



UNDERGRADUATE EFL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES DEPENDING ON LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFICIENCY LEVEL

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore elementary and intermediate-level EFL undergraduate students' use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs), and specifically to investigate which VLSs are employed by elementary-level and intermediate-level students, and explore the relationship between VLS use and foreign language learning achievement. The findings of the study showed that although the most popular and the least popular VLSs used by elementary-level and intermediate-level undergraduate students are different, VLS preferences of both groups are generally quite similar. It was also found that intermediate-level undergraduate students use a wider variety of VLSs than the elementary-level students. Finally, the results of the present study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between foreign language learning achievement and VLS use.

Key Words: Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs), Proficiency Level, Language Achievement

LİSANS SEVİYESİNDEKİ YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KULLANDIKLARI KELİME ÖĞRENME STRATEJİLERİNİN BAŞARI VE YETERLİLİK DEĞİŞKENLERİ BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, yabancı dilde başlangıç ve orta seviyedeki lisans öğrencilerinin Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerini belirlemek, özellikle başlangıç ve orta seviyedeki öğrencilerin kullandıkları Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerini ortaya çıkarmak, Kelime Öğrenme Stratejisi kullanımı ile yabancı dil öğrenme başarısı arasındaki ilişkiyi tespit etmektir. Araştırmanın sonuçları, başlangıç ve orta seviyedeki yabancı dil öğrencilerinin en çok ve en az kullandığı Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerinin farklı olduğunu, ancak her iki grubun kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin genel olarak benzerlik gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, orta seviye yabancı dil öğrencilerinin başlangıç seviyesindeki öğrencilere kıyasla daha çok çeşitlilikte Kelime Öğrenme Stratejisi kullandığı saptanmıştır. Son olarak, bu araştırmanın sonuçları, yabancı dil öğrenme başarısı ile Kelime Öğrenme Strateji kullanımı arasında pozitif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelime Öğrenme Stratejileri, Yeterlilik Seviyesi, Dil Öğrenme Başarısı

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of foreign/second language education, various approaches have been adopted, and each of them has had a unique perspective on the role of vocabulary (Schmitt, 2000:10). For example, teaching methods such as the Direct Method and Audiolinguilism put an emphasis on the teaching of grammatical structures. Therefore, in order not to divert the focus from the learning of these structures, the number of words introduced in such courses was reduced to minimum. Vocabulary choice depended largely on the ease of demonstration or their compatibility with the ‘structure of the day.’ In the 1970s, the emergence of the Communicative Approach caused a paradigm shift which involved rethinking the role of vocabulary (Thornbury, 2002:13-14). The paradigm shift has brought with it a great deal of research on the importance of vocabulary in language learning.

Many scholars from the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), on many occasions, have reiterated that vocabulary has been a neglected field of language teaching until recently (Zimmerman, 2000; Lewis, 2002; Willis, 2003). Nowadays, it is widely agreed that vocabulary is an indispensable part in communication (Rafik-Galea and Wong, 2011:145-146; Nation, 1990) Therefore, research on the role, teaching and learning of vocabulary has increased dramatically recently. Some other ELT scholars (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Misulis, 1999) have also pointed out that vocabulary growth and reading comprehension are strongly related to each other in a positive manner.

Even though vocabulary is a basic component of communication, it is often regarded as a source of problems by second and foreign language learners (Rafik-Galea and Wong, 2011:145-146). One of the main reasons for it is that the term ‘vocabulary’ or more specifically, the term ‘word’ is not an easy concept to define in theoretical terms or for other purposes (Read, 2000:17). An additional problem is not being able to find a commonly-agreed answer to the question, “What does ‘knowing a word’ entail?” A likely answer to this question is provided by Nation (1990:31) who suggested that a person must master the following kinds of knowledge in order to know a word:

- the meaning(s),
- the written form,
- the spoken form,
- the grammatical behaviour,
- the collocations,

- the register,
- the associations,
- the frequency.

The relationship between vocabulary and comprehensible input is another point of interest to many scholars. In his *Natural Approach*, Krashen (1982:80) states that vocabulary knowledge may not be sufficient for comprehending messages; however, an increased vocabulary helps the learner comprehend more of what is heard or read. Therefore, it can be suggested that more vocabulary brings about more comprehension of input, and indirectly more grammar acquisition. This view is quite different from the traditional view of many linguists who had the belief that vocabulary was only to provide context to learn grammatical structures. But this traditional paradigm is no longer acceptable among ELT scholars since increasing importance has been given to vocabulary (Willis, 2003).

