

# Examining the Impact of Vocabulary Strategy Training on Adult EFL Students

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**Abstract** - This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of strategy instruction in vocabulary learning. To reach the goal of the study, 70 elementary level EFL learners at the Preparatory School of Mersin University were assigned as study and control groups. At the first stage of the study, through a Vocabulary Strategy Frequency Survey (Cohen, Oxford & Chi, 2002) and Taxonomy (Schmitt, 1997), conscious and/or unconscious use of vocabulary learning strategies in both groups was investigated. The study group received instruction on vocabulary learning strategies which was embedded to the course-book through a 10-week period. For the next stage, it was aimed to raise the teachers' awareness of vocabulary strategy learning; therefore, discussion and feedback sessions were planned. For the follow-up stage of the study, 10 of the participant students who were then second grade medical students were interviewed in order to investigate the effects of strategy training after 2 academic years. Interviewees were asked about their opinions on strategy use during this period. The findings indicated that vocabulary strategy training can help students to learn and store more vocabulary.

**Keywords:** language learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, strategy training, adult EFL learners

**Özet–Kelime Strateji Eğitiminin İngilizce Öğrenen Yetişkin Öğrenciler Üzerindeki Etkisinin Araştırılması.** Bu çalışma kelime öğreniminde strateji kullanımının etkisini ölçmek için yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla, Mersin Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulundan 70 başlangıç düzey yabancı dil öğrencisi çalışma ve kontrol grubu olarak seçilmişlerdir. İlk olarak, kelime stratejisi sıklık anketi (Cohen, Oxford & Chi, 2002) ve taksonomisi (Schmitt, 1997) ile her iki grubun bilinçli ve/veya bilinçdışı kullandıkları stratejiler araştırılmıştır. Çalışma grubu ders kitaplarına uygun olarak düzenlenmiş etkinliklerle kelime öğrenim stratejileri üzerine 10 haftalık bir eğitim almıştır. Diğer yandan çalışmada, öğretmenlerin de kelime öğrenimi stratejileri konusunda bilinçlendirilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Bu amaçla toplantılar planlanmış; bu toplantılarda fikir alışverişinde bulunulmuş, çalışmanın gidişatı ve sonuçları konusunda bilgi verilmiştir. Çalışmanın son aşaması, strateji eğitiminin uzun vadede etkisini ölçmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu amaçla iki yıl sonra Tıp Fakültesi 2. sınıf olan 10 çalışma grubu üyesi öğrenci ile mülakat yapılmıştır. Öğrencilerin geçen süre boyunca strateji kullanımı konusundaki düşünceleri sorgulanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, kelime strateji eğitiminin öğrencilerin daha fazla kelime öğrenmesine ve akılda tutmasına katkıda bulunabileceğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** dil öğrenme stratejileri, kelime öğrenme stratejileri, strateji eğitimi, yetişkin yabancı dil öğrencileri

## Introduction

Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal (Chamot, 2004). Language learners often apply their own strategies to learn and to regulate their learning. Not only the term “strategy” but the terms; styles, techniques, tactics, consciously employed operations have been defined and clarified by the researchers (Wenden, 1987; Cook, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2000; Richards & Rogers, 2001) in order to explain the thoughts, behaviors students have and the steps they use to comprehend, learn or retain new information. Researchers have focused on the research targeting the language learning strategies, as well as vocabulary learning strategies for nearly three decades (Balcı & Çakır, 2012; Zhang & Li, 2011; Erten & Williams, 2008; Wong, 2005; Chamot et al., 1999; O’ Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

In this study, we focused on vocabulary learning strategies and the impact of vocabulary strategy training on EFL students in a university setting. As Zimmerman (1997) states ‘Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner’ (p.5). How well one listens, speaks, reads

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and writes is deeply interrelated with the depth of one's vocabulary knowledge; therefore, both teachers and students agree on the importance of learning vocabulary. Mastering vocabulary is one of the most challenging tasks that any learner faces while acquiring another language (Nyikos & Fan, 2007) because vocabulary knowledge is a multidimensional and complex construct (Read, 2000), and knowing a word involves numerous types of word knowledge, such as meaning, word form, collocation, and register (Nation, 2001). There has not been one theory to date that can be prescribed for the complexities of the vocabulary acquisition process. Applying vocabulary learning strategies is a way of improving vocabulary knowledge and compared to other skills, they are more often used by second language (L2) learners. According to Schmitt (1997), the higher strategy use may be a result of learners' awareness of the importance of the vocabulary. However, strategy is useful on condition that (a) it relates well to the L2 task, (b) it fits the particular student's learning style preferences, and (c) the student uses the strategy effectively and links it with other strategies (Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003).

The most efficient way to increase learner awareness is to provide strategy training. Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) is a learner-centered approach to teaching and it may include both implicit and explicit integration of strategies into the course content. In a typical SBI classroom, teachers describe and model strategies, draw facts from students' learning experiences, lead discussions about strategies, encourage students to try to employ a variety of strategies and integrate strategies into class materials (Cohen, 2003). According to a recent review by Rubin et al. (2007), with regard to the intervention studies relating to language learning strategies; teaching students learning strategies, if effectively done, increases not only their knowledge of strategies but also their motivation and performance. In a large number of studies, instructing students to employ learning strategies have yielded positive outcomes, and training has been found to be successful (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999; Oxford, 1990; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2009).

