabulary, pre- and post- test scores of the two groups were compared. While the pre-test scores of the experimental group who received implicit instruction ranged from 3 to 10 ( $M= 13.12$ ;  $SR= 170.5$ ), the control group with explicit instruction had similar scores ranging from 3 to 13 ( $M=12.88$ ;  $SR=154.5$ ). After the implementation of the two instructional methods, the post-test scores of the participants were calculated. The scores of the experimental group ranged from minimum 10 to maximum 24 ( $M= 12.88$ ;  $SR= 167.5$ ) whereas the explicit instruction group performed from 12 to 25 ( $M= 13.13$ ;  $SR= 157.5$ ). As for the comparison of the two group scores, no significant difference was found between the means of the groups ( $p = .0001$ ). In brief, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instructions on the use of target vocabulary.

### ***Perceptions and feelings of EFL teachers about incorporating implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction in fifth grade classrooms***

To reveal the perceptions and feelings of the two Turkish EFL teachers about the implementation of implicit and explicit vocabulary teaching methods in fifth grade classroom, each teacher wrote a reflective diary for a period of two weeks (10 days, 22 hours of instruction) based on the lesson plans they implemented in fifth grade classrooms. The following section describes the perceptions of two participating teachers about each type of vocabulary instruction (implicit and explicit), obtained from the reflective journal data. To begin with, for the implicit vocabulary instruction, the EFL teacher stated that the students enjoyed learning new words through games (e.g. word wizard and telephone game). They actively participated in the activity and were eager to use the new words in different contexts as shown in the excerpt below:

1. [...] The students loved the Word Wizard and the telephone game. They enjoyed the game and participated actively in the activity. I was so happy to see them using the words in different contexts (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016).

Furthermore, through implicit instruction, the participating students learned new words about the subject (natural wonders and disasters) through PPTs and posters followed by online vocabulary games and role plays. They were eager to learn and enjoyed this process. The following two excerpts clarify this point:

2. [...] The students loved learning new words from PPTs and posters. Then, they played online words games and acted out new words. They enjoyed the lesson very much (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

In addition, in the implicit fifth grade EFL classroom, the subject was introduced through videos and visuals. Then, the students were engaged in activities such as, technology quiz, drawing game, hangman and word scramble. They practiced the target words in meaningful contexts which increased their motivation and willingness to learn as displayed in the following comments:

3. [...] The subject on natural wonders and disasters was introduced using videos and visuals. After that, the students took a technology quiz and drew pictures about the news words. They were very motivated and eager to learn. (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).
4. [...] The students loved practicing new words playing games such as hangman and word scramble. They enjoyed the activities a lot (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

Finally, the students listened to a song about natural wonders and disasters, and then, were asked to prepare a dialogue about the topic. They asked each other questions and gave answers using the target words. They liked talking to each other and actively used the target words. The following comment was made by the teacher using implicit vocabulary instruction in her fifth grade EFL classroom:

5. [...] The students enjoyed listening to as song on natural wonders and disasters. Then, they took part in dialogues and used the new words actively (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

On the contrary, student noise and use of Turkish were the two negative points mentioned by the EFL teacher during teaching vocabulary implicitly in fifth grade classrooms. The students were very excited and curious while participating in games so that there was noise in the classroom. They sometimes switched to Turkish while talking to each other. The following to excerpts support these points:

6. [...] Although the students enjoyed the activities and were curious, they sometimes talked to each other in Turkish and I had to warn them to use English in the lesson (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).
7. [...] The activities were so exciting for the students that there was a lot of noise in the classroom and I had to remind them to be quiet (Implicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

Apart from the reflective diary of the EFL instructor on implicit vocabulary instruction, the second participating teacher in this study went through the same process expressing her thoughts and feelings about explicit vocabulary instruction in fifth grade classrooms. To begin with, the participating teacher stated that she introduced the new topic on natural wonders and disasters using the book. She wrote the title on the board and asked questions about it. Then, she noted down the new words and asked students to make sentences. The students had difficulty as they did not know what the words meant and resisted participating. The following expert was taken from the teacher's reflective diary:

8. [...] I introduced the topic directly from the book talking about the title and asking questions. Then, the students had to make sentences using the new words which they found difficult and resisted to participate (Explicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016).

Moreover, during explicit instruction, the teacher read the text aloud and then, asked students to do fill in the blanks and matching activities from the book. The students felt bored and were not eager to participate as presented in this comment:

9. [...] I read the text aloud. As the next step, the student had to do fill in the blanks and matching activities about words on natural wonders and disasters from the book. However, they were bored and did not want to participate in the lesson (Explicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2016).

As the next step for teaching new words explicitly, the students were asked to define the new words in a sentence. Then, they had to talk about the topic as well as write a paragraph using those words which were the two activities in the book. They were demotivated and unwilling to talk about the subject as stressed in the excerpt below:

10. [...] I asked the students to describe each new word by using it in a sentence. Then, they had to talk about the topic and lastly, write a paragraph on natural wonders and disasters. However, the students did not want to talk and were not motivated at all (Explicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

Furthermore, the teacher asked the students questions about a picture from the book about technology. Next, they had to complete a matching activity from the book about new technological words. Nevertheless, the students found the task difficult as they could not understand the instructions and resisted participating. The following quotation displays this issue:

11. [...] I wanted the students to do the matching activity from the book about the new words on technology, but they could not do it because the instructions were difficult and did not want to give answers. (Explicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

Finally, the students were not willing to take part in the speaking and writing activities on natural wonders and disasters using the target words. They found this task boring and wanted to play games and watch videos, as shown below:

12. [...] I wanted the students to talk about natural wonders and disasters and then, write a paragraph using new words. However, they said that this was boring. Instead they wanted to watch videos and play games (Explicit instruction, Reflective journal data, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2016).