As the focus has shifted from language teaching to language learning, the independence of learning has come to the fore. Elaborating on the independence of the students, Cook (2008:105) states that it is not appropriate for the teacher to dictate everything to students, take all the important decisions about the language learning process since students have the potential and the skills to cope with all the challenges in the language classroom. This independence of the learner from the teacher has given birth to the strategies research, which tries to discover the choices that students are making and to analyze them in great detail.

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES (VLSs)

Different researchers propose varied definitions of VLSs based on their different perspectives. In Cameron's definition (2001:92) "VLSs are the actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary items." Considering the strategy preferences employed by students, Nation (2000:352) emphasizes the learner independence and strategy effectiveness by stating that "a strategy needs to involve choice (there are several strategies to choose from), be complex (there are several steps to learn), require knowledge and benefit from training; and increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use."

The first aspect to be mentioned about VLSs is that some of them are consciously employed, and others are automatic. As mentioned above, most learning styles are expressed by observable learning strategy behaviors. Another broad definition is given by Takac (2008:106), who states that VLSs are all sorts of activities, behaviours, or techniques used by learners to

improve vocabulary learning. These strategies help learners to discover the meanings and forms of lexical components. Additionally, learners employ these strategies in order to internalise, store, retrieve and actively use the newly learned vocabulary in language production, which is an important part of the language learning process.

Another aspect to be pointed out here is the choice of VLSs. Schmitt (2000:133) suggests that in order to decide on the effectiveness of learning strategies, the whole language learning context should be taken into consideration. According to him, the effectiveness of learning strategies when they are taught or used depends on many factors, including the proficiency level, L1 and culture of students, their motivation and purposes for learning the L2, the task and text being used, and the nature of the L2 itself. From a similar perspective, Gu (2003) states that “there is an increasing awareness that the choice and effectiveness of VLSs in general depend very much on a combination of task, learner and context.

Citing one of the main contributions of VLSs, Nation (2001:222) points out that thanks to the VLSs, a great deal of vocabulary items can be learned and students with various proficiency levels can benefit from the use of VLSs when used appropriately. Finally, Takac (2008:76) claims that VLSs are crucial in enabling language learners to become autonomous learners (independent learners), who are equipped with all the language learning tools to improve their vocabulary knowledge and meeting their own vocabulary needs.

TAXONOMY OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

When looking at the taxonomies of VLSs built by scholars in the field, it is clear that their similarities outnumber the differences between them. Generally, although the strategies listed in each taxonomy are very similar, their numbers and categorizations differ to some extent.

Cohen (1987:31-40) divided the VLSs into four groups: 1) rote repetition, 2) structure, 3) semantic strategies, 4) the use of mnemonic devices. Hogben and Lawson (1996) divided the strategies into four categories: 1) repetition, 2) word feature analysis, 3) simple elaboration, 4) complex elaboration. Nation (2001:218) developed a general classification of VLSs. She categorized VLSs into three general groups: 1) planning, 2) sources, 3) processes. According to Cook (2008:58-62), VLSs are divided into two groups: 1) strategies for understanding the meaning of words, 2) strategies for acquiring words.

In Schmitt's taxonomy (1997), on which the present study is based, the fifty-eight strategies were put under two headings: discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies are those which are used to obtain initial information about new words. Consolidation strategies, on the other hand, involve strategies learners use to help them memorize the words once taught or encountered.

RESEARCH ON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

Takac (2008:58) cites two main origins about the research on VLSs. The first one is the general language learning strategies. As a matter of fact, many VLSs are originally considered as language learning strategies. However, the same strategies can also be used for vocabulary learning purposes. The second origin is the research that is aimed at looking into the effectiveness of each individual strategy during the vocabulary learning process. In this study, only those related to the relationship between VLSs and proficiency level or language achievement will be mentioned.

Kürüm (2012) carried out a study to find out the impact of the Strategy Based Instruction on improving the foreign language proficiency level of the undergraduate-level students. As the data collection instrument, he used a questionnaire adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategies Inventory. He found that the students use the compensation strategies most and the social strategies the least, and that the students having lower grades are likely to use more memory strategies, whereas the students with higher grades are found to use the compensation strategies more frequently.

