VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF TURKISH HIGH SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS[1]

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Abstract

In all schools in Turkey, English is a compulsory subject. Therefore, English is taught for two hours a week depending on the school type or grade. Since vocabulary is regarded as a crucial aspect in language learning, the purpose of the study is to investigate vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) adopted by 9th grade students in general and to find out which vocabulary learning strategies used the most and the least. Another purpose of this study is to present whether there were any differences between male and female learners regarding vocabulary learning strategy use. 172 9th grade students took part in this study and they were asked to fill in a questionnaire of 25 vocabulary learning strategy items. Also, a semi-structured interview with ten students was held. Data were analyzed and presented in frequencies, percentages, and means. The results revealed that the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies were Social (Discovery) and Determination Strategies and the least ones were Social (Consolidation) and Metacognitive Strategies. Although no significant difference of vocabulary learning strategy use between female and male students was observed, slight differences were noted when the strategy items were examined individually. The findings indicate that teachers' awareness regarding their students vocabulary learning strategies may trigger them to consciously improve and modify their VLS instructions more effectively. Besides, the findings may contribute to teachers' selection of appropriate course books as well as materials to enhance vocabulary learning strategy use of their students.

Keywords: Vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategies, use of strategy.

İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN LİSE SEVİYESİNDEKİ ÖĞRENCİLERİN KELİME ÖĞRENME STRATEJİLERİ

İlkokuldan üniversiteye kadar Türkiye'deki bütün okullarda İngilizce, öğrenciler için zorunlu bir derstir. Bu nedenle İngilizce dersi öğrencilerin öğrenim gördükleri okula ve sınıfa göre değişmekle beraber haftada iki saat okutulmaktadır. Kelime bilgisi, dil öğrenmenin genel kabul gören önemli bir yönü olduğundan bu çalışmanın amacı, 9. sınıf öğrencileri tarafından kullanılan kelime öğrenme stratejilerini araştırmak, hangi kelime öğrenme stratejilerini en çok ve en az kullandıklarını bulmaktır. Bu çalışmanın diğer bir amacı da, bu stratejileri kullanma açısından kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında herhangi bir fark olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu hedeflerin ışığında, bu çalış-

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maya dokuzuncu sınıfta öğrenim gören 172 öğrenci katılmış ve 25 maddeden oluşan bir kelime öğrenme stratejisi anketi doldurmaları istenmiştir. Ayrıca on öğrenciyle bir yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler toplandıktan sonra frekans, yüzde ve ortalamalar kullanılarak bir analiz yapılmıştır. Verilerin analizi sonucunda öğrencilerin en çok kullandıkları stratejilerin Sosyal (Keşif) ve Kararlılık Stratejisi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. En az kullanılan stratejiler ise Sosyal (Pekiştirme) ve Üstbilişsel Stratejileridir. Cinsiyet açısından, kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında stratejilerin kullanımı bakımından önemli bir fark görülmemiştir. Bununla birlikte strateji maddeleri teker teker ele alındığında, bazı küçük farklılıklar göze çarpmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın bulgularının kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin öğretimi konusunda öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin kendilerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olması, ayrıca bu çalışmanın sonuçlarını dikkate alarak öğrencilerin strateji kullanımlarıyla ilgili olarak öğretmenlerin daha uygun ders kitapları ve materyalleri seçmelerine de katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelime, kelime öğrenme stratejileri, strateji kullanımı.

Introduction

Feet of a person are vital for his walking and similarly, vocabulary is a vital element for foreign language learners in order to speak, understand, write and read in the target language. Folse and Briggs (2004) imply that a number of different aspects such as "pronunciation, syntax, culture" are entailed in language learning but vocabulary is the most important of all these aspects. Given that a robust vocabulary is crucial in improving communication successfully in all language learning skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing, vocabulary development is an essential part of language learning that paves the road to language acquisition in first and foreign languages. Hence, this important aspect of any language learning calls for special attention not only by language teachers and learners, but also by producers of language learning materials. Successful vocabulary expansion may be realized by using effective vocabulary learning strategies. On the basis that vocabulary is an important componenet of learning a language and that this importance derives from the reason that learning a language will enable language learners to communicate with each other and master other aspects of language, vocabulary mastery further necessiates the knowledge and proper use of language learning strategies. It is this necessity of vocabulary learning strategies that has aroused interest among specialists such as linguists, psychologists and language teachers for a long time (Levenston, 1979). Although students study in the same schools and classes and the teacher gives the same learning material, the vocabulary learning strategies shown by them are not the same. The factors influencing the use of vocabulary learning strategies affect their choices, too. While choosing a vocabulary learning strategy, some particular factors become the reason for this choice. When the factors and reasons for that choice are known and understood clearly, their benefits to teachers and researchers will be much of help and thus teachers will have better opportunities to design more appropriate materials aimed to enhance students' vocabulary.

