

## İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERİN KELİME ÖĞRENME STRATEJİLERİ VE ÖĞRENEN ÖZERKLİĞİ SEVİYELERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ\*

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### Öz

Alanda öğrenen özerkliği ve kelime öğrenme stratejileri hakkında yapılmış çalışmalar mevcuttur, ancak özellikle İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin kelime performansları ile öğrenen özerklik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki hakkında yapılmış çok fazla çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Çalışmaların çoğu, sınıf dışında değil, yabancı dil sınıflarında öğrenci özerkliğini geliştirmeye odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, öğrenen özerkliği ile öğrenenlerin kelime öğrenme stratejileri arasındaki ilişkiyi, eğitilmiş verilerle karşılaştırarak açıklamakta ve tartışmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin kelime öğrenme stratejileri ve onların özerk öğrenenler olmaları ile nasıl bir ilişkisi olduğu hakkında bir geri bildirim vermektedir. Bu çalışmanın nitel ve nicel verileri analiz edildiğinde, İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin özerklik seviyeleri ve kelime öğrenme stratejileri arasında zayıf olumlu ilişki bulunmuştur. Ayrıca bulgular öğrencilerin kelime öğrenme stratejilerini kullanım sıklıklarında cinsiyet, yaş ve İngilizce eğitim yılına göre ciddi bir farklılık olmadığını ve öğrencilerin özerk öğrenmeye istekli olduklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu çalışma ile elde edilen sonuçlar, dil öğretmenlerinin yabancı dil sınıflarında kelime öğreniminde özerk olmanın farkında olmalarını sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca bu çalışma, ikinci dilde daha iyi kelime öğrenimi için bir kılavuz niteliği taşıyabilme özelliğine sahiptir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğrenme Özerkliği, Kelime Öğrenme Stratejileri, İngilizce'yi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen Öğrenciler

### The Relationship Between EFL Students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies And Their Level Of Learner Autonomy

#### Abstract

There are studies on autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies in the field, but there are not many studies on the relationship between vocabulary performance and autonomy levels of Turkish students who learn English as a foreign language. Most of the studies focus on improving student autonomy in foreign language classes, not outside the classroom. This study describes and discusses the relationship between learning autonomy and the learning word learning strategies by comparing it to the trained data. The findings of the study give feedback on the vocabulary learning strategies of Turkish students who have learned English as a foreign language and how they relate to being self-learners. When this study's qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed, a weak positive relationship was found between the autonomy levels and vocabulary learning strategies of students who learned English as a foreign language. In addition, the findings revealed that the students' vocabulary learning strategies do not have a significant difference in the frequency of use compared to gender, age, and English education year, and students are willing to be autonomous learners. The results suggest that language teachers are aware of their autonomy in vocabulary learning in foreign language classes. In addition, this study is capable of carrying a guide for better vocabulary learning in the second language.

**Keywords:** Learner Autonomy, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, EFL Students

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## INTRODUCTION

Language education plays an essential role in the countries' education systems. It prepares the learner for life in many aspects, such as finding a job, entering university, following worldwide issues, etc. Besides, language learning is significant not only for being a part of the education system but also for being the crucial point for communication and the notion of communicative language learning (Byram, 2013). Also, English learning enables the learner to be burdened with cruel impositions in the global market (Guilherme, 2007).

Türkiye is located in a strategic and geopolitical area. Because of this reason, learning English in Türkiye is essential (Kirkgoz,2007). Furthermore, English as a Lingua franca enables a good way of international communication and catches up with the latest developments in many areas such as technology, science, and business (Kirkgoz, 2005).

Vocabulary learning has been studied so much in EFL classrooms by scholars. Schmitt (2000) underlines that lexical knowledge needs to be the central point to communicating competence and acquiring a second language. Learners are expected to learn linguistic knowledge and store and reuse it when necessary, so whether a learner can learn the language or not can be measured according to the vocabulary knowledge of that learner. It is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary knowledge, and as Nation (2001) believes, learners can acquire an excessive amount of vocabulary by assessing vocabulary learning strategies. That is, vocabulary learning strategies are essential for good vocabulary knowledge. These strategies can be helpful in the learning process of acquiring the vocabulary of the target language. Because all the students are different from each other, the strategies they use while learning vocabulary are also different.

Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's learning (p.3). That is, it is a way for learners to direct their learning and control their learning process. Moreover, the learners and teachers play a great role in building knowledge (Little, 2008). The teachers can promote learner-centred learning and encourage the students to be more involved in their learning processes. As Benson (2007) points out, learner autonomy in language learning is to control the purposes of learning a language and how they learn the language. For such reasons, learner autonomy plays a vital role in vocabulary learning.

In learning a second or foreign language, vocabulary knowledge is essential because it is impossible to communicate without vocabulary knowledge (Sedighi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2016). There are many vocabulary learning strategies, and learners choose their own strategy. In this aspect, learner autonomy helps the learner to select the best suitable strategy for himself and gives some privileges to the learner in the learning process (Gu & Johnson, 1996). The learner should decide what kind of strategies to adopt to benefit from learning vocabulary knowledge.

Tuan (2011) mentions that when a learner has autonomy in the vocabulary learning process, the learner will probably benefit from the long-term capacity. The learner can acquire lexical knowledge, keep it in mind, and use it when necessary. Therefore, autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies may have a relationship, and learning this relationship may be helpful for EFL students in Türkiye. Hence, this study aims to investigate which vocabulary learning strategies are used by Turkish secondary school students in and outside of the EFL classrooms and seek a relationship between their level of learner autonomy and students' preferences for vocabulary learning strategies.

There are several studies conducted about learner autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies in the field (Sedighi & Hadidi, 2016). Still, there are not many studies undertaken explicitly about the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' vocabulary performance and their levels of learner autonomy. Most studies concentrate on fostering learner autonomy in EFL classrooms but not out of

the school. This study explains and discusses the relationship between learner autonomy and learners' vocabulary learning strategies by comparing them with the triangulated data. The study findings give feedback about the Turkish EFL learners' VLSs and how they are related to their being autonomous learners.

This study enables language teachers to be aware of being autonomous in vocabulary learning in EFL classrooms, the effectiveness of fostering learner autonomy, and its results on the vocabulary learning process. Furthermore, knowing which vocabulary learning strategies are used by autonomous learners enables the teachers to show a good way of planning their lessons and preparing suitable materials in their teaching processes. Moreover, this study shows the differences in choosing VLSs in terms of gender, so teachers can consider individual differences.

### METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and learner autonomy. In this study, the mixed method research design was employed. Collected qualitative and quantitative data were used to seek answers to the research questions listed below:

**R. Q. 1.** Do English language learners utilize different VLSs? If so, to what extent do they use VLSs?

**R. Q. 2.** What is the autonomy level of English language learners? To what extent are language learners autonomous regarding VLSs?

**R. Q.3.** How do VLSs differ according to

A. gender?

B. age?

C. year of education?

**R. Q. 4.** Is there any relationship between the level of LA and VLSs?

Two types of questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. One was about VLSs, and the other was about LA. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were used as a qualitative data collection tool.

#### Research setting and participants

Convenience sampling was used at a school, which was located in the South of Türkiye, to select the participants. Eighth-grade students of the school were asked whether they were eager to participate in this research or not. The study was on a voluntary basis. The study was conducted with 100 students, ten percent of whom were also interviewed.

The quantitative data were collected from 100 participants: 45 male and 55 female. In this study, there were 100 participants. The age of the participants differed. Twelve of them were 12 years old, 71 of the participants were 13 years old, and 17 participants were 14 years old. The participants of this study were asked to write information about how many years they have been taking English courses. Eighty-one have been learning for seven years, ten have been learning for eight years, five have been learning for nine years, and four have been learning English as a second language for ten years. In other words, a language learner who has studied for seven years represents a student who only studies English, as the Turkish education system provides. However, students who study for 8, 9, and 10 years represent the ones who took extra courses in the English language for 1, 2, and 3 years.

The data was collected using a learner autonomy questionnaire (closed and open-ended questions embedded) and a VLSs (closed and open-ended questions embedded) questionnaire. Both questionnaires were translated into the participants' mother language, Turkish, to ensure comprehensibility of the questionnaires. During this process, a numbering system was used to compare the students' learner autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies. Also, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with students to ensure the reliability of the study.

