

PERCEIVED VOCBAULARY LEARNING
STRATEGIES OF TURKISH
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Every nation in today's world needs people who can speak a foreign language, and of course English has its place as the most commonly learned foreign language in the world. When a Japanese and Swedish businessmen meet in Istanbul, chances are that they are going to communicate in English. Thus, the teaching of English as a foreign language has gained tremendous importance in the last decades. Turkey, the country to which participants of the present study belong, is no exception to this. English is the most popular foreign language to learn among Turkish foreign language learners and, therefore, there is a considerable interest in learning the language.

The quality of foreign language education in Turkey in the last decade has improved greatly: smaller classes, use of technology in classrooms, and the presence of native speakers from the UK and/or the United States. Some EFL teachers have come to realize the importance of a learner-centered curriculum. However, despite all the improvements, some traditional methods of foreign language teaching such as the grammar-translation method, and memorization and rote learning are still widely practiced in most of the English language classrooms. Rather than self-directed learning, students want to be spoon-fed. In fact, it is not uncommon to see students generally depend on their teachers' instructions just to receive an adequate grade. Furthermore, interaction in the language is generally restricted to class time which, in

most institutions, is limited to a few hours a week. This, of course, is not enough for the Turkish EFL learners to develop their English proficiency level. As a result, most students do not have much contact with English outside the classroom, which means in order to be successful in English students have to study on their own, and not be dependent on and limited to in-class instruction. Therefore, learners need to practice more on their own when learning the English language; that is, they need to learn to be autonomous, independent, and responsible for their own learning.

Learner autonomy and empowerment are important principles that have found favor among foreign language teaching professionals over the last two decades (Wenden, 1991; Cotteral, 1995; Sharle and Szabo, 2000). According to this new trend in language teaching the learner takes the initiative that would help him/her shape the learning process. Similarly, the general belief is that when teachers walk their students through the course, learning will take place. However, this is not always true. Thus one of the reasons for promoting self-directed learning is that students do not have to be dependent on their teachers. Sharle and Szabo (2000) mention how essential learner autonomy is for language learning, “No matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practice, on their own.” (p. 5).

Autonomy in language learning means freedom from the teacher and the restrictions of the curriculum, so the learner would be able to study entirely on his/her own, outside the class. In other words the learner would be in charge of his/her own learning. One of the most important factors in accomplishing learner autonomy is to help the foreign language learners discover some useful ways of approaching language

learning i.e. language learning strategies. According to Oxford (1990) language learning strategies "...are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning." (p. 1). These learning strategies affect the ways learners gain knowledge of the language. Therefore, it would undoubtedly be very educational if teachers were aware of their students' learning strategies and to help them adapt the ones that benefit their own needs. This would eventually enable EFL learners to be better language learners.

According to Omaggio (1978) there are seven attributes that characterize an autonomous learner:

1. Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
2. take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
3. are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
4. are good guessers;
5. attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
6. develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
7. have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Learners exercise their autonomy by using strategies; that is, they take steps toward mastering the language. Students bring their own knowledge and experience into the language learning process. Different learners might feel comfortable using different strategies in learning different skills and components of a second language. Learners use a variety of learning strategies such as communication strategies, reading strategies, and learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) are part of language

learning strategies as well. The present study was designed to investigate the VLSs of a group of participants (Turkish university-level students) whose VLSs have not yet been examined. Thus, the purpose of this study was to find out what Turkish English language learners do on their own as they attempt to acquire vocabulary of the English language.

Broadly speaking, vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) are conscious steps taken by the language learner to help acquire new words. Most learners are aware of the fact that vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in learning a foreign language. Horwitz (1988) developed the BALLI (*Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory*), designed to assess students' beliefs about SL language learning. Substantial number of students (close to 70%) completing this questionnaire either agreed or strongly agreed that the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary.

Studying a foreign language means knowing hundreds and thousands of new words in order to be able to effectively use the language and communicate. It would be very difficult for a language teacher to go over each and every new word during the class period. However, what the teacher can do is to introduce the different possible ways to learn and retain the new words, help learners to choose the ones that suit their students' needs/styles and encourage them to use these outside the class when they are studying on their own. This would help them to be responsible for their own learning.

Communication is rarely prevented by grammar mistakes, but commonly prevented by inadequate or wrong use of vocabulary (Allen, 1983) and therefore, having an adequate vocabulary is very important at all the stages. Ask any language learner about his headache in learning a foreign language; one answer you might get is

difficulty in remembering vocabulary. Yet knowing the meaning of words is crucial in learning a foreign language. Language learners would be able to convey their thoughts, more or less, by making grammar mistakes, but if the word choice is wrong then chances are that there might be a lack of communication or misunderstanding between the speakers. In other words, communication would be prevented. Politzer (1983) asked native speakers of German about the seriousness of some errors made by learners of German, lexical errors were judged as the most serious ones among grammar and phonological errors

As a student of English as a foreign language myself, I found studying vocabulary the most monotonous and difficult part of the language learning process. However, my lack of vocabulary knowledge affected all the four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It often took me a long time to read and understand an English text because I had to stop and look up unknown words in the dictionary. Listening comprehension was hindered because of my lack of vocabulary. Not being able to find the right words to express myself was at times frustrating. I suspect that most of the frustrations I experienced are related to the difficulty of studying and remembering new English words. As Meara (1982) points out "... most learners identify the acquisition of vocabulary as their greatest single source of problems." (p. 100).

My experience as a language learner and an instructor has been that the different ways to learn vocabulary are not adequately discussed in the classrooms. Students should be exposed to various techniques and ultimately need to learn vocabulary on their own, independent from their teachers. In her study of L2 vocabulary learning

strategies of Japanese students, Kudo (2000) points out that some students filling out the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire commented that there were so many different ways to learn vocabulary. Students also mentioned that they would try some of the strategies in the questionnaire that they found interesting which they had never thought of before.

Students have their own ways of learning new words. Some students prefer memorizing words, coming up with vocabulary lists, using dictionaries to translate vocabulary items, or identifying vocabulary in context at the beginning of each lesson, whereas others might feel more comfortable with asking a native speaker, grouping words semantically, or using images, etc. Language learners, especially adults, will eventually come up with certain strategies that suit their needs when learning a word. According to Oxford (1999), every learner has his/her own unique way of learning a new word in the target language and students who have successfully come up with VLSs that suit their needs have higher chances of being successful. They have better control and higher understanding of a new word. Each student's VLSs would vary accordingly, and these strategies would be considered as learner's "control" over his/her learning (Maera, 1980).

The study I report here is different from the previous studies, in that it examines vocabulary learning strategies used among Turkish college-level students, a student population that has not been included in any previous studies on VLSs. These students learn English in the environment where it is a *foreign* language, one of the most common learning environments in today's world. The absence of research on the VLSs of Turkish was the primary reason of this research.

Given the importance of learner autonomy and self-directed learning, this study investigates the reported vocabulary learning strategies of Turkish university students in state and private universities in Turkey. While there have been studies which have investigated the VLSs use of native speakers of Arabic, Japanese, Sudanese students, to the best of my knowledge there are not any studies that investigated the VLSs of Turkish students studying English in Turkey. This study was designed to fill this void.

Research Questions

In particular, my purpose in conducting this study is to better understand the VLS of Turkish students and what they do on their own to learn new words in English. The survey method was used for collecting data in order to include a large number of participants. The students were asked to fill out a 35-item survey questionnaire in order to find out about the reported VLSs of Turkish university students. The study is designed to explore the following research questions:

1. What are some of the most commonly used VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?
2. Do Turkish learners, who have studied a foreign language other than English, use VLSs more frequently than those who have not?
3. Are there any differences in the use of strategies among these students relating to certain background variables, namely a) gender, b) self-reported English proficiency, c) use of strategies based on the number of years they have studied English, d) or educational background (the type of high school

they attended before enrolling at the university, that is, public vs. private high schools)?

4. Do Turkish foreign language learners who have been instructed in the use of VLSs use the strategies more frequently than foreign language learners who have not received any such instruction?

The study of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) is a relatively new area in foreign language research. Investigating the VLSs of Turkish students learning English in Turkey will help both the instructors and the students to become aware of the strategies that are used as well as ones which are not used as much.

Definitions of the terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study based on these definitions.

Vocabulary learning strategies: Steps taken by the language learner to acquire new English words.

First language: The native language of the learner, which in this study refers to Turkish.

Foreign language: A language other than learner's native language which is studied in learner's native country. Here it refers to Turkish students learning English in Turkey.

Foreign language learners:

Cognates: Words that are historically derived from a common parent word such as *Yoğurt* in Turkish and *Yogurt* in English.

Public high schools: These high schools are funded by the government and are open to all Turkish students. The foreign language education in these schools is limited to a few hours a week.

Private high schools: In order to get accepted to the private high schools, students are required to pass an entrance exam. The foreign language classes are relatively small and students have access to native speakers of English. The number of hours of foreign language education varies between 6-9 hours per week.

Summary of Organization

Following this introduction, the study continues with a review of the relevant literature (Chapter II). This chapter reviews several relevant issues including research on VLS, the effects of different variables on the choice of vocabulary strategy, including subjects' cultural background, gender, age, and English language proficiency, respectively. The review of the literature also provides a detailed explanation of studies on vocabulary instruction. Chapter III comprises the methodology of the study used to examine the reported VLSs of Turkish students studying English as a foreign language in various universities in Turkey. This chapter includes the pilot study, a description of the main study, instrument, participants, procedure, and results. The methodology chapter also describes how the data are analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Chapter IV presents the findings of the present study, followed by a discussion of the results. This section basically presents the findings of the analysis addressing the four research questions. Chapter V closes the body of this study with a discussion of the practical implications of this research for second and foreign language teachers and learners in Turkey, and with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Until the mid-1980s vocabulary was a neglected area in language learning (Meara, 1981; Laufer 1997), but since then, it has gained considerable popularity, and, in recent years, researchers have begun to re-emphasize the role of vocabulary in language learning. Today the learning of vocabulary is regarded as an important component of foreign language learning both by teachers and researchers (Coady, 1993; Laufer, 1997). As McCarthy (1990) points out, “No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (p. 140).

The attention given to vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) has led to studies investigating VLSs of EFL students. Initially, research on VLSs focused on the impact of variables such as gender (Oxford, 1993), age (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1993), and English proficiency (Yongqi, 1994). More recent investigations have begun to examine the effect of cultural background (Al-Khataybeh, 2000) on VLSs. VLSs of various ethnolinguistic and cultural groups investigated to date include Japanese (Kudo, 1999), Saudi (Al-Nujaidi, 2000), and Sudanese (Ahmed, 1989) students. However, missing

from these VLSs studies is research on the VLSs of Turkish students, the subject of the present study.

The purpose of the study reported here was to examine the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish students studying at state and private universities in their homeland. In particular, this study was aimed at investigating and better understanding what Turkish students do to learn new words in English. This chapter, divided into six sections, provides a review of the research on issues related to the role of vocabulary and the strategies that are employed to learn new words. The first section of this chapter provides information on the role of English language in Turkey. It also addresses the English language education in middle/high schools and higher education in Turkey. The second section gives a synopsis of history of the vocabulary in foreign language teaching and briefly summarizes the role of vocabulary in various foreign language methodologies. The third section reviews research on knowledge of a word: what it means to know a word, and what words to teach. The fourth section reviews the research on various VLSs and gives in-depth definition of these strategies. The fifth section discusses the research on the effects of the different variables on the choice of vocabulary strategies including cultural background, gender, and English language proficiency. The final section summarizes the contents of this review of the literature.

The role of English in Turkey

Turkey is among the developing nations where English is expanding as the primary foreign language, and “has become one of the most vital tools of ideological and social change” (Kachru 1990, p. 5). The role of English is becoming more and more important in every aspect of Turkish people’s lives. They perceive English as a tool for

communicating with the outside world and believe their proficiency in English will help them improve their knowledge in the area of scientific and technical information and help them find higher paid jobs. An increasing number of job advertisements require the candidates to have a good command of both written and spoken English. In fact, when companies are looking for accountants, public relation specialists, executives, managers, or assistant directors, they advertise in English. Engineers, medical doctors, scientists need to read professional journals in English to improve their knowledge in their fields. Thus, motivation to learn English is especially high among the younger generation: not only do they see it as a means to get well-paid jobs, but also knowing English is *popular* and *fashionable* and is considered a social accomplishment. Consequently, Turkish parents have come to realize that the importance of knowing English. Thus they support their children in learning English and try to hire English tutors or send their children to private English language institutes.

Today's language learners in Turkey, compared to a decade ago, have better access to foreign publications. Most of the magazines published at the local newspaper stands around the world such as *Cosmopolitan*, *The Economist*, *Times*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, etc. can be purchased at the newspaper stands in Turkey, and in most of the bookstores. Besides, college students have access to university libraries and computers where they can access various reading materials in English. Families who can afford to subscribe to cable TV are able to watch popular English programs and TV channels such as, CNN, NBC, or MTV.