Knowing a word is different from using a word. Sometimes you may know the meaning of words, but using them requires some more competence. So distinguishing

them from each other is a good and useful method to observe the vocabulary learning task generally. In other words, remembering words and using them spontaneously in various language contexts are aimed by vocabulary learning (McCarthy, 1984). Indeed, evidence suggests that "the knowledge aspect (both breadth and depth) requires more conscious and explicit learning mechanisms whereas the skill aspect involves mostly implicit learning and memory (Ellis, 1996)." Therefore, VLS do serve as an important factor in vocabulary expansion in learning any language. The main purpose of this study is to investigate vocabulary learning strategies employed by 9th grade students in a Turkish public school. With this in mind, the study attempts to find answers to three research questions:

1. What are the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by the 9th grade students?

2. What are the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by the 9th grade students?

3. Are there any significant differences between vocabulary learning strategies used by the 9th grade students in terms of gender?

Literature Review

Neuman and Dwyer (2009) define vocabulary as words which a learner must know so that he does not have difficulty during his speech and communication. The more words a speaker knows the more effectively he will be able to get his messages across or express his feelings or ideas. According to Nunan (1999), vocabulary is a list consisting of many words to be learnt at the targeted language. Vocabulary is a vital element for all language skills and therefore, communicating competently can be achieved by improving vocabulary learning and teaching. While there are many students thinking that vocabulary learning is easy, there are also many others who think that it is one of the most difficult parts of learning a language. They are right as they have serious problems while they are trying to remember large amounts of vocabulary necessary to communicate fluently and understand texts easily in the target language. Since words are building blocks of a language, they serve as an integral part of learning a language, effective vocabulary strategies might be helpful tools in this regard. Asgari, A., & Mustapha, G. B. (2011) also emphasize the importance of second learning vocabulary and the challenges it poses to language learners.They also assert that students need to be trained and made aware to use effective vocabulary learning strategies for successfully broaden their vocabulary.

Learning strategies are very important in the sense that they accelerate the learning process and make it more effective and pleasant. Kırmızı, Ö. (2014) investigated vocabulary strategy use of Turkish tertiary level EFL learners in relation to academic success and vocabulary size. In his study he reports that the participants used vocabulary learning starategies at a moderate level which in return contrubuted significantly to their academic success. Another study by Çelik, S., & Toptaş, V. (2010) examined VLSs employed by Turkish university EFL students to find out the frequencies of strategy use, strategy patterns and whether or not there was a diffrenece between between strategy use and

different language levels. However, the analyzed data indicated that the use of VLS was insufficient among these learners.

During the learning process, students often encounter unknown vocabulary items and concepts which makes it difficult to comprehend the content. Cameron (2000, p. 40) comments, "…if they are not understanding, they cannot be learning." In this context, learning strategies have a vital importance in a language learning period. In her study Subaşı, G. (2014), suggests that helping students get familiarized to adopt approriate vocabulary learning strategies may boost their encouragement to improve their L2 vocabulary. It is indeed important that learners are made aware of various strategies by their instructors.

Various kinds of strategies are used for various kinds of tasks and skills in language learning (Cohen 2007). One of the claims is that some language learners who are not efficient enough at learning a foreign language tend to use strategies which are not appropriate for certain tasks and consequently they do not succeed in fulfilling them (Vann & Abraham, 1990; Gu, 2003;−O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot, 2008). As long as learners make these kind of mistakes so frequently they won't be able to get a long way in language learning and it will be an obstacle for them in terms of reaching their goals. But they can be successful and better learners if they find and use the right strategy in order to make progress.

According to O'Malley & Chamot (1990, p. 8, 44, 45) LLSs can be grouped in three types:

1) The first type of strategy is metacognitive strategy which includes making a plan of language learning, monitor it and make an evaluation of the learning activity

2) The second type of strategy is cognitive strategy which includes the use of information that has just been learnt, making practice and revision, organizing what is going to be learnt and elaboration

3) The third type of strategy is social or affective strategy which includes communicating with people and controlling ideas over impacts (e.g. ways of reducing uneasy feelings and stress etc.).