### **Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides the basis for effective communication. Maintaining a large store of vocabulary is a demanding job for language learners and L2 teachers want to know which strategies and tasks are more effective in helping their students acquire as much vocabulary as they can in the most economical way (Khoii & Sharififar, 2013). Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) have been appealing to teachers and learners because learners of a foreign language are confronted with vocabulary learning right from the very beginning of language instruction, and it is a never-ending, challenging task. Nowadays, it is widely accepted that vocabulary learning is a fundamental component both of acquisition of one's native language and of learning a foreign language (Morra & Camba, 2009).

Attempts have been made to classify vocabulary learning strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) divide vocabulary learning strategies into two major parts: Metacognitive Regulation and Cognitive Strategies. Metacognitive Regulation comprises of selective attention and self-initiation. Cognitive strategies include guessing (wider and immediate context), dictionary (comprehension, extended dictionary and looking-up strategies), note-taking (meaning-oriented and usage-oriented), rehearsal (using word lists, oral and visual repetition), encoding (association/ elaboration, imagery, using word structure, visual, auditory, semantic and contextual encoding), and activation strategies. Schmitt (1997), on the other hand, mentions two categories of L2 vocabulary learning strategies: Discovery and Consolidation Strategies. The former includes determination and social strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning while the latter encompasses social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies for consolidating a word when it has been encountered.

Researchers noted some interesting patterns of strategy. Learners tend to use several strategies at once (Ellis & Beaton, 1993), beginners prefer learning words separately, that is, using a list of words to memorize, whereas advanced students, although there are some exceptions, try to learn words in context (Ellis, 1994, Carter, 1987; as cited in Lawson & Hogben, 1996), the female students' total strategy usage percentages are higher than the males' (Catalan, 2003), and lastly explicit metacognitive strategies instruction has positive impact on the lexical knowledge development of EFL students (Rasekh & Ranjbary, 2003). Moreover, higher-achievement learners use more strategies than lower-achievement peers (Schmitt, 1997; Fan, 2003).

### **Vocabulary Strategy Training**

Oxford (2002) emphasizes that language learning style (general approach to language learning) has been identified as a key determiner of L2 strategy choice. When left to their own devices and if not overly pressured by the environment to use a certain set of strategies, students typically use learning strategies that reflect their basic learning style (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). According to Oxford (2002), 'students with an analytic learning style prefer strategies such as contrastive analysis, rule learning, and dissecting words and phrases, whereas students with a global style use strategies that help them find the big picture (i.e., paraphrasing, gesturing). Visually oriented students use strategies such as listing, word grouping, and so on, whereas those with an auditory preference like to work with tapes and practice aloud' (p.127).

They can, however, learn to develop additional strategies and test value of the ones they ordinarily use. Students are not always aware of the power of consciously using language learning strategies for making learning quicker, easier, more effective, and even more fun (Nyikos, 1987). Skilled teachers help their students develop an awareness of learning strategies and enable them to use a wider range of appropriate strategies.

Studies have shown that the most effective strategy training is explicit: Learners are obviously told that a particular behavior or strategy might be helpful, and they are taught how to use and transfer it to new situations. Learners can be taught explicitly how to improve their own vocabulary by teaching them appropriate vocabulary learning strategies as opposed to simply letting students learn vocabulary in their own way (Brown & Perry, 1991; as cited in Rasekh & Ranjbar, 2003). 'Blind training', in which students are oriented to employ strategies without realization, is found less successful. Research shows that strategy training is more fruitful when it is woven into regular class activities (Oxford, 2002).

In this study, the issue of vocabulary strategies was the area of interest because it was identified from informal student-teacher and teacher-teacher talks that in the institution we are working, the common concern of the students has been the way to learn and retain vocabulary. Mastering vocabulary is one of the most challenging tasks that any learner faces while acquiring another language (Kılıçkaya & Krajka, 2010). This is especially true in Turkey where exposure to English in daily life is extremely limited. It is also believed that having a large and varied vocabulary is the indicator of communicative competence and it is one of the important aspects of language learning (McCrostie, 2007). The researchers in this study believed that vocabulary strategy training can help students to learn more vocabulary and regulate their own learning. To that end, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the instruction about vocabulary learning strategies have an impact on students' vocabulary learning?
2. Does the instruction enable students to use vocabulary learning strategies in the long run?
3. What are the teachers' opinions about vocabulary learning strategies?