Gu and Johnson (1996) looked into university students' VLS preferences and learning outcomes. They found out that learners reported using more meaning-oriented strategies than rote-learning strategies in vocabulary learning, and some strategies showed positive correlation between vocabulary size and general language proficiency. Contextual learning, dictionary, and note-taking strategies were also predictors of success.

Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) investigated learners' use of VLSs in relation to L2 proficiency. The results showed that ESL learners have more opportunities to practise the newly learned vocabulary when they are exposed to real life situations. The results also showed that extensive strategy use was positively related to success in language learning. Erten and Williams (2008) looked into how to measure the effectiveness of VLSs through using percentages or correlation coefficients. The findings indicated that percentage calculation can give a more realistic picture of strategy effectiveness than correlation coefficients.

In the study by O'Malley et al. (1985), which was conducted in order to look into the relationship between language learning strategies and success in FL learning, it was found that high-achieving students used a greater use of metacognitive strategies, which means that high-achieving students are more able to monitor the learning process and make necessary adjustments depending on the circumstances. The study which was carried out by Ehrman and Oxford (1995) showed that successful students used cognitive strategies more frequently in their language learning process.

Ellis (1994) cites three main categories about the factors affecting the use of VLSs:

1. Learner individual difference factors (belief, attitude, motivation, language learning experience),
2. Social and situational factors (field of study, course type, class level, gender, language learning environment),
3. Learners' learning outcomes (language achievement, language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge).

While there is much research focused on each of the subcategories, there is very little research covering the relationship between VLSs and language achievement and language proficiency of undergraduate students in the EFL context. Therefore, the present study is aimed at looking into the relationship between VLSs and learners' learning outcomes, specifically language achievement and language proficiency. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to generally explore elementary-level and intermediate-level undergraduate EFL students' use of VLSs, and specifically to investigate which VLSs are employed by elementary-level and intermediate-level students, to explore the relationship between vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement.

Three research questions have been formulated in this study:

1. What VLSs are employed by elementary-level and intermediate level students in learning English vocabulary?
2. Is there a significant difference between elementary-level and intermediate-level students in the use of VLSs?
3. Is there a relationship between the frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement for elementary-level and intermediate-level students?

In order to address research question 1, frequency tables showing vocabulary learning strategy use for elementary (group 1) and intermediate-level (group 2) students were formed. In order to address research question

2, an independent-samples t-test was used to investigate the difference in the vocabulary learning strategy use between the two groups. In order to answer the research question 3, a Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement.

Participants

The participants of the study are 143 students studying at the first grade of an undergraduate school in the fall semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. A quarter of the students at this school are military high school graduates while three quarters of the population come from various civilian high schools. Because of the intense language courses at military high schools, military high school graduates start their first year at the intermediate level while civilian high school graduates mostly start their first year at the elementary level. The majority of the students participating in the study are in English classes having a number of 25-30 students. The participants are attending their English classes 6 hours a week.

Instrument

The required data for the present study was mainly collected by means of the responses given to the statements of the questionnaire, namely Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire. It contained thirty-one closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish so that students could understand and respond to the items easily. Since it is a very comprehensive inventory of VLSs, the items were adopted from Schmitt (1997) in line with the objectives of this study. The questionnaire includes a Likert-type scale, ranging from “never” to “almost always” about the strategies used to discover the meanings of new words and strategies used to consolidate the learnt items. The Questionnaire divides the strategies into the following groups:

- a) Statements 1 to 5: Strategies for discovering the meaning of new words (determination strategies),
- b) Statements 6 to 8: Strategies for discovering the meaning of new words (social strategies),
- c) Statements 9 to 19: Strategies for consolidating meanings of words (memory strategy),
- d) Statements 20 to 21: Strategies for consolidating meanings of words (social strategies),
- e) Statements 22 to 27: Strategies for consolidating meanings of words (cognitive strategies),

f) Statements 28 to 31: Strategies for consolidating meanings of words (meta-cognitive strategies).

The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale calculated to be .84. Tables 1 and 2 below show the reliability analysis.

Table 1. Case Processing Summary.

