

## Vocabulary Instruction Strategies Employed by Preschool Teachers

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the extent to which preschool teachers utilize vocabulary instruction strategies. The participants of the research, which was conducted in a survey model, consisted of 240 preschool teachers working in central districts of Antalya, Turkey. In this research, the *Vocabulary Instruction Strategies Scale*, designed for preschool teachers in the 5-point Likert scale style, and the *Demographic Information Form* were used as data collection tools. In accordance with the research questions pertaining to the employed strategies, descriptive statistics calculations were conducted. Furthermore, Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis H, One Way Anova, and Independent Group t-tests were applied for inquiries related to demographic variables. As a result of the applied statistical analyses, it was determined that the participants who consisted of preschool teachers employed vocabulary teaching strategies at a high level. The participants' levels of employing vocabulary instruction strategies did not show any significant differences based on their educational level, years of service, the age group they taught, and the type of school where they worked. Recommendations are provided in line with the findings obtained from the research.

**Keywords:** Early childhood; language development; lexical development; vocabulary instruction; vocabulary teaching strategies.

## Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Kullandığı Sözcük Öğretim Stratejileri

**Öz:** Bu çalışmada okulöncesi öğretmenlerinin sözcük öğretim stratejilerini hangi düzeyde kullandığını belirlemek amaçlanmıştır. Tarama modelinde yürütülen araştırmanın katılımcılarını Türkiye’de Antalya ili merkez ilçelerindeki okulöncesi eğitim kurumlarında görev yapan 240 öğretmen oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada okulöncesi öğretmenlerine yönelik geliştirilen beşli likert tipindeki “Sözcük Öğretim Stratejileri Ölçeği” ve “Kişisel Bilgi Formu” veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Kullanılan stratejilerle ilgili araştırma sorularına bağlı olarak betimsel istatistik hesaplaması yapılmış ve ayrıca demografik değişkenlerle ilgili sorular için de Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis H, One Way Anova ve Bağımsız Grup t-testleri uygulanmıştır. Uygulanan istatistiksel çözümler sonucunda okulöncesi öğretmenlerinden oluşan katılımcıların sözcük öğretme stratejilerini yüksek düzeyde kullandığı belirlenmiştir. Katılımcıların sözcük öğretme stratejilerini kullanma düzeyleri eğitim düzeyine, hizmet süresine, eğitim verilen yaş grubuna ve görev yapılan okul türüne göre anlamlı farklılık göstermemiştir. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

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**Anahtar kelimeler:** Sözcük öğretimi, sözcüksel gelişim, sözcük öğretim stratejileri, erken çocukluk, dil gelişimi.

### **Introduction**

One vital aspect of early language development revolves around words. Children with a robust vocabulary tend to excel in reading skills in subsequent years (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Hiebert, Goodwin, & Cervetti, 2017; Silverman & Crandell, 2010) and achieve adequate levels of academic competence (Baumann, 2008; Sénéchal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2006; Snow & Kim, 2007). Additionally, word knowledge signifies the development of various cognitive skills that contribute to comprehension (Farkas & Beron, 2004) and positively impacts children's ability to comprehend oral texts (van Kleeck, 2008). The rapid development of word knowledge in early childhood also supports language skills and the cognitive abilities that make up the language (Chang, Li, & Lu, 2021; Tudor, 2001). Therefore, fostering and expanding children's vocabulary through effective interventions during early childhood holds paramount importance for their later years.

The development of vocabulary knowledge in early childhood is a result of interaction with the environment. When individuals in the child's environment engage in communication and expose them to different words, they naturally support the development of their vocabulary (Llach & Gomez, 2007). Given that children spend a significant portion of their time at home and in school (Dickinson and Porche, 2011; Hoff, 2006), family members and teachers are identified as the most influential individuals with whom children interact. While word acquisition may occur incidentally in the family environment or outside of school (Arifani, 2020), in the classroom, teachers can expand children's experiential repertoire through various activities, enabling them to encounter new words and learn them consciously (Lipsky & Adelman, 2015). Conscious learning occurs through the use of strategies that focus on various dimensions of words (Graves, 2006). Vocabulary learning strategies facilitate the effective learning, long-term retention, and retrieval of words as needed (Nemati, 2009). Hence, the knowledge and utilization of these strategies by preschool teachers play a pivotal role in the development of vocabulary knowledge.

### **Vocabulary and Vocabulary Learning**

Vocabulary knowledge corresponds to a comprehensive conceptual network. In this regard, particular emphasis is placed on four dimensions, namely, vocabulary size, knowledge of word characteristics, lexical organization, and lexical access (Chapelle, 1998; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Nation, 2001). The first three of these pertain to lexical breadth. Lexical breadth encompasses the total number of known words, the quality of vocabulary knowledge, and the knowledge of word associations (Vermeer, 2001). Individuals with extensive vocabulary knowledge can better establish semantic relationships among words. Semantic relationships between words refer to both paradigmatic and syntagmatic knowledge. Paradigmatic knowledge pertains to vertical relationships, such as the relationship between "bird" and "animal", while syntagmatic knowledge relates to the horizontal associations among words used in the same context. In other words, paradigmatic knowledge relies on children's abilities in conceptualization, classification, and contextualization (Ordóñez, Carlo, Snow, & McLaughlin, 2002). Conversely, syntagmatic knowledge describes children's vocabulary richness and their ability to differentiate objects based on distinct attributes, such as appearance, location, and function (Schwartz & Katzir, 2011). Lexical access measures the speed at which a relevant word is retrieved from memory during language use

(Levelt, 2001). Proficient vocabulary knowledge should encompass these dimensions adequately. During the early childhood period, children's receptive and productive vocabulary, knowledge of word characteristics, and speed of lexical access can be developed through appropriate strategies including various games, interactive studies, or stories. To achieve this, teachers should comprehend the nature of lexical units and what it means to know them.