## **The Study**

### **Participants**

The participants were 70 students aged 18 to 22 attending the Preparatory School of Foreign Languages of Mersin University. 33 students were female and 37 students were male. The participants were chosen randomly from four elementary level classes. The study group, 35 students from departments of Medicine, Engineering, and Tourism, took 10-week training on vocabulary learning strategies with specific activities in accordance with the program and their course-book, whereas our control group, 35 students from Physics and Psychology departments did not have any explicit training with specific activities. 10 students out of our study group were interviewed after four academic terms, and they were asked about their previous strategy training. In addition, 30 English language instructors of the School of Foreign Languages of the same university participated in the study. The average year of experience for the teachers was eleven; minimum with a four-year, maximum with a twenty-year experience. Most of the instructors were graduates of English Language Teaching departments, some with a degree from Linguistics and Literature, and Interpretation and Translation departments.

### **Methodology**

## *Examining the Impact of Vocabulary Strategy Training on Adult EFL Students*

At the School of Foreign Languages, in Mersin University, students have one year English language education, 24 lessons of instruction for about 26 weeks. At the time of the study, all of the students received main course instruction 22 lessons a week using the course-book series called "Pathfinder". There were grammar based supplementary materials accompanying the course-book. Additionally, an academic writing course was given to the students for two lessons a week. The subjects were assigned in groups by the researchers. The groups were randomly assigned as experimental and control group. The homogeneity of the two groups in terms of vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency was determined by a placement test given at the beginning of the academic year by the School's testing office.

The Survey of Strategy Frequency (Cohen, Oxford & Chi, 2002) was used to understand all the students' vocabulary learning strategy use. Both groups were given a survey of strategy frequency at the beginning of the study in order to see whether they use any strategies in vocabulary learning. Moreover, the groups were given a vocabulary test, developed by the researchers, including synonyms and antonyms, word formation, collocations, grouping, affixes, parts of speech and labeling pictures. However, the 10-week vocabulary learning strategies training was only given to the study group. The training was given by the researchers and it was embedded to the course-book. In the course of the instruction, the students in the study group kept vocabulary notebooks as required, received word list worksheets to brush up on the given vocabulary. Besides, posters were hung and flashcards were prepared to enhance and facilitate the vocabulary learning. Vocabulary games were introduced to make learning fun. Both groups took the same vocabulary test at the end of the study. A dependent t-test was employed to see whether there existed a change in the study group's strategy frequency use before and after training.

As for the survey analysis a five-point survey of strategy frequency was used in the study. In statistical analysis the Type I error probability was taken as 5% and SPSS program (version 11.5) was used in the calculations. A non-independent t-test was conducted to see whether there was a change in our study group's frequency before and after the vocabulary strategy instruction. A professional help was received from one of the professors of the Biostatistics department of the same university for statistical calculations. When the rise in each group was compared, the rise of the study group in terms of pretest and post-test results was found to be significant compared to the control group ( $P=0.010$ ).

The teachers were also asked questions in order to understand their perception about strategy use and training. They were asked four questions: 1. Do you think your students use any strategy/strategies to develop their vocabulary knowledge? If yes, what are they? 2. Do you think the strategy/strategies your students adapt are enough to help them retain and use the vocabulary they need? If not how could they be trained? 3. Can you please list some of the strategies you use and generally recommend to your students (i.e. using flashcards, games, etc.)? 4. In what ways is teaching vocabulary strategies to students important? Think aloud sessions were also held. It was aimed to interview each teacher, in their office hours or in group discussions. The interviews with the teachers were audiotaped. The content analysis was performed for the interviews. The responses were analyzed by the researchers separately. Strategies were categorized. Examples and number of occurrence have also been noted. After analysing the responses, the researchers negotiated any differences to reach a consensus.

Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted after 2 academic years with 10 students to seek their opinions. The students were chosen randomly among medical students, but they volunteered to be interviewed. During the interviews, students were asked two questions: 1. Do you think the vocabulary strategy training you received was useful? and 2. If yes, in what ways have you made use of the strategies you were instructed? Interviews were transcribed and the findings were evaluated.

The interviews with the teachers and the students were held in Turkish; the survey was also translated. The responses were re-translated into English adhering to their original meaning.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### ***1. Does the instruction about vocabulary learning strategies have an impact on students' vocabulary learning?***

In order to see the effects of vocabulary strategy training, a study group consisting of 35 students and a control group of the same number were evaluated. The study group was given a pre-test just before the training

and the results were noted, and then the results after 10-week training were noted with the help of a post-test. The control group did not take any specific training and they followed the program and the four-skills English course-book including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, reading, writing and speaking exercises during this period and they were given the post-test at the same time with the study group and their results were noted down as well. As the first research question inquires, the difference between the scores within study and control group were compared and the following results were obtained. In Table 1 determining factors of the scores obtained in pretest by study and control groups were given as mean  $\pm$ SD.

**Table I Determining factors of the scores of pre-test by study and control group**

	Study Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	Control Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	p
Pre-test	48.20 $\pm$ 8.12	31.17 $\pm$ 9.83	<b>&lt;0.001</b>

To find the impact of vocabulary strategy instruction on the lexical knowledge of the study group and compare the improvement with their counterparts in the control group, both groups took part in a post-test of the same vocabulary test after completing the course. The results of the vocabulary test in the two groups were compared using independent samples t-test statistical procedure, whose result showed that the mean scores of the study group (M = 61.88, SD = 12.46) was significantly different from the control group (M = 39.71, SD = 10.63). In other words, while there was not any significant difference between control and experimental group in terms of lexical knowledge at the beginning of the study, the study group surpassed the control group in terms of lexical knowledge at the end of the experiment. The result of the t-test of post-test of both groups is summarized in Table 2.