Cases	N	%
Valid	143	100,0
Excluded ^a	0	0,0
Total	143	100,0

As it can be seen from Table 1, 143 students rated the statements in the questionnaire. All of them were included in the reliability analysis.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,848	31

Cronbach's Alpha value is shown in the Reliability Statistics table. The value is ,848, suggesting very good internal consistency reliability for the scale.

Data Analysis

First, 79 elementary-level students and 64 intermediate-level students were selected for the study. The questionnaire was introduced to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. Second, the questionnaire sheets were coded according to the participants' proficiency levels as intermediate and elementary. The questionnaire was distributed and collected by the researcher and his colleagues. All the questionnaires, which had been distributed, were collected. After carefully gathering the appropriate data using the questionnaire, the data were analyzed by using frequency (quantitatively) and description (qualitatively). Statistical techniques such as t-test, correlation were used to explore the relationships between vocabulary

learning strategy use and some other variables such as proficiency level and achievement.

Findings

In this part, the findings obtained from the questionnaires to examine VLSs used by the respondents participating in this study are given in the tables. The results are divided into two main parts; tables about the respondents' general information and tables about the use of vocabulary strategies for providing an answer to the research questions.

General Information about Respondents

Demographic features of the respondents are given in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3. Number of students according to the high school variable.

ELEMENTARY OR INTERMEDIATE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Elementary Valid Civilian High School	37	46,8	46,8	46,8
Anatolian High School	42	53,2	53,2	100,0
Total	79	100,0	100,0	
Intermediate Valid Military High School	64	100,0	100,0	100,0

As it is illustrated in Table 3, there are 79 elementary-level students and 64 intermediate-level students. Elementary level students come from two types of high schools; civilian high school and anatolian high school. On the other hand, all the intermediate-level students are military high school graduates.

Research Question 1: “What VLSs are employed by elementary-level and intermediate level students in learning English vocabulary?”

In order to address the research question 1, regarding the VLSs employed by elementary-level and intermediate-level students in learning English vocabulary, frequency tables showing vocabulary learning strategy use for elementary and intermediate-level students are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Vocabulary Learning Strategy Frequency of Elementary and Intermediate Level Students

Elementary-Level					Intermediate Level				
	N	Min	Max	Mean		N	Min	Max	Mean
Q26	79	1	5	4,13	Q29	64	2	5	4,28
Q5	79	1	5	4,13	Q9	64	2	5	3,94
Q30	79	1	5	3,71	Q3	64	2	5	3,94
Q9	79	1	5	3,67	Q30	64	3	5	3,91
Q29	79	1	5	3,61	Q26	64	2	5	3,72
Q7	79	1	5	2,28	Q17	64	1	5	2,69
Q20	79	1	5	2,28	Q20	64	1	4	2,67
Q8	79	1	5	2,04	Q19	64	1	4	2,63
Q4	79	1	5	1,99	Q8	64	1	3	2,33
Q19	79	1	5	1,71	Q14	64	1	4	2,06
Valid N (listwise)	79				Valid N (listwise)	64			

In Table 4, the first five strategies are the most popular strategies used by the elementary-level and intermediate-level students while the last five strategies are the least popular strategies used by the same students. It is clear from Table 4 that there are some similarities between the vocabulary learning strategy usage of elementary and intermediate-level students in both most-popular and least-popular categories even though their frequencies are comparatively different. The most popular vocabulary learning strategy for elementary-level students is Q26 which states “I take vocabulary notes in class”, which is a cognitive strategy used for consolidating meanings of words. On the other hand, the most popular vocabulary learning strategy for intermediate-level students is Q29 which states “I listen to English radio or television programs, read books, magazines, fictions and the likes to improve my English vocabulary knowledge.”, which is a meta-cognitive strategy used for consolidating meanings of words. In the least popular categories, the least popular vocabulary learning strategy for intermediate-level students is Q14 which states “I connect unrelated with rhyme so I can remember them (e.g. one is bun, two is a shoe etc.)”, which is a memory strategy for consolidating meanings of words. On the other hand, the least popular vocabulary learning strategy for elementary-level students is Q19 which states “I use physical action when learning to remember new words”, which is a memory strategy for consolidating meanings of words.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between elementary-level and intermediate-level students in the use of VLSs?