Knowing a word entails more than simply memorizing its surface form; it involves a broader spectrum of knowledge and skills. Words are composed of a basic root and its inflected forms (Laufer & Nation, 1995), hence embodying a form and a meaning. Words employed in different communicative contexts are inflected while taking into account the nature of the context and other words within it. This process pertains to the usage dimension of words. Therefore, lexical knowledge encompasses knowing the form, meaning, and usage of a word (Nation, 2001). Form-related knowledge includes awareness of a word's oral and written forms, as well as its constituent parts (Nation, 2007). Meaning-related knowledge, on the other hand, necessitates understanding not only the word's meaning but also the meanings of other words within the same word family. Consequently, form and meaning, concept and referents, and associations represent the three branches of semantic knowledge (Nation, 2001). Lastly, usage knowledge refers to the rules governing word choices, such as grammatical functions, synonymy, and constraints in usage. For children to truly know a word, they must grasp its form, meaning, and usage.

### **Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Children**

Implementing proper techniques that encompass the dimensions discussed above is crucial for supporting children's vocabulary during early childhood. Learning strategies facilitate word acquisition through specific methods. Learning strategies are preferred practices aimed at achieving certain competencies (Cohen, 2009). Strategies that enable learners to manage their learning processes play a role in individuals' becoming independent learners (Oxford, 2011). Guiding children in early childhood through various strategies that cover the different stages of vocabulary learning can enhance both their vocabulary and their ability to learn words independently (Oxford, 1990). Children can acquire these strategies through teachers' vocabulary teaching efforts. Teachers who work with young children can positively affect their lifelong vocabulary learning by using different teaching strategies that match the stages of word learning. Children acquire these strategies during this process.

Literature on vocabulary learning strategies encompasses various classification types (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997; Stoffer, 1995), with Schmitt's (1997) classification being the most widely referenced. Schmitt's approach includes five types of strategies: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Identification strategies and some functions of social strategies are used to uncover the meaning of unknown words, while memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies are employed to consolidate learned words. Identification strategies enable learners to acquire new words independently, while social strategies involve learning with assistance from others. Memory strategies involve drawing on prior knowledge, cognitive strategies facilitate learning more mechanically without using mental processes, and metacognitive strategies involve self-assessment and finding the most suitable way to learn new words (Chumworatayee & Pitakpong, 2017). To concretize these strategies that can be implemented through different techniques, one might assert that deriving the meaning of an

unknown word from visuals corresponds to determination strategies, asking a teacher relates to social strategies, learning alongside its antonym pertains to memory strategies, utilizing it in various games aligns with cognitive strategies, and examining the contexts of its usage represents examples of metacognitive strategies. These strategies encompass various stages from discovering the meaning of an unknown word to embedding it in long-term memory. In early childhood, teachers' knowledge of these strategies and their ability to apply them strategically can form the foundation of a strong vocabulary.

### **The Role of Teachers in Vocabulary Learning During Early Childhood**

The influence of teachers on young children during early childhood is substantial (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994). Teachers' strategic knowledge can positively affect both children's vocabulary knowledge and their ability to learn words. Various studies have demonstrated successful outcomes when unfamiliar words are presented to children who are highly receptive to language learning due to their developmental characteristics, provided that teachers employ well-designed instructional practices (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005; Loftus et al., 2010; Marulis & Neuman, 2010). Therefore, teachers directly instructing children to enhance their vocabulary and creating a rich linguistic environment in the classroom can foster vocabulary development (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Phillips et al., 2016). However, some research has indicated that teachers' knowledge of vocabulary instruction is limited (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009; Justice et al., 2008). This issue holds critical importance for early childhood, as teachers' knowledge of vocabulary instruction can impact children's vocabulary knowledge (Cash et al., 2015). Therefore, in addition to having knowledge of developmental characteristics, teachers who educate children should also possess knowledge of vocabulary teaching strategies.

Young children's teachers can potentially yield positive outcomes in children's word acquisition by employing a strategic and conscious approach to vocabulary instruction, thereby establishing correct models. Conversely, research has indicated that preschool teachers often simplify word learning content, lack any structured plans, and resort to inadequate practices (Hadley et al., 2022; Wright & Neuman, 2014). On the other hand, it has been found that teachers who develop a specific instructional plan, such as grouping words, achieve more favorable results (Neuman, Newman & Dwyer, 2011). Furthermore, when learners consist of young children, the importance of employing multiple strategies is emphasized (Marulis & Neuman, 2010; Christ & Wang, 2011). This is because strategies facilitate overcoming various challenges at different stages of the vocabulary learning process. Vocabulary knowledge expands from the learning of word meanings to its contextual use and an increase in the number of contexts it is used over time (Clark, 2010). The most crucial variable enabling such expansion in young children is teachers' strategic knowledge, which may vary based on whether they have direct teaching experience with vocabulary instruction strategies or on other variables. In this context, this study focuses on preschool teachers' knowledge of vocabulary teaching strategies and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do preschool teachers utilize various vocabulary teaching strategies?

2. Do the vocabulary teaching strategies used by preschool teachers differ according to demographic variables (age groups taught, years of service, educational levels, type of school, etc.)?

## Method

This research was conducted using a survey model. Survey research aims to examine relationships between variables and make predictions about the attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and actions of individuals (Christensen et al., 2015). Since the primary purpose of this research is to determine the vocabulary teaching strategies of preschool teachers and to interpret the findings together with the relevant demographic variables, the study was evaluated within the scope of the survey research model.

## Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 240 preschool teachers who were selected using purposive sampling. The participants were required to possess specific characteristics (Christensen et al., 2015). Accordingly, participants were teachers who worked in the central district of Antalya, Turkey during the 2020-21 academic year, had a minimum of one year of teaching experience, taught children between the ages of 3 and 6, and were employed in either public or private schools. It has been determined by expert opinion that these demographic characteristics might have an impact on the strategies used by teachers. Personal information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Frequency and percentage distributions regarding the personal characteristics of the participants*

Education level	f	%
Associate degree	58	24
Undergraduate degree	168	70
Graduate	14	6
Teaching experience		
1 to 5 year	84	35
6 to 10 year	54	22
11 to 15 year	43	18
15 and above	59	25
Age group taught		
3 to 4 year old	81	34
5 to 6 year old	159	66
Type of school		
Public school	134	56
Private school	106	44
Total	240	100

As seen in Table 1, among the participants, 24% had completed associate degrees, 70% had completed bachelor's degrees, and 14% had completed postgraduate education. In terms of teaching experience, 35% had worked for 1-5 years, 22% for 6-10 years, 18% for 11-15 years, and 25% for 15 years or more. Concerning the age groups they taught, 34% had experience with 3-4-year-olds, while 66% had experience with 5-6-year-olds. The participants' distribution reveals that 56% were employed in public schools, whereas 44% were affiliated with private schools.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data of the study were collected by using two instruments: Demographic Information Form and Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Scale. The Demographic Information Form aimed to gather various information from the participants, including the age group they taught, the type of school they worked in, their educational level, and years of service.

The Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Scale was developed by Schmitt (1997) and adapted into Turkish by Ölmez (2014). To make it suitable for the participants, only items related to preschool education were included, and no Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to reveal the relationships between variables. Instead, the model proposed in the scale was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on theoretical knowledge and existing literature (Jöreskog, Olsson, & Wallentin, 2016). This decision to perform only CFA was influenced by the presence of theoretical and empirical studies in the literature related to both latent and observed variables (Schmitt, 1997; Ölmez Çağlar & Saka, 2020). Schmitt's (1997) work laid the theoretical foundation for the items in the scale, categorizing word-learning strategies into five domains as determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. This scale, initially developed by Schmitt (1997), was translated into Turkish by Ölmez (2014) with subsequent validation and reliability studies. The adapted Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Scale used in this research was restructured to align with both Schmitt's (1997) recommended domains and strategies and the specific characteristics of the participant group.

The results of the CFA indicated that the fit indices for the scale were as follows:  $\chi^2=2728.13$  ( $SD=1070$ ,  $p<.000$ ),  $(\chi^2/SD)=2.54$ ,  $NFI=0.93$ ,  $NNFI=0.96$ ,  $CFI=0.96$ ,  $SRMR=0.062$ ,  $RMSEA=0.079$ . Following this analysis, error variances for items 3 and 4; 13 and 14; and 46 and 48 were correlated, and the analysis was repeated. The repeated analysis yielded the following fit indices:  $\chi^2=2473.40$  ( $SD=1067$ ,  $p<.000$ ),  $(\chi^2/SD)=2.31$ ,  $NFI=0.93$ ,  $NNFI=0.96$ ,  $CFI=0.96$ ,  $SRMR=0.060$ ,  $RMSEA=0.073$ . All fit indices in the final analysis were found to be acceptable (Schermele-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Following the first-level Confirmatory Factor Analysis, a second-level Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted, resulting in the following fit indices:  $\chi^2=2426.52$  ( $SD=1072$ ,  $p<.000$ ),  $(\chi^2/SD)=2.26$ ,  $NFI=0.93$ ,  $NNFI=0.96$ ,  $CFI=0.96$ ,  $SRMR=0.067$ ,  $RMSEA=0.073$ . These results indicated a good fit for the five-factor model.

To assess the reliability of the Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated. The overall scale showed a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of .968. Internal consistency coefficients for specific domains were as follows; determination strategies, .877; social strategies, .922; memory strategies, .925; cognitive strategies,

.923; and metacognitive strategies, .924. These values indicate that the scale is a reliable instrument for measuring the use of vocabulary teaching strategies.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection instrument utilized for gathering data in the research was transmitted electronically to the participants due to the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the elimination of participants who engaged in incomplete or erroneous data entry processes, a total of 240 participants contributed data. Preliminary analyses were conducted on the data based on the research questions, with each category and item pertaining to the employed vocabulary teaching strategies examined individually. In the interpretation of the average scores obtained from the 5-point Likert scale by the participants, the score ranges suggested by Balcı (2005) were utilized. These ranges are determined using a coefficient of 0.80. The coefficient is calculated using the formula  $(\text{Highest Value} - \text{Lowest Value}) / 5 = (5-1) / 5 = 0.80$ . The specific score ranges used in this study are as follows: the range 1-1.79 is labeled as “Very low”; the range 1.80–2.59 is labeled as “Low”; the range 2.60–3.39 is labeled as “Moderate”; the range 3.40–4.19 is labeled as “High”; and the range 4.20–5.00 is labeled as “Very high”. Necessary pre-tests were conducted for the demographic variables of the research, and the decision regarding which analytical technique to employ was determined. Accordingly, the Mann-Whitney U Test, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Kruskal Wallis H Test, and t-test techniques were applied for independent samples.