**Table II Determining factors of the scores of post-test by study and control group**

	Study Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	Control Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	p
Post-test	61.89 $\pm$ 12.46	39.71 $\pm$ 10.63	<b>&lt;0.001</b>

Table 3 shows mean and standard deviation of the difference of the scores the students got in two tests in study and control groups.

**Table III Mean and standard deviation of the difference of the scores**

	Study Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	Control Group (n=35) Mean $\pm$ Std. Deviation	p
Differences of pre-test and post-test	13.69 $\pm$ 9.80	8.54 $\pm$ 5.33	<b>0.010</b>

After the calculations, in study group 13.68 point rise was seen as a result of the training, whereas after 10-week training-free instruction in control group 8.5 point increase was observed. When the rise in each group was compared, the rise of the study group in terms of pre-test and post-test results was found significant compared to control group (P=0.010). With this result, it can be said that strategy training had a significant positive effect on the increase in scores.

Research by Coady (1997), Oxford and Scarcella (1994), and Nation (2001) shows that vocabulary learning can be enhanced when the attention of the learners is directed consciously to vocabulary items and

strategies (Mercer, 2005). The comparison of the increase between pretest and posttest of each group shows that students benefit from vocabulary strategy instruction, as Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990) point out, directly instructing students in vocabulary learning strategies is recognized as a way to empower students to take control of and responsibility for their own learning (Mercer, 2005). They were already employing some strategies, however, with the help of the instruction, their consciousness was increased and they became aware of a wide range of strategies. We tried to exemplify the strategies in order to emphasize that they can be used throughout their lives, namely in their further education as well, but the frequency of the usage of the strategies depends upon the students' endeavors and willingness.

The two open-ended questions in the survey enabled us to see our learners' strengths and weaknesses about vocabulary strategy use. Most of the learners indicated that they face problems when they memorize the words (66%). They have difficulty in recalling words. Most of them stated that if they do not see or use the words in a sentence, they can forget it easily, especially multi-part words (44%). They pointed out that when they see the word, they can learn it better; for example flashcards, pictures, and posters may be of help to our learners to retain the word. Moreover, they stated that they benefit from the lyrics of their favorite songs, terminology of computer games, and watching foreign TV series with subtitles (28%). Some of our learners remarked that they make associations with other words, i.e. Turkish meaning, a formerly learnt word, or a place (32%). Listing words according to their topic was scored 28%. Trying to guess the meaning from the root, or affixes was the least preferred strategy students used (9%).

The five-point strategy frequency survey which was given to the study group twice shows that the learners' frequency may change due to the consciousness raising activities. For example, our study group received training in roots and affixes and it was noticed that item 13 in the survey 'I remind myself of a word's meaning by first thinking of meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix)' was responded differently by the learners before and after the instruction. Before the instruction 25.7% of the students thought "generally true of me (4)", however, 51.4% of the students chose (4) after the instruction ( $P=0.035$ ). Another example is the item 7, "I learn a new word by listing it along with other words related to it by topic." 14.3% of the students chose "never or almost never true of me (1)" before the instruction. After the instruction none of these students chose (1). The lowest rating became "somewhat true of me (3)". Finally, the survey gave us a clue that our students did not show a real effort to use idiomatic expressions in English, which did not change even after the instruction.

We may comment favorably, then, that training may be beneficial and may affect the frequency rates of the learners. Behavioral change may be observed after the training. Think aloud sessions were conducted in all the classes and Schmitt's taxonomy helped our students to recognize various strategies, and stimulated them to think about strategies. Posters, vocabulary lists on the walls were appreciated by the students and they stated that it changed the atmosphere of the classroom. As Çetin and Flamand (2013) state, hanging posters is very effective and they may provide incidental learning opportunities although the instructors do not utilize them directly. Preparing posters by either the teachers or the students may turn the classroom walls into 'edutainment' environments as well as facilitating self-directed learning. Indeed, posters are as valuable as vocabulary games. Vocabulary games played in the classroom motivated not only students but the teachers as well. Online vocabulary games were suggested by some students; however, the technical circumstances of the School were not suitable for that at the time the research conducted. Students also mentioned that they liked keeping vocabulary notebooks. The notebooks were controlled twice by the researchers, and feedback how to design their notebooks was given to the students. The researchers tried to correct the major mistakes in the notebooks. As McCrostie (2005) notes teachers need to spend more time guiding their students in the proper use of vocabulary notebooks. 'Notebooks have the potential to be a valuable tool for vocabulary learning but it seems that most students need more extensive and frequent training than they probably receive' (p.254).