### **Data collection instruments**

The VLS questionnaire was adapted from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy and had 30 items. It has five categories: determination strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies. The researcher adapted her questionnaire from his taxonomy and translated its language from English to Turkish (mother tongue) to be more understandable. The participants were given 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. According to Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of VLS was 0,903. This score showed a high degree of reliability.

To evaluate the level of participants' autonomy, a LA questionnaire was conducted. The original questionnaire was developed by Sakai, et al. (2008), and the researcher adapted this questionnaire to fit the research objectives. It also had 30 items and three sections: abilities, autonomous activities, and responsibilities both in and out of the classroom. The questionnaire included a 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=usually). According to Cronbach's alpha, the LA questionnaire had high reliability with 0,925. (Except for the LA questionnaire from the 7th to 14th item).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in the second part of the data collection. Interview questions were adapted from Ölmez' (2014) interview questions. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher mentioned again about the ethical issues. Ten students from students, who participated in the VLS and LA questionnaires, were interviewed as well. Each participant was interviewed individually and audio-recorded to be transcribed afterwards.

### **Data analysis**

All the quantitative data were analyzed via the SPSS program. The study's qualitative data were analyzed via thematic analysis with respect to six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Quirkos program was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Interviews with students and open-ended comment questions, and teacher opinions were analyzed thematically. As Braun and Clarke (2006) identify, thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within collected data. Boyatzis also (1998) mentions that thematic analysis enables researchers to use different types of information systematically, and so data analysis has an important role in the accuracy and sensitivity of understanding data.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

While qualitative supplementals require transferability, confirmability, dependability, and credibility, quantitative supplementals require reliability, objectivity, and validity as the main commons for a study to be trustworthy. (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Dörnyei, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, all these parameters were taken into consideration. Also, member checking was used by the researcher to raise the reliability and validity.

## Ethical Issues

All the participants were given consent forms that informed them that participating in the questionnaire was voluntary for ethical issues. The students were under eighteen years old, and their families signed the consent forms. Moreover, the participants were given the information that their identities were disguised to align with the principles of research ethics. The aim of the study was presented, and they were kept free to leave the study at any time they wanted.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### The Results of Quantitative Analysis

In this study, vocabulary learning strategies and learner autonomy questionnaires were applied. Firstly, each questionnaire was analyzed separately, and then a comparative analysis of these two questionnaires was provided.

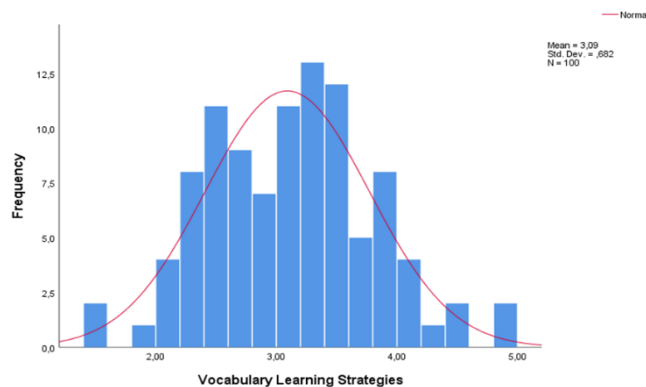
### Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The present section aims to present the general demographic profile of the participants who joined the questionnaire in the present study. As stated in the methodology section, the participants were secondary school students in the state school in Adana, Turkey. The participants' age range varied from 12 to 14. 13 years old students were dominant in the participant group. As mentioned in the methodology section to introduce the participants, it is evident that the gender distribution is about equal with the 45 male and 55 female students. Moreover, the education year groups varied from 7 to 10 years. Therefore, it is possible to state that the majority in the participants' group consisted of students who had studied English for seven years. Hence, the students generally did not have extra English courses or any education except their education process in school.

### Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The first part of the questionnaire evaluated the participants' VLSs usage frequency, with its five subcategories: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. In total, the section included 30 items. The minimum frequency degree was 1.53; the maximum VLS usage frequency was 4.97. Moreover, the mean was 3.09, and the standard deviation was 0.68. The highest mean reached 3.25 metacognitive vocabulary learning subcategory (VLSS), and its standard deviation was 0.82. On the other hand, according to the participants' responses, the minor usage frequency mean was found at 2.80 of social strategy as a VLS with a 0.89 standard deviation.

