A Study on Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Turkish EFL Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies of preparatory program Turkish EFL students when they learned new words in English. To that end, 85 Turkish EFL students in English preparatory education at a state university located in the western part of Turkey participated in the study. The 'Vocabulary Learning Strategies Scale' (VLSS), developed by Kocaman & Cumaoglu (2014), was utilized to collect the data for this study. The results of the study showed that the participants used vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) at a medium level. The results of the study also displayed that while affective strategies were the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by preparatory program Turkish EFL students, social strategies were the least frequently utilized vocabulary learning strategies by them. Finally, the results displayed a statistically significant relationship between individual variables such as gender, English proficiency level, success and students' use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategies, Turkish EFL students, gender, English proficiency level, success

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerin Kelime Öğrenme Stratejileri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Özet

Bu çalışma, İngilizce hazırlık programındaki İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin araştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için, Türkiye'nin batı kesiminde bulunan bir devlet üniversitesinde İngilizce hazırlık eğitimindeki 85 Türk öğrenci çalışmaya katılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın verilerini toplamak için Kocaman ve Cumaoğlu (2014) tarafından geliştirilen "Kelime Öğrenme Stratejileri Ölçeği" (KÖSÖ) kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları katılımcıların kelime öğrenme stratejilerini (KÖS) orta düzeyde kullandıklarını göstermiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları aynı zamanda, İngilizce hazırlık programındaki İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrenciler tarafından en sık kullanılan kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin duyuşsal stratejiler olduğunu, en az kullanılan kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin ise sosyal stratejiler olduğunu göstermiştir. Son olarak, sonuçlar cinsiyet, İngilizce yeterlilik düzeyi, başarı gibi bireysel değişkenler ve öğrencilerin kelime öğrenme stratejilerini kullanmaları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kelime öğrenme stratejileri, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türkler, cinsiyet, İngilizce yeterlilik düzeyi, başarı

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Introduction

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are particularly important when a student learns English as a foreign language. It is clear that a person cannot communicate well or express his/her emotions or thoughts in detail without words or without knowing any essential vocabulary in the target language. However, it can be claimed that he/she can communicate without words or without any vocabulary in the target language by body language. On the one hand, this claim can be acceptable for basic communication. For example, someone can express his hunger, thirst, sleep or any other needs through gestures. On the other hand, he/she cannot express the details of his/her request or cannot comment on them without having any vocabulary competence. Therefore, learning vocabulary or knowing words is one of the essential parts of learning English as a foreign language. As Kariuki & Taylor (2018, p. 2) state, "the ability to see words and understand them for what they are is an important necessity". A word is "a sign of one or more syllabic sounds that have a meaning or a cumulative grammatical task in the sentence. Words have an important place in foreign language learning and teaching. Vocabulary acquisition is the biggest and most difficult task that foreign language learners face" (Baskin, Iscan, Karagoz & Birol, 2017, p.126).

To improve the competency in the foreign language, "language learners need to possess considerable vocabulary learning skills to learn word meaning more accurately. Vocabulary learning skills are vital as they can equip learners with the ability to improve their reading experience in the foreign language by learning vocabulary more systematically" (Ahmad, Muhammad & Kasim, 2018, p. 107). Besides, Mart (2012) states that vocabulary is a fundamental component of language and he emphasizes that learning via context is meaningful for vocabulary learning. As Harmer (1991) indicates, if linguistic structures constitute the skeleton of a language, vocabulary presents the basic organs and the flesh.

English is the lingua franca of the contemporary world. Everyone around the world from different countries and nationalities communicate through English. On the one hand, to communicate with someone in English, you should know the basic words of English, even if you don't even have the basic level of English grammar. This knowledge of foreign words in the target language is required not only for English but also for all other languages spoken around the world. On the other hand, learning and teaching English as a foreign language has gained popularity in recent years. To find out the best approach, method or technique for the purposes of learning and teaching English as a foreign language is important and many research studies have been carried out for these two purposes. Though there are a number of approaches, methods and techniques on foreign language learning, most learners, particularly the ones in Turkey, complain about communication inefficiencies. At this juncture, it is vocabulary that can make L2 communication possible. EFL

learners should master, memorize and remember words in L2 because utilizing suitable words enables them to express themselves overtly. Hence, finding an approach, method, technique or strategy that can help learners to master, memorize and remember words facilitates L2 communication and makes L2 learning more entertaining for learners (Bahrami, Izadpanah & Bijani, 2019, 979). This study was conducted for two reasons:

1. The topic of VLS is disregarded by language teachers working at English preparatory schools in our country. Especially, in speaking lessons, students have difficulty in expressing themselves clearly due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Language teachers do not teach their students how to apply VLS as efficiently as possible, which, unfortunately, prevents students from developing their L2 vocabulary knowledge and establishing successful L2 communication with (non)native speakers of English within or beyond the classroom environment.

2. There are very few previously conducted research studies focusing on the preparatory program Turkish EFL students' VLS. Thus, it should be stressed that this study is significant because it wil fill in a gap by contributing to the literature concerning preparatory program Turkish EFL students' VLS.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What strategies do preparatory program Turkish EFL students use to develop their English vocabulary?

2. Are there significant differences between male students and female students in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies?

3. Are there significant differences between the students with low English proficiency and those with high English proficiency in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies?

4. Are there significant differences between high achieving and low achieving students in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies?

Literature Review

Studies on Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Research into VLS began at the end of 1980s. It was Porte (1988) and Ahmed (1989) who studied how L2 learners used VLS for the first time. For instance, Porte (1988) interviewed 15 low-achieving EFL learners in private language schools in London to analyze their use of VLS. The results of the study revealed that these learners were utilizing strategies to deal with new words that were closer to the ones encountered in the studies of 'the good language learner'. Moreover, present and past L2 learning experiences were viewed as factors affecting the use of strategies. Finally, some

suggestions were made for EFL teachers so that they can help low-achieving EFL learners to describe, develop and refine these strategies to make them more active.

Ahmed (1989) investigated 300 EFL learners' use of VLS. He categorized all the strategies into macro strategies and micro strategies. Macro strategies covered memorization, practice, note-taking, and using different information sources. Micro strategies contained specific behaviors within one of the macro-strategies. The results of the study revealed that the same macro strategies such as note-taking, memorization, practice, dictionaries or other information sources were utilized by both good and weak learners. However, it was also found in the study that good learners utilized more micro-strategies within each macro-strategy. To illustrate, they often employed words in context or tested themselves while practicing.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggested three categories of VLS as metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) grouped VLS into metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies. Metacognitive strategies include selective attention and self-initiation strategies. Cognitive strategies comprise guessing, using a dictionary and note-taking strategies. Memory strategies consist of rehearsal and encoding strategies. Activation strategies cover the strategies via which learners can have the chance to use new words in different linguistic contexts.

Schmitt (1997) classified VLS into discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies are made up of determination strategies and social strategies. Consolidation strategies consist of social strategies, memory strategies, metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies.

In recent years, the topic of VLS has also attracted researchers' interest in Turkey. For instance, Tılfarlıoğlu and Bozgeyik (2012) investigated 252 EFL learners' use of VLS. The participants were from four proficiency levels. Their study showed that the most frequently preferred vocabulary strategies were determination strategies and that the least frequently preferred vocabulary strategies were the social strategies. It was found in the study that memory strategies were in positive correlation with the proficiency level. However, VLS preferences were not found to be consistent with the proficiency level.

Kırmızı (2014) investigated 213 English language and literature students' use of VLS by using a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire and vocabulary levels test and found that the participants had a high level of vocabulary size for 2000 word level, 3000 word level, and academic word levels, a moderate level of vocabulary size for 5000 word level and a low level in 10000 word level. It was also found in the study that the participants had a moderate level of vocabulary learning strategy use.

In another study done by Kırmızı and Topcu (2014), 158 Turkish EFL students' use of VLS was investigated and it was found that the participants had a moderate level of VLS. It was also revealed that there were significant differences among the participants from different fields regarding top-down strategies, note taking strategies, repetition strategies, activation strategies, and anxiety level. Moreover, it was determined that there were significant differences between day and evening section students in terms of top-down strategies, dictionary strategies, memory/ repetition strategies, and activation strategies. Lastly, it was indicated that selective attention, using linguistic clues, and anxiety were prominent predictors of academic success.