In the classification of Gu and Johnson (1996), four main vocabulary learning strategies are suggested for learners of a second language. These are "metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies." Learners who employ metacognitive strategies use "selective awareness and self-initiation strategies." In other words, they are able to make differentiation among words in terms of their importance. The learners know which words require an initial importance for learning and understanding a reading text and which do not require an urgent importance. The learners who employ "self-initiation strategies" try to apply various methods and tools so as to make the vocabulary items more understandable. In Gu and Johnson's taxonomy, cognitive strategies include guessing strategy, using dictionaries and note-taking strategies. While using guessing strategies, learners make connections with their present and prior knowledge in order to guess the meaning of a word. Memory strategies include two items. The first item is revision (repeating words and making word lists) and the second item

is encoding strategies including "association, imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, and contextual encoding". By means of activation strategies the learners learn some new words and then they use these newly learnt words in a sentence in different contexts. The summary of explanations made above can be shown as follows:

STRATEGIES	Metacognitive	*Selective attention: Identifying essential words for comprehension *Self-initiation: Using a variety of means to make the meaning of words clear
	Cognative	*Guessing: Activatating background knowledge, using linguistic items *Use of dictionaries *Note taking
	Memory	*Rehearsal: Word lists, repetition, etc. *Encoding: Association (imagery, visual, auditory, etc.)
	Activation	*Using new words in different contexts

Table 1. The classification of Gu and Johnson (1996)

However, in the taxonomy of Nation (2001) different vocabulary learning strategies are suggested. Three general divisions are made in the taxonomy and they are "planning, sources and processes." In the planning category learners make a decision of choosing the focusing point on the vocabulary item and they decide to arrange the time and frequency of focusing attention on words. The strategies of the first division include "choosing words, choosing aspects of word knowledge and choosing strategies and planning repetition." In the sources category in Nation's taxonomy getting information about the word is added. The way to get this information can be acquired by looking at the word form, by context, by a dictionary, or by making a connection with other languages. The last category in Nation's taxonomy (2001) is the process and learners focus on finding their knowledge of words by using strategies such as "noticing, retrieving and generating strategies." According to Nation, by using noticing strategy a learner can better see the word item to learn. Noticing strategies contain constituting vocabulary notebooks by writing the words in them and making oral or visual repetition of words by writing the words on cards. Retrieval strategies include remembering the items which had been encountered before. It contains recalling knowledge in the same way it was originally stored. Nation (2001) explains that generating strategies contain connecting the new characteristics of data to the existing knowledge through visualization, analyzing words, "semantic mapping and using scales and grids." The summary of explanations made above can be shown as follows:

General class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	• Choosing words to focus on • Choosing aspects of word knowledge to focus on • Choosing appropriate strategies to use and when to switch to another strategy • Planning repetition (increasingly spaced repetition)
Sources: finding information about the words	• Analysing word parts • Using the context • Consulting a reference source in L1 and L2 words (e.g. dictionaries, glosses) • Comparing similarities and differences in L1 and L2 words (e.g. cognate words)
Processes: establishing knowledge	• Noticing (seeing a word as an item to be learnt, e.g. keeping a notebook, using word cards, written and verbal repetition) • Retrieving (recall of previously learnt/met items, e.g. meeting a word in a new context, covering parts of a word recorded in a notebook) • Generating (generation of word knowledge, e.g. using a word in new contexts across the 4 skills)

Table 2. Taxonomy of Nation (2001)

Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies

After Oxford (1990) and Nation (1990), another important classification is made by Schmitt (1997). He developed a taxonomy of VLSs by combining Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of VLSs. He also took into account Nation's (1990) distinction between discovery and consolidation strategies in vocabulary learning. Schmitt's taxonomy is important for the first instrument used to gather data in this study was Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire which included 25 items based on Schmitt's Taxonomy. His taxonomy contains:

1. Discovery: discovering the meaning of unfamiliar words
   a) *Determination strategies* (finding meaning without asking for help from others)
   b) *Social strategies* (making cooperation with others to find meaning)