The popularity of the language can also be seen in private businesses as well. For instance, when selecting a name or a logo for a restaurant, business, bar, or nightclub,

there is a tendency to pick English names, such as The Marmara Club, X Entertainment Center, Y Cultural Center. The business owners prefer using English names because they think the business would have a better chance to sell their products.

English Language Education in Turkey

English language is one of the most important subjects in Turkish high schools and college curricula. Secondary education in Turkey includes all the general, vocational and technical institutions of education that give at least three-year education, and consists of high schools. Students studying at any of these high schools are required to take a foreign language, either, English, French, or German. However, among these foreign languages, English is always the most popular and most frequently elected foreign language.

Besides the public high school, families that can afford it, have the option of sending their children to private high schools, where more hours of English language classes are offered per week. Besides, most of these private high schools employ native speakers of English in order to motivate and encourage the mastery of the target language. Students have access to computer labs where they have a chance to practice their English.

In public schools, however, the amount of time students spend in the foreign language classrooms is limited to only a few hours a week. Based on my experience and knowledge about the English language education system in Turkey, both as a language learner and a teacher, I know that most school districts have a shortage of English language teachers. In cases when there are not enough English teachers, the language classes are either cancelled or teachers from other subject areas substitute. Students who

are fortunate enough to have an English teacher, have only 3-4 hours of English classes where the instruction mostly consists of rote memorization of words, and written exercises of grammar rules. Classes are predominantly teacher centered, and students are mostly asked to read a passage from the textbooks, underline and look up the meanings in the dictionary. Learning vocabulary using memory strategies is pretty popular not only in foreign language areas but also in any other subject area. It is not uncommon for language teachers to ask their students to memorize a given list of words and later give written/oral exams to assess the comprehension. The words studied would mostly be the ones that occur in a given text. Teachers would make a list of the words on the board and ask students to memorize them for the coming exam.

The supreme authority for the higher education is the Council of Higher Education (YOK), which is a fully autonomous national board of trustees with no governmental affiliation. The Turkish higher education has a centralized structure. All universities, both state and private, are subject to the same regulations (www.esib.org/PC/Countries/turkey/Turkey.pdf). Private universities, which are all approved by the Council of Higher Education, have been established since 1984. To get admitted into any undergraduate program in Turkey, the applicant needs a secondary school/high school diploma, and sufficient score from the Student Selection Examination (OSS), which is affiliated to the Council of Higher Education. This examination is usually administered in May, at a single session and at the same time in all centers.

The main language of education in higher institutions in Turkey is Turkish; that is, every student has to take Turkish classes. However, in most institutions of higher education, the medium of language is English where students are required to take

certain hours of English classes. After the students are accepted in an undergraduate program, they are required to take the English language exam offered by the institution. Although the type of the entrance exams varies according to the institution, they are mostly similar to the TOEFL exam where the reading, writing, vocabulary skills are tested. In fact, if the students have an adequate score set by the institutions they are exempt of the entrance exam. Those who take the preparation entrance exam and show adequate EFL ability in written and oral interviews, begin academic course work (i.e. the freshman year) immediately. Students who have insufficient knowledge of English, i.e. are not able to follow the courses in English, have to take the English preparatory classes for one year. This one-year preparatory class is aimed to provide students with the required language level in all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and prepare them to be competent enough to follow lectures, and academic texts, and write research papers.

History of vocabulary in foreign language teaching

Throughout the history, there have been various methods of second or foreign language learning, each with different emphasis on vocabulary. Some of these teaching methodologies put great emphasis on vocabulary and some neglected it. This section summarizes the historical role of vocabulary in various second language methodologies.

In ancient Rome, when children were learning Greek at schools, they first mastered the alphabet, followed by the syllables, words, and finally the discourse (Schmitt, 2000). The textbooks written in this period provided vocabulary help for students either by alphabetizing or grouping them under their respective topic areas

(Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985). Based on this information, Schmitt (2000) concludes that lexis was considered important in SLL.

During the Renaissance, Latin emerged as the predominant language in schools (Schmitt, 2000). Language learning in this period was primarily based on grammar, and even though vocabulary was not a primary focus in language learning, dictionaries were produced to standardize vocabulary. The first English dictionary was published in 1604 by Robert Cawdrey entitled *A Table Alphabetical*, followed by Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755 (Schmitt, 2000).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the major foreign language teaching methodology in foreign language teaching was the Grammar-translation method, which consisted of rote learning of words, teaching and learning of grammar rules, and translating from the mother tongue to the target language and vice versa (Schmitt, 2000). In this rote method, vocabulary did not receive much attention. Students were expected to learn new words on their own, by using dictionaries and bilingual word lists in order to be ready to take tests where they had to translate texts.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a need for a better pedagogical method which would help learners to actually use the foreign language (Schmitt, 2000). This is the period when the *Direct method* of language learning became popular. In contrast to Grammar-translation method, the direct method primarily emphasized oral and listening skills and encouraged students to learn vocabulary by communicating in the target language. According to Zimmerman (1997), in this method vocabulary instruction was explained by pointing out the objects in the classroom, and so was

associated with reality. Abstract words were introduced by grouping them according to topic or association of ideas without the use of translation.

As has been the case with the other foreign language methodologies, the direct method started to show its pedagogical weaknesses, especially during the Second World War, when the American military needed soldiers fluent in foreign languages. Structural linguists in the United States developed a new instructional method called the *Audiolingual Method*, where new words were often introduced through drills.

Audiolingualism emphasized teaching language skills by building habits. Vocabulary was not the primary emphasis and received almost no attention. According to Coady (1993), in this method teachers assumed that learners would increase their vocabulary through exposure to language; therefore no explicit vocabulary instruction was needed.

The audio-lingual method was harshly criticized by Chomsky and his followers who attacked behaviorist idea that language learning is formed by habit formation. During late the 1950s, audiolingualism proved inadequate and thus began to fall out of favor. Following this, Hymes (1972) added his concept of *communicative competence*, which changed the focus of language from correctness to appropriateness. The approach that developed from communicative competence theory emphasized the use of language for meaningful communication. This approach was called *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* and focused on the appropriate use of communicative categories in order to provide students with opportunities to interact with each other and the teacher in natural situations. The CLT approach also gave vocabulary instruction secondary status to grammar. The only help on how to use vocabulary in CLT was taught through problem-solving activities and exercises where students had to exchange information

(such as information gap exercises). Other than that, there was no guidance on how to handle vocabulary.

In general, looking historically at the methods and approaches to foreign language teaching, it appears that the traditional way of memorizing vocabulary words has been common among language learners.

Research on Knowledge of a Word

Learning a word is more than just knowing its simple meaning. According to Richards (1976), “Knowing a word” is a complex process involving the degree of probability of recognizing that word, knowing the types of words that associate with that word, knowing the syntactic behavior of the word, knowing the underlying form of the word, and the derivations that can be made from it. Bada & Okan (2000) explain that knowing a word involves an understanding of the spelling, pronunciation, stress, grammatical class, semantic category, and its occurrence in various contexts.

There are different degrees of knowing a word. For instance, sometimes learners have the knowledge and the experience of recognizing the word when reading it in a text or hearing it during a conversation, but are not able to produce it. Melka (1992) defines this as receptive vocabulary. Productive vocabulary, on the other hand, refers to words when the learner is able to use in speaking and writing. The assumption is that learners first learn the words (receptive) and later are able to produce them (productive). According to Ingram (1974), Aitchison (1987) and Clark (1993), receptive vocabulary is much larger than productive vocabulary. Estimates have shown that receptive vocabulary is double that of productive vocabulary in L2 (Marton, 1977; Michel, 1972). The two notions, receptive and productive vocabulary, can also be explained as active

vocabulary and passive, or recognition vocabulary vs. actual or possible use vocabulary (Melka, 1992).

Knowing a word also involves knowing a set of features. Researchers (Chomsky, 1965, Lado, 1972; Gibson and Levin, 1975; Richards, 1976; Nation, 1990), have agreed that knowledge of the following list is generally accepted to be necessary in order for an individual to know a word:

- Spoken and written form: that would be pronunciation and spelling.
- Word structure: the free morpheme or the bound root morpheme, and the common derivations of the word and its inflections.
- Syntactic pattern of the word in a phrase and sentence.
- Meaning: This includes referential, affective, and pragmatic meaning.
- Lexical relationships of the word with the other words, with respect to the synonym, antonym, and hyponym.
- Common collocations.

The native speaker of a language would likely know all the features of a word listed above; however, according to Laufer (2000), the case is different for foreign language learners. Having to know all the features of a word increases the difficulty of knowing a word for foreign language learners. They might be familiar with a word in a certain context and be able to understand the meaning, but might not be able to use it productively.

In his qualitative study, Gu (1994) interviewed native speakers of Chinese, learning English as a foreign language, asking what it meant to them to “know a word”. One answer he received was “To have learned the word doesn’t just mean to know its

meaning. It's best to put it in a context, to be able to use it in various contexts, for instance, what sort of a situation or a state the word describes, how it is used, and with what words it collocates" (p. 15).

Research on what words to teach

Not all words in English are equally useful nor can they all be taught. According to two separate studies, (Dupuy, 1974; Goulden, Nation, and Read, 1990) English has approximately fifty-four thousand word families. This number is way beyond what second language learners can learn, which brings the language teachers to the question "What words to teach?" Nation and Waring (1997) suggest that the priority needs to go to the high frequency words, and that second language learners need to concentrate on learning these words first. The L2 learner needs to know more or less 3,000 high frequency words which would allow them to comprehend a large portion of words in written and spoken texts. Nation & Waring, (1997) state that teachers need to help learners to develop strategies to learn vocabulary. Even though the goal in teaching these strategies is for the learner to gain control of strategies "... the end goal of these strategies is to help the learners to continue to learn new words and increase their vocabulary size." (Nation & Waring, 1997, p. 11).

Another potential answer to what words to teach would vary according to how the learner wants to use the language. If the learner's goal is only to be able to communicate in daily conversation, then the 2,000 high frequency words is a realistic goal to begin with (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). Nation (1990) adds that this number might seem large at first, but learners are able to acquire a list of 30-100 L2 words with their native language translation to remember them.

In addition to the 2,000 most effective word lists, difficult words should also be emphasized in foreign language teaching. Both as a foreign language teacher and a learner, I have experienced that there is a tendency among language learners to avoid words that are difficult in meaning and pronunciation. As a consequence they prefer to stick with the ones they can generalize.

Since motivation plays an important role in language learning (Baddeley, 1990), having students choose the words they want to learn is an option as well. Learners themselves recognize the importance of a word coming from their need to learn them. Whether these words are difficult, self-selected, or high frequency, the goal of the language teachers should be working consciously with learners. This may mean working with students on their vocabulary 10 minutes every day in class, spending a whole class period every week, or teaching them various VLSs to enable them to handle unknown words on their own.

Definitions of various vocabulary learning strategies

Skehan (1989) states that overall learning strategies have been a neglected area in foreign language teaching. Even though he was referring to the general field of foreign language teaching, his statement holds true for the field of vocabulary as well.. This section defines and gives examples of some of these strategies asked in the survey questionnaire in the present study.

Analyzing word parts

Analyzing a word based on its parts (root, pre-fix, and suffix) is a common strategy used among language learners to predict the meaning of a new word. Many words in English are derived from words of French, Latin, and Greek origin which are

made up of affixes (prefix/suffix) and stems. Thus understanding the meaning of affixes would be extremely useful, especially for learners whose native languages are similar to English. Chin (1999) recommends that teachers help students identify these affixes and roots as a strategy to help them better comprehend word meaning. However, studies have shown that (Vacca & Vacca, 1989; Seal, 1991, Johnson & Steel, 1996) affixes should not be introduced separately as long lists, but rather be presented as they are needed, for instance analyzing the parts of the word in an assigned reading list.

As in the case of other vocabulary strategies, in analyzing word parts there is a possibility that students may arrive at a meaning for a word that is totally incorrect for the given context. With this possibility in mind, Clarke and Nation (1980) suggest that analyzing word parts be a last resort in teaching vocabulary and recommend breaking the word into its prefix, root, and suffix if possible. In order for language learners to be able to successfully use analyzing word parts as a vocabulary strategy, they first need to be introduced to what prefixes and suffixes are. Then they need to practice and experience the use of this strategy; otherwise they might have difficulty correctly predicting the meaning of the word using word forms. Similar to Clarke and Nation's suggestion, Gunning (1996) also advises introducing the word with its prefix and root. For example, he introduces affixes by first writing the words *prepay*, *preview*, *premature* on the board. He then discusses the roots followed by how the prefix *pre-* changes the meaning of root words.

Knowledge of the negative prefix *un-*, for instance, is another example of using analysis of word parts to predict the meaning of the unknown word item. The second or foreign language learner would most likely figure out the meaning of the words

unsuccessful, unhappy, unemployed, if they know the meaning of the stem. Power and White's (1989) study on the use of four prefixes, (*un-, re-, in-, dis-*) proved that 60% of the time the meaning of the unknown word could be understood by knowing the meaning of the stem. Thus, relying on the background knowledge of word parts, mostly the productive suffixes and prefixes, would help the learner to be able to get familiar with new vocabulary (Nation, 1990; Haynes, 1993).