In the study conducted by Yılmaz (2017), the role of gender and academic major in learners' frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use was investigated by gathering data from 79 students pursuing their post graduate studies in different departments in Turkey. It was found in the study that there were significant differences between male and female learners in favor of the female ones in the frequency of VLS use. However, no significant differences were found in the study between science major and arts and humanities major learners.

Yigit and Aykul (2018) examined the most frequently utilized VLS by high school students in a Turkish state high school and university students in a Turkish state university by the participation of 50 EFL students from a state high school and 55 EFL students from a state university. It was found in the study that using a bilingual English-Turkish dictionary was the most frequently utilized vocabulary learning strategy. It was also revealed that there were significant differences between high school EFL students and university EFL students in terms of using (a) English-English dictionaries, (b) vocabulary tests and (c) revising the old vocabulary items while learning the new ones. More specifically, it was found that high school EFL students used English-English dictionaries and vocabulary tests more than university EFL students. Likewise, they revised the old vocabulary items while learning the new ones more than university EFL students.

As a summary, when analyzing the research studies done on VLS within and beyond the Turkish EFL context, some similarities and differences in the findings are observed. The findings of the studies done by Kırmızı (2014) and Kırmızı and Topcu (2014) were the same in that the findings of those two studies showed that Turkish EFL learners had a moderate level of VLS. The results of the study conducted by Yılmaz (2017) revealed that females had a higher level of vocabulary learning strategy use than males. The results of the study done by Yigit and Aykul (2018) showed that high school EFL students used vocabulary strategies more than university EFL students did. The findings of the studies conducted by Ahmed (1989), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Gu and Johnson (1996) and Schmitt (1997) were similar to one another because the findings of all those studies were related to

the vocabulary learning strategies used by non-native EFL learners, classification of VLS and the relationship between the strategies and outcomes in learning English as a foreign language.

Theories of Language Learning and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

There are four main theories of language learning in relation to VLS, which are: behaviorist learning theory, cognitive learning theory, sociocultural theory and incidental learning theory. In the following section, these four main theories are summarized.

1. Behaviorist learning theory

Behaviorists support the view that language acquisition is the output of habit formation (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Learning a language is similar to placing linguistic items into the learner's ears and a habit forms via this in her/his mind. When the habit is formed, a linguistic system is constituted in the learner's mind and the learner gives the conditioned reflex to the language. From the perspective of behaviorist language learning theory, hearing the word repeatedly is the most beneficial strategy for learning L2 vocabulary. More specifically, the view is that the more frequently the learner hears the word, the more deeply she/he will be impressed by it and she/he will learn the word more easily (He, 2010).

2. Cognitive learning theory

It was cognitive psychology that shifted the interest of researchers to the topic of language learning strategies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In cognitivism, language learning is viewed as an active process in which new information is encoded and tied to the previous experiences stored by students (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). As students are responsible for their own learning, they are engaged in managing it. At this point, language learning strategies enable students to contol and develop the language learning process (Kulikova, 2015). From the point of cognitive language learning theory, writing words on cards and carrying these cards in the pocket, keeping a vocabulary notebook and taking notes are some of the useful VLS.

3. Sociocultural theory

The proponents of the sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) stress that learning is a social process. As Donato and McCormick (1994) indicate, strategies are employed as a byproduct of the socialization process. The EFL classroom is a social context in which students can have the chance to learn how to involve the values, beliefs and behaviors of a specific community. The language classroom, teachers, classmates or partners and assessment can all affect language learners' strategy preferences (Gao, 2006). Relevant to the sociocultural theory, asking friends for

correction when mispronouncing new words, asking the teacher for help while learning new words, working with class when learning new words are some of the useful VLS.