**Figure 1**  
Distribution of participants' responses about their VLSs usage frequency



Moreover, Figure 1. represents the distribution of participants' responses about their VLSs usage frequency. According to Figure 1., the participants' VLSs usage frequency degrees were distributed normally. In other words, it is apparent in the figure that the large majority of the participants' frequency degree scores were concentrated in the middle of the distribution, and the scores decreased in frequency the farther away from the standard they were. To sum up, the participants' responses to the VLS' usage frequency degree scores had a standard distribution curve; thus, the mean, median, and mode are identical in the present study's data set.

### Learner Autonomy

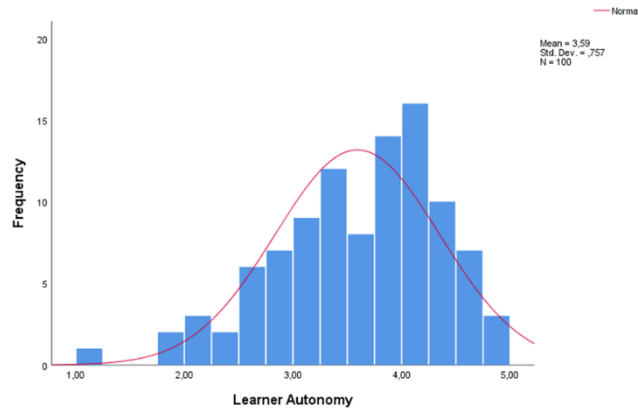
LA was the second part of the questionnaire. The section consisted of LA's four subcategories: "learner perception, responsibilities, learner outside, and from now on." In total LA section contained 30 items. The participants' general LA level was illustrated. Then the subcategories of LA were provided, except the "responsibility" subcategory as it included a different type of items than the ones in the other sub-sections of LA. The maximum LA level score was 4.94; the minimum LA level was 1.06. Furthermore, the general mean of the participants' LA level was 3.59 with a 0.75 standard deviation score, except for the responsibility section because of the inclusion of different items.

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics of the Score of Learner Autonomy

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Learner Autonom	100	1.06	4.94	3.5926	.75734	.574
Learner Perception	100	1.00	5.00	3.5300	.81663	.667
Extramural Activities	100	1.00	5.00	3.3300	.84154	.708
Future Tendency	100	1.00	5.00	3.9177	.93732	.879
Valid N (list-wise)	100					

Furthermore, it is evident that the highest mean was reached as the 3.91 scores of the "future tendency" section, and its standard deviation was 0.93. However, the lowest LA level mean was found at 3.33 of the "extramural activities" subcategory, with a 0.70 standard deviation.

**Figure 2**  
Distribution of the participants' responses about their LA level



Moreover, Figure 2. represents the distribution of the participants' responses about their LA level. It is evident in Figure 2. that most of the participants' LA level scores were concentrated in the middle of the distribution, and the scores decreased in level the farther away from the middle they were. Therefore, it is convenient to state that the participants' responses about their LA level scores had a standard distribution curve, like their responses about their VLS usage frequency. Therefore, the mean, median, and mode of the data representing the participants' LA level were identical, like the VLS section.

### The results of the Significance Analysis

Research question three focuses on the possible significance among the research variables: gender, age, and education year. The gender variable is divided into two categories: male and female. Therefore, the researcher conducted a *t*-test for the means of the questionnaire sections to figure out the probable significance between the gender and the participants' VLSs usage frequency and LA level. According to the literature, it is convenient to utilize if there is a distinction between the means of the two variables (Fraenkel et al., 1993). Moreover, the *analysis of variance (ANOVA)* technique was utilized because of the desire to determine if there is a significant distinction between the participants' age group and the education year groups.

### Results according to the participants' gender, age and education year groups

The present study aims to investigate the possible significance of the participants' gender on the means of VLS and LS parts in the questionnaire. The VLS and LA parts t-test results were checked. Moreover, the p-value of the cognitive strategies section was less than .05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicates that the usage frequency of the cognitive strategy reflects significance regarding the participants' gender (Fraenkel et al., 1993). According to the means in the results, it is convenient to state that female participants' cognitive strategies usage frequency was higher than the male participants' one. As Frankel et al. (1993) stated that the means show significance if the p-value is less than 0.05. The LA part's total mean was found to be less than 0.05. the p-values were .002 and .014. Therefore, it is convenient to verbalize that there are significant differences between the female and male participants' means in the LA parts total and its mentioned section.