In conclusion, the overall analysis of the reflective journals showed that explicit vocabulary instruction was perceived boring and ineffective by the students and teacher, whereas implicit vocabulary instruction was taught to be effective and enjoyable both by the students and teacher. So, as a result of the teacher dairies it can be suggested that implicit vocabulary instruction can be used in fifth grade EFL classrooms.

## **Discussion**

The main objective of this study was to investigate and compare the effectiveness of implicit and explicit instructional methods on the vocabulary development of fifth grade EFL learners. The study also intended to reveal the perceptions and feelings of teachers about implementing these two methods while teaching target vocabulary in their classroom.

As for the identification of what extent explicit and implicit instruction has an impact on the vocabulary development of fifth grade Turkish EFL learners. The analysis of the post-tests for each instructional method showed that both methods helped students to improve their vocabulary. In other words, the results of the study showed that students from both groups performed similar at the posttest even though they were instructed by different methods. These results are not compatible with the ideas of Nation (2000) as he believed that incidental vocabulary learning from context was the most important source of vocabulary learning as learners come across with the target vocabulary in many contexts. Additionally, Stone and Urquhart (2008) believed in the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction as they claimed that students` success increased 33 percentile points when students were told the target vocabulary directly. As the test results of both groups are very close to each other, the

conclusion of using both implicit and explicit instructional methods interchangeably to teach target vocabulary can be used in fifth grade classrooms as it was suggested by the National Reading Panel in 2000.

Furthermore, for the relationship between explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction on the use of target vocabulary of fifth grade EFL learner, the comparison of the obtained findings showed that there was no significant difference between the two instruction methods. The gained results support what Pallant (2007) states by saying that the difference between the groups' mean ranks shows which group is higher. Specifically, the mean ranks of explicit and implicit instruction groups are close to each other meaning that neither of the groups outperformed the other, and showed parallel improvement in vocabulary. Finally, to find out the teachers' perceptions and feelings about implementing a lesson plan based on explicit or implicit vocabulary instruction, the data collected from the reflective journals, revealed that implicit vocabulary instruction was perceived to be more enjoyable. In other words, the implicit group had fun during the activities in which they could get actively involved, played games, and listened to songs. Additionally, they were introduced to the new topics through videos, visuals and PPT, whereas the explicit group was directly told the definitions of the target vocabulary. As a result, the implicit oriented lessons were more interactive and the students were more willing to participate in the activities.

On the other hand, there were two negative points observed in the implicit vocabulary instruction environment. The first one was the student noise in the classroom when they played games as they got too excited; and the next one was that they switched to Turkish at times when they could not express themselves in English. The possible reasons behind these points might be related to the student excitement to participate and competitive nature of the activities. Additionally, in implicit vocabulary setting, there were a rich range of activities including movements and senses as well as a variety of activities switching from one to another. The activities did not involve anything memorization and the students learnt the target vocabulary through games and other fun activities unintentionally. During the lesson, the participating teacher paid attention both to individuals and groups, and enhanced a positive classroom environment. These findings are compatible with Harmer's (2007) suggestions for creating a productive and effective learning environment for children.

Furthermore, data obtained from reflective journals about explicit vocabulary instruction revealed that both the teachers and students did not enjoy the lessons and the motivation was low in terms of student participation in the activities. A possible reason behind this finding might be that in the explicit classroom, the activities in the book were followed one by one and no extra materials were provided to the students. Unlike the implicit vocabulary instruction, there were no games, songs, videos or PPTs, therefore, the students lost their motivation and did not enjoy the lessons. They also intended to speak Turkish when they did not know the meanings of the words and looked for the equivalents of the target words. These results were parallel to previous studies conducted by Demir (2013), Demirel (2007) and Şahin (2009) who highlighted the importance of incorporating implicit vocabulary instruction in Turkish EFL classrooms. In other words, using visuals, realia, definitions, synonyms, maps and translation is important for student engagement. Even though students

were provided with the definitions, translations and visuals that were shown in the book, they lost their interest and their participation decreased regardless of their test performance.

Finally, in respect to the above findings, the data obtained from the teachers' reflective journals showed that implicit vocabulary instruction was perceived highly positive due to the enjoyable and interactive nature whereas explicit vocabulary was seen just the opposite as it decreased students' motivation and participation. Based on the teachers' reflections, implicit vocabulary instruction can be seen as a more effective instructional method regarding student interaction, enjoyment and production in fifth grade EFL classrooms.

### Conclusion and Implications

The findings of the present study revealed that while explicit and implicit instruction did not have a significant impact on fifth grade Turkish EFL students' vocabulary development when compared with each other, teachers perceived implicit vocabulary instruction to be more effective with respect to student interaction, enjoyment and participation in their classrooms.

With regards to these findings, it can be concluded that explicit vocabulary instruction is as effective as implicit vocabulary instruction in terms of vocabulary development of fifth grade EFL learners. Therefore, the two instructional methods can be interchangeably implemented for this particular grade. However, to make the vocabulary learning process more absorbing, productive, interactive and enjoyable for students, incorporate implicit vocabulary teaching strategies were more effective. Based on the findings of this study, it is highly recommended for pre- and in- service teacher training programs to emphasize the implementation of different vocabulary instructional methods in primary level EFL classrooms.

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