2. Consolidation: remembering words as soon as their meanings are found
   a) *Social strategies*
   b) *Memory strategies* (mnemonics)
   c) *Cognitive strategies* (strategies involving mental processing, but without the use of mnemonics)
   d) *Metacognitive strategies* (related with the management of learning)

Methodology

This study is a mixed method research which requires the collection of information about variables or phenomenon within a population by combaining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Timans, R., Wouters, P., & Heilbron, J. (2019) point out that Mixed Methods Research (MMR) has recently become favorable particularly by the community in the social sciences. This design involves data collection at a single point in time from samples representing a population. Creswell (2007) defines mixed methods research as a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or a longitudinal program of inquiry. This mixed method study was conducted at an Anatolian High School with the participation of 9th graders to investigate vocabulary learning strategies they used.

Participants

The study was conducted in 9th grade classes of an Anatolian High School during the academic year of 2015-2016. The school is a public school in İstanbul, Eyüp district. The number of the participants was 172 and they were 15 years old.

Data Collection Instruments

The first instrument administered in this study was Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire based on Schmitt's Taxonomy. It was designed by Schmith (1997, Akt. Riankamol, 2008) specifically for the purpose of investigating vocabulary learning strategies used by students.

The second instrument was semi-structured interviews with ten students. The students for the interview were chosen from students who got the highest marks from the official exam (TEOG) given by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in the eighth year of primary school in order to enter high school.

Semi-Structured Interview

The second instrument used to gather data in the study was an interview. This interview was held with ten students. A semi-structured interview form was used in these interviews. During the preparation period of this interview form, primarily a literature review was made and then expert opinions were taken and necessary corrections were made. Accordingly, the final version of the interview form consisted of two main parts: The first part (Questions 1 to 3) was concerned about gathering basic information about interviewees like when they started to learn English, what they thought about their language learning ability, and the importance of English in their life and its effect in their career in the future. The second part of the interview (Questions 1 to 7) focused on the students' VLSs they applied both inside and outside their English classroom. In this part, the purpose was to investigate which VLSs the students used in language learning and how they overcame problems related with learning new vocabulary.

Research Findings

The statistical package, SPSS program, was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires. The descriptive statistics were used to find frequencies, percentage, and mean. Also, a t-test was used in order to see the similarities and differences between males and females. Before filling out the questionnaire, the students were asked to answer as honestly as possible. Since all the participants' English level was not the same, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish. The participants were asked to indicate if they had used a particular strategy. Moreover, ten students out of 172 students were selected as interviewees. All interviews were conducted in Turkish, the first language of the interviewees, to assure that they understood questions correctly.

Quantitative Findings of the Research

The quantitative findings of the research were btained by a vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire. The findings of the research are shown by numbers and percentages in tables.

Points Obtained from Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire

The standard deviations and means of the 172 students who have taken the questionnaire according to six categories are shown in Table 3.

Strategy Category	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD
Determination	172	2.85	1.14
Social (Discovery)	172	2.92	1.11
Social (Consolidation)	172	2.30	1.21
Memory	172	2.67	1.29
Cognitive	172	2.45	1.12
Metacognitive	172	2.42	1.23

Table 3. *Percentage of Overall Strategy Use*

The findings show that in six categories, the most frequently used strategies by the respondents were Social (Discovery) Strategy with the highest mean score of 2.92 and Determination Strategy with a mean score of 2.85. It can be inferred from those scores that the students mostly prefer asking their classmates meaning and using an English-Turkish dictionary to help them translate English words into the Turkish language. Also, they usually learn some new words when working in group works.

Meanwhile, the least used strategies were Social (Consolidation) strategies with the lowest mean score (2.30) following that Metacognitive Strategy with the second lowest

mean score (2.42). Social (Consolidation) Strategies include practising English in group work activities, asking native speakers for help, learning words about the culture of English speaking countries. As most students think that the class atmosphere is artificial, not natural for English conversations and as they know that nobody in the class is a native speaker, and that they do not have the chance to share the same atmosphere with natives, it can be understood why the least used strategies are Social (Consolidation) Strategies. Metacognitive Strategy users make preparation for the lesson, evaluate their own learning, and continue their vocabulary studies perpetually. But as my students lack the testing of themselves and their studies, plans and preparations are not continuous, the mean score of their Metacognitive Strategy use is only 2.42. Findings Related to the Vocabulary Learning Strategies' Frequency of Use Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire includes 25 vocabulary learning strategies grouped into six categories. The strategies in each category are presented in separate tables below. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Determination Category are displayed in Table 4.