Social strategies

Asking the meaning of an unknown word to someone who knows, is commonly used among foreign language learners. The majority of the time the person would be a teacher or a native speaker, as well as friends, classmates, and/or family members.

Asking the meaning of an unknown word to group members in or outside the class is also another social strategy learners use. The people whom the learner asks about new words can help them in various ways; e.g., giving the L1 translation, giving synonyms, paraphrasing the word, using it in a sentence etc.

Asking someone who knows the target language the meaning of a word might have certain shortcomings. However, for instance, to be able to give the L1 translation the teacher (or another person) needs to know the native language of the learner and even if he or she does, it is hard to find the exact translation which might cause wrong knowledge to be transferred (Martin, 1984). Paraphrasing might have similar kinds of disadvantages as well (Scholfield, 1980). Even though it is not frequently used, asking the teacher to check a word list is another social strategy employed by the language learners. Kramsch (1979) explains that in this strategy students come up with their word lists, or the more mobile flash cards, and ask their teachers to check them for accuracy.

Guessing from the context

Guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar English word from the context is one of the most commonly used strategies in learning vocabulary and has been highly promoted by language instructors (Nation 2001). This strategy involves foreign language learners looking at other words in the text in order to help them comprehend more about the unfamiliar word. To be able to guess the meaning of a new word from the context, however, the learner must have a certain level of language proficiency; training learners in guessing the meaning of the unknown word from the context would help them use this strategy more effectively. Clarke and Nation (1980) discuss an inductive procedure which would help learners in using the contextual strategy. First, the learner decides the part of speech to which the unknown word belongs, and looks at the immediate context of the word. Next, the learner looks at the adjoining sentences to help attempt a guess at the word's meaning. Finally, the learner checks the guess, asking if the word guessed has the same part of speech with the unfamiliar word and substituting the guessed word in the sentence. If the word works, the learner looks up the word in the dictionary.

Studies have shown that there are both advantages and disadvantages of guessing the meaning of an unknown word from the context. While this strategy is widely used among the VLSs and is emphasized as the primary vocabulary skill, studies on the use of this method have shown the two sides of it. Sokmen (1997) offers some arguments as to why this strategy is not an efficient one. First, she argues that guessing the new word from the context is a slow process, especially for those learners who have very limited time to learn words. Second, this method is prone to errors. Second language learners rarely guess the meaning of the new words correctly, especially those with low-level

English proficiency. Unless second language learners achieve a relatively higher level in L2 proficiency, they will have a lesser chance of getting the word right by trying to infer from the context (see also, Cziko, 1978; Pressley, Levin, and Mc Daniel, 1987). The third reason Sokmen mentions for not solely focusing on this strategy is that every individual learner has different, yet successful, strategies to learn new words in language. Thus, this method might not be as useful. In his study with Dutch high school students learning English, Hulstijn (1993) found that students with good guessing skills could acquire vocabulary more easily than those who could not; however, the opposite was not true. Students with good vocabulary skills were not necessarily good at this method. Hulstijn (1993) therefore, suggests that, "... we teach inferring skills as an option, but also allow students to decide whether they need to look up unfamiliar words" (cited in Sokmen, 1997).

Finally, Sokmen mentions that guessing from the context does not necessarily result in long-term retention, and acquisition might not happen the first time. Studies (e.g. Parry, 1993; Mondria & Wit de-Boer, 1991; and Wesche & Paribakht, 1994) have shown that even if the student is exposed to a rich text and does a lot of reading, what it takes to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word is not the same as it takes to store the meaning in memory. Repeated exposure to a word in a variety of contexts (e.g., books, magazines, watching TV, interaction with native speaker) often leads to a better understanding and greater depth of knowledge of the word. Nation (2001) mentions that in order for a student to truly acquire the word in depth he or she needs to encounter the word between 5-16 times either in written or oral texts. In essence, the more exposure a student has to a word, the better the acquisition of that word.

Despite the afore mentioned shortcomings of this method, guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar word from context is still widely used among the L2 learners, and no one has thrown this strategy out as another alternative strategy to learn a new word. Nagy (1997) offers some convincing arguments for the use of contextual guessing. Even though the chance of learning a new word from the context is low, he argues that the cumulative effects of learning new words by using this method can account for significant vocabulary growth. Nagy also says this method might be less important for the learners at the beginning level because they might not have achieved a higher proficiency level. At higher levels; however, context plays an important role, and guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words from the context becomes an important strategy for language learners.

Some studies have demonstrated that second language learners are successfully able to guess the meanings of words from context (see also Parry, 1993; Chern, 1993; Haynes, 1993; Huckin & Bloch, 1993). These studies have also concluded that second language learners are active strategy users, and although they are not very successful in global clues (the ones requiring integration of information throughout the text), they are successful in the use of local clues (the clues requiring reference to the immediate context).

Training in the use of strategy improves learners' ability to correctly guess the meaning of the words. Huckin and Jin (1987) investigated the effects of instruction on the use of this strategy. The participants were 18 Chinese graduate students at two American universities. The experimental group was briefly trained for 15 minutes on how to guess the meaning of a word from the context. The results showed a significant difference in

the percentage of correct guesses between the control and experimental groups. This study showed that even brief instruction in guessing the unknown word from the context could enhance learners' ability to guess meaning from the context.

These arguments, as well as the findings of the afore mentioned studies lead me to believe that learning vocabulary from context should be an integral part of any language program. However, I think that guessing the meaning of the new vocabulary item from the context requires an extensive knowledge of vocabulary and in some cases maybe familiarity with topic of the text, which to me is an obvious weakness of this method.

Cognates

Cognates are words in different languages which have descended from a common parent, have the same origin, similar pronunciation and spelling in both languages, and are frequently similar in meaning. For example the word *wasser* in German, and the word *water* in English have a similar pronunciation, spelling and meaning. When it comes to remembering and guessing the meaning of new words, cognates are excellent sources for the language learners, especially if the target language is closely related to the learner's L1 (Schmitt, 1997; Holmes and Ramos, 1993). Similarly, Maera (1993) and Palmberg (1985) give an example: when learners see a cognate such as *inteligencia* in Spanish and *intelligent* in English, they anticipate that the meanings of these words are equal, which helps the learner to recognize the words.

Languages also borrow words from each other and mostly these words keep their similarities in form and meaning. For example, *yogurt* is originally a Turkish word that English has borrowed which has retained its original Turkish form and

meaning in both languages. Similarly, Turkish has borrowed words from English such as train, television, sports, electricity etc which helps the native speakers of Turkish students learning English as a foreign language to remember, recognize, and learn the words to a great extent.

Later on in the learning phase, the L2 learner realizes that cognates are not always equivalent. Melka (1992) states that at the beginning level the learner has a tendency to generalize the meaning of the cognates. However, in the later stage the L2 learner would hesitate to produce cognates that s/he is not sure about.

The use of the dictionary

Dictionaries are used extensively by language learners as a vocabulary strategy, and they play an important role in SL learning. According to Summers (1988), language teachers should encourage students to make use of the information in their dictionaries. Learners will not always be able to infer the meaning of the words through analyzing word parts, context clues, etc. Therefore, they should be allowed to consult their dictionaries, especially when unknown vocabulary impedes the meaning, the word form analysis provides few clues, or the contextual clues are not enough to predict the meaning of the unknown vocabulary item (Chin, 1999). Additionally, studies have shown that (McKeown, 1993; Nist & Olejnik, 1995) dictionaries might be the only aid available to help learner obtaining the vocabulary meaning of a word when they are alone without any help from a teacher or native speaker.

However, there are certain shortcomings and disadvantages of using the dictionary as a vocabulary strategy (Scholfield, 1982). Some language teachers rely extensively upon dictionaries, assuming that the definitions in the dictionary will help

students learn the new words. Yet, Nagy (1988) argues that the dictionary definition does not necessarily lead to successful knowledge of a word. Often it doesn't provide students with enough information to use the word correctly or in an appropriate manner. For instance, even though a dictionary definition provides the pronunciation of a word, learners only see the written form in the dictionary. Thus, they might not be able to recognize the word when they hear it spoken which would ultimately interfere with comprehension.

Studies have shown that compared to monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries are used more extensively among language learners (Tomaszczyk, 1997; Baxter 1980). As an EFL learner myself, I was always instructed by my foreign language teachers to use monolingual dictionaries from the early stages of the learning process. However, my observation as an EFL teacher was that, some students, especially those at the beginning level feel more comfortable using bilingual dictionaries. Therefore, I think students should be given the option of choosing the type of dictionary (monolingual vs. bilingual) on their own.

Altun (1995) investigated the effects of monolingual dictionary training on Turkish EFL students' vocabulary learning. The participants were 37 Turkish EFL preparatory students in the Department of English Language Teaching at Mustafa Kemal University. Students were randomly assigned to three groups, the dictionary training group (DT), dictionary only group (D), and the guessing group (G). The dictionary-training (DT) group received special instructions on the use of the monolingual dictionary. Subjects in the dictionary group (D) had access to dictionary but received no training on the use of the monolingual dictionary. The guessing group

neither had access to nor training with monolingual dictionary. Subjects were given a pre-test and a post-test in order to measure the vocabulary learning. The results showed that for vocabulary production the DT group performed significantly better than the other two groups. There was no significant difference between the D and G groups. The finding of the study showed that dictionary training had a positive effect on vocabulary production, and access to dictionary without training was not superior to guessing.

Grouping words

Grouping words according to their meaning is another helpful vocabulary learning strategy. An example would be recalling the words that typically belong to the same group such as all vegetables, all fruits, or all animals. Studies have shown that (Schmitt, 1997, Cofer, Bruce, and Reicher, 1996) this strategy works for L1, and there is no reason not to believe that it will not for L2 learners; besides, organizing the words this way, would help to recall the new words.

Bellezza (1983) found that when words are grouped in some sort of pattern they are better recalled than words arranged in columns. For instance, words arranged on the page in the shape of rectangles, plus signs, Xs, Ks were better recalled both immediately and after one week than words arranged in columns. Similarly, Decker and Wheatly (1982) found that words listed diagonally down the page were better remembered than those listed in one straight column.

Mnemonics

Mnemonics, (meaning-aiding memory), is another strategy language learners use to consciously remember the meaning of the words. Once the student learns the meaning of new words, they need to make an extra effort to remember them. Similar to

guessing meaning from context, mnemonic is also widely used among language learners and has been researched extensively. This strategy can be verbal, visual, or a combination of both (Sokmen, 1997). Similarly, Baddeley (1990) mentions that using the rhyming of poetry or song is one of the most common verbal mnemonic device used to enhance memory, and this has a very powerful effect on retention.

Using visual aids (word/picture activities) to remember the meaning of the words can be helpful for students as they set up mental links. In his study with 79 first semester Spanish students at the University of Central Arkansas, Pouwel (1992) founded a relationship among the teaching of foreign language vocabulary with visual aids, and students' vocabulary achievement scores. Swahili was chosen over Spanish in order to avoid any former knowledge. Thirty concrete nouns were chosen from Swahili. The first ten words had pictorial visual aids, the second ten words had verbal visual aids along with the English equivalent, and the last ten words had a combination of pictorial and verbal visual aids. The results showed the strongest statistically significant correlation was between the combined picture and verbal visual aids and scores on the vocabulary recall test.

Among all the mnemonic devices, Atkinson's (1975) keyword method, the linking of a visual image to a sound, is the most researched in the language learning mnemonic technique. In this method, the learner comes up with an L1 word that rhymes with the word to be learned in the target language, and then creates a visual image of the L1 word that goes with the L2 meaning. Atkinson (1975) offers an example from Spanish. In order to learn the Spanish word *pato* (duck), the rhyming keyword *pot* can be used along with the imaginary link of a duck hiding under a pot. Atkinson's

extensive research on the keyword method has shown that, in general, providing keywords for learners, especially for beginners, works very well.

Sokmen (1997) provides an example from Turkish. To teach the Turkish word *kapi* (door), the word *cop* (policeman) in English can be used, as it is acoustically similar with the L2 word. Then the acoustic image would be a cop waiting at a door, *kapi*. So every time the student comes across the Turkish word *kapi*, he or she would remember the image of the cop standing at the door, which would lead the learner to the meaning of the word.

The results of the studies conducted on the use of keyword method have been both positive and negative. For instance, in Levin, Glassman, and Nordwall's (1992) study, subjects using the keyword method were able to recall the meaning of L2 words better compared to those subjects using sentence-context or free study. Levin (1993) suggests that although this method is not for every student, studies have shown that it works for "*many students some of the time*" (p. 242). Atkinson and Raugh (1975) studied the role of keyword method in language learning. They did an experiment by using Spanish vocabulary to show the effectiveness of this particular method. The experimental group was given instructions on how to use the keyword method, while the control group was told to only use rote rehearsal procedure when studying lexical items. The results of the vocabulary comprehensive test showed that the control group recalled only 28% compared to 88% in the experimental group.