### Results

The first research question aimed to determine the distribution of vocabulary teaching strategies used by preschool teachers. The results of the descriptive statistical calculations for this purpose are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics for total and mean scores obtained from the vocabulary teaching strategies scale*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Determination Strategies	240	4.15	0.63	2	5
Social Strategies	240	3.91	0.75	1.78	5
Memory Strategies	240	4.15	0.60	2.31	5
Cognitive Strategies	240	3.92	0.76	1.50	5
Metacognitive Strategies	240	3.77	0.79	1.89	5
Average Score Obtained from the Scale	240	3.99	0.57	2.42	5
Total Score Obtained from the Scale	240	191.94	27.51	116	240

According to Table 2, the average score obtained from the scale was 191.94. The lowest total score obtained was 116, while the highest total score was 240. Furthermore, the mean score was 3.99, with the lowest mean score being 2.42 and the highest mean score being 5. It can be observed that the highest mean score from all sub-dimensions of the scale was 5. For detection strategies, the mean score was 4.15, and the lowest mean score was 2. For social strategies, the mean score obtained was 3.91, while the lowest mean score was 1.78. Memory strategies yield a mean score of 4.15, with the lowest mean score being 2.31. Cognitive strategies result in an average score of 3.92, with the lowest mean score being 1.50. As for metacognitive strategies, the mean score was 3.77, and the lowest mean score was 1.89.

The average scores obtained by the participants from the vocabulary teaching strategies scale were categorized and interpreted into five groups based on the score ranges recommended by Balcı (2005). Accordingly, participants are classified as follows in terms of their use of word teaching strategies: 1 participant (0.42%) used them at a low level, 40 participants (16.67%) at a moderate level, 108 participants (45%) at a high level, and 91 participants (37.92%) at a very high level. There were no participants who used word teaching strategies at a very low level. When the findings are evaluated overall, it can be seen that the majority of participants (82.92%) used word teaching strategies at a high or very high level according to the scale.

The second research question aimed to determine whether the vocabulary teaching strategies used by the participants differed according to demographic variables. In this context, the findings obtained from the Mann-Whitney U Test conducted according to the variable of the age group they teach are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test regarding the age group taught*

Strategies	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	z	P
Total Score	3-4	81	115.08	9321.50	6000.50	-.863	.388
	5-6	159	123.26	19598.50			
Determination Strategies	3-4	81	111.10	8999.50	5678.50	-1.500	.134
	5-6	159	125.29	19920.50			
Social Strategies	3-4	81	111.76	9052.50	5731.50	-1.394	.163
	5-6	159	124.95	19867.50			
Memory Strategies	3-4	81	123.91	10036.50	6163.50	-.544	.587
	5-6	159	118.76	18883.50			
Cognitive Strategies	3-4	81	119.74	9699.00	6378.00	-.121	.903
	5-6	159	120.89	19221.00			
Metacognitive Strategies	3-4	81	112.95	9149.00	5828.00	-1.205	.228
	5-6	159	124.35	19771.00			



According to Table 3, it is observed that the word teaching strategies used by the participants do not vary significantly based on the age group they are instructing ( $U=6000.50$ ,  $z=-0.863$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). The utilization of determination strategies ( $U=5678.500$ ,  $z=-1.500$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), social strategies ( $U=5731.500$ ,  $z=-1.394$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), memory strategies ( $U=6163.500$ ,  $z=-0.544$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), cognitive strategies ( $U=6378.000$ ,  $z=-0.121$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and metacognitive strategies ( $U=5828.000$ ,  $z=-1.205$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) by preschool teachers does not significantly differ based on the age group they are instructing.

This analysis aimed to determine whether the use of word teaching strategies by the participants varies according to their years of service. To achieve this, a one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) was conducted for dependent samples, and a Kruskal-Wallis H Test was performed to assess whether the total scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale differ significantly based on the duration of service of the participants. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

**Table 4**

*Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) regarding the duration of service*

<i>f</i> , $\bar{x}$ and <i>ss</i> Values					ANOVA Results					
Total Score	Group	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	Source of Variation	<i>KT</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
	1-5	84	189,0238	28,87070	Inter-group	2583,409	3	861,136	1,140	,334
	6-10	54	191,6852	27,59876	Intra-group	178312,887	236	755,563		
	11-15	43	198,5116	28,97320	Total	180896,296	239			
	15 and above	59	191,5593	24,03465						

When examining Table 4, it is observed that the total scores obtained from the scale do not significantly differ among teachers based on their years of service ( $F(3, 236) = 1.140$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 5**

*The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test applied concerning the duration of service*

Score	Groups	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$x^2$	<i>sd</i>	<i>P</i>
Determination Strategies	1-5	84	108.40	6.164	3	.104
	6-10	54	122.06			
	11-15	43	140.42			
	15 and above	59	121.77			

Social Strategies	1-5	84	115.68	3.202	3	.362
	6-10	54	119.11			
	11-15	43	137.41			
	15 and above	59	116.31			
Memory Strategies	1-5	84	107.39	5.447	3	.142
	6-10	54	126.44			
	11-15	43	135.35			
	15 and above	59	122.90			
Cognitive Strategies	1-5	84	120.80	.500	3	.919
	6-10	54	117.53			
	11-15	43	126.65			
	15 and above	59	118.31			
Metacognitive Strategies	1-5	84	123.47	2.276	3	.517
	6-10	54	117.70			
	11-15	43	130.94			
	15 and above	59	111.22			

According to Table 5, it can be observed that the average scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale, including detection strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), social strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), memory strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), cognitive strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), and metacognitive strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), do not significantly differ based on the duration of service of the participants.