In order to address the research question 2, an independent-samples t-test was used to investigate the difference in the vocabulary learning strategy use between the elementary-level and intermediate-level students. The results are represented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Group statistics for elementary and intermediate-level groups

QTOTAL	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Elementary	79	90,95	15,450	1,738
Intermediate	64	98,16	13,343	1,668

It is clear from Table 5 that 79 students from elementary-level and 64 students from intermediate-level participated in the study. Table 6 below shows the results of the independent-samples t-test.

Table 6. Independent Samples Test

QTOTAL	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	3,459	0,065	-2,946	141	0,004	-7,207
Equal variances not assumed			-2,992	140	0,003	-7,207

QTOTAL	Std. Error Difference	t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2,446	-12,043	-2,371
Equal variances not assumed	2,409	-11,970	-2,444

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the total scores of VLSs for the elementary and intermediate-level students. As it can be seen in Table 6, there is a significant difference in total scores between elementary (M=90,95, SD=15,450) and intermediate-level students (M=98,16, SD=13,343); $t(434)=-2,946$, $p=004$. Intermediate-level students use a wider variety of VLSs than elementary-level students.

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement for elementary and intermediate-level students?

In order to answer the research question 3, a Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement for elementary and intermediate-level groups. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptives for exam scores of elementary and intermediate-level students

ELEMENTARY OR INTERMEDIATE?		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Elementary	ENGLISH EXAM SCORE	79,46	13,588	79
	QTOTAL	90,95	15,450	79
Intermediate	ENGLISH EXAM SCORE	77,92	10,876	64
	QTOTAL	98,16	13,343	64

Table 7 shows the means and standard deviations of elementary and intermediate-level students.

Table 8. Correlations between English exam scores and questionnaire total scores

ELEMENTARY OR INTERMEDIATE?		ENGLISH EXAM SCORE	QTOTAL
Elementary	ENGLISH EXAM SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,639**
		N	79
	QTOTAL	Pearson Correlation	0,639**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000
		N	79
Intermediate	ENGLISH EXAM SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,748**
		N	64
	QTOTAL	Pearson Correlation	0,748**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000
		N	64

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

As it can be seen in Table 8, the relationship between language learning achievement and vocabulary learning strategy use was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for elementary and intermediate-level students respectively. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a strong positive correlation between the two variables. (for the elementary group $r=.639$, $n=79$, $p<.0005$, for the intermediate group $r=.748$, $n=64$, $p<.0005$, with high levels of English exam scores associated well with high frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that the most popular and the least popular VLSs of elementary and intermediate-level undergraduate EFL students are different. On the other hand, both groups have similar vocabulary learning strategy preferences. What is also important is the fact that the most popular VLS of elementary-level students is a cognitive strategy while the most popular VLS of intermediate-level students is a meta-cognitive strategy, which might mean that compared to elementary-level students, intermediate-level students are more involved in observing their progress in their language learning endeavour.

The intermediate-level students use more strategies than the elementary-level students, which is an important finding even though the number of strategies cannot be solely responsible for effective language learning. There are some other variables involved in this process such as proficiency level, L1 and culture of students, their motivation and purposes for learning the L2, the task and text being used, and the nature of the L2 itself (Schmitt, 2000:133).

There is a strong relationship between vocabulary learning strategy use and language learning achievement. In both groups, high-achieving students use more strategies than less-achieving students, which is consistent with the finding of Meara's (1999:565), which states that better learners adopt a wider range of strategies for learning than less successful learners. Another distinction is that good language learners take responsibility for improving their own vocabulary, while less successful learners do not.

Another important point that should always be kept in mind is the fact that strategy use is a dynamic process and learners choose their strategies from among a wide variety of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies. Klapper (2008:173-174) suggests that the learner's decisions about strategy use are, to a large extent, dependent on the learner himself/herself and that strategy use is closely related to individual differences, such as age, motivation and proficiency levels, and to individual learning styles.