Determination Strategy items	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD
1. I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into the Turkish language.	172	3,33	**1,003**
2. I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings.	172	2,58	1,214
3. I learn the meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.	172	2,65	1,221

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Use in Individual Item of Determination

When the results for determination strategies examined, it can be seen that respondents most frequently used the strategy item 1; "I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into the Turkish language. ($\bar{X}$ = 3.33). Meanwhile, the least used strategy was item 2; "I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings." ($\bar{X}$ = 2.58).

Table 5 displays the arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Social Strategies (Discovery) Category.

	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD
4. I ask the teacher to translate the words into Turkish.	172	2,98	**1,175**
5. I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning.	172	1,94	**1,074**
6. I ask my classmate for meaning.	172	3,41	1,107
7. I know some new words when working in group works.	172	3,35	1,091

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics Use in Individual Item of Social Strategies (Discovery)

According to the frequency of social strategies for discovery, the results show that to interact with other people in vocabulary learning, the strategy, which the students use most frequently, was item 6; "I ask my classmate for meaning." ($\bar{X}$ = 3.41). While the least used strategy was item 5; "I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning.." ($\bar{X}$ = 1.94).

Table 6 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Social Strategies (Consolidation) Category.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
8. I practice English in group work activities.	172	1	5	2,71	**1,241**
9. I ask native speakers for help.	172	1	5	1,85	1,203
10. I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries.	172	1	5	2,34	**1,200**
Valid N (listwise)	172				

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Use in Individual Item of Social (Consolidation)

To promote vocabulary learning the respondents used the Social strategies for consolidation most frequently, as clearly shown in item 8; "I practice English in group work activities." which had the highest mean score of 2.71. The strategy which the respondents used the least frequently was item 9; "I ask native speakers for help." with the lowest mean score by 1.85.

Table 7 displays the arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Memory Strategy Category.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it.	172	1	5	2,54	**1,105**
12. I study the spelling of new words.	172	1	5	2,11	1,197
13. I use physical actions when learning words.	172	1	5	2,74	1,395
14. I speak words out loud when studying.	172	1	5	3,29	**1,470**
Valid N (listwise)	172				

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Use in Individual Item of Memory

The results in the table above show that the Memory strategy which the respondents

most frequently used for storing and retrieving new information was item 13; "I use physical actions when learning words." (X^- = 2.74). Meanwhile, the least used strategy by the respondents was item 12; "I study a spelling of new words." (X^- = 2.11).

Table 8 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Cognitive Strategy Category.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
15. I repeatedly practice new words.	172	1	5	3,13	1,103
16. I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.	172	1	5	2,35	**1,354**
17. I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs.	172	1	5	1,91	,993
18. I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook.	172	1	5	2,28	1,295
19. When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly.	172	1	5	3,56	1,130
20. I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.	172	1	5	1,51	**,895**
Valid N (listwise)	172				

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Use in Individual Item of Cognitive

Table 8 shows that to develop automatic vocabulary retrieval, the Cognitive strategy that the students used most frequently was item 19; " When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly." (X^- = 3.56), while the strategy "I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go." was least used (X^- = 1.51).

Table 9 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation distributions of responses to the items given by students for the Metacognitive Strategy Category.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
21. I listen to English songs and news.	172	1	5	3,47	**1,378**
22. I memorize word from English magazines.	172	1	5	2,08	1,289
23. I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts.	172	1	5	1,75	**1,038**
24. I don't worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them.	172	1	5	2,36	1,246
25. I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge.	172	1	5	2,44	1,244
Valid N (listwise)	172				

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Use in Individual Item of Metacognitive

Table 9 depicts the results of the most frequently used strategy of Metacognitive as item 21; "I listen to English songs and news." by the respondents (X^- = 3.47), while the item 23; "I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts." was least used (X^- = 1.75).