The aim was to determine whether the use of vocabulary teaching strategies by the participants varies according to their educational backgrounds. The findings obtained from the Kruskal-Wallis H Test conducted for this purpose are presented in Table 5.

**Table 6**

*Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test conducted based on the educational background*

Score	Groups	N	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\chi^2$	sd	P
Total Score	Associate	58	123.47	.847	2	.655
	Bachelor	168	120.80			
	Graduate	14	104.57			
Determination Strategies	Associate	58	118.80	2.022	2	.364
	Bachelor	168	123.13			
	Graduate	14	96.04			
Social Strategies	Associate	58	122.09	2.046	2	.359
	Bachelor	168	122.10			
	Graduate	14	94.79			

Memory Strategies	Associate	58	129.23	2.063	2	.356
	Bachelor	168	119.08			
	Graduate	14	101.32			
Cognitive Strategies	Associate	58	125.45	.392	2	.822
	Bachelor	168	118.88			
	Graduate	14	119.46			
Memory Strategies	Associate	58	120.62	.155	2	.925
	Bachelor	168	121.04			
	Graduate	14	113.46			

According to Table 6, it is evident that the average scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale, including detection strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), social strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), memory strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), cognitive strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), and metacognitive strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ), do not significantly differ based on the participants' educational backgrounds.

The aim was to determine whether the use of vocabulary teaching strategies by the participants varies according to the type of school where they are employed. The results of the independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test applied for this purpose are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

**Table 7**

*Results of the Independent Samples t-Test conducted based on the type of school where the participants are employed*

Score	Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Sh $\bar{x}$	t Test		
						t	Sd	p
	Public	134	189.4328	28.10358	2.42778	-1.596	238	.112
	Private	106	195.1226	26.53576	2.57738			

According to Table 7, it can be observed that the total scores obtained from the scale do not significantly differ based on the type of school where the participants are employed ( $t_{238} = -1.595$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 8**

*The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test applied concerning the type of school where the participants are employed*

Strategies	Group	N	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\sum_{sira}$	U	z	P
Determination Strategies	Public	134	117.21	15705.50	6660.500	-.828	.407
	Private	106	124.67	13214.50			

Social Strategies	Public	134	117.02	15681.00	6636.000	-.874	.382
	Private	106	124.90	13239.00			
Memory Strategies	Public	134	113.58	15219.50	6174.500	-1.740	.082
	Private	106	129.25	13700.50			
Cognitive Strategies	Public	134	113.55	15215.50	6170.500	-1.749	.080
	Private	106	129.29	13704.50			
Memory Strategies	Public	134	118.57	15888.50	6843.500	-.485	.628
	Private	106	122.94	13031.50			

The utilization of determination strategies ( $U=6660.500$ ,  $z=-0.828$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), social strategies ( $U=6636.000$ ,  $z=-0.874$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), memory strategies ( $U=6174.500$ ,  $z=-1.740$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), cognitive strategies ( $U=6170.500$ ,  $z=-1.749$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and metacognitive strategies ( $U=6843.500$ ,  $z=-0.485$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) by the participants does not significantly differ based on the type of school where they are employed.

## Results and Discussion

This research aimed to determine the distribution of vocabulary instruction strategies used by preschool teachers. According to the findings of this study, the majority of teachers employ strategies identified by Schmitt (1997) at a high level. In particular, determination and memory strategies are used more frequently compared to other strategies. Determination strategies involve techniques used to guess and find the meaning of an unknown word, while memory strategies are instructional techniques that connect words with prior knowledge (Schmitt, 1997). It is reasonable that these strategies, which pertain to the initial stages of word learning, are more commonly used for young children. In the early stages of development, there are many unknown words, and naturally, children encounter these words less frequently. Therefore, it is natural for teachers to use these strategies, corresponding to the initial stages of word learning, with various techniques. Within the scope of memory strategies, learning by establishing connections with prior knowledge is easily accessible and effective for preschool teachers. This may be because new knowledge becomes meaningful when linked to prior knowledge, thus ensuring its permanence for children (Brown, 2000).

It is noteworthy that participants respond more positively to scale items related to determination strategies, which include techniques like classification and visualization. Such practices are known to be more suitable for early childhood. Studies have shown a significant relationship between classification skills in children and word acquisition (Gelman & Coley, 1990; Poulin-Dubois, Graham, & Sippola, 1995; Waxman & Markow, 1995). Therefore, teachers applying the between classification technique as a part of the determination strategy during word teaching obtain positive results. Similarly, visualization is another practice that produces similar results with concrete effects on children (Güneş & Erkan, 2017). Research has shown that visual methods support children in word learning (Rowe, Silverman, & Mullan, 2013; Sadighi & Nourinezhad, 2018). The reason why these techniques are more frequently used within the determination strategy may be that young children grasp and process visual information more easily (Özkubat & Ulutaş, 2018). However, it is challenging to claim that all techniques within the

determination strategy are suitable for children. Techniques such as asking adults for the initial meaning of a word, asking peers during group work, or using supplementary materials to infer meaning have been found to be the least used within the determination strategy.