4. Incidental learning theory

Incidental learning indicates the learning that takes place without specific intention to concentrate on vocabulary. Students can learn new words subconsciously when they are engaged in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. Related to incidental learning theory, listening to music in the background for relaxation, using technological softwares, listening to television or radio, joining conversations and extensive reading are among the suitable VLS (Nation, 2001). Hence, it can be stated that these four theories of language learning feed this research study.

Gender and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The results of some studies indicated that female students employed VLS more than male students did (e.g., Gu, 2002; Huang, 2010; Shadikah et al. 2017; Yılmaz, 2017). However, the results of some research studies exhibited that male students utilized VLS more than female students did (e.g., Wharton, 2000). The results of some research studies showed that there were no significant differences between male and female EFL learners' use of VLS (e.g. Lee, 2007; Tsai and Chang, 2009; Wei, 2007; Zokaee, Zaferanieh, & Naseri, 2012). Because the results of the research studies are contradictory, more detailed research studies should be conducted by researchers so as to shed light on whether gender really plays a role in learning L2 vocabulary.

English Language Proficiency and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

It was found in some research studies that EFL learners with high proficiency used VLS more than low proficiency EFL learners did (e.g. Barcroft, 2009; Barekat and Karami, 2012; Celik and Toptas, 2010; Lin-Fang, 2013). Nevertheless, some research studies displayed that low proficiency EFL learners utilized VLS more than high proficiency EFL learners did (Doczi, 2011; Mongkol, 2008). It was revealed in some studies that there were no significant differences between high proficiency and low proficiency EFL students' overall strategy use (Noormohamadi and Amirian, 2015). As the findings of the research studies are contradictory, more detailed research studies should be conducted by researchers so as to reveal whether English language proficiency really plays a role in learning L2 vocabulary.

Success and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Some research studies unearthed that successful students used a larger quantity and wider variety of VLS than unsuccessful students (Abraham and Vann, 1987; Ahmed, 1989, Gidey, 2008). However, some studies revealed that it is the quality of strategy use rather than quantity or variety

that enables EFL learners to be successful in specific contexts (Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999). In this vein, Cohen (1998) indicated that the effectiveness of a strategy may rely on the features of the given learner, the given linguistic structure(s), the given situation or the interaction of these. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) stated that how vocabulary strategies are utilized is probably as significant as which strategies are utilized.

In the above five sub-sections focusing on studies on VLS, theories of language learning in relation to VLS, gender and VLS, English language proficiency and VLS and success and VLS, the findings of the selected research studies were reported. The underlying reason why the researchers integrated their findings into the present study was that the selected research studies were among the most frequently cited scientific works by other researchers in the area of VLS in both national and international platforms.

Methodology

Sample Characteristics

The study was conducted with the participation of 85 Turkish EFL students in the English preparatory school at a state university located in the western part of Turkey. The subjects were randomly selected. The age of the students ranged from 18 to 23, with a mean of 20. Forty-two were males and forty-three were females. Fifty-two students had A1 level of English proficiency and thirty-three students had B1 level of English proficiency. The demographic properties of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of participants according to age, gender and proficiency level*

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20	80	94.1
	21-23	5	5.9
Gender	Male	42	49.4
	Female	43	50.6
English proficiency level	A1	52	61.2
	B1	33	38.8
Total		85	100

Instruments for Data Collection

The data for this study were collected via the 'Vocabulary Learning Strategies Scale' (VLSS) developed by Kocaman and Cumaoglu (2014). The first part contained a series of questions about students' age, gender and proficiency level. The second part included thirty-two items based on 5-point Likert scale (from 1=never to 5=always) to reveal students' use of VLS with respect to memory

strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. To check the reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was utilized. The reliability was α = 0.84 for the questionnaire, which was a high level of reliability.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was administered to 85 Turkish EFL students in English preparatory school during their regular class hours. Before the students filled out the questionnaire, they were told that their identities would be kept confidential. Morever, they were asked to respond to the items in the questionnaire as truthfully as possible.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed quantitatively. To identify what vocabulary strategies Turkish EFL students used, VLSS scores for each subscale were calculated. To reveal whether there was a significant relationship (a) between gender and students' use of vocabulary strategies, (b) between English proficiency levels and students' use of vocabulary strategies and (c) success and students' use of vocabulary strategies, a series of independent samples t-tests were performed. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.0 was used to do the required computations to answer the research questions.