## **2. Does the instruction enable students to use vocabulary learning strategies in the long run?**

According to McDonough (2006), when learners have developed their own strategies for the new circumstances they are in, rather than they are doing the strategies you have taught them a few months down the line, it is possible to argue that somebody's learning to be an independent and strategically expert language learner. Keeping in mind that McDonough gives emphasis to students' developing their own strategies, we traced students from our study group to conduct a post-study interview. During the interview, 10 students who

were studying medicine were asked what strategies they use while learning vocabulary, what they think about the strategy instruction they took in preparatory school, whether they could transfer any strategy they use for learning vocabulary to their education at the Medical Faculty and whether they develop new strategies for learning vocabulary. The reason why the medical students were chosen for the interview was that one of the researchers was teaching first grade medical students in that faculty; therefore, it was easy to reach the participant students.

The answers to interview questions were worth considering. Students have a tendency to use some VLSs in their lives. Their education in the Faculty of Medicine enables them to get familiar with Latin. Therefore, they said they focus on affixes and the roots of the words they encounter, and through the use of this strategy they keep words in their minds easily. Some of them use the words in the sentences or write them many times to remember, namely they refer to written repetition. The students' reports show that the use of media, watching movies and series are common ways of learning English vocabulary. Excerpt 1 and 2 stress these facts.

[Excerpt 1:S1]

I specifically focus on prefix usage. I can transfer Latin words to my vocabulary knowledge. I watch movies, read articles and translation texts to gain vocabulary. I used to have difficulty in phrasal verbs... Now, I try to pay attention to their use in sentences. I don't memorize them. I sometimes post my notes on my room's walls while studying anatomy.

Students' concern about VLSs was that when they start to study in their departments, they tend to forget English due to too much emphasis on their Medical education. They focused on medical terminology which results in strategy transferring. The course in Latin had an impact on this process. Some suggestions were in the direction of continuous strategy instruction in their English courses after the preparatory classes.

[Excerpt 2: S2]

I usually understand words when they have similar word roots. I can figure out the meanings of the words by looking at their roots. I use the same strategy at Medical Faculty. I memorize words by writing down 5-10 times. To me, the strategy training we received at the preparatory school had medium effect on the way I learn vocabulary. After 2 years, I believe I forgot many things. The training should have continued.

Some students noted that they employ the strategy of sound associations to learn vocabulary; they use their own coding system and do translation to retain words.

[Excerpt 3:S3]

While I am learning English words, I try to code them. I try to keep them in my mind by the help of their phonetics. For example, the word: "dungeon"... I make use of my Latin, especially prefixes and suffixes, but it is not always enough. I think there should be more focus on vocabulary and strategy training in preparatory year and during our education in the faculty. In medical faculty, we have been doing translation which helps me with the vocabulary.

The students said that they are making use of their Latin; they try to focus on affixes or roots. They are trying to use the words in sentences, or get help from the words' sound associations. Translation, watching movies, reading articles, visualizing words in their minds are some strategies they mentioned. They believed that the strategy training they got in Preparatory School enabled them to use some strategies and/or help them realize the existence of strategy use. They suggested that strategy instruction would be given to all students during their language education in the first year and if possible it should continue during their education in later years in their departments.

### **3. What are the teachers' opinions about vocabulary learning strategies?**

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When the teachers are considered, they were asked how they think VLSs enable the learners to continue their learning. They were also asked whether they encourage their students to develop their VLSs repertoires, if they devote time to VLSs during their courses, if they reinforce strategies while presenting their lessons after the feedback session, if they believe students overcome their problems using VLSs and whether they encourage their students to apply VLSs on their own.

When the instructors' responses to the questionnaire were taken into account, it was found out that 90% of the teachers think that strategy instruction is important, rating the skills that need strategy instruction most as writing, vocabulary and reading the highest. 24 teachers out of 30 (80%) stated that they often ask students the kinds of strategies they prefer while learning vocabulary. The teachers' notes indicated that the most common vocabulary strategies the students in the school use are:

1. Using dictionaries (mostly bilingual)
2. Asking teacher for translation and meaning
3. Asking classmates for meaning
4. Writing word lists
5. Keeping a vocabulary notebook
6. Guessing the meaning from context
7. Analyzing affixes and roots and part of speech

Teachers also said that they often suggest some of these strategies to their students. However, they believe that if students are not trained about strategies and if their work and progress are not looked on, the impact will not be sufficient. Moreover, 22 teachers out of 30 (73%) had a negative notion towards the course-book used in terms of not providing enough space for vocabulary learning strategies, and finally they were willing to conduct "Action Research" within their classrooms to provide strategy instruction and to know their learners better.

An examination of the teachers' interviews indicated that the teachers take distinctly positive view of the VLSs. Teachers, as a response to the first interview question, thought that VLSs make learning easier, faster and self-directed. Plus, they produce permanent effects. One teacher provided the following comment at the interview:

[Excerpt 1: T3]

...I think using VLSs enable the learners to learn vocabulary effectively and they provide long-term effects. They have positive impact on students' language learning. If students are educated about how they should learn, the learning doesn't have a temporary effect. It lasts for a long time and students become fully autonomous.