In addition to their experiment with the use of keyword method for learning Spanish vocabulary, Atkinson and Raugh (1975) wanted to see whether this method was also beneficial in learning vocabulary items in a non-Romance language, namely

Russian. The subjects were fifty-two Stanford University undergraduates with no former training in Russian. There were 120 Russian words, with the keywords being pre-selected by an expert committee. The subjects were first trained with the equipment, a specific computer program and headphones, and then were randomly assigned to either the control or the experimental group. When the experimental group listened to a Russian word, they could simultaneously see a keyword or keyword phrase as well as the English translation on the computer screen. They were instructed to learn the keyword first and then create their own visual image between the keyword and its English translation. The control group, on the other hand, only received the English translation and no keyword. The 120 Russian words were introduced in four consecutive days. A comprehensive test was given on the fourth day of the experiment. The keyword group was able to recall 72% of the words, and the control group was able to recall 46%. An unannounced comprehensive test was given six weeks later to assess the amount of words that could be recalled. While the experimental group recalled 43%, the control group recalled only 28% of the 120 Russian words. In order to evaluate the use of this method in actual teaching situations, Atkinson and Raugh (1975) developed a vocabulary-learning program to supplement the second-year course at Stanford University. This program consisted of 40-minute sessions every week for a 10-week period. During these sessions students emphasized the usefulness of the keyword method.

The use of keyword method has also been successful in helping learners to better recall foreign language words compared to the other VLSs. Kasper (1993) conducted a study where he compared the keyword method and rote memorization

using a total of 72 Spanish words consisting of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The experimental group received the instruction in the keyword method, and the control group was asked to memorize the words. The results of the final test showed that subjects in the experimental group correctly translated 86% of the sentence combinations compared to the 49% of the control group.

Some studies have compared the effect of bizarre visual association in the keyword method to the regular visual association. For example, Senter and Hoffman (1976), presented the subjects in their study with pictures of objects in two different ways, one with bizarre or common, and the other in interacting. The results showed that interacting ones were recalled better compared to non-interacting ones, and the bizarre pictures were not necessarily more effective than the plausible ones. The findings of this study demonstrated that, contrary to common belief, bizarre visual associations were not necessarily more effective compared to the ordinary ones.

In a series of experiments, Wang, Thomas, Inzana, and Primicerio (1993), explored the accuracy of results claiming the keyword method to be a superior method of recall, over rote memorization. The researchers criticized that most experimental studies relied on with-in subject comparisons of retention over time, which are confined by both rates of initial acquisition and level of immediate recall. Therefore, Wang, et. al., designed several experiments in which the retention interval (immediate versus delayed) was treated as a between-subject factor. Their first experiment involved 70 university students, using a 2x2 factorial design, with variables of learning condition (keyword vs. one-week delay). Subjects using the keyword method for learning 22 French concrete nouns were compared to subjects using rote

rehearsal. As predicted, the mnemonic group recalled more words than the control group. However, in an unexpected finding, researchers discovered that subjects using mnemonic devices forgot the words sooner than those subjects learning the same information by rote. In the second experiment, whose design replicated that of the first, subjects were asked to learn 20 concrete nouns in Tagalog, the major language of the Philippines. The overall pattern of results was virtually identical for both experiments. While keyword learners were markedly superior to rote rehearsal subjects in the immediate testing condition, there was no significant difference between the groups after the one-week delay. Wang et al. hypothesized that the positive results for keyword learners could be due to the fact that their initial acquisition level was higher than that of rote rehearsal learners.

The third experiment involved sixty subjects who were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions: keyword immediate, keyword delay, rote rehearsal-immediate and rote rehearsal delay. In order to achieve almost identical initial acquisition level of the groups, learners were provided with additional study time. Results from this experiment showed no significant differences in recall between the two learning groups on the immediate test. On the delayed test, the rote rehearsal group outperformed the keyword group. Contrary to the three former experiments, the fourth one involved within-subject measures across time, which meant that the same 39 subjects were tested for immediate and delayed recall. In the fourth experiment, the keyword group outperformed the rote rehearsal group on the immediate test of cued recall as well as after the one-week delay. With this series of experiments, Wang, et. al.

showed that due to the acquisition rate, levels of immediate performance could inflate delayed performance and lead to erroneous conclusions regarding forgetting rates.

Contrary to the studies mentioned above, some studies also show that the keyword method is not as effective in recalling vocabulary, and that it has some limitations. Stenberg (1987) argues that the keyword method is limited and requires a lot of effort on the learners' side. He contends that method is limited to little use with abstract vocabulary, and that it does not have any tricks to help learners remember the spelling and/or pronunciation of vocabulary words (Ellis, 2000).

Another mnemonic strategy is that of focusing on the orthographical or phonological form to help remember what the meaning of the word is. Schmitt (1997) gives the example of making an orthographical form of a word to remember it, or to make a mental representation of the sound of a word. Another option, according to Schmitt, would be to explicitly study the spelling or pronunciation of the word. Studies have shown that (Marchbanks and Levin, 1965; Timko, 1970), the first letter of the word has the most prominent feature to remember a word.

Besides keyword, there have been studies dealing with mnemonic devices (Cohen and Apeh, 1981; Hogben & Lawson, 1994). Through interviews with the language learners, Cohen and Apeh (1981) have identified 11 different kinds of associations among English speaking students at an intensive Hebrew program in Israel. Some of these strategies included:

- Associating English words with Hebrew words by sound.
- Associating Hebrew words with other Hebrew words by sound.
- Associating the word with frequently seen signs.

- Associating Hebrew words with proper names.
- Associating the Hebrew word to an English phrase by sound and meaning.

If efficiently presented, the mnemonic device may provide a good start for the learner to make semantic relationships among the words.

The study conducted by Raif (1999) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of two techniques, teacher-supplied mnemonic keywords and teacher supplied dictionary definition, on the recognition of English vocabulary items. The subjects were thirty-two native speakers of Turkish studying English as a foreign language at Middle East Technical University, department of Basic English located in Ankara. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the two groups to be instructed with one of the techniques. The researcher selected 20 vocabulary items based on the assumption subjects were not familiar with these items. Students in both groups received a list of L2 vocabulary items. However, one group had a list of words with Turkish translation and key words, and the other group had a list of words with dictionary definitions. Both groups were given an immediate recall test, and another one three weeks later. The test results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups which showed that neither techniques could be considered as aiding vocabulary retention.

Yayli (1995) investigated the effects of the teacher-provided and student generated keyword method on the immediate and delayed recall and recognition of vocabulary items under classroom conditions. The subjects were forty-seven intermediate-level students from three intact classes, studying at a Turkish university. One class received teacher-instructed keyword method, the other student-generated

keyword method, and the last group were asked to learn the words by heart using rote-memorization. Each group was given 20 minutes to learn 20 target words. Participants were given a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test right after the treatment, in order to measure immediate recall and recognition. The same test was given to all the participants to measure the long-term retention of the vocabulary items. Results of the three tests did not show any significant difference among the groups. The results of Yayli's study demonstrated that keyword method (either generated by students or teacher) is not better compared to rote-memorization for either vocabulary recall or recognition.

Pictures/videos

New words can be learned by studying them with pictures of their meaning instead of definition, (pairing L2 words with pictures). By using picture dictionaries students associate the new word with its picture right away. In certain schools in Turkey, pictures and videos are commonly used in foreign language classrooms as an aid to introduce and practice vocabulary. Kumbaroglu (1998) did a study where she compared the effectiveness of picture versus videos in vocabulary recognition and retention among Turkish EFL students. The researcher also wanted to see whether proficiency level was a factor, so she chose her subjects from two different proficiency levels: pre-intermediate, and intermediate. A 2x2 factorial design was used with pre-intermediate picture group, pre-intermediate video group, intermediate picture group, and intermediate video group. Each group was given a pre-test on forty English words, and a post-test after the treatment session. A third exam was given at the end of the treatment to measure the long-term retention of the English words. The results showed

no significant relationship between either recognition of the vocabulary items and the type of treatment they received (picture versus video) or the proficiency levels of the learners (pre-intermediate, intermediate). The only significant difference in the study was the results of the long-term test, which proved pictures to be more effective visual aids in helping students' long-term retention of vocabulary.

Cognitive strategy

This strategy includes written and verbal repetition, repeatedly writing or saying a word over and over again, along with word lists and/or flash cards which can be taken almost anywhere and studied when one has free moment. Going over the vocabulary section in the textbook is another cognitive strategy. A vocabulary notebook has been suggested by a number of researchers (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1993). Although these strategies are similar to memory strategies, they are particularly useful on mental processing (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). Since these strategies are directly related to learning, Schmitt classifies them as cognitive strategies. Oral repetition of a vocabulary, and writing it several times are also some examples of cognitive strategies. Finally, learners can also use flash cards or note cards, which are very convenient because they can easily be carried to any place.

Word lists

Making word lists is not as popular among language teachers who believe that the lexical items should be introduced only in context, and they believe using word lists would prohibit guessing meaning from context (Schmitt, 1993). I personally believe introducing words in a non-contextual fashion, as long lists with their L1 translations, is an outdated method. In addition, based on my experience both as a foreign language

teacher and a language learner, words introduced using long word lists tend to be forgotten easily, which obviously is a weakness of this strategy. Similarly, Chin (1999) argues that providing students with only word lists in class would not help them to connect the newly learned item with the pre-existing knowledge and consolidate the new words into their lexicon. Besides, it should not be assumed that vocabulary learned from word lists or word cards are learned forever. This strategy is used in the initial stage of learning a word, and there is always a need for extra exposure to the words through various activities such as listening, reading, writing, speaking.

Even though presenting words in isolation is not popular among language teachers, some studies show that this method is a strong part of the vocabulary learning process and that it is effective in terms of the amount and speed of learning (Cohen and Apeh 1981; Paivio and Desrochers 1981). Nation's (1982) survey study showed that language learners were able to learn a large number of words using this strategy. According to Nation, this technique can be very beneficial at the initial exposure to the word; however, the word would be only partially learned unless it is enriched by additional information. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) explained how this could be done by the help of a vocabulary notebook, noticing that the new words are first learned through translation, and then they can be enriched in various ways (semantic maps, grouping, being used in sentences).

In another study with Japanese students, Schmitt and Schmitt (1997) found that, learning the meanings of the words using a word list was among the most popular VLSs among this particular group of students. Similarly, based on my experience both as a foreign language learner and a teacher, I know that studying new vocabulary items with

their Turkish translations as long lists is a fairly popular vocabulary strategy among Turkish foreign language learners. It is very common among English teachers to assign students to study and learn the words on the word lists. However, despite the fact that this method is still popular among Turkish language learners, I personally think presenting words as long lists, is not efficient. Using word lists to acquire vocabulary can be one way of learning new words in a foreign language; however, I think it should be incorporated with other VLSs as well.

Real life practice

Real life practice is another strategy students use to learn, and practice their vocabulary. Even though students don't have as much opportunity to practice their English outside the class in an English as a foreign language environment, with extra effort there are still things that they can do in order to practice their vocabulary. For example, reading newspapers, magazines and books printed in English and, if possible, having conversation with native speakers on a regular basis, are all ways foreign students can learn and reinforce their vocabulary. Besides, it is relatively easy to get access to Internet in Turkey. Even if the student cannot afford owning a computer, access to Internet is available at places called *Internet Coffee Shops*. Most universities are equipped with computers. Language learners surfing on the net, using e-mail would come across new words, which might help them become familiar with the word easier. In addition to computers, those who have the opportunity to own cable, have a chance to watch English TV channels, such as BBC, CNN, or MTV. Foreign magazines are also available at bookstores in Turkey.

EFL Vocabulary Learning in Turkey

From my personal experience, I believe that the public school EFL curriculum in Turkey is overloaded with grammatical explanation at the expense of vocabulary instructions. This results in students' failure to acquire the necessary vocabulary, which would lower their competence in all the four language skills. Besides, students lack the knowledge of the various VLSs that would tremendously help them to acquire the L2 vocabulary. The EFL curriculum in Turkey lacks adequate use of VLSs; there is insufficient presentation of vocabulary items, and ineffective use of vocabulary recycling and testing. Therefore providing learners who have limited vocabulary size with extensive grammatical instruction may not be very useful.