Results

Strategies Preparatory Program Turkish EFL Students Use to Develop their English Vocabulary

Of the six main types of VLS, the majority of the participants stated that they utilized affective strategies to develop their English vocabulary with a mean score of 3.71 (SD=1.10). Of the six sub-categories of affective strategies, *noticing the use of known English words while watching an English video or a movie* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 26, M=4.65; SD=0.84). However, *rewarding themselves while learning English words* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 22, M=2.07; SD=1.31). The following table shows the distribution of the mean scores of affective strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students.

Table 2. *Distribution of mean scores of affective strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students*
(N=85)

Affective strategies	M	SD
21. While learning English words, I listen to music in the background for relaxation.	2.34	1.52
22. When I learn English words, I reward myself.	2.07	1.31
23. When I learn English words, I feel happy.	4.49	0.88
24. When I develop my English vocabulary, I feel more comfortable in class.	4.55	0.88

	M	SD
25. Our teacher encourages us to learn English words beyond the classroom.	4.15	1.19
26. While watching an English video or a movie, I notice the use of English words that I know.	4.65	0.84
Overall	3.71	1.10

Another prominent finding in this section was that a great number of students stated that they utilized metacognitive strategies to improve their English vocabulary with a mean score of 3.58 (SD=1.19). Of the four sub-categories of metacognitive strategies, *trying to learn pronunciation together with meaning while learning English words* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 18, M=4.24; SD=0.90). However, *studying in a planned way while learning English words* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 20, M=3.00; SD=1.27). The following table exhibits the distribution of the mean scores of affective strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students.

Table 3. *Distribution of mean scores of metacognitive strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (N=85)*

Metacognitive strategies	M	SD
17. I prefer to learn the necessary English words for my lesson with the help of technological games.	3.15	1.41
18. While learning English words, I try to learn their pronunciation together with their meanings.	4.24	0.90
19. While learning English words, I try to find the most appropriate method.	3.93	1.18
20. While learning English words, I study in a planned way.	3.00	1.27
Overall	3.58	1.19

The participants also indicated that they employed memory strategies to promote their English vocabulary with a mean score of 3.21 (SD=1.25). Of the seven sub-categories of memory strategies, *trying to remember the meaning of an English word by picturing it in mind* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 6, M=3.72; SD=1.11). However, *trying to learn English words by their word categories (noun, adjective, adverb)* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 7, M=2.66; SD=1.38). The table below displays the distribution of the mean scores of memory strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students

Table 4. *Distribution of mean scores of memory strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students*

Memory strategies	M	SD
1. When I forget an English word, I try to remember its synonym.	3.06	1.27

	M	SD
2. I relate the English words that I learned earlier with the new words that I have learned.	3.45	1.25
3. I make a mental picture of a word in my mind to help remember an English word.	3.34	1.31
4. I connect the pronunciation of a new English word that I have learned with the pronunciation of an English word that I already know.	2.94	1.34
5. I constantly repeat the English words that I have learned so as not to forget them.	3.29	1.07
6. I try to remember the meaning of an English word by picturing it in my mind.	3.72	1.11
7. While learning English words, I try to learn them by their word categories (noun, adjective, adverb)	2.66	1.38
Overall	3.21	1.25

Furthermore, the participants in this study indicated that they used compensation strategies to develop their English vocabulary with a mean score of 2.93 (SD=1.21). Of the four sub-categories of compensation strategies, *preferring to learn the necessary English words for the lesson with the help of technological softwares* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 15, M=3.72; SD=1.21). However, *solving various English vocabulary tests while learning English words* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 14, M=2.34; SD=1.19). The table below shows the distribution of the mean scores of compensation strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students.