All the interviewees stated that they encourage their students to develop their VLSs repertoires. It was evident that teachers use the VLSs so as to provide a model for students to copy. The view of one of the teachers can be seen in the following excerpt:

[Excerpt 2: T5]

Yes, I encourage my students to develop their vocabulary strategy repertoires. I think that vocabulary is very important. Especially in Main Course and Reading Skills, vocabulary is essential. I encourage my students to keep diaries, use dictionaries and read their future using dictionaries- just to make learning fun I recommend playing the game, fortunetelling- it is my own approach, I support their using vocabulary notebooks but tell them to group the words and use the words in sentences with parts of speech. I try to encourage the students to use a number of strategies, actually; pictures, guessing the meaning from context, dictionaries, flashcards, translation, media so on. I think the level is important in determining strategies. If the level is the beginning level, I want them to label the real objects. If it is advanced level, I suggest using flash cards or translation. I recommend them to listen to English songs, watch movies, even with Turkish subtitles. In my opinion, listening is very important as a source of input. I encourage my students to listen to the radio or native speakers to learn vocabulary. Moreover, I urge them to develop their own strategies.

Teachers certainly devote their time to VLSs during their courses. In Reading and Writing-Language Skills- and Main Course, they almost always refer to VLSs. However, they reported that they seldom devote



time to VLSs in grammar courses due to the nature of the course. This fact was reflected in one teacher's comment as:

[Excerpt 3: T1]

I do not devote much time to VLSs if I have a grammar lesson. The only strategy I use in a grammar lesson is translation. However, if I teach skills such as reading and writing or listening or follow a course-book, I try to employ VLSs during my lessons.

Teachers reinforce strategies while presenting their lessons after the feedback session. They found the feedback session instructive and satisfying. The following comment was made by one of the teachers:

[Excerpt 4: T4]

Yes, I reinforce strategies during my lessons. After the feedback session, I emphasize that students can learn vocabulary in a group. I try to make them understand that repetition is very helpful-both oral and written, of course.

Teachers believe that interested students try to use VLSs and they attempt to overcome their problems using these strategies. If students continue to study systematically, problems will be resolved thanks to strategies.

[Excerpt 5: T6]

If the students are eager and enthusiastic, they find suitable strategies, adapt them into their learning lives and overcome their problems. The key word is 'being interested or involved'.

Teachers encourage their students to apply VLSs on their own. They believe mere explanation is not enough. Implementation is more important than imparting knowledge. Besides, language learning is an ongoing process and students will keep learning themselves. One of the teachers remarked:

[Excerpt 6: T2]

I try to encourage my students to apply VLS on their own, but students' departments and interests play important roles. The students who continue to learn English at their departments care about strategies. The strategy is the vehicle to succeed in language learning, and some of the students know that strategies are means to achieve their goals.

Teachers who use strategy training often become enthusiastic about their roles as facilitators of classroom learning. Strategy training makes them more learner-oriented and more aware of their students' needs. Teachers also begin to scrutinize how their teaching techniques relate (or fail to relate) to their students' learning strategies and sometimes teachers choose to alter their instructional patterns as a result of such scrutiny (Oxford et al., p.210).

## **Conclusion**

The major concern of the present study was to explore the impact of vocabulary strategies training on vocabulary learning of the EFL students. As it was shown, the study group outperformed the control group on the vocabulary test. Thus, the strategy training seems to have contributed to the improvement of students' vocabulary learning.

It has become increasingly apparent that "teaching learners how to learn" is crucial as we seek to make the language classroom an effective milieu for learning. Wenden (1985) was among the first to assert that learner strategies are the key to learner autonomy, and that one of the most important goals of language training should be the facilitation of that autonomy. Teachers can benefit from an understanding of what makes learners successful and unsuccessful, and establish in the class a milieu for the realization of successful strategies. Teachers cannot always expect instant success in that effort since students often bring with them certain

preconceived notions of what “ought” to go on in the classroom (Bialystok, 1985). Nevertheless, our efforts to teach students some “technical know-how about how to tackle a language” are well advised.

With interviews conducted after two academic years, it was noticed that in the long run, the students somehow benefited from the instruction and they tried to use them in their further education. They were more aware of the strategy use. However, they demanded more strategy instruction in their language courses especially after preparatory school. This is possible for departments where there are language courses in their program. Teachers could evaluate the course content, the terminology the students need and prepare supplementary materials which contain strategies to be used.

In our study, it was also detected that students are more familiar to vocabulary learning strategies when compared to other skills because of the nature of the classroom instruction. The schools should support strategies for all skills to improve language learning.

Teachers were very receptive to VLSs. They said they use VLSs and encourage their students to use VLSs in all their courses. Teachers declared in the interviews that the course-books in which VLSs are embedded should be preferred. According to the teachers, VLSs enabled the learners to learn easily and fast. However, good language learners are more concerned about the strategies and they try to overcome their problems via strategies. However, strategy research suggests that less competent learners may improve their skills through training in strategies evidenced by more successful learners (Carrell, Pharis & Liberto, 1989). Moreover, Schmeck (1988; as cited in Carrell et. al., 1989) has suggested that “learning strategies training and research programs should routinely include individual difference measures to study and take advantage of interactions between personal attributes and the treatments used in training” (p. 171). It is important in VLSs instruction to consider individual differences in terms of motivation level, gender, self-efficacy, career orientation, and the learning environment (context) in which the learners are situated. The researchers of this study could have considered these differences. Future studies may consider strategy training in terms of individual differences.