Since exposure to the second language is limited in the EFL environments, the EFL programs in Turkey need to compensate for the lack of exposure to the target language. If this necessary input is not provided to the language learners then the teaching of all the language skills may be affected. The teaching of EFL vocabulary in Turkey is no exception to this. To the best of my knowledge, the vocabulary learning strategies of Turkish students have not been researched. The closest study I was able to find is Bada and Okan's (2000) study of Turkish *Students' Language Learning Preferences*. The study was originally designed to find out about learners' preferences in learning a foreign language and to see to what extent the language teachers at the same institute were aware of their students' strategies. Subjects for this study was 230 Turkish students at the English Language Teaching department at a state university in Turkey. They were given a 13-item questionnaire asking about their preferences in working styles, learning inside and outside classroom, different was of learning, error correction, peer correction, and their media preferences. One section of the questionnaire asked the

learners whether they liked to use the following vocabulary strategies when learning an item: use new words in a sentence, think of the relationships between known and new words, say or write words several times, avoid word by word translation, guessing the unknown word, or reading the text without looking up the words, all of which overlapped with the items asked in the survey for this study. However, the options the students had to answer these questions were either yes or no. So, either they were supposed to chose whether they used the strategy or not. Setting up a relationship between the known word and the new word was the most popular strategy among this particular group of learners (64%). This strategy was followed by inferring the meaning from context (60.9%). According to Bada and Okan (2000), one possible explanation for this strategy to be popular is because teachers in that institution highly emphasized this strategy in the classroom and language instructors motivated students to use this method. Strategies such as written or oral repetition of the words, and avoiding verbatim translation were among the least popular VLSs.

Even though part of Bada and Okan's (2000) study examines the VLSs of Turkish students, the study was limited in its scope to examining a limited number of VLSs. Besides, the students were asked to choose between the only two given options, "yes" or "no". Moreover, the study did not examine the effect of different variables on the choice of VLSs such as gender, self-reported English proficiency, use of strategies based on the number of years they have studied English, educational background and whether there are any differences in the use of strategy among the students studying at the state universities versus those at the private universities.

The current study is an attempt to fill this gap. Examining the various VLSs of the Turkish students will provide foreign language teachers with the knowledge of what language learners do to learn an unfamiliar vocabulary item in English. By providing statistics and measures about Turkish EFL learners, the language educators in Turkey may use the findings of this study to relate to the huge body of research on L2 vocabulary and to improve vocabulary acquisition instructions and conditions.

The effects of different variables on the choice of VLSs

Every student has his or her unique way of learning a new word when studying a foreign language. Strategies are not inherently good, and there is no such thing as the best way to learn a word. However, studies have shown that certain variables such as cultural background, gender, and English language proficiency might affect the choice of VLSs among the learners.

The impact of cultural background on the choice of VLSs

Studies have shown that cultural background influences the learners' choice of the way they learn new words. In her study of Hispanic EFL students Reid (1995) found that, they preferred predicting, guessing from context, and working with peers (rather than alone): whereas, Japanese EFL students preferred using more analytic strategies aiming towards accuracy, work alone and look for small details. They lean more towards accuracy, studying alone, and search for small details. Students from Korea, and Arabic-speaking countries, on the other hand, tended to prefer learning words in some specified sequence because, according to Reid, their respective cultural and educational backgrounds encouraged them to do so.

Certain vocabulary strategies are more popular with certain groups of students. Kudo (1999) conducted a study with the 504 Japanese senior high school students who ranged in age from 15 to 18. The purpose of the study was to find out what strategies these students used when learning a new word and to systematically categorize these strategies into memory, social, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies. The mean for the social strategies was the lowest, which Kudo speculated might be due to the fact that vocabulary learning does not really require social interaction. Almost all the individual strategies received the highest score indicating that this group of students do not collaborate when learning a new word. The study also showed that cognitively demanding strategies such as the keyword method and semantic mapping were unpopular among this particular group, whereas strategies which were not cognitively demanding such as verbal repetition and rote learning were among the most commonly used strategies. This, according to Kudo, might be due to the fact that rote learning has been historically widely used in Japan. Kudo's study was of particular interest to me because his study was similar to mine as she focused on one specific group of students; i.e. the Japanese speakers, aiming to find what specific strategies this particular group of students use and whether they can be generalized to the population.

Studies have shown that certain learners from the same cultural background use similar strategies when it comes to learning new words. Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) studied the vocabulary learning strategies of 600 Japanese EFL students, ages varying from high school students to adults. The students were asked to complete a survey of VLSs asking them whether they used each strategy or not. They were also asked to rate the five most helpful strategies. Strategies such as written and verbal repetition, saying

the word out loud when studying it, studying the spelling of the word, and studying the word's synonyms and antonyms were considered the most popular strategies among these learners. On the other hand, students considered strategies such as having the teacher check word lists and flash cards, using cognates, using key word approach, studying the word roots, prefixes, and suffixes as being the least helpful (and so the least popular). These results, according to Schmitt & Schmitt (1993), showed that Japanese students favored strategies demanding more mental processing, i.e. the highly popular strategies.

Kobayashi's (2000) study on VLSs also focuses on the Japanese students, specifically those studying English in the United States. Designed to partially replicate Schmitt's study (1997), the study investigated how the use of vocabulary learning strategies by Japanese students in the United States differ from their peers studying in Japan. Kobayashi's study also compared two groups of language learners in the U.S. One group consisted of 22 Japanese students studying English in three English programs, and the second group consisted of 24 students studying academic subjects at a State university. Kobayashi administered a written questionnaire similar to the one used in Schmitt's study (1997). The results showed that there was a strong positive correlation between the two groups, namely those studying at the English institute and those studying in the academic classes. Strategies such as the use of bilingual dictionary, guessing from the textual context, saying the new words out loud were among the most popular in both groups. Strategies such as asking the teacher for an L1 translation, key word method, and using flash cards were among the least popular ones, among this particular group of students. Overall, there was a high degree of agreement

both in use and helpfulness of VLSs among the three groups of students. This, according to Kobayashi, proves that there is a high degree of similarity in VLSs among the Japanese students and that the cultural background is, in fact, a variable that affects the choice of vocabulary strategies among language learners.

The study conducted by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also concluded that cultural background is another learner characteristic when it comes to vocabulary learning. They found that Hispanics who had strategy training improved their vocabulary scores compared to the Hispanic control group. However, Asians in the strategy training group performed worse than the Asian control group. In fact, the Asian students in the training group resisted training.

Similar to Kudo's, Kobayashi's, and O'Malley and Chamot's study on the impact of cultural background on VLSs, Al-Nujaidi (2000) conducted a study to survey the VLSs used by first-year university students studying English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Strategies involving low level mental or mechanical processing were among the most frequently used ones. Some of these strategies included taking notes of new words in class, verbal and written repetition, using both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Less cognitively demanding strategies were among the most used strategies such as physical action, using scales to learn gradable adjectives and teacher checking wordlists and flash cards.

In his study Al-Nujaidi (2000) also investigated the differences in strategy use across cultures by comparing the VLSs of Japanese EFL learners, Japanese ESL learners, and Saudi EFL learners, respectively. He compared the results of his study with Schmitt's (1997) and Kobayashi's (2000) study that investigated the VLSs of 600

Japanese EFL and 45 Japanese ESL learners, respectively. Results showed that the largest difference was between the strategy use by Saudi and Japanese EFL learners. Saudis tended to use VLSs much more than their Japanese peers. However, Japanese ESL learners tended to use mentally demanding strategies more often than Saudis. This study is significant in that it indicates how students from similar cultural background tend to have similar patterns of VLSs. Perhaps the present study will reveal among Turkish student, a pattern similar to the Arabic, and Japanese students in the mentioned studies.

According to Oxford & Anderson (1995), “Research shows that individuals within a culture tend to have a common pattern of learning and perception when members of their culture are compared to members of another culture” (cited in Cagiltay & Bichelmeyer, 2000). To the best of my knowledge, there have not been any studies on the correlation between Turkish students and the VLSs they use. The closest study that I was able to find is Cagiltay & Bichelmeyer’s (2000) qualitative study on the learning style relationships between Turkish and American students. The participants for the study were three Turkish and two U.S. graduate students each of whom was interviewed for two hours. The results showed that Turkish students used memorization and rote learning widely, whereas, the American students used more real life related activities in class. All three of the Turkish students mentioned about the conservative characteristics of Turkish culture and its effect on learning. Additionally, they stressed the importance of memorization in the education system, which continues to be considered by some professors as the best way to teach. Based on the findings of

Cagiltay & Bichelmeyer's study, I would assume that Turkish students would use rote memorization as one of the main VLSs.

The impact of gender on the choice of VLSs

Certain personal characteristics such as gender of the learner can affect the choice of vocabulary strategy. Studies have shown that certain vocabulary strategies are more popular among female learners than their male counterparts. Using 135 students in beginning level German classes, Nyikos (1987) conducted a controlled, university-level VLSs training study, to find out the impact of gender on VLSs. Three treatment groups received written instructions along with examples of three types of memory strategies respectively. The first group, the color-only group, associated certain colors with grammatical gender of the noun to be learned. The second group, the picture only group, associated each item with a drawing. The last group used both color and drawing. Rote memorization was used in the control group. Nyikos' study showed that the color only strategy was more effective for women, while the color plus picture was very advantageous for men which, according to Nyikos, caused by the different perceptions of grades by the two genders. Men viewed grades as rewards, whereas women viewed grades as signs of social approval.

Stoffer (1995) designed a study to research the effects of different variables such as age, and gender on the choice of VLSs. He administered the VOLSI (Vocabulary Learning Strategies Inventory), a 53-item Likert-type measurement scale, to 707 university students enrolled in various foreign language courses (German, French, Japanese, Russian, or Spanish) in the US. There were almost twice as many female students as male. Results of the study showed that even though gender as a variable did

not make an overall significant difference in strategy use female students used strategies such as making mental linkage, memory, and organizing words strategies more frequently than their male colleagues. The findings of Stoffer's study was consistent with the existing research, which showed, female students used more strategies compared to their male peers (Politzer, 1983; Nyikos, 1987; Oxford, Park-Ok, Ito, & Sumrall, 1993).

Similar to the findings of Stoffer's study, Al-Nujaidi's (2000) research on *Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Saudi First-year University Students* showed that the difference between the two genders is not significant. Al-Nujaidi looked at the difference between the two genders in terms of the quantity and frequency of the strategy use. Even though the results didn't show a significant difference, male Saudi learners appeared to use more strategies compared to their female peers (an average of 39.6 of the 47 strategies, compared to 38.6 among female students, p. 59).

The role of English Proficiency on the choice of VLSs

The use of vocabulary learning strategies is often related to students' level of English proficiency. Lawson and Hogben (1996) divided the students as good and poor based on their recall scores. They later compared the strategy use of these students. The results clearly showed that the single feature distinguishing the two groups were the total number of strategies used. The high scoring group i.e. the group in which the high proficiency students were, used twice as many strategies. Besides, the good students employed more procedures and used them more consistently than their less successful peers.

One of the pioneering studies on how the good and poor learners approach lexical learning was conducted by Ahmet (1988). He asked 300 EFL Sudanese learners to learn 14 new words. To elicit the kind of strategies the learners use during the learning process, he used think-aloud protocols. The learners were divided into good and poor learners based on their scholastic records. Ahmet concluded that overall good learners used more strategies, showed greater awareness of what they could learn about new words, and also relied more on various strategy types.

Another study comparing the strategy use of good and poor students was conducted by Gu (1994). The study was designed to explore the VLSs of Chinese learners of English, to see, in qualitative terms, whether the strategies they used were related to their English proficiency. Her subjects were two university students identified as “poor” and “good” language learners. They were asked to read two passages, one with twice as many unfamiliar vocabulary word as the other. Using the think aloud protocol, the texts were marked for students to stop reading at certain points to verbalize their thinking process. Each learner’s vocabulary learning process was studied according to vocabulary learning, initial handling of a problem, dictionary use and reinforcement strategies. The two Chinese learners were compared and contrasted and some dramatic differences were found. The “good” learner was actively aware of the VLSs and made extensive use of them whereas the “poor” learner used fewer strategies. The “good” learner frequently tried to use a variety of cues in order to guess the meaning of a word before looking it up in the dictionary whereas the poor learner rarely made use of these cues and made no successful attempts. Gu comments that the poor learner, as the one in this study, has been using inadequate strategies for too long and

concludes the study by stating that “to help learners like her [the poor learner], researchers and especially teachers would be better off taking up the role of a nurse, pushing the wheel chairs of the strategically disabled, guiding them, encouraging them patiently to stand up again” (p. 16). Of course, it would be unwise to generalize the results of this study based on two subjects; however the findings recommend that teachers can help low English proficiency students to develop their own self-sufficient vocabulary learning strategies which would eventually lead them be autonomous language learners.

There are few research studies on L2 vocabulary learning in various types of vocabulary context. Sanaoui’s research (1992) is unique in this area. She looked at how adult L2 learners approached learning vocabulary acquisition in a French as a foreign language (FFL) environment. She administered a questionnaire to 74 students studying French in Vancouver. She identified the learners as *structured* and *unstructured*. Sanaoui identified learners as structured if they indicated a) spending three or more hours per week on independent language study, b) initiating more than three learning activities, c) keeping extensive records of vocabulary items and reviewed them occasionally and d) their opportunities to practice words came from self-initiated activities. On the contrary those who did not follow any of these criteria were considered to have an unstructured approach. Sanaoui compared students’ performance on vocabulary test based on their structured or unstructured approach. Results showed that students with a structured approach were overall more successful than those with an unstructured approach. This study showed that learners’ approaches to vocabulary study

were an important factor and that the structured approach was related to advanced lexical acquisition as measured by the vocabulary test.