According to the results of the ANOVA of the participants' age mean scores in the VLS part of the questionnaire, there was no p-value higher than 0.05. Therefore, it could be proposed that there was no significance of the participants' ages in the VLS choices and their usage frequency. According to the results of the ANOVA of the participants' age sub-groups means in the LA part of the

questionnaire, there was no p-value higher than 0.05. As a result, there was no significance based on the participants' age regarding their LA level.

According to Frankel et al. (1993) statements regarding the p-value limit, the education subgroups mean p-value result was very close to the limit. However, the .047 value was less than 0.05, so post hoc tests were convenient to conduct. The other education duration sub-groups' means were not found to be less than 0.0. Therefore, it is convenient to infer that there was no significance based on the participants' education year regarding their VLSs usage frequency, except for social strategies since it was evaluated with the Kruskal-Wallis Test. As a result of the homogeneity test result of the social strategies was not appropriate because of the lower value than 0.05. Therefore, Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted. It is convenient to express that the .371 sig value represents that it was not less than 0.05. Therefore, there was no significance based on the participants' education year regarding their social strategy usage frequency.

According to the findings, the significance was not detected regarding the participants' education year on the memory strategies. According to the results of the ANOVA of the participants' education year sub-groups means in the LA part of the questionnaire, there was no p-value higher than 0.05. As a result, there was no significance based on the participants' education year regarding their LA level.

### **Correlation Analysis between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Learner Autonomy**

The present study utilized simple regression analysis, which aims to investigate and assess the relative effect of the predictor variable on a particular outcome (Zou et al., 2003). The continuous variables are the participants' mean scores on the questionnaire based on VLS and LA. The data include continuous variables, which are appropriate to test, and desired normality assumptions checked.

**Table 2**  
Pearson Correlation Coefficient: Autonomy and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

		<b>Learner Autonomy</b>
Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the results of the Pearson Correlation analysis, it is obvious to see from the table that a positive and significant relationship exists between the participants' LA level and their frequency of VLS usage. The Pearson correlation result “.536” is evidence of a weak positive relationship according to Gogtay and Thattle (2017). Moreover sig. (2-tailed) value “.000” is the proof of the significance between LA and VLS.

To sum up, the correlation analysis results showed the existing relationship between the LA and VLS. It is a weak positive correlation, which means that the participants' VLS usage frequency increases as their LA level increases. Therefore, the regression analysis is appropriate to conduct.

### **The Results of Qualitative Analysis**

The qualitative data collected through interviews were analyzed. To analyze the data, thematic analysis was employed with the integration of responses to open-ended questions into the interview



data. As a result of the analysis, the qualitative data were grouped into four titles. The students were at the same grade level, but their ages were differentiated. Additionally, six female and four male students were interviewed, and their English education duration ranged from seven to ten years. The participants were asked to give answers to eight questions to gather information about the relationship between learner autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies. The obtained data were analyzed with thematic analysis. After establishing the introductory data, the themes and sub-themes were found by scrutinizing and categorizing the similar or close codes.

The students in the interviews mentioned the importance of vocabulary learning in learning a language in terms of forming sentences, semantic knowledge, producing the language, and feeling more comfortable in the morphology knowledge. The positive perception of the students' regarding vocabulary learning was convenient with the previous results of the quantitative analysis in the present study. The fact of the high means of vocabulary learning strategies is evident in these findings.

Qualitative analysis gives us an opinion about whether the students have an idea about vocabulary learning strategies. While some have positively effective ideas, some don't even know what the VLS are. In the interview, there are some answers from students that think that vocabulary learning strategies have some positive effects on learning vocabulary. The participants believed that vocabulary learning strategies positively affect their learning such as making learning easier, faster, and more permanent.