Teachers stated that they should devote more time to VLSs and try to urge their students to develop the repertoire of their strategies. Furthermore, they wanted their students to implement the VLSs on their own since they support learning to learn. Think aloud sessions showed that teachers want to conduct action research studies in their classrooms to explore their students’ improvement. However, teachers’ speech and action may not overlap when they start to follow their intense syllabus. They may ignore the strategy training. Therefore, teachers should be given support and training on strategy training. Cohen (1998) suggests that ‘in-service seminars provide the most extensive and efficient means for training teachers for how to conduct their own strategy training in the form of strategies based instruction’ (p.10). Seminar on strategy training was suggested and the in-service training unit in the school decided to put it in their agenda.

Future studies may expand the vocabulary learning strategy types since the use of technology keeps climbing. There are recent studies on learning vocabulary via mobile phones (Lu, 2008); electronic dictionary entities with animated pictures (Lew & Doroszewska, 2009); online vocabulary games (Huyen & Nga, 2003; Yip & Kwan, 2006), which all proved to be effective.

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### Genişletilmiş Özet

Her birey bilgiyi kendi eşsiz perspektifinden algılar, süzer, saklar ve hatırlar. Yabancı dil eğitimi söz konusu olduğunda bu durum zorlukları beraberinde getirir. Kelime bilgisi çok yönlü ve karmaşık bir yapıdır (Read, 200). Kelime bilmek sayısız kelime bilgisi, kelime yapısı, eşdizimlilik ve dildizgesi bilgilerini gerektirir (Nation, 2001). Dil öğrenenler, bu yüzden, kendi stratejilerini kullanmak durumundadırlar. Sadece strateji terimi değil, stil, teknik, taktik, bilinçli olarak uygulanan işlemler, pek çok araştırmacı tarafından, öğrencilerin düşünce ve davranışlarını tanımlamak ve yeni bilgiyi anlama, edinme ve koruma yollarını belirlemek için kullanılmıştır (Wenden, 1987; Cook, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2000; Richards and Rogers, 2001). Yaklaşık 30 yıldır araştırmacılar dil öğrenim stratejileri üzerinde çalışmaktadırlar (Chamot et al., 1999; O' Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden and Rubin, 1987).

Oxford (1990) dil öğrenim stratejilerini 'öğrenmeyi daha kolay, hızlı, eğlenceli, daha bağımsız, daha etkili ve aktarılabilir yapmak için kişilerin uyguladığı adımlar' olarak tanımlar. İkinci dil öğrenim stratejilerini 6 ana başlıkta gruplandırır: (1) Bilişsel, (2) Üst bilişsel, (3) Hafıza, (4) Telafi Edici, (5) Duyuşsal ve (6) Sosyal strateji. Ellis (1994) Oxford'un dil öğrenim stratejilerinin sınıflandırmasının en anlaşılır sınıflandırma olduğunu vurgular.

Kelimenin yabancı dil öğreniminin en önemli parçası olduğu düşünüldüğünden, kelime öğrenim stratejilerini de gruplandırma çalışmaları yapılmaktadır. Gu ve Johson (1996) kelime öğrenme stratejilerini iki ana bölüme ayırmışlardır: Üstbilişsel Düzenleme ve Bilişsel Stratejiler. Üstbilişsel Düzenleme seçici dikkati ve kendi kendine başlatmayı içerir. Bilişsel Stratejiler, tahmini (geniş ve anlak bağlam), sözlük (anlama, açık sözlük), not alma (anlama yönelik ve kullanıma yönelik), tekrarlama (kelime listesi kullanma, işitsel ve görsel tekrar), kodlama (çağırışım/ayrıntıya girme, betimleme, kelime yapısını kullanma, görsel, işitsel, semantik ve bağlamsal kodlama) ve aktivasyon stratejilerini içerir. Schmitt (1997), diğer bir yandan, iki kategoriden bahseder: Bulgulama ve Pekiştirme Stratejileri. İlk olan yeni kelimenin anlamını keşfe yönelik belirleme ve sosyal stratejileri, ikinci olan ise kelime ile karşılaştığında pekişmek için sosyal, hafıza, bilişsel, üstbilişsel stratejileri kapsamaktadır. Schmitt'in taksonomisi 58 stratejiyi kapsar.

Ehrman; Leaver ve Oxford'a göre (2003) bir strateji (a) ikinci dil çalışması ile anlam ifade ederse, (b) öğrencinin öğrenme şekline, tercihine uyum sağlarsa ve (c) öğrenci stratejiyi etkili kullanır, diğer stratejilerle bağlantı kurarsa faydalı olur.