Table 5. *Distribution of mean scores of compensation strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (N=85)*

Compensation strategies	M	SD
13. I learn English words with their synonyms and antonyms.	2.65	1.16
14. While learning English words, I do various English vocabulary tests.	2.34	1.19
15. I prefer to learn the necessary English words for my lesson with the help of technological softwares.	3.72	1.21
16. I prefer to learn the necessary English words for my lesson with the help of videos.	3.02	1.29
Overall	2.93	1.21

Moreover, the participants in this study expressed that they employed cognitive strategies to develop their English vocabulary with a mean score of 2.92 (SD=1.33). Of the five sub-categories of cognitive strategies, *studying the English words that I want to learn by taking notes* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 12, M=3.82; SD=1.32). However, *trying to learn English words by writing them on cards and carrying these cards in pocket* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 8, M=1.58; SD=0.93). The table below shows the distribution of the mean scores of cognitive strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students.

Table 6. *Distribution of mean scores of cognitive strategies used by preparatory program Turkish EFL students (N=85)*

Cognitive strategies	M	SD
8. I try to learn English words by writing them on my cards and carrying these cards in my pocket.	1.58	0.93
9. To remember English words, I put word cards in places where I can see them.	2.34	1.51
10. I learn the pronunciation of an English word by listening to the pronunciation a few times with the help of technology	3.55	1.37
11. I keep a vocabulary notebook while learning English words.	3.31	1.50
12. I study the English words that I want to learn by taking notes.	3.82	1.32
Overall	2.92	1.33

Lastly, the participants in this study stated that they used social strategies to advance their English vocabulary with a mean score of 2.82 (SD=1.84). Of the six sub-categories of social strategies, *asking friends if they pronounce the English words that I have learned correctly or not* was the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (item 27, M=3.19; SD=1.52). However, *preferring group work while trying to learn English words* was the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategy by the participants (item 29, M=1.91; SD=1.04). The table below shows the distribution of the mean scores of social strategies used by preparatory program Turkish EFL students.

Table 7. *Distribution of mean scores of social strategies used by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students (N=85)*

Social strategies	M	SD
27. I ask my friends if I pronounce the English words that I have learned correctly or not.	3.19	1.52
28. When I mispronounce the English words that I have learned, I ask my friends to correct me.	3.14	1.37
29. While trying to learn English words, I prefer group work.	1.91	1.04
30. While learning English words, I need my teacher's help.	3.11	1.29
31. While learning English words, I prefer working with class to individual work.	2.56	1.36
32. I learn English words better by competing with my friends.	3.00	4.44
Overall	2.82	1.84

Overall, the results of this study showed that the preparatory program Turkish EFL students were moderate level vocabulary strategy users (M=3.20, SD=1.32).

Gender and Preparatory Program Turkish EFL Students' Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

To reveal whether there were significant differences between males (n=42) and females (n=43) in relation to their use of VLS, a series of independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the means of these two groups. Based on the results of the independent samples t-tests, it

was revealed that there were significant differences between male students' mean scores and female students' mean scores with respect to the strategies 5 [t (83)= -2.150, p= .034, p <0.05], 12 [t (83)= -3.221, p= .002, p <0.05], 17 [t (83)= 3.170, p= .002, p <0.05], 23 [t (83)= -2.473, p= .015, p <0.05] and 24 [t (83)= -2.334, p= .022, p <0.05]. These differences indicate that female students had higher level of using VLS than male students with respect to the VLS numbered 5, 12, 23 and 24. For instance, female students (M=3.53, SD=1.14) indicated that they constantly repeated the English words that they had learned so as not to forget them more than male students (M=3.05, SD=0.94) did. However, male students had higher level of using VLS than female students with respect to only one vocabulary learning strategy 17. Hence, it can be stated that female students had higher level of using VLS than male students.

Table 8. *Mean differences between male students and female students in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies*

Items	Subscale	Male (n=42) (M, SD)	Female (n=43) (M, SD)	t-value	p
5	Memory	3.05 (0.94)	3.53 (1.14)	-2.150	.034*
12	Cognitive	3.38 (1.43)	4.26 (1.05)	-3.221	.002*
17	Metacognitive	3.62 (1.38)	2.70 (1.30)	3.170	.002*
23	Affective	4.26 (1.08)	4.72 (0.55)	-2.473	.015*
24	Affective	4.33 (1.10)	4.77 (0.53)	-2.334	.022*

* p< 0.05

English Proficiency Level and the Preparatory Program Turkish EFL Students' Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