The result of the interview also provides the participants' autonomy and their choice of activities in their autonomous vocabulary learning. Firstly, it was reached that the participants underlined their consciousness in their vocabulary learning. Most of the participants underlined their autonomy in the vocabulary learning process. Students also mentioned different strategies they used in their learning process, students mentioned their being autonomous learners in their learning process. They also expressed their teachers' contributions to their learning. Besides the teachers' contributions, the students also used different strategies to learn new vocabulary.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND SUGGESTION

### Discussion

The present study mainly focused on investigating the relationship between the learner autonomy level and vocabulary learning strategies of students who study at a Secondary School in Adana- Turkey. The mixed-methods research design was conducted to collect data for seeking answers to the research questions.

According to the results, the normal distribution of scores on the vocabulary learning strategies is evident in this finding. In the five Likert-scale, three scores are in the median value; therefore, it can be concluded that most participants persisted in average usage of vocabulary learning strategies in their language learning process. Along the same line, Duong (2022) also investigated vocabulary learning strategies and conducted a questionnaire on Schmitt's 5 Likert scales with 270 tertiary students in Vietnam by adapting Schmitt's questionnaire for ESP. In conclusion, he also reached the same conclusion with three scores. Tayyebi (2021) studied vocabulary learning strategies of Iranian elementary-level students and concluded the same results as this study with an average score of three. Nevertheless, to some extent, Tılfarlıoğlu and Bozgeyik (2017) have contrasting findings to the current investigation.

According to the results of the LA questionnaire, most of the participants' LA-level scores were mainly in the middle of the distribution, even slightly above the average mean. These results are in line with the study of Göksel and Adıgüzel (2022), Ceylan (2021), and Yiğit (2018) that the

learner autonomy level of the students is in the middle of the scale. This shows that learners are aware of the importance of being autonomous learners in language learning and can integrate their autonomy with their learning in different environments.

According to the results of this study, there is some significance only in the cognition subcategory regarding the participants' gender. That is, female participants' cognitive strategies usage frequency was higher than the male participants'. This study is in the same line as Na' (2016) study. Also, in their study, Ansari et al. (2016) and Catalan (2003) concluded the same as the results of this study that the mean rank was higher for females than males. Conversely, this study is not in the same line as Omaar (2016) study. The researcher found a significant difference only in the determination subcategory between males' and females' use of vocabulary learning strategies.

This study showed a significant difference in autonomous learners regarding gender. In total, female students were more autonomous than male ones. In line with this study, Ozer and Yukselir (2021) also found the same results when they tested learner autonomy by gender. In contrast, these two studies conflict with Ozkan and Kirac (2018) study.

The results of the ANOVA of the participants' age sub-groups means in the VLS questionnaire; no p-value higher than 0.05. That is, there wasn't any significance of the participants' ages in the VLS choices and their usage frequency. In contrast with this study's findings, Yaacob et al. (2019) conducted a study with 16, 17, and 18 years old students. They found that the highest score belonged to the 18 years old students and the lowest score belonged to the 16 years old ones. Therefore, they concluded that as students got older, their frequency of using vocabulary learning strategies also increased.

The significant results of the study have some general conclusions in terms of the gender, age and education year of English. Firstly, female students used more cognitive vocabulary learning strategies than male ones. This may stem from the fact that this study's participants are the ages 12,13, and 14. Therefore, they are at puberty, and females mature faster than males can think logically. Female students were also found to be more autonomous than male participants. This also may be due to being more logical at this age. Also, male students are more eager to spend so much time with their friends outside, which is allowed in Turkish culture. Yet, for girls, it is not the same that spending long hours outdoors may be a problem for the parents of a girl. Secondly, there were no significant differences in the participants' ages regarding VLS and LA. It may be a result of the number of participants that there was not a wide range of participants to illustrate in general. Also, the majority of the group consists of 13 years olds students; maybe 12 and 14 years old students didn't affect the results so much. Lastly, the education year of English instruction had no effect on the frequency of using VLSs and the level of LA. This may stem from the parents' attitudes toward the students towards English learning. Also, learner autonomy is not a situation that can be influenced by learning English. Students may not express their opinions clearly because they may have forgotten what they answered while answering the next ones. Also, studies, which include class observations, diaries, and interviews, can be done in the long term for more specific and significant results.