Contrary to Gu's and Sanaoui's studies, Lessard-Clouston's (1988) study showed that there was no correlation between students' approach to vocabulary learning (whether structured or unstructured) and students' proficiency level. He investigated and compared the vocabulary learning strategies of five non-native and six native speaking graduate students of theology in a core course. The non-native speakers of English were all native speakers of Cantonese or Mandarin Chinese. The purpose of the research was to find out whether a particular approach (structured vs. unstructured) or strategy (consulting a dictionary) predicts success in learning vocabulary. Data were gathered using a test of theological language that looked for information about both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge at the beginning and end of the term. The results showed that most students did not use structured vocabulary learning strategies. In essence structured vocabulary learning strategies did not predict success in developing vocabulary.

Lessard-Clouston's recent study (1996) which replicated the most essential steps of Sanaoui's research, also failed to find any relationship between students' approaches to vocabulary learning and their English proficiency level. His participants were 14 students enrolled in a TEOFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) preparation class. Learners were given a questionnaire similar to the one in Sanaoui's study to find out about their vocabulary learning strategies. Their vocabulary knowledge was measured by a vocabulary test, again similar to the one used in Sanaoui's study. Lessard-Clouston also used the learners' TOEFL scores to identify their English

proficiency. Results showed that students' approaches to vocabulary did not predict their performance on the vocabulary test. The discrepancy was even greater with the results of TOEFL. Those learners with structured approach received the lowest score on TEOFL, whereas the unstructured group received the highest.

Beginning students' use of VLSs might be different than the ones advanced students prefer to use. Cohen and Apek (1980) did a study where the results showed that word lists proved to be better for beginning students, and they believed this strategy is more effective. The advanced students, however, benefited more from contextualized words. Cohen and Apek also found that if students were more proficient initially, they were able to use associations in recall tasks much better.

Another recent study that shows the relationship between strategy use and proficiency level was done by Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1998). Their study compared the performance of the students on a vocabulary test and a cloze test assessing general language proficiency. The subjects also filled out a questionnaire, which investigated the VLSs of these students. The researcher wanted to see whether there was a relationship between strategy use and the proficiency level. The results showed that students who received higher scores on the two given tests used more frequency and elaborate strategies, whereas those with poor proficiency level on the test lacked strategy use.

Knowledge of vocabulary and the strategy to acquire new words can help the learner achieve in other areas as well. Misulis (1999) investigated the effect of three vocabulary strategies after instruction (use of contextual clues, structural analysis and making association) on text comprehension. The subjects, 46 intermediate level ESL

students from Malaysia, were divided into an experimental and control group. Both groups were given a pre-test of 15 comprehension questions. The following two weeks students were given reading instructions which revolved around two passages (narrative and news report). Students read the texts, answered the comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises related to the passage. In addition to these, the experimental group was given specific vocabulary instructions. Following these two weeks, the students were given a post-test which consisted of the same passage and questions used in the pre-test. The results showed that while there were significant improvements in both groups, the experimental group showed higher level of improvement.

Contrary to the findings of the studies mentioned, the results of Porte's (1988) study with fifteen under-achieving EFL learners at private language schools in London, showed that these learners were using strategies that were similar to the ones used by the 'good language learners'. According to Porte (1988), little emphasis has been given to what VLSs poor language learners use stating that "...it has often been assumed that the poor language learner has few worthwhile learning strategies and that his or her improvement is best achieved by emulating good language-learner strategies" (p. 168). Porte suggests ways language teachers can help their low English proficiency students with vocabulary learning strategies such as (developing, identifying, and refining them) which would help learners to be more efficient in the target language.

Summary

As the review of the literature shows, only recently researchers have been interested in the importance of vocabulary in foreign language education. There have been studies

on vocabulary: acquisition, strategies, effect of different variables on VLSs such as age, gender, cultural background, level of English proficiency, knowledge of other languages etc. However, there are only a handful of studies focusing on Turkish students and vocabulary. More recent investigations have begun to examine the effects of various strategies on vocabulary recall and recognition. However, none of these studies investigated the effects of various variables on the choice of Turkish EFL learners' perceived use of VLSs. This study was designed to build on additional information on Turkish students, and specifically on their perceived use of VLSs.

One of the major contributions of the current study is examining gender differences as they relate to the choice of VLSs in an EFL environment. Another major contribution of the current investigation is examining the role of studying at the state universities versus at the private universities and whether this has an effect on the choice of the VLSs. As this review has shown, there seems to be a scarcity of this kind of research within the whole field of second language vocabulary research. In fact, I am almost certain that this type of investigation does not exist in the Turkish context, especially because the private universities in Turkey were not available until recently.

The following chapters address a study which was conducted to investigate the perceived VLSs of Turkish students studying in various universities in Turkey.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to examine the perceived use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) of university-level Turkish students. These students learn English in an environment where English is a *foreign* language, which is one of the most common learning environments in today's world. My purpose in conducting this study was to better understand the perceived use of VLS of Turkish students and what they do to learn new words in English. I also investigated the impact of certain variables, such as gender, type of high school attended, type of university currently attending, and knowledge of other languages on the perceived use of VLSs.

The first section of this chapter gives detailed description of the interview and the pilot study I conducted to better develop the items on the VLSs survey for the main study. First, I had interviews with six Turkish students, to find out their perceived use of VLSs. Following the interviews, I introduced the VLSs survey, a self-report instrument measuring the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish students, which was pilot tested before being administered to a larger group of learners for the main study. The last section of this chapter provides information on the main study and gives detailed information on the

background of the participants, along with the final version of the survey, procedures used in collecting the data, and a discussion how the data will be analyzed.

The Interview

The purpose of the interviews were to find out the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish university students. The interviews were planned in order to obtain more detailed information from the subjects on the strategies they use when learning a new vocabulary item in English. During the summer of 2001, I interviewed six Turkish students studying at various universities in Istanbul; to find out what VLSs Turkish students perceive using when learning a new word in English.

Interviewees

The participants for the interview were native speakers of Turkish studying English at a university in Istanbul, and came from more or less the same socio-economic background. I specifically chose three male and three female students, to see whether gender was a variable on perceived use of VLSs among these individuals. Table 1 shows the participants, their gender, age, number of years they studied English, and their major.

None of the participants had grown up in large cities and so families did not have an option of sending their children to private high schools where better standards and facilities in foreign language education are offered. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 33, and at the time of the interview all were studying at a university in Turkey. Two of the participants were students at the preparatory school learning English, one was a sophomore and the other three were graduate students who had already mastered the language. The variety of English proficiency levels of the subjects gave me the

opportunity to learn more about the strategy use of both beginner and advanced level students. Except for San, none of the participants had been introduced to any specific vocabulary learning strategies.

Table 1: The background information about the subjects

Subjects*	Gender	Age	# of yrs studying English	Received VLSs Instructions	Major
#1 Zen	Female	23	7	No	Graduate student in Physics
#2 Nev	Female	29	8	No	Graduate student in Chemistry
#3 Merry	Female	24	8	No	Graduate student in Biology
#4 Shukr	Male	21	5	No	Sophomore in Economics
#5 Ken	Male	23	5	No	Preparatory School
#6 San	Male	20	7	Yes	Preparatory School

* Not real names

Zen is a 25-year-old female, working on her masters' in physics at a state university in Turkey. She had studied English in high school, and is currently taking an English class at the university she is studying. During the interview, she frequently mentioned the inefficient foreign language education she received. Zen also added that her ambition is to continue her education in the US, and so has to intensively study for the TOEFL on her own in order to receive the minimum required score and get accepted to a graduate college.

Nev is a 29-year-old female student working on her doctorate in chemistry and at the time of the interview was planning to graduate at the end of the semester. Like Zen,

she mentioned she was not satisfied with the foreign language education she received and had to take private English lessons in order to improve her English language skills.

Merry is a 24 year-old graduate female student and has been studying English for eight years. Like all the other participants, she also graduated from a public high school in Istanbul. At the time of the interview she was working on her masters' in biology. Her English teacher at junior high school was very enthusiastic about teaching the language, which had a positive impact on her, and so Merry was very motivated and willing to learn the language. Upon graduating from high school, Merry attended a private English language institute to improve her English. Merry never had a chance to meet a native speaker of English and was very curious to know how well she would be able to communicate with him/her if she ever had a chance to meet a native speaker.

Shukr is a 21-year-old male student studying economics. He has been studying English for five years, three years in high school and two at the university he is currently attending. When I mentioned the purpose of the interview and the objective of my study, he was interested to know more about the various VLSs. Shukr's experience with language is a bit different from that of the others participants. His father is a cornel and worked with American soldiers at the American base located in one of Eastern cities in Turkey. Shukr grew up at the base and had a chance to interact with his father's American colleagues.

Ken is a 24 year old male, studying English at the preparatory school at one of the private universities, where during the preparatory year, students take 20 hours of English per week. Ken commented that "The prep year is pretty intensive, and I have a lot of assignments to do outside the class." Despite the busy schedule, Ken was very satisfied

with the foreign language education he was receiving because the private university where he was attending classes were small, and he had native speakers as teachers.

San is a 20-year old male student studying at the preparatory school for about six months. Even though he had studied English for five years prior to starting university, he had to start the preparatory school from the first level because his English proficiency was low.

Materials used during the interview

The reading passages are comprised of two articles I chose from *The New York Times*. The first article, "Clean-Air Battlefield" was written by Matthew L. Wald on December 1, 2002, and consisted of 698 words. The second article, "Convict says Rabbi's friend admitted to two other murders", was written by Robert Henley on November 1, 2002 and consisted of 537 words (see Appendix Y).

Procedure

This case study was designed to obtain specific information on what strategies these particular learners use when learning a new vocabulary item in English. I conducted semi-structured interviews to elicit information on the perceived use of VLSs, which would eventually assist me in coming up with the various VLSs for the survey for the main study. Turkish, the native language of the subjects, was used for the entire interview to eliminate any possibility of misunderstanding. I interviewed each subject separately, a single interview session. To make the subjects feel more comfortable, the interviews were conducted at subjects' places of residency, with no one else's presence. During the interviews, I focused more on open-ended question to obtain maximum information. For

instance, instead of asking “Do you look up the dictionary next?” I asked questions such as “What do you do next?” I asked the questions naturally wherever I thought I needed to elicit more information from the subjects. I did not record the interviews for the purpose of not making the subjects uneasy. Instead, I took intensive notes in Turkish during the interview and went home right after the interviews and wrote my reflections down as much I could remember.

I asked each subject to read one of the articles from *The New York Times*. I told the subjects to feel free to write on the text if they wanted to (make notes, underline, draw lines etc). I also provided them with paper and pencil. I asked the participants to read the passage and think aloud whenever they encountered an unfamiliar word in the text. Whenever the participants fell into silence, I prompted them by asking questions such as “OK, you underlined the word, then what do you do? What are you thinking now? Tell me how you arrived at the conclusion that X means Y?” These questions helped me get more information on the strategies these subjects used when figuring out the meaning of a new word in English.

Results and discussion

The interviews, helped me obtain some valuable qualitative feedback on the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish students, which helped me add questions to the survey for the main study. Results showed that there are both similarities and differences between the perceived use of VLSs of these learners. Even though each learner had his/her unique ways of studying the unknown vocabulary item in English, there are quite a few strategies that are used among this particular group of students, and so the similarities outweighed the differences. All the participants first underlined the unfamiliar

words and later tried to guess the meanings from the context by reading the previous and the following sentences more than once. In addition, all the participants indicated that they used bilingual dictionaries (Turkish-English) at the early stages and gradually switched to the monolingual ones, as they felt more comfortable with the language

The subjects read the whole passage once and while reading they underlined the unfamiliar words. Next, they went back to the underlined words and tried to figure out the meanings of the underlined words. The participants mentioned that the main reason for reading the whole passage once was to get the gist of what the passage was about. The second time they read the passage, they tried to figure out the meanings of the unfamiliar words from the context. Finally, if the context clues were not clear enough, they looked up these words in monolingual dictionaries. When using dictionaries, subjects checked all the meanings of the words but tried to locate the meaning that they thought was most appropriate to the one in the passage. Subjects also mentioned that this strategy was their usual procedure, and was not specific to this particular task.

I asked Ken and San, the two preparatory school students, to read the first article, "Clean-Air Battlefield". Both subjects started reading the passage and underlined the words they were not familiar with. After reading the passage once, they went back to the passage to find out the meanings of the words they underlined. I asked Ken to think aloud and tell me what steps he was taking to figure out the meaning of the words. He started to do a word-by-word translation of the sentence in which the word was underlined. He mentioned this method was really time consuming and might not be very practical for everyone, but he felt more comfortable translating the sentence into Turkish and then trying to figure out the meaning of the underlined word. If he still had problems

understanding the meaning, he looked it up in Turkish–English dictionary. I noticed that Ken made extensive use of note-taking strategy. After looking up the new word in the dictionary, he wrote the definition of the word in the margin of the reading text. When I asked him why he preferred using this technique, he said “When I go back and read the passage later on, I try to remember the meaning of the word without looking at my notes in the margin. But if I am having problem remembering the meaning, then I read the notes. This helps me save a lot of time. I don’t have to go back and look up the word in the dictionary again.”