Another highly used strategy examined in the research is the memory strategy. Memory strategy is considered one of the most effective word-learning strategies (Nation, 2005). When looking at the items on the scale related to memory strategy, it is observed that techniques based on visualization stand out once again. However, visualization within memory strategies differs from determination strategies as it is used to access the verbal representation of a concept stored in memory. Therefore, Oxford (1990) describes the function of memory strategies as “holding specific information in memory and retrieving it when needed” (p. 38). Unknown words are transferred to long-term memory using various techniques within the memory strategy. Visualization, as a part of the memory strategy, facilitates recall by organizing information and connecting it with prior knowledge (Heuer, 1999; Schmitt, 1997). The applicability of these learning outcomes in early childhood seems to be the reason why teachers more frequently resort to visualization through memory strategies. On the other hand, it has been observed in this study that techniques involving more challenging processes in early childhood are less commonly used. For example, an item that involves teaching the word through a scaling strategy, whose meaning can be understood by referring to other concepts, such as the words cold, hot, warm and therefore requires more complex cognitive operations, has been one of the least used techniques in this context. Techniques like teaching through verbal repetition or associating words with synonyms or antonyms are also among the least used items. This result may be due to the fact that verbal repetition is considered a superficial form of learning (Senemoğlu, 2012). Similarly, the limited use of techniques like associating words with synonyms or antonyms may be related to the developmental stage in early childhood. While learning the opposite of some words can facilitate word learning, dealing with synonyms can be challenging (Mazzocco, 1997), because one word tends to dominate for just one concept (Doherty, 2004). Therefore, encoding the same concept with another word in memory is a difficult task during the learning process.

In the research, it has been determined that participating preschool teachers frequently use social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies in vocabulary instruction. Among the social strategies, it is observed that teachers frequently engage in activities such as rehearsing with the teacher, using the word in interactions with others in the environment, and researching with adults. On the other hand, techniques such as asking others about the meaning of the word and discussing the meaning with others are identified as the least used social strategies. The structure of social strategies naturally directs children to seek assistance from adults. Considering that the foundational concepts underlying words are typically acquired within the family environment (Çetin et al., 2012), it can be asserted that the orientation of children towards the family is a natural and anticipated phenomenon. Furthermore, it is well-established that when families assume a pedagogical role as a social environment for children and support their education in school, children’s language skills tend to flourish (Kızıldaş, 2009). Therefore, it is expected that teachers utilize this resource in the context of vocabulary instruction. Among social strategies, when looking at the least used items, it can be explained that techniques requiring a sufficient level of language sensitivity are less used, mainly because children in their developmental stage may not possess this skill. Considering the least used items among social strategies, it can be explained by the fact that

techniques such as asking the synonym or explanation of an unknown word and discussing new words in the stories they listen to require sufficient language sensitivity and cognitive development, but children do not have these skills at a sufficient level in early childhood.

Regarding cognitive strategy items, it is found that the most frequently used techniques include ensuring the use of the word in games, capturing the learned word in songs or rhymes, and speaking about newly learned words. Conversely, the least used items include drawing the meaning of the word, creating illustrated cards, and creating stories with new words. Cognitive strategies include repetition of learned words and the use of tools to facilitate this (Schmitt, 1997). Games, which are built on the logic of repetition, allow children to have fun while learning (Varışođlu et al., 2013). It has been found that children's vocabulary increases through games (Göztalan & Koçak, 2014). Similarly, songs or rhymes are enjoyable tools for repetition that are suitable for early childhood. Through rhymes, word phonological and articulatory features are obtained, and if these words are encountered in various contexts, learning is reinforced. The frequent use of these techniques by participants is thought to be related to the entertaining and instructive qualities of these practices. On the other hand, it is observed that the least used cognitive strategy techniques involve techniques that require producing the word in different structures. Techniques such as drawing the meaning of the word, creating illustrated cards related to the word, and creating a story with the word are included in these techniques. Since these techniques require producing something different, such as an image or a story, they require other skills. For instance, when creating a story, children may struggle to structure transitions between events in a meaningful way (Slobin, 2004; Boudreau, 2007), which appears to involve the collaboration of multiple skills. The lower use of these techniques by teachers may be attributed to these challenges.

The last category of word teaching strategies examined in the research is metacognitive strategies. It is determined that teachers use metacognitive strategies less frequently compared to other strategies. These strategies are expected to allow individuals to control and evaluate their own learning status (Schmitt, 1997). However, it is stated that metacognitive strategies develop later in children (Brown, 1994; Zimmerman, 1995), and it can be thought that this situation also affects vocabulary learning. In this research, it is found that participants use techniques such as practicing at home and studying at intervals more frequently in relation to metacognitive strategies, while self-testing, examining the contexts in which the word appears, and generating projects are the least used techniques. The more frequent use of these techniques by participants seems to be related to the relatively easier nature of these techniques for children. The purpose of practicing at home and repeating techniques at intervals is to enable children to control themselves regarding the words they have just learned. In this way, children can develop an autonomous perspective on word learning. Attempting to instill methods and techniques that center on the skill of learning itself in children has an impact on their overall learning abilities and academic achievements (Fuchs et al., 2003). On the other hand, within the scope of metacognitive strategies, the practices used less by the participants are the techniques that are more difficult for children. In techniques that emphasize self-assessment, children are required to evaluate themselves, and this application may have been perceived as difficult by teachers due to its demand for a broad knowledge base. Furthermore, deficiencies in assessment skills among preschool teachers in Turkey, as evidenced by a study (Erdođan et al., 2021), may have also influenced this outcome. Similarly, techniques that involve examining contexts where words are used and generating projects are considered to

pose similar challenges. For instance, a study revealed that preschool teachers in Turkey rarely utilized the project method, instead opting for traditional lecture techniques (Yeşilyurt, 2013). This tendency has also manifested itself in the context of vocabulary instruction.