According to the results of qualitative data analysis, participants of this study had positive attitudes towards LA. Although they expressed their dependence on their teachers, most of them were eager to be autonomous learners. This study is in line with the study of Tran (2020) that who also found his participants' positive attitudes toward LA. Also, Chen and Pan (2015) investigated their participants' learner autonomy and concluded that their participants had a positive attitude toward LA in English learning and learning vocabulary. These results can be seen as a motivating factor for students' and teachers' beliefs and efforts in language learning and vocabulary development.

The qualitative data analysis results show a relationship between students' LA level and usage of VLSs in language learning. As a result, it can be inferred that if the level of LA increases, the frequency of use of VLS also increases. That is, the awareness of students and teachers about LA also influences the VLS use by the students, so it needs to be considered in the language learning and teaching processes.

### **Conclusion**

The current study explored the VLSs usage of EFL learners, VLS choice of learners, the autonomy level of the learners, and the relationship between the level of VLSs usage and the level of LA.

Firstly, according to the results, all subcategories of VLS questionnaires were about three scores as the mean. This showed that most participants had about or more than three scores as the mean. Moreover, the normal distribution of scores on the vocabulary learning strategies was evident in this finding. The results also showed that most students used memory strategies. Moreover, the results showed that students mostly preferred taking notes in the classroom, in contrast, they wanted to use flashcards and listen to English CDs of word lists, at least from all the cognitive strategies. The findings showed that the item 'listening to English songs' had the highest mean score among all the metacognitive strategies to learn a new vocabulary.

Secondly, according to the results of the LA questionnaire, most of the participants' LA level scores were mainly in the middle of the distribution, even slightly above the average mean. The findings showed that the 'extramural' section had the lowest average mean among all the sections, which meant that students were not autonomous in outside activities. Moreover, although students did not use extramural activities to learn English, they were quite eager to be autonomous learners from now on. There was a contrast between their current actions and their expected future actions. Lastly, the most significant difference between the scores is seen in the self-evaluating section. That is, it can be concluded that students need to be supported to evaluate themselves in a pedagogical environment.

Furthermore, according to the results of this study, firstly, there was some significance only in the cognition subcategory regarding the participants' gender. That is, female participants' cognitive strategies usage frequency was higher than the male participants'. Also, this study showed a significant difference in the tendency toward being autonomous learners regarding gender. In total, female students were more autonomous than male ones. Secondly, regarding the ages of the students, there wasn't any significance of the participants' ages in the VLS choices and their usage frequency, and there was not any certain significance based on participants' age regarding their LA level. Lastly, there was no significance based on the participants' education year regarding their VLSs usage frequency, except for social strategies. In conclusion, the duration of English instruction among students did not influence the students' choice of VLSs.

Moreover, Pearson's correlation test was conducted to identify whether any statistically significant relationship existed between the participants' LA characteristics and their VLS usage frequency. According to the results of the correlation test, it is evident that there was a positive and significant correlation between the participants' LA level and their frequency of VLS usage. The Pearson correlation resulting in ".536" is evidence of a weak positive relationship.

According to the results of qualitative data analysis, participants had a positive attitude towards learning vocabulary; that is, students were motivated and eager to learn a new vocabulary. Also, the students mentioned their positive attitude toward VLSs. Moreover, participants of this study had positive attitudes towards LA. Although they expressed their dependence on their teachers, most of them were eager to be autonomous learners. As a result, according to the qualitative data analysis, it

can be concluded that there is a relationship between students' LA level and usage of VLSs in language learning. It can also be inferred that if the level of LA increases, the frequency of use of VLS also increases.

### Suggestions for Further Studies

The current study was conducted to investigate the possible relationship between the level of LA and VLSs usage of EFL students, the VLSs English language learners use, which strategy they apply, the level of LA of English language learners, and how VLSs differ according to gender, age, and year of education. Because the study was conducted in just one state school, the results can not be generalized to other schools in the region. Therefore, the same study can be conducted in different state schools, also in private schools. Secondly, more participants can be involved in the study to make a generalization. Also, to see the effect of age on VLSs usage, students from different grades can be chosen as participants. Lastly, this study can be done with the addition of a questionnaire or an interview about what can be done to increase awareness of LA and VLSs use among students and their perceptions can be investigated.