Even though San and Ken have the same level of English proficiency, San uses a slightly different strategy. He read the sentences coming before and after the sentence in which the word was underlined and tried to figure out the meaning from the clues in the context without getting help from his native language. One of the words he underlined was *undeclared*, and I asked him to think aloud so I would know what he was thinking. “I assume the word has a negative meaning because of the prefix *un-*”, he said, “...and from the context I think it means *not knowing*”. He was able to come up with the correct meaning; however, he mentioned that sometimes, if he underlined more than one word in one sentence, he had difficulty figuring out the meaning of the words. In such cases, he does not spend too much time on the context clues but rather looks up the word in a dictionary.

Zeyn used a method that was unique to her. She mentioned she remembered the words better if she was physically active such as, walking, even jumping in her room, with the list of words in her hand. She also tried to come up with some kind of connection to remember the meanings of the unknown words. For instance, she gave the

example of the two words *crutch*, and *clutch*, which she said she always confused and had a hard time remembering which is which. So, she tried to make a connection: “When you are driving a car that has a clutch, you have to stretch your leg to push the clutch. Leg starts with an ‘L’ and the word *clutch* has an ‘L’ in it. This strategy helped me to remember that clutch is device in the car.” Similar to *clutch*, Zeyn said she always confused the spelling of the two words *adapt* and *adopt*. She made a connection between *adapt* which has all A’s to “adapting to America”, and America starts with an A. My interview with Zeyn was very productive, and I noted several of her strategies and added them to the survey for the main study. I asked Zeyn what she would do if she had a vocabulary test in a few days and she had to study a certain number of words. Not to my surprise she said she would make a list of the words, write their meanings next to them, and memorize them for the test by either saying the words out loud or writing them several times until she had the meanings right.

The strategies Shukr and Zeyn used overlapped to a certain extent. Shukr mentioned he always confused the meanings of the two words *pessimistic* and *optimistic*. The word *pes* has a negative meaning in Turkish and so does the word *pessimistic*. This strategy helped him to remember the words and their meanings. Shukr said he always tried to use the clues in the context to come up with the meanings of the words he didn’t know. He emphasized that he would consult a dictionary only if the context clues in the passage are not enough for him to figure out the meaning of the word.

Results of the interviews showed that *rote memorization* is the most favored strategy among this group of learners. This is not surprising based on the fact that the educational background of these individuals favors rote memorization and thus is stressed

by the teachers throughout the curricula. Following rote memorization, written and/or verbal repetition of the words was the second most commonly used strategy when compared to strategies requiring more active manipulation of information (prefix, suffix, the use of flash cards, etc.).

Based on my interviews with the participants, I was able to discover a number of similarities and differences among the participants.

Similarities

- Most of the participants (five out of 6) use bilingual dictionaries at the beginning level but later on at the advanced level, switch to monolingual dictionaries.
- They try to predict the meaning of new words from the context. If the context clues are not sufficient, they refer to the dictionary.
- They prefer writing down the words several times.
- Learners mainly used memory strategies and did not make use of various other existing vocabulary strategies such as using rhymes, making connection between the previously learned words, or using flash/note cards.
- Hardly any importance is given to the pronunciation of the word.
- All participants write the words on a sheet of paper, along with their definitions (Turkish or English), and then memorize the list.
- The most popular strategy for all the students is that of rote memorization.

Differences

- Some carry pocket dictionary.

- One student preferred being physically active (walking around, jumping) when memorizing new words.
- Two participants never wrote on the books (underline, draw an arrow and write the meaning, etc.)

Among these interviewed participants, the level of English proficiency was a factor that affected their perceived use of VLSs. Those whose English proficiency was low used bilingual dictionaries, and as their English improve, they switched to monolingual ones. Cultural background and educational system are also factors in the strategies these individuals use in learning a new word. During the interviews, the majority of the participants complained about the poor quality of foreign language instruction in Turkey. San said he studied new words “The Turkish way” that is, by rote memorization.

Survey development

To find out about the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish students I came up with a survey, which I used for the main study. I went through several stages to come up with vocabulary strategies. The first step was conducting the pilot case study mentioned in the previous section, which helped me to gather valuable information on various VLSs this group of learners use, as well as confirmed the ones I was already aware of, such as memory and discovery strategies. Then, I wrote a list of strategies based on my experience both as an English teacher and a learner. I also read the published studies on vocabulary and acquisition, and studies conducted on various strategies learners use to learn a new vocabulary item in English (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1993; Yongqi, 1994; Al-Khataybeh, 2000; Kudo, 1999; Al-Nujaidi, 2000; and Ahmed, 1989).

Purpose

The quantitative pilot study was conducted primarily to pilot test the VLSs survey instrument prior to officially administering it to a large group of students. To this end, the purpose of the pilot study was to answer the following questions:

1. What are some of the most commonly used VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?
2. To what extent was the survey valid and reliable?

The Instrument

During the fall of 2002, I developed the first version of the VLS. The survey consisted of two parts: the first part had a background information component with several items eliciting information about the subjects such as age, gender, number of years studying English, classification, major, self-rated English proficiency, type of high school they graduated from and university they are currently attending (that is, state vs. private), other languages studied, and previous instruction on VLSs, and reasons for studying English.

The second part of the survey consisted of 38 items; each item intended to discover the frequency a given strategy used in comprehending the meaning of a new word in English. To come up with a variety of vocabulary learning strategies used by language learners, I consulted non-native speakers of English studying English for various purposes. I asked questions during an informal conversation what they would do if they came across an English word they did not know. I received valuable feedback from some of the students, especially the ones who seemed to be aware of their VLSs. Some of the learners were trying to remember the meaning of a word by speaking it out

loud or trying to make a note of a word that they come across and later looked it up in the dictionary. As a second language learner and teacher myself, I also used my own experiences and thoughts about the different strategies use to learn new words. These suggestions and experiences were incorporated in the survey used for this study. The list I came up with provided the majority of the strategies in the survey. I also asked some of my colleagues to add any strategies they gained from learning a foreign language. I also added additional strategies I came across in the literature (e.g. texts on VLSs, journal articles, books, reference textbook and dissertations written on this topic) on both first and the second VLSs questionnaire. Finally, I informally interviewed Turkish students and asked them what strategies they use when learning new vocabulary items. These interviews helped me add a few more strategies to the survey, for instance, writing the words several times, being physically active when learning the new word, making connections to remember the word and so on.

Each item on the survey uses a five-point Likert scale from 1 (“I almost never use this”) to 5 (“I almost always use this”). Students were asked to read each statement and circle the number that best applied to them, indicating how frequently they used the strategy in the statement. The higher the number circled, the more frequently the strategy mentioned in the statement was used. At the end of the survey the subjects were asked to write down any other strategies they used that was not listed on the survey.

The VLSs survey consisted of 38-items, each intended to throw light on techniques used to learn a new word in English. At the end of the survey, subjects were asked to list any strategy they used for learning a new word in English that had not been listed as an item on the survey.

Establishing Translation Authenticity

After I completed the survey with the list of the items, it was important to translate the survey into Turkish; the participants' first language. This step was taken to make sure the subjects did not have any problem understanding the items on the survey. The correct translation of the survey was crucial because if there were any items that posed any problems, it would affect the answers.

In order for the subjects to understand the items on the survey clearly, I took several steps to make sure the translation was accurate. First, as a bilingual Turkish-English speaker, I used my expertise, and translated the survey into Turkish. Then, I asked two professional translators to look at both the English and Turkish versions of the surveys and confirm the translation. Next, I sent the initial Turkish version of the survey (38 items) to native speakers of Turkish who were studying at the graduate level in the United States (N=4) to complete the survey as if they were participating in the study, and comment on the items they thought were unclear. Based on their suggestions adjectives such as "occasionally", "sometimes", and "usually" were added to the numbers 2, 3, and 4 respectively in order to make what numbers represented more clear. Finally, I asked Turkish two professors who had graduated from American universities to complete the Turkish version of the survey and give me feedback on whether any item on the survey caused confusion and misunderstanding. The two professors verified that the translation was comprehensible and clear.

Participants

After the process of translation was successfully completed, the survey was piloted to 32 undergraduate university students enrolled at a private university located

in Istanbul where the medium of language is predominantly English. The sample consisted of 27 male and 5 female students, and the age of subjects varied from 21 to 25. The participants represented a small sample of the survey population of the current study.

At this particular institution, students whose English language skills are not adequate, i.e. students who had failed the required English proficiency exam offered before starting the freshman year, are required to study at the English Preparatory School for one year. The university, as in many other parts of the world, employs a credit system. Under this scheme students are awarded the final degree upon completing the required total of credits (<http://www.yeditepe.edu.tr/7tepe/>).

Procedure

Subjects were read a consent script, informing them about the purpose of the survey, about the fact that there were no right or wrong answers to the survey questions that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they would not be identified in any way, and that there was no penalty in not filling out the survey. Prior to the pilot study, the subjects were explained what is meant by *vocabulary learning strategy* and were provided with a few examples. Along with the survey, the necessary and sufficient explanations were also given in Turkish. Subjects were able to complete the survey in 12-15 minutes at the beginning of their English class.

Results

The first part of the survey consisted of questions regarding the background information of the subjects. Two of the students had studied English between 0-3 years, 7 between 3-5 years, and 4 between 5-8 years. The majority of the students (N=19) had

studied English for more than 8 years. There was one freshman, three sophomores, six juniors and twenty-two seniors. The majority of the students (N=26) were studying economics, only one was majoring in architecture, and five in various engineering fields.

Subjects were asked to rate their English proficiency by circling one of the numbers from 1 (“below average”) to 6 (“excellent”). The higher the number circled the better the self-rated English proficiency. Subjects were also to indicate which high school they had graduated from. Fifteen of the students had graduated from public, and 17 from private high schools.

Subjects were asked to rate how important they thought vocabulary learning is in learning English by circling a number between 1 (“Not important at all”), to 6 (“Very important”). Interestingly, none of the subjects circled numbers one and two, and close to 70% circled either 5 or 6 which showed how important they thought the role of vocabulary is in learning English as a foreign language.

Finally, the subjects were asked whether they ever had any direct instruction (either by book or instructor) on different VLSs in learning new vocabulary items in English. A majority of the students (N=21; 63%) had never had any instruction on ways to learn vocabulary. In other words, the teaching of vocabulary learning strategies was neglected in this group of students’ foreign language classes.

The second part of the survey consisted of 38 VLSs items. The subjects were asked to circle a number from 1 (“Never or almost never”) to 5 (“Almost or almost always”), indicating how often they used the strategy given in the statement. After piloting the 38-item survey, the data were analyzed to address the three research questions. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviations were calculated to address the first research

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of VLSS of EFL Turkish Learners in the Pilot Study

No:	Vocabulary Learning Strategies	M	SD
1.	I use note-cards to remember new English words.	3.1	1.55
2.	I look up new English words in an English-English dictionary	2.6	1.53
3.	I try to guess the meaning of words I don't know.	3.1	1.56
4.	I study new words by grouping them according to their meaning.	1.9	1.44
5.	I learn the meaning of a word by using it in a sentence in my mind	2.8	1.58
6.	I have to hear the new word spoken to remember it.	3.1	1.25
7.	I learn new words from English songs.	2.8	1.53
8.	I use the vocabulary section of my textbook to learn new words.	2.6	1.44
9.	I try to make a connection between the new word and a picture.	2.9	1.35
10.	I try to use new words I've learned when I speak to someone.	3.6	0.95
11.	I make a list of the new words and their meanings and memorize them.	2.7	1.25
12.	I use a bilingual dictionary to learn meanings of new words.	3.4	1.47
13.	I use rhymes to remember the English words (e.g. feather, leather, whether).	1.7	1.4
14.	When I come across a new word, I make a note of it and learn it later.	2.5	1.11
15.	When I look up a word in the dictionary, I read all the meanings of the word.	3.5	1.27
16.	I check to see if my guesses about the words are right or wrong	3.3	1.39
17.	I try to use the new words I've learned as much as possible in my writing.	3.1	1.21
18.	I carry a pocket dictionary to look up the words I don't know.	2.3	1.41
19.	I use antonyms and synonyms to remember word meanings.	2.5	1.3
20.	I try to connect the meaning of new words with what I already know.	2.5	1.30
21.	I write the new words on a piece of paper and stick them on the wall.	1.8	1.22
22.	I remember a new word best by writing it down several times.	2.9	1.18
23.	I have to see the word written on paper to learn it well.	3.2	1.3
24.	I write the new words on pieces of papers, put them in a plastic bag and randomly draw.	1.8	1.26
25.	When I learn a new word I learn the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time.	3.7	1.13
26.	I learn new words when using the computer.	3.6	1.16
27.	I try to learn new words by studying their part of speech	3	1.28
28.	I learn new words while studying with others (group work) in or outside of the class.	2.7	1.31
29.	I make a list of new words with Turkish translation and memorize them.	2.1	1.34
30.	I remember the meaning of the word better if the teacher uses it in a sentence.	3.1	1.27
31.	I think of cognate words to understand the meaning of a word.	2.8	1.51
32.	I study new words later in order to remember them.	2.9	1.29
33.	I learn to spell a new word by writing it out several times.	2.9	1.24
34.	I ask my teacher, a family member (brother, sister, father) or my friends the meaning of words I don't know.	2.8	1.39
35.	I keep a vocabulary notebook to jot down new words I want to learn.	2.4	1.19
36.	I listen to English radio, watch English movies, read English magazines/newspapers to improve my vocabulary.	3.5	1.3
37.	I try to learn the new word by repeating it out loud several times.	2.3	1.27
38.	I try to make use of prefixes and suffixes when learning a word.	2.8	1.3

question: “What are some of the most commonly used VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?” Table 2 shows the mean and the standard deviations of the strategies asked in the pilot study.