To determin whether there were significant differences between low English proficiency (n=52) and high English proficiency (n=33) students in relation to their use of VLS, a series of independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the means of those two groups. Based on the results of the independent samples t-tests, it was revealed that there were significant differences between the low English proficiency students' mean scores and the high English proficiency students' mean scores with respect to the strategies 1 [t (83)= -2.356, p= .021, p <0.05], 13 [t (83)= -2.079, p= .041, p <0.05], 14 [t (83)= -2.451, p= .016, p <0.05], 23 [t (83)= -2.248, p= .027, p <0.05] and 25 [t (83)= -2.496, p= .015, p <0.05], 26 [t (83)= -2.349, p= .021, p <0.05], 28 [t (83)= -2.389, p= .019, p <0.05] and 30 [t (83)= 3.590, p= .001, p <0.05]. These findings show that the students with high English proficiency had higher level of using VLS than the students with low English proficiency with respect to the VLS 1, 13, 14, 23, 25, 26 and 28. To illustrate, the students with high English proficiency (M=3.45, SD=1.25) stated that when they forgot an English word, they tried to remember its synonym more than the students with low English proficiency (M=2.81, SD=1.22) did. However,

the students with low English proficiency had higher level of using VLS than the students with high English proficiency with respect to only one vocabulary learning strategy 30. Hence, it can be stated that the students with high English proficiency had higher level of using VLS than the students with low English proficiency.

Table 9. *Mean differences between the students with low English proficiency (A1) and students with high English proficiency (B1) in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies*

Items	Subscale	Students with Low (n=52) English Proficiency (A1) (M, SD)	Students with High (n=33) English Proficiency (B1) (M, SD)	t-value	p
1	Memory	2.81 (1.22)	3.45 (1.25)	-2.356	.021*
13	Compensation	2.44 (0.94)	2.97 (1.40)	-2.079	.041*
14	Compensation	2.10 (1.09)	2.73 (1.26)	-2.451	.016*
23	Affective	4.33 (0.96)	4.76 (0.66)	-2.248	.027*
25	Affective	3.90 (1.36)	4.55 (0.71)	-2.496	.015*
26	Affective	4.48 (1.02)	4.91 (0.29)	-2.349	.021*
28	Social	2.87 (1.43)	3.58 (1.17)	-2.389	.019*
30	Social	3.48 (1.18)	2.51 (1.25)	3.590	.001*

* p< 0.05

Success and Preparatory Program Turkish EFL Students' Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

To determine whether there were significant differences between successful students (n=35) and unsuccessful students (n=50) in relation to their use of VLS, a series of independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the means of these two groups. Based on the results of the independent samples t-tests, it was found that there were significant differences between the successful students' mean scores and the unsuccessful students' mean scores with respect to the strategies 1 [t (83)= -2.310, p= .023, p <0.05], 6 [t (83)= 2.049, p= .044, p <0.05], 26 [t (83)= -2.528, p= .013, p <0.05], 28 [t (83)= -2.315, p= .023, p <0.05] and 30 [t (83)= 3.386, p= .001, p <0.05]. These results indicate that the successful students had higher level of using VLS than the unsuccessful students with respect to the vocabulary learning strategies 1, 26 and 28. To illustrate, the successful students (M=3.43, SD=1.31) indicated that when they forgot an English word, they tried to remember its synonym more than the unsuccessful students did (M=2.80, SD=1.18). However, the unsuccessful students had higher level of using VLS than the successful students with respect to VLS 6 and 30. Hence, it can be stated that both the successful students and the unsuccessful students had nearly the same level of using memory strategies and social strategies. On the other hand, it can be stated that the successful students (M=4.91, SD=0.28) had higher level of using affective strategies than the unsuccessful students (M=4.46, SD=1.03).