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### STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

There are studies on autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies in the field, but there are not many studies on the relationship between vocabulary performance and autonomy levels of Turkish students who learn English as a foreign language. Most of the studies focus on improving student autonomy in foreign language classes, not outside the classroom. This study describes and discusses the relationship between learning autonomy and the learning word learning strategies by comparing it to the trained data. This study enables language teachers to be aware of being autonomous in vocabulary learning in EFL classrooms, the effectiveness of fostering LA, and its results on the vocabulary learning process. Furthermore, knowing which vocabulary learning strategies are used by autonomous learners enables the teachers to show a good way of planning their lessons and preparing suitable materials in their teaching processes. Moreover, this study shows the differences in choosing VLSs in terms of gender, so teachers can consider individual differences. This study investigates the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and learner autonomy. In this study, the mixed method research design was employed. Collected qualitative and quantitative data were used to seek answers to the research questions about English language learners' usage of different VLSs, about the autonomy level of English language learners, about how VLSs differ according to gender, age and year of education and whether there is a relationship between the level of LA and VLSs. Two types of questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. One was about VLSs, and the other was about LA. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were used as a qualitative data collection tool. Convenience sampling was used at a secondary school in the South of Türkiye to select the participants. Eighth-grade students of the school were asked whether they were eager to participate in this research or not. The study was on a voluntary basis. The study was conducted with 100 students, ten percent of whom were also interviewed. The quantitative data were collected from 100 participants: 45 male and 55 female. In this study, there were 100 participants. The age of participants differed. The data was collected using a learner autonomy questionnaire (closed and open-ended questions embedded) and a VLSs (closed and open-ended questions embedded) questionnaire. Both questionnaires were translated into the participants' mother language, Turkish, to ensure their comprehensibility of the questionnaires. During this process, a numbering system was used to compare the students' learner autonomy and vocabulary learning strategies. Also, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with students to ensure the reliability of the study. The significant results of the study have some general conclusions in terms of the gender, age and education year of English. Firstly, female students used more cognitive vocabulary learning strategies than male ones. Female students were also found to be more autonomous than male participants. Secondly, there were no significant differences in the participants' ages regarding VLS and LA. It may be a result of the number of participants that there was not a wide range of participants to illustrate for general. Lastly, the education year of English instruction had no effect on the frequency of using VLSs and the level of LA. This may stem from the parent attitudes of the students towards English learning. Also, learner autonomy is not a situation that can be influenced by learning English. According to the qualitative data analysis results, there is a relationship between students' LA level and usage of VLSs in language learning. As a result, it can be inferred that if the level of LA increases, the frequency of use of VLS also increases. That is, the awareness of students and teachers about LA also influences the VLS use of the students, so it needs to be considered in the language learning and teaching processes. Moreover, the correlation analysis results showed the existing relationship between the LA and VLS. It is a weak positive correlation, which means that the participants' VLS usage frequency increases as their LA level increases. According to the results of the correlation test, it is evident that there was a positive and significant correlation between the participants' LA level and their frequency of VLS usage. The Pearson correlation resulting in ".536" is evidence of a weak positive relationship. According to the results of qualitative data analysis, participants had a positive attitude towards learning vocabulary, that is, students were motivated and eager to learn a new vocabulary. Also, the students mentioned their positive attitude toward VLSs. Moreover, participants of this study had positive attitudes towards LA. Although they expressed their dependence on their teachers, most of them were eager to be autonomous learners. As a result, according to the qualitative data analysis, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between students' LA level and usage of VLSs in language learning. It can also be inferred that if the level of LA increases, the frequency of use of VLS also increases. The current study was conducted to investigate the possible relationship between the level of LA and VLSs usage of EFL students, the VLSs English language learners use, which strategy they apply, the level of LA of English language learners, and how VLSs differ according to gender, age, and year of education.

Because the study was conducted in just one state school, the results can not be generalized to other schools in the region. Therefore, the same study can be conducted in different state schools, also in private schools. Secondly, more participants can be involved in the study to make a generalization. Also, to see the effect of age on VLSs usage, students from different grades can be chosen as participants. Lastly, this study can be done with the addition of a questionnaire or an interview about what can be done to increase awareness of LA and VLSs use among students and their perceptions can be investigated.

**Keywords:** Learner Autonomy, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, EFL Students