Findings Related to Gender Differences

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1-I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Turkish language	F	89	3,51	1,035	,110
	M	83	3,14	,939	,103
2-I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings	F	89	2,71	1,227	,130
	M	83	2,45	1,192	,131
3-I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech	F	89	2,53	1,178	,125
	M	83	2,78	1,260	,138
4-I ask the teacher to translate the words into Turkish	F	89	3,00	1,197	,127
	M	83	2,95	1,157	,127
5-I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning	F	89	2,02	1,168	,124
	M	83	1,86	,964	,106

6-I ask my classmate for meaning	F	89	3,61	1,114	,118
	M	83	3,19	1,064	,117
7-I know some new words when working in group works	F	89	3,52	1,013	,107
	M	83	3,18	1,149	,126
8-I practice English in group work activities	F	89	2,81	1,339	,142
	M	83	2,60	1,126	,124
9-I ask native speakers for help	F	89	1,94	1,265	,134
	M	83	1,76	1,133	,124
10-I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries	F	89	2,48	1,188	,126
	M	83	2,18	1,201	,132
11-I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it	F	89	2,61	1,094	,116
	M	83	2,47	1,119	,123
12-I study a spelling of new words	F	89	2,12	1,242	,132
	M	83	2,10	1,154	,127
13-I use physical actions when learning words	F	89	2,97	1,457	,154
	M	83	2,51	1,291	,142
14-I speak words out loud when studying	F	89	3,85	1,248	,132
	M	83	2,69	1,456	,160
15-I repeatedly practice new words	F	89	3,24	1,168	,124
	M	83	3,02	1,024	,112
16-I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.	F	89	2,63	1,449	,154
	M	83	2,06	1,183	,130
17-I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs	F	89	1,97	1,071	,114
	M	83	1,84	,904	,099
18-I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook	F	89	2,30	1,360	,144
	M	83	2,25	1,228	,135
19-When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly	F	89	3,76	1,108	,117
	M	83	3,35	1,120	,123
20- I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go	F	89	1,42	,795	,084
	M	83	1,72	1,425	,156
21-I listen to English songs and news	F	89	3,80	1,281	,136
	M	83	3,12	1,400	,154
22-I memorize words from English magazines	F	89	2,25	1,376	,146
	M	83	1,89	1,169	,128

23-I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts	F	89	1,72	1,000	,106
	M	83	1,78	1,083	,119
24-I do not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them	F	89	2,18	1,183	,125
	M	83	2,55	1,290	,142
25-I use on-line exercise to test my voca-bulary knowledge	F	89	2,44	1,270	,135
	M	83	2,45	1,222	,134

Table 10. Group Statistics

This research was conducted on 172 9th grade Turkish high school students in İstanbul. 89 of the paricipants were females and 83 males. When we look at the mean scores of strategy use between males and females, it can be concluded that there are not dramatic differences in terms of using vocabulary learning strategies. However, in some strategies, slight differences are worth mentioning. For example, the biggest difference is seen in the fourteenth item "I speak words out loud when studying ". The mean score of females is 3.85 for this item, it is 2.69 for males. Another difference is observed in the twenty-first item, "I listen to English songs and news". The mean score of females is 3.80 and the mean score of males is 3.12. The result reveals that while learning vocabulary, females prefer listening to English songs and news more than males. Another difference is in the sixteenth item, "I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it". The mean scores are 2.63 for females and 2.06 for males. Again the mean score of females is much higher than males. Females use flash cards more often than males. The thirteenth item, "I use physical actions when learning words" is used more by females than males. The mean scores are 2,97 and 2,51 respectively for females and males.

Gender Differences in terms of Overall Strategy Use

Strategy Category	Gender	N	Mean (X̄)	SD	Gender	N	Mean (X̄)	SD
Determination	M	83	2.79	0.73	F	89	2.91	0.78
Social (Discovery)	M	83	2.79	0.64	F	89	3.03	0.67
Social (Consolidation)	M	83	2.18	0.82	F	89	2.41	0.93
Memory	M	83	2.43	0.84	F	89	2.88	0.77
Cognitive	M	83	2.47	1.17	F	89	2.55	0.77
Metacognitive	M	83	2.35	0.66	F	89	2.47	0.65

Table 11. Percentage of Gender Differences in terms of Overall Strategy Use

This table shows that in six categories the mean scores of females are higher than males. Especially females tend to use Memory Strategies (M=2.88) more than males (M=2.43).

Qualitative Findings of the Research

Ten students are interviewed in this study. The findings of this interview are shown below.

Findings on Students' Age When They Started to Learn English

The first question of the first part of the interview form aims at finding when the interviewees started learning English. According to the answers they gave to this question, all the students started learning English in the fourth grade of primary school. However, one participant stated that before the fourth grade his mother had given her English books so that she could learn numbers and colours.