This research examined certain demographic variables to see if they influenced the use of word-teaching strategies by preschool teachers. However, remarkably, no differences related to these variables were found. For instance, although the ages of the children taught by participant teachers ranged from 3 to 6 years, it was unexpected that word-teaching strategies were used equally for all children. Word acquisition occurs rapidly in the early years (Huttenlocher et al., 1991), and strategy use supports this (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Sadighi & Nourinezhad, 2018). However, due to developmental differences between 3-year-olds and 6-year-olds, some differences in the types of strategies used are expected. Similarly, it is found that the duration of service in teaching does not make a difference in the use of word teaching strategies. This result may be attributed to teachers in Turkey not receiving any specific training in language or word teaching after starting their careers. The same situation applies to the educational levels of participants. Preschool teachers who teach young children in Turkey graduate from programs in Preschool Education or Child Development at universities. According to the records of the Council of Higher Education (2021), the courses in these programs are largely similar. Therefore, differences in the educational levels of teachers did not make a difference in the use of word teaching strategies. Finally, when considering the type of school where participants work, i.e., whether it is a public or private school, it was observed that it did not make any difference in the use of strategies. This result is consistent with Liu's (2007) study. However, another study showed that teachers working in public schools used vocabulary teaching strategies more than teachers working in private schools. However, in another study, it was found that teachers working in public schools used word teaching strategies more often than teachers working in private schools (Öğüt, 2018). It is thought that this difference may be due to the diversity among the participant groups. In summary, variables such as the age group taught, years of service, educational level, and type of school do not affect the use of vocabulary teaching strategies by preschool teachers.

In conclusion, the preschool teachers who participated in this study were found to use word teaching strategies identified by Schmitt (1997) at a high level. Moreover, the use of word teaching strategies by teachers does not vary according to their demographic characteristics. The fact that demographic differences do not affect teachers' use of word teaching strategies calls for more detailed research. Additionally, presenting how word-teaching strategies are used in detail through different studies can positively impact language and word education provided in early childhood and support children in terms of academic skills. Finally, it is recommended to investigate the success level of preschool teachers in applying the vocabulary teaching strategies they use.

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## Geniş Özet

### Problem Durumu

Okulöncesi dönem dil gelişiminin ve sözcük öğreniminin en hızlı ve etkili geliştiği dönemdir. Sözcük dağarcığı yeterince gelişen çocuklar ileride daha iyi bir okuma becerisine ulaşır (Hiebert, Goodwin ve Cervetti, 2017; Silverman & Crandell, 2010) ve akademik açıdan daha başarılı olur (Baumann, 2008). Çocukların erken çocuklukta gerçekleşen sözcük gelişiminde okulöncesi öğretmenleri önemli bir rol oynar (Lipsky ve Adelman, 2015). Öğretmenlerin sözcükleri uygun stratejilerle öğretmesi çocukların geniş bir sözcük bilgisine sahip olmasında ve bunları gerektiğinde etkili biçimde kullanmasında son derece etkilidir. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin

okul öncesi dönemde sözcükleri öğretirken bir sözcüğü bilmenin tüm boyutlarını oluşturan biçim, anlam ve kullanım bilgi ve becerilerini kazandırması beklenir (Nation, 2001). Bu gelişimi sağlamanın en etkili yolu sözcük öğretirken uygun stratejileri kullanmaya dayanır. Sözcük öğrenme ve öğretme stratejilerine ilişkin alanyazında birçok strateji sınıflaması yapılmıştır (Gu ve Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997; Stoffer, 1995). Yapılan sınıflamalar arasında araştırmalara en çok temel oluşturan (Schmitt, 1997) tarafından önerilen sınıflamadır. Schmitt'in (1997) sözcük öğretim stratejileri saptama stratejileri, sosyal stratejiler, bellek stratejileri, bilişsel stratejiler ve üstbilişsel stratejiler olmak üzere beş türde toplanır. Saptama stratejileri öğrenenin yeni bir sözcüğü yardım almadan öğrenmesi, sosyal stratejiler diğer insanlardan yardım alarak öğrenmesi, bellek stratejileri önceki bilgilerine başvurarak öğrenmesi, bilişsel stratejiler bellek stratejilerine göre daha mekanik biçimde ve zihinsel süreçleri kullanmadan öğrenmeyi ve üstbilişsel stratejiler ise öğrenenin kendini değerlendirmesi ve yeni sözcükleri öğrenmede en uygun yolu bulması anlamına gelir (Chumworatayee ve Pitakpong, 2017). Bu stratejiler bilinmeyen bir sözcüğün anlamının keşfedilmesinden uzun süreli belleğe yerleştirilmesine kadar geçen aşamaları kapsar. Erken yaşlarda çocukların öğretmenlerin yardımıyla bu stratejileri öğrenmesi ve kullanmaya başlaması iyi bir sözcük bilgisinin temelini oluşturabilir. Bu bağlamda okulöncesi öğretmenlerinin sözcük öğretim strateji bilgisini odağa alan bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin kullandığı sözcük öğretim stratejileri nasıl bir dağılım gösterdiği ve kullanılan sözcük öğretim stratejilerinin öğretmenlerin demografik özelliklerine göre (eğitim verilen yaş grubu, hizmet süresi, öğrenim durumu, görev yapılan okul türü) farklılık gösterip göstermediği araştırılmıştır.