The language teacher's role on the VLS preferences of the learner should not be underestimated or overlooked. The language teacher should be informed about the VLSs, they should harness this knowledge in their pre-service training course and expand it through in-service seminars and workshops on integrating strategy training into language courses (Takac, 2008:150). The language teacher should start with determining the VLSs already used by their students. Two research tools can be used for this purpose. The first one is a VLS questionnaire. With this kind of questionnaire, the language teacher can find out the strategies used by their students, also the teacher can make a wide variety of VLSs listed in the questionnaire known to the students so that the students can improve their repertoire of VLSs. The second research tool is observation. Some of the strategies are visible and some of them are invisible. For visible ones, the teacher can observe their students in the classroom in order to find out whether the students are using them effectively or not.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Kelime, iletişimin ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Aynı zamanda, bilinen kelime sayısı ile okuduğunu anlama arasında da doğrusal bir ilişki olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu nedenle, kelime öğretimi ve öğrenimi konusunda birçok araştırma yapılmıştır. Yapılan araştırmalar, zengin bir kelime bilgisinin dil öğrenen kişiler için dinlediğini ya da okuduğunu anlama konusunda önemli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Kelime Öğrenme Stratejileri konusunda literatürde değişik tanımlar yapılmıştır. Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerinin bazıları bilinçli olarak kullanılmakta, bazıları ise beyin tarafından otomatik şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Bu stratejilerin bazıları öğretici tarafından gözlenebilirken bazıları gözlemlenememektedir. Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerinin etkinliğinin belirlenebilmesi için dikkate alınması gereken faktörlerden bir tanesi öğrencinin yabancı dildeki yeterlilik seviyesi ve başarı düzeyidir. Dolayısıyla, bu araştırmada Kelime Öğrenim Stratejileri ile yabancı dil öğrenme başarısı ve yabancı dil yeterliliği arasındaki ilişki ele alınmıştır. Bu amaçla, başlangıç ve orta düzeydeki yabancı dil öğrencilerinin hangi Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerini kullandığı, bu stratejilerin kullanımı konusunda başlangıç ve orta düzeydeki öğrencilerin arasında anlamlı bir fark olup olmadığı ve strateji kullanımı ile bu iki seviyedeki öğrencilerin dil başarısı arasında nasıl bir ilişki olduğu araştırılmıştır.

Araştırma sorularını cevaplamak için Frekans Tabloları, Bağımsız Örneklem T Testi ve Pearson Korelasyon Katsayısı analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırmaya, 143 lisans düzeyinde öğrenci katılmıştır. Bu öğrencilerin yabancı dil seviyesi başlangıç ve üst-orta arasında değişiklik göstermektedir. Araştırma verileri öğrencilerin Kelime Öğrenme Strateji Anketi'ne verdikleri cevaplardan elde edilmiştir. Anket, Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerini; belirleme, sosyal, hafıza, bilişsel ve üst-bilişsel stratejiler olarak sınıflandırmaktadır.

Araştırma sonucunda, başlangıç ve orta düzeydeki öğrencilerin en sık ve en az kullandığı Kelime Öğrenme Stratejilerinin farklı olduğu, öte yandan, her iki grubun da genel anlamda benzer kelime öğrenme stratejileri kullandığı, başlangıç seviyesindeki öğrencilerin en sık kullandığı strateji bilişsel bir strateji iken orta seviyedeki öğrencinin en sık kullandığı stratejinin üst-bilişsel olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu da orta seviyedeki öğrencilerin dil öğrenimi konusundaki ilerlemeyi daha çok sorguladıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, orta seviyedeki öğrencilerin başlangıç seviyesindeki öğrencilere kıyasla daha çok çeşitlilikte strateji kullandığı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, Kelime Öğrenme Strateji kullanımı ile dil öğrenim başarısı arasında güçlü bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Her iki

grupta da başarılı olan öğrencilerin az başarılı olanlara kıyasla daha fazla çeşitlilikte strateji kullandığı saptanmıştır.

Son olarak, öğrencilerin kullandığı strateji sayısına ek olarak strateji seçim aşaması da önemlidir. Yabancı dil öğrencileri bu stratejileri seçerken yaş, motivasyon, yeterlilik seviyesi, bireysel öğrenme tarzlarını da dikkate almaktadırlar. Bu nedenle, bir strateji bazı öğrencileri başarıya taşırken başkalarına katkıda bulunmayabilir. Bu durum, öğretmenin bu stratejilerin seçim aşamasında öğrencilere katkı sağlamasını gerektirmektedir. Öncelikle, öğretmenler hizmet-içi eğitim ya da atelyelerle bu stratejiler konusunda yeterince bilgi edinmeli, daha sonra öğrencilerin kullandığı stratejileri anket ve gözlem yöntemlerini kullanarak belirlemeli ve son olarak öğrencilerin strateji seçimine yardımcı olarak şekilde Kelime Öğrenme Strateji eğitimi vermelidir.