Students' Opinions About Their Ability to Learn English Language

In the interviews the question of "What do you think about your ability to learn English language?" was asked and according to the results of the analysis it was found that four students thought that their ability to learn English was really enough, three students thought that their ability to learn English was enough and the other three students thought that their ability to learn English was at a medium level, neither really enough nor enough.

Students' Opinions About the Importance of English in Their Life and Its Effect on Their Career

Generally, all the students are aware of the importance of English. They know that it is an international language, and that it is important for them to find a good job easily. Also, the students think that learning English may help them to be promoted at work in future. It is also important for knowing about different cultures and communicating with different people.

Students' Opinions About What They Find Difficult in Learning English and How They Solve the Problems

Six students think that the most difficult part of learning English is memorizing words. They find it difficult to retain the words while four students find grammar difficult in learning English and they think that the reason behind being unable to form and produce accurate   sentences easily is their lack of grammar knowledge. In order to solve these problems, the students try to write the words for multiple times, watch English videos, listen to English songs and try to understand the lyrics. When they encounter unknown vocabulary, they mostly use a dictionary to look up the meaning of words.

Students' opinions on what features are necessary for learning English

Seven students reported that for learning English three aspects are important. They are ambition, patience and ability. Three students think that the necessary things to learn English are knowledge of grammar and the words. The findings show that the students think that intrinsic motivation is more important than extrinsic motivation in learning English.

Students' opinions on problems they have in learning vocabulary items

Five students expressed that pronunciation is too difficult for them. While some words are nearly pronounced the same as they are written, others are pronounced quite differently from their written forms. The other four students explained that the words in English are similar to each other in writing, so they cannot differentiate them and that makes memorising and spelling the words more difficult. Only one student reported that she has no problem in learning English words.

Students' opinions on which language skill they use vocabular learning strategies–the Most Frequently

Four students use vocabulary learning strategies mostly in reading and writing skills. Three students use them in writing, two students use them in listening and speaking and one student use them only in speaking skill.

Students' use of vocabulary learning strategies to discover the meaning of new English vocabulary items

Eight students responded that they use a dictionary to discover the meaning of new English words whereas two of them preferred to guess the meaning from the context of the word. The students who look up the words in the dictionary explained that if they do not posses a dictionary, they try to make use of online dictionaries available on the internet or they simply ask the teacher or a person who can help with the meaning of the word.

Students' use of vocabulary learning strategies to remember the meaning of English vocabulary items that have just been learnt

Five students revealed that they usually associate the newly learnt words with a similar word in their native language, however three students mentioned that they revise the recently learnt words regularly. Only two students reported that revise the words by writing them on small pieces of papers with their meanings.

Students' use of vocabulary learning strategies that they have already been aware of using

As six of the ten students are aware that they usually write the words and consult the dictionary for learning, it can be said that the students usually use the determination strategy of vocabulary learning. They also use social strategies as two of them ask the teacher or their classmates for meaning. The other two reported that they use memory strategies when they try to remember the meanings of unknown words by associating them to those of words that sound like the words in thier mother tongues.

Results

The aim of the first research question of this study was to reveal the most frequently

used vocabulary learning strategies by the 9th grade students. The results of the study show that, Social (Discovery) Strategy with a mean score of 2.92 and Determination Strategy with a mean score of 2.85 are the most frequently used strategies. Asking classmates for the meaning of words (3.41), learning new words when working in group work activities (3.35), using a bilingual dictionary to help them translate English words into Turkish language (3.33), asking the teacher to translate the words into Turkish (2.98), using pictures illustrated in the textbook to the word meanings (2.58), and learning meaning of words by identifying its part of speech were found to be the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies. The obtained results show that the students mostly prefer to ask for help from someone such as a teacher or a classmate before looking up an unknown word in their dictionaries. As with Schmitt's (1997) study on vocabulary learning strategies, it can be seen that there are some correlations between the results of his and our study. According to the results of the study conducted by Schmitt (1997) with 600 Japanese learners of English, among the ten most usedly vocabulary learning strategies, Schmitt (1997) found, *"bilingual dictionary"* with 85 %   is the first and *"ask classmates for meaning"* with 73% was the sixth mostly used strategy. The similarity between Japanese and Turkish learners of English can be seen clearly.