Table 10. *Mean differences between the successful students and the unsuccessful students in relation to their use of vocabulary learning strategies*

Items	Subscale	Successful Students (n=35) (M, SD)	Unsuccessful Students (n=50) (M, SD)	t-value	p
1	Memory	3.43 (1.31)	2.80 (1.18)	-2.310	.023*
6	Memory	3.43 (1.01)	3.92 (1.14)	2.049	.044*
26	Affective	4.91 (0.28)	4.46 (1.03)	-2.528	.013*
28	Social	3.54 (1.24)	2.86 (1.40)	-2.315	.023*
30	Social	2.57 (1.29)	3.48 (1.16)	3.386	.001*

* $p < 0.05$

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study showed that the preparatory program Turkish EFL students used vocabulary strategies at a medium level (M=3.20, SD=1.32). These results were in line with the results of some of the previous studies done in various EFL/ESL/ESP learning environments (e.g. Hamzah, Kafipour, Abdullah, 2009; Kafipour, Yazdi, Soori, & Shokrpour, 2011; Kırmızı, 2014; Kırmızı and Topcu, 2014). The main reason why the preparatory program Turkish EFL students in this study used vocabulary strategies at a medium level was that those students had not received any specific vocabulary learning strategy training. Another significant reason why this result was obtained was that the coursebooks that were followed in the English preparatory school did not include VLS or VLS training. The language teachers should have provided materials that included VLS.

The results of this study also showed that affective strategies were the most frequently used VLS by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students with a mean score of 3.71 (SD=1.10). Social strategies were least frequently employed VLS by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students with a mean score of 2.82 (SD=1.84). These results were contrary to those of other research studies conducted by Bekleyen (2006), Grossman (2011) and Hamamcı (2012). The main reason why social strategies were least frequently employed VLS by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students in this study was that the teachers did not provide the students with a variety of listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary activities in the EFL classoom that would enable them to work in pairs or groups to develop their vocabulary knowledge. However, the finding that affective strategies were the most frequently used VLS by the preparatory program Turkish EFL students in the present study was due to the existence of a stress-free, motivating and friendly classroom environment.

Regarding the relationship between gender and preparatory program Turkish EFL students' use of VLS, this study exhibited that there were significant differences between the male students' mean scores and the female students' mean scores concerning the use of vocabulary strategies. It was found that female students utilized VLS more than male students did. These findings were

congruent with those of other studies done by Gu (2002), Huang (2010), Shadikah, Fauziati and Supriyadi (2017) and Yılmaz (2017). The main reason why female students utilized VLS more than male students did in this study was that female students gave more importance to understanding, learning or remembering new information when performing the tasks given by the teacher in the classroom than male students.

Relevant to the relationship between English proficiency and the preparatory program Turkish EFL students' use of VLS, this study exhibited that there were significant differences between low English proficiency (A1 level) students' mean scores and high English proficiency (B1 level) students' mean scores regarding the use of vocabulary strategies. It was found that students with high English proficiency had higher level of using VLS than students with low English proficiency. These results were consistent with the results of other studies done by Barcroft (2009), Barekat and Karami (2012), Celik and Toptas (2010), Lin-Fang (2013). The main reason why students with high English proficiency had higher level of using VLS than students with low English proficiency in the present study was that students with high English proficiency had lower level of foreign language anxiety due to having high level of linguistic and pragmatic competence.

With respect to the relationship between success and the preparatory program Turkish EFL students' use of VLS, the results of this study showed that there were significant differences between successful students' mean scores and unsuccessful students' mean scores regarding their use of VLS. More specifically, it was found that while both successful students and unsuccessful students had nearly the same level of using memory strategies and social strategies, successful students had higher level of using affective strategies than unsuccessful students. These findings were contrary to those of studies done by Abraham and Vann (1987), Ahmed (1989) and Gidey (2008) who reported that successful students had higher level of using VLS than unsuccessful students. The main reason why successful students had higher level of using affective strategies than unsuccessful students in the present study was that there was a stress-free, motivating and friendly classroom environment from the perspectives of successful students.

In conclusion, Turkish EFL teachers should view vocabulary teaching as one of the main activities in their classrooms. They should teach their students not only new vocabulary items but also VLS to make them more autonomous. They should motivate their students to employ vocabulary strategies and inform them about how they can benefit from these strategies so that their students can be good vocabulary users (Behbahani, 2016; Hadavi and Hashemi, 2014).

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