## **Yöntem**

Araştırma tarama modelinde yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını 240 okulöncesi öğretmeni oluşturmuş ve katılımcılar amaçlı örnekleme tekniği ile seçilmiştir. Buna göre katılımcılar 2020-21 öğretim yılında Türkiye'de Antalya ili merkezinde görev yapan, en az bir yıl deneyimi olan, 3-6 yaş aralığındaki çocuklara eğitim veren, devlet kurumlarında ya da özel kuruluşlarda çalışan öğretmenlerdir. Araştırmanın veri toplama araçları Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve Sözcük Öğretme Stratejileri Ölçeği olmak üzere iki adettir. Kişisel Bilgi Formu ile katılımcıların demografik bilgileri elde edilmiştir. Sözcük Öğretme Stratejileri Ölçeği ise Schmitt (1997) tarafından geliştirilen ve Ölmez (2014) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan ölçeğin okulöncesi öğretmenlerine uygun olarak yeniden uyarlanmış biçimidir. Uyarlama yapılmasının nedeni okulöncesi dönemde sözcük öğretimine yönelik bazı konuların diğer kademelerden farklı olmasıdır. Orijinal ölçekteki yapıyı ve ölçülecek değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri ortaya koymak için açıklayıcı faktör analizi (AFA) kullanılmamış, ölçekte ortaya konulan modelin uyumu doğrulayıcı faktör analizi (DFA) kullanılarak test edilmiştir. Buna göre toplamda 48 maddeden oluşan ölçekte okul öncesi eğitimi bağlamıyla tutarlı olarak saptama, sosyal, bellek, bilişsel ve üstbilişsel stratejilerden maddeler bulundurulmuştur. Ölçeğin güvenilirliği için Cronbach Alfa iç tutarlılık katsayısı hesaplanmış ve bütün maddelerin iç tutarlılık katsayısı .968 olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri katılımcıların yanıtladığı Sözcük Öğretme Stratejileri Ölçeği ile elde edilmiştir. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde araştırma sorularıyla tutarlı biçimde Mann Whitney U Testi, tek yönlü varyans analizi (One Way Anova), Kruskal Wallis H Testi ve bağımsız örneklemler için t testi teknikleri uygulanmıştır.

## **Bulgular**

Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre ölçekten alınan toplam puanların ortalaması 191,94'tür. Alınan en düşük toplam puan 116, en yüksek toplam puan 240'tır. Bunun yanında ortalama puan 3,99 iken en düşük ortalama puan 2,42 ve en yüksek ortalama puan 5'tir. Ölçeğin tüm alt boyutlarından alınan en yüksek ortalama puanın 5 olduğu görülmektedir. Saptama stratejileri için ortalama puan 4,15, en düşük ortalama puan ise 2'dir. Sosyal stratejiler için alınan ortalama puan 3,91, en düşük ortalama puan ise 1,78'dir. Bellek stratejileri için alınan ortalama puan 4,15, en düşük ortalama puan 2,31'dir. Bilişsel stratejilerde alınan ortalama puan 3,92, en düşük ortalama puan 1,50'dir. Üstbilişsel stratejiler için alınan ortalama puan 3,77, en düşük ortalama puan ise 1,89'dur. Katılımcıların sözcük öğretme stratejileri ölçeğinden aldığı ortalama puanlar Balcı (2005) tarafından önerilen puan aralıklarına göre beş grupta ele alınmış ve yorumlanmıştır. Buna göre sözcük öğretme stratejilerini 1 (%0,42) katılımcı düşük, 40 (%16,67) katılımcı orta, 108 (%45) katılımcı yüksek ve 91 (%37,92) katılımcı çok yüksek düzeyde kullanmaktadır. Çok düşük düzeyde sözcük öğretme stratejilerini kullanan katılımcı ise bulunmamaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular genel olarak değerlendirildiğinde katılımcıların çoğunluğunun (%82,92) ölçekte yer alan sözcük öğretme stratejilerini yüksek veya çok yüksek düzeyde kullandığı görülmüştür. Demografik özelliklerle ilgili olarak ise katılımcıların kullandığı sözcük öğretim stratejilerinin öğretim yaptıkları yaş grubuna, hizmet sürelerine, öğrenim durumuna ve görev yaptıkları okul türüne göre farklılaşmadığı saptanmıştır.

## **Sonuç ve Tartışma**

Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular alanyazındaki diğer çalışmalar dikkate alınarak tartışılmıştır. Buna göre öğretmenlerin çoğunluğunun Schmitt (1997) tarafından belirlenen stratejileri yüksek düzeyde kullandığı ve özellikle saptama stratejileri ile bellek stratejilerini daha sık kullanmalarının nedeninin okulöncesi dönemde bulunan çocukların gelişim özellikleriyle ve bu stratejilerin sözcük öğrenmenin ilk aşamalarına karşılık gelmesi ile ilgili olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Özellikle bellek stratejileri kapsamında önceki bilgilerle bağıntı kurarak öğrenmenin gerçekleştirilmesi çocuklar için kalıcılığın sağlanmasında etkilidir (Brown, 2000). Öte yandan katılımcıların saptama stratejilerine ilişkin sınıflama ve görselleştirme gibi teknikleri içeren ölçek maddelerine daha sık olumlu tepki verdiği ve bunun çocukların sınıflama tekniğine yatkınlığı ile ilgili olduğu görülmüştür. Çocuklarda sınıflama becerisi ile sözcük edinimi arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koyan araştırmalar söz konusudur (Gelman ve Coley, 1990; Poulin-Dubois, Graham ve Sippola, 1995; Waxman ve Markow, 1995). Son olarak araştırmada katılımcıların demografik özelliklerinin kullanılan sözcük öğretim stratejilerinde bir farklılık yaratmadığı sonucu elde edilmiştir. Bu durumun ise okulöncesi öğretmenlerinin dil ve sözcük öğretimine yönelik özel bir eğitim almamış olmasına ve bu nedenle sözcük öğretimini öğrenen özelliklerini ve öğrenme içeriğini dikkate almadan genel bir yaklaşımla gerçekleştirmelerine bağlanabilir.