Bu çalışmada, özellikle kelime stratejileri üzerinde durulmuştur, çünkü çalışmanın yapıldığı okulda öğrenciler için en büyük sorunlardan biri kelime öğrenimi ve kelimenin akılda kalmasını sağlamaktır. Kelime bilgisine sahip olmak yabancı dil öğrencilerinin karşılaştıkları en zor durumlardan biridir ve az miktardaki kelime ile öğrenciler idare ettiklerinde kelime bilgisinin önemini kavramaktadırlar (Nyikos ve Fan, 2007). Bu özellikle İngilizceden etkilenmenin az olduğu Türkiye için geçerlidir. Ayrıca, çoğu okulda dil eğitiminde önem verilen genellikle becerilerin birleştirilmiş bir şekilde öğretilmesi değil, ayrı ayrı ele alınmasıdır. Buna rağmen, çalışmada öğrencilerin kelime öğrenim stratejilerine diğer becerilere oranla daha tanıdık olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Schmitt'e göre (1997) bu durum öğrencilerin kelime bilgisinin öneminin farkında olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır.

Bu çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına cevap bulmayı amaçlamaktadır:

- 1- Kelime öğrenim stratejileri üzerine verilen eğitim öğrencilerin kelime öğrenime faydalı olmuş mudur?
- 2- Eğitim uzun vadede öğrencilerin kelime öğrenim stratejilerini kullanmalarını sağlamış mıdır?
- 3- Öğretmenler kelime öğrenim stratejilerine ne kadar açıktırlar?

Çalışmaya Mersin Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda öğrenci olan 18-22 yaş aralığında 70 denek katılmıştır. Öğrencilerden 33'ü kız, 37'si erkekti. Çalışma grubunu oluşturan 35 öğrenci, Tıp, Mühendislik, ve

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Turizm bölümlerine kayıtlı öğrenciler olup, bu öğrencilere derslerde kullanılan kitaba ve program akışına uygun özel aktivitelerle 10 haftalık kelime öğrenme strateji kursu uygulanmıştır. Diğer taraftan, Fizik ve Psikoloji bölümlerinden oluşan kontrol grubumuz (n:35) herhangi bir eğitim almamıştır. Buna ek olarak, aynı Üniversitesinin Yabancı Diller bölümünden 30 İngilizce okutmanı bu çalışmada yer almıştır.

Oxford, Cohen ve Chi'nin (2002) Strateji Sıklık Anketi'nin uyarlanmış şekli öğrencilerin kelime öğrenme strateji kullanımlarını anlamak için çalışmaya katılan tüm öğrencilere verilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışmanın başında öğrencilere kelime testi uygulanmıştır. Bu sınavda farklı şekillerde kelime soruları mevcut olup, eş anlamlı, zıttanlamlı, eşdizim, gruplama, kelime türetme, ön ek, son ek, kelime yapısı inceleme ve resim eşleştirme bunlardan bazılarıdır. Ancak, eğitim 10 hafta boyunca sadece çalışma grubuna verilmiştir. Çalışma grubundaki öğrenciler kelime defteri tutma konusunda teşvik edilmişler, sınıf duvarlarına posterler asılmış, kelime eğitimine yönelik oyunlar oynanmıştır. Her iki grup kelime testini çalışma sonunda tekrar almıştır.

Okutmanların düşüncelerini anlamak için onlara da bir anket uygulanmıştır. Toplantılarda bu anket sonuçları değerlendirilmiş ve tartışılmıştır.

Çalışmanın uzun vadede faydalarını gözlemlemek için 2 yıl aradan sonra 10 öğrenci ile mülakatlar yapıldı, bu görüşmeler kayıt altına alınmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonunda kelime öğrenme stratejilerinin fark yarattığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğrencilerin aradan uzun zaman geçmesine rağmen öğrendikleri ve uyguladıkları stratejileri kullandıkları, yeni strateji uyguladıkları görülmüştür. Ancak öğrenciler hazırlık eğitimi sonrasında da aldıkları yabancı dil derslerinde strateji eğitiminin devam etmesini talep etmişlerdir. Strateji eğitimi sonrası strateji kullanma sıklığının arttığı da ortaya çıkmıştır. Hatta öğrencilerin edindikleri bu stratejileri diğer derslerini çalışırken de kullandıklarını söylemeleri sevindiricidir.

Öğretmenlerin strateji kullanımına yaklaşımları da olumluydu. Öğrencilerini strateji kullanımında teşvik ettiklerini dile getirmişlerdir. Kendi kullandıkları yöntemleri öğrencilerle paylaştıklarını söylemişlerdir. Ancak öğrencilerin bu tavsiyeleri dinlediklerini ama eğitimin bir parçası olarak görmedikleri sürece kullanmadıkları dile getirilmiştir. Şöyle ki, çalışma grubunda uygulanan pek çok yöntemin aslında birçok öğretmen tarafından sınıflarda kullanıldığı ve öğrencilere tavsiye edildiği, ancak öğrencilerin bu yöntemleri belli bir süre ve ihtiyaçları olduğu zaman kullandıkları, diğer zamanlarda dikkate almadıkları söylenmiştir. Strateji kullanımının programa ve kullanılan ders materyallerine entegre edilmesinin uygunluğu vurgulanmıştır.