It should be noted that although the most commonly used strategies are the Social (Discovery) and Determination Strategies, when we look at the 25 strategies in the questionnaire as an individual item, with a mean score of 3.56, the 19th item "when I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly" is the first most used strategy item. With a mean score of 3.47 the 21st item "I listen to English songs and news" is the second most used strategy. From these quantitative findings, it can be concluded that "asking others for learning" is very common and students tend to choose the easiest way to learn vocabulary meaning, obviously for practical reasons. The findings also show that the students are not independent learners. In other words, they seem not take the necessary responsibility for their own educational improvement. Asking for help is the first option that comes to their mind.

The aim of the second research question of this study was to reveal the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by the 9th grade students. The findings show that with a mean score of 2.42, the Metacognitive Strategies and with a mean score of 2.45, Cognitive Strategies are the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies. The twentieth item from the Cognitive Strategies group, "I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go" is the least used vocabulary learning strategy with a mean score of 1.51. From the Metacognitive Strategy group, the twenty-third item with a mean score of 1.75 is the second least used strategy, "I review my own English vocabulary cards before the next class starts". As for the third least used strategy, this is the seventeenth item from the Cognitive Strategy group with a mean score of 1.91, "I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs". It may be concluded that strategies such as repetition, keeping vocabulary notebooks, listening to taped wordlists or using flash cards are not so common among 9th grade students.

Strategy	Category	Mean	SD	Rank
When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly	Cognitive	3,56	1,130	1
I listen to English songs and news	Metacognitive	3,47	1,378	2
I ask my classmate for meaning	Social (Disc.)	3,41	1,107	3
I know some new words when working in group works	Social (Disc.)	3,35	1,091	4
I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into the Turkish language.	Determination	3,33	1,003	5
I speak words out loud when studying	Memory	3,29	1,470	6
I repeatedly practice new words	Cognitive	3,13	1,103	7
I ask the teacher to translate the words into Turkish	Social (Disc.)	2,98	1,175	8
I use physical actions when learning words	Memory	2,74	1,395	9
I practice English in group work activities	Social (Cons.)	2,71	1,241	10
	Determination	2,65	1,221	11
I learn the meaning of words by identifying its part of speech	Determination	2,58	1,214	12
I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings	Memory	2,54	1,105	13
I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it	Metacognitive	2,44	1,244	14
I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge	Metacognitive	2,36	1,246	15
I don't worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them	Cognitive	2,35	1,354	16
I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it	Social (Cons.)	2,34	1,200	17
I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries	Cognitive	2,28	1,295	18
I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook	Memory	2,11	1,197	19
	Metacognitive	2,08	1,289	20
I study a spelling of new words	Social (Disc.)	1,94	1,074	21
I memorize word from English magazines				
I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me	Cognitive	1,91	,993	22
understand the word meaning	Social (Cons.)	1,85	1,203	23
	Metacognitive	1,75	1,038	24
I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs	Cognitive	1,51	,895	25
I ask native speakers for help				
I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts				
I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go				

Table 12. Rank Order of the Most and Least Frequently Used Strategies

The aim of the second research question of this paper was to discover whether there are any significant differences between vocabulary learning strategies used by the 9th

grade students in terms of gender. When we look at the findings related to gender differences in terms of Overall Strategy Use, it can be concluded that there are not significant differences. But if we look at the 25 strategies one by one, there are significant differences can be obderved in some of them. For example, the fourteenth item from the Memory Strategy Category, "I speak words out loud when studying" is much higher among females. While the mean score of females 3.85, the mean score of males is 2.69. Another difference can be seen in the sixteenth item from the Cognitive Strategy Category "I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it". The mean score of females is 2.63 and the mean score of males is 2.06. The last significant difference is seen in the twenty-first item from the Metacognitive Strategy Category, "I listen to English songs and news". While the mean score of females 3.80, the mean score of males is 3.12.

Conclusion

The results of the research presented in this article indicate that the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by 9th garde high school EFL students are Social (Discovery) and Determination Strategies. However, the least used VLS s are Social (Consolidation) and Metacognitive Strategies. While no significant difference of vocabulary learning strategy use between female and male students was observed, slight differences were noted when the strategy items were examined individually. The study has limitations as it was conducted on limited number of participants, therefore it may not be generalized to all 9th graders. The findings may have implications on teachers' awareness regarding their students use of vocabulary learning strategies which in turn may trigger them to consciously improve and modify their VLS instructions more effectively to promote L2 vocabulary enrichments in their teaching contexts.

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