The means of the strategies were analyzed as follows: a mean of 3.5 and higher was considered high use of the strategy, a mean between 2 to 3.49 represented medium frequency of use, and a mean between 1.99 and below was considered low usage of the strategy. The overall average of all the 38 strategies was 2.89, which showed that this group of students used the VLSs at a medium frequency. The following table shows the five most commonly used strategies among the learners in the pilot study.

Table 3: The five most commonly used strategies

Vocabulary Learning Strategy items	M	SD
22. When I learn a new word I learn the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time.	3.77	0.9
10. I try to use new words I've learned when I speak to someone.	3.66	1.3
23. I learn new words when using the computer (e.g. surfing on the Internet, checking my e-mail).	3.6	1.2
33. I listen to English radio, watch English movies, read English magazines/newspapers to improve my vocabulary.	3.53	1.1
14. When I look up a word in the dictionary, I read all the meanings of the word.	3.5	1.1

Items number 13, 21, and 24 received the lowest means among all the items. Item number 13 “*I use rhymes to remember the English words (e.g. feather, leather, whether)*” was removed for various reasons: first, the mean for this strategy was 1.7, the lowest among the 38 items. Second, I decided that this item is not considered a VLSs. Also, the translation of this strategy caused some misunderstanding and discrepancy. Item 21, “*I write the new words on a piece of paper and stick them on the wall*” and 24 “*I write the new words on pieces of papers, put them in a plastic bag*” were removed from the survey

because they both had the lowest means ($M= 1.83$ and 1.86 respectively). As mentioned in the pilot case study, I decided to include these strategies after I interviewed the Turkish students. One of the participants, Zeyn, mentioned that she used above-mentioned strategy to study for the verbal section of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). She wrote the new words on small sheets of papers, put them all in a plastic bag, and randomly draw one and tried to remember the meaning. The mean for this strategy was the third lowest ($M= 1.86$), suggesting that the strategy was not commonly used among this group of learners. After removing these three strategies, the final modified survey included 35 strategy statements (Appendix A).

The second research question was to find out to what extent the survey was valid and reliable. The standardized alpha of the survey as a whole turned out to be .87 for this sample. This showed the 38-item questionnaire provided a reasonably reliable measure for this study of the vocabulary learning strategies used by Turkish college students.

At the end of the vocabulary learning strategies survey, subjects were asked to write any other strategies they used which were not listed among the 38-items. None of the students wrote any additional VLSs.

PRESENT STUDY

In particular the present study was designed to address the following four research questions:

1. What are some of the most commonly used VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?
2. Do Turkish learners, who have studied a foreign language other than English, use VLSs more frequently than those who have not?

3. Are there any differences in the use of strategies among these students according to background variables of gender, self-reported English proficiency, length of previous English study educational background (that is, the type of high school they attended that is public vs. private) and whether there are any differences in the use of strategy among the students studying at the state universities versus those at the private universities?
4. Do Turkish English language learners who have been instructed in the use of VLSs use the strategies more frequently than foreign language learners who have not received any instructions?

The survey instrument used for the main study was based on the adjustments made in the pilot study. The final version of the survey was administered to students studying at various universities in Istanbul towards the end of fall semester of 2002.

Participants

The subjects for this study consisted of 934 EFL Turkish university students (male N= 547, female N= 387), studying at various universities in Istanbul. Table 4 breaks down the demographic information of the 934 participants. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 27, with a mean of 19.3 years, the majority of them being between the ages 18 and 20. The item number 7 on the background questionnaire, (*How important do you think vocabulary learning is in learning English?*), 51.2% of the participants responded by circling the highest number (6 very important), and 96% circled 4, 5 or 6. This shows that almost all the EFL Turkish students in this study agree that vocabulary learning plays an important role in learning English.

Table 4: Distribution of Subjects by Background Variable (N=934)

Background Variables	Number (percentages)
Gender	
Male	547 (58.6%)
Female	387 (41.4%)
Years of English Study	
0-3 years	183 (19.7%)
3-5 years	122 (13.2%)
5-8 years	427 (46.1%)
More than 8 years	195 (21%)
Classification	
Freshman	183 (90%)
Sophomore	43 (4.6%)
Junior	17 (1.8%)
Senior	33 (3.5%)
Major	
Business	290 (31.7)
Architecture	195 (21.3)
Engineering	430 (47)
Self reported English proficiency	
From 1 to 6 (1 being below average, 6 being excellent)	4.47
Received Instruction on VLSs	
Yes	368 (39.4%)
No	564 (60.6%)
High school graduated from	
Public	676 (72.5%)
Private	257 (27.5%)
Type of uni. currently attending	
Public	271(28.8)
Private	662(70.4)

One of the purposes of this study was to find out whether studying more than one foreign language affects the choice of VLSs. Question number 8 “*What other languages have you studied?*” was aimed to gather information on this topic. I decided to put German or French in one category, and or Italian and Spanish as another, and a third category as any other languages. There are a number of high schools located in large cities in Turkey where the medium of instruction is French or German. In addition, most of the high schools, where English is the medium of instruction, offer German or French as optional foreign language electives. These available choices explain the reason why

German and French are the two most popular foreign languages among these participants. Eighty nine percent of the participants (N=256) indicated that they had studied either German or French as a second foreign language. There is only one high school where the instruction is Italian (The Italian High School), and to the best of my knowledge, no high school offers Spanish classes. This might be an explanation why only 2.4% (N=7) of the subjects in the study had studied Spanish or Italian. In addition, only 8% of the subjects (N=23) had studied some other languages (e.g. Arabic, Urdu, Japanese, or Greek).

One of the questions in the first section of the survey asked the participants the reasons why they are studying English. They were asked to circle as many as statements as they wanted. The answers to this question are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons why subjects are studying English

Reasons why the subjects are studying English	Frequency	Percent
need it to get a job	460	48.9%
want to go to an English speaking county	457	48.9%
it is an international language	486	52%
I want to be able to speak English	450	48.2%
like the language	466	49.9%
have to take it in order to get my degree	448	48%
it is an international language	423	45.3%
I want to be able to speak English	450	48.2%

At the end of the mentioned list of reasons, participants were asked to state any other reasons they may have for studying English. The following comments were made by the students:

- Because I would like to work abroad as a reporter.

- Because it is compulsory and it is the language of our time.
- I study English so I would be able to understand the TV serials I watch, and the music I listen to.
- It will play an important role in my career in future (mentioned by two subjects).
- To pass the preparatory exam, right now this is the only reason.
- I guess because it is necessary everywhere now (mentioned by two subjects).

At the very end of the survey the participants were asked to list any other strategies they used when learning English words, the one that were not listed. The answers were:

- I carry an English Turkish dictionary with me all the time.
- Since I use the computer a lot, I loaded a dictionary program and I look up the words that I do not know instantly and 65% of the time I remember the meanings.
- I learn new words by watching the soccer games on Eurosport.
- I remember words better if I can come up with a connection between the English word and French.
- I learn all the new words in class otherwise it is very difficult to study and remember all the new words.
- I try to practice speaking as much as I can, and be present in English speaking environments.

- I underline the words I do not know in the English story books that I read, I loop up the meanings in the dictionary, then I learn the meanings by heart. I learn the words better when I read the book next time.
- I rewrite the meaning of the new words that I learned in certain intervals (every other week or so), and I use the words in sentences.
- I write the words and their meanings my note-book and try to study and memorize them.
- I remember the meaning of the words better when I try to guess the meaning from the context.
- I try to study the dictionary (study the words under A, and then move to B and so on)
- From time to time, I try to keep a diary, which helps me to practice vocabulary.
- I take notes of the new words in my course book. Later I make a list of these words and study them.

Procedure

The VLSs survey was administered during the months of November and December 2002. Before conducting the study, I obtained written consent from each of the organizations to which the target institutions belong. All institutions were very cooperative in allowing their students to participate in the study and they assigned the administration of the job to one of their English teachers. Based on the pilot study, I proposed an administration time of 12-15 minutes.

The survey was distributed to the subjects with the help of the classroom instructors. Participants were first read a consent script (see Appendix B) that informed them about the purpose of the survey, that there were no right or wrong answer to the survey questions, that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they would not be identified in any way. Prior to administering the survey the subjects were given an explanation of what is meant by the term *vocabulary learning strategies*.

One of the institutions requested me to make copies of the consent form and attach it to every survey administered in that institution. The reason for this was that the instructors who were asked to administer the survey were all native speakers of English with no knowledge of the Turkish language. I complied with the request. Before filling out the survey, the participants read the consent form on their own, in their first language. The written consent form helped the subjects to understand the content, purpose of the survey and avoided any possibility of misunderstanding.

Instrument

The VLSs survey used for the present study was the modified version of the one used in the pilot study. As mentioned in the pilot study in detail the instrument had a background component with several items eliciting demographic information about the participants. Items included background information such as gender, number age, number of years studying English, classification, major, self-rated English proficiency, type of high school they graduated from and university they are currently attending (that is, state vs. private), other languages studied, and previous instruction on VLSs, and reasons for studying English. In the second part of the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used the stated VLSs.

Data Analysis

The data for the present study were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 11) to answer the four research questions.

Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations were calculated to obtain information on overall use of VLSs which would be the first research question “What are some of the most commonly used VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?” An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to check which types of reading strategies were perceived to be used more frequently.

More descriptive and correlational analyses were also conducted to address the third research question, “Are there any differences in the use of strategies among these students according to certain background variables such as gender, self-reported English proficiency, use of strategies based on the number of years they have studied English, educational background (that is, the type of high school they attended before enrolling at the university) and whether there are any differences in the use of strategy among the students studying at the state universities versus those at the private universities?, and Do Turkish foreign language learners who have been instructed in the use of VLSs use the strategies more frequently than foreign language learners who have not received any instructions?” An independent *t*-test was used to examine the impact of gender differences while correlational and descriptive statistics including frequencies were used to explore the impact of the other variables on the perceived use of VLSs.

In the following chapter, I present the results of the current study. The data analysis follows the order of the four research questions, i.e. analyses are conducted to address the specific research questions.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research study outlined in the third chapter. The first section, “Learners’ Beliefs about Vocabulary” briefly reports what subjects think about the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. The next section “Perceived use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies” explains the first research question by summarizing and reporting the mean and standard deviation for each vocabulary learning strategy used in the survey. The third section, “Impact of Studying a Foreign Language Other Than English” reports the effect of studying a foreign language other than English on the perceived use of VLSs. The fourth section, “Variables Impacting strategy Use of VLSs” summarizes and reports the results of the third research question: impact of gender, self-reported English proficiency, length of previous English language study, and the impact of the educational background (private vs. public high school). The last section, “Role of Vocabulary Strategies Instruction on the perceived use of VLSs” summarizes and reports whether students who have been instructed on the use of various VLSs use these strategies more than those who have not.

Learners’ Beliefs regarding Vocabulary in Learning FL

To explore learners’ perceptions about the importance of vocabulary in learning English as a foreign language, I included an item on the background questionnaire that asked the subjects to rate the importance of vocabulary in learning a foreign language by

circling a number from 1 (not important at all) to 6 (very important). This question might at first seem redundant since every learner needs to know words for any of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) at any stage of language learning. However, in Turkey most of the English language classes consist of teaching grammar rules and doing grammar exercises. The importance of vocabulary is hardly ever emphasized and various strategies to learn vocabulary items are almost never introduced. Therefore I wanted to know how important the subjects in this study think vocabulary is in learning English. Interestingly enough, none of the subjects circled numbers one or two, and close to 70% circled either 5 or 6. This shows that subjects in this study think the role of vocabulary is in learning English is very important. The answer to this question is consistent with other studies (Al-Nujaidi 2003, and Horwitz, 1988). In Al-Nujaidi's (2003) study with Saudi EFL learners, subjects were asked to rank four components of the language (vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and pronunciation) according to their importance in learning a foreign language. The largest group of participants, about 42%, ranked vocabulary as the most important component and another 31% ranked it as the second most important component in learning a foreign language.

First research question: Perceived Use of VLSs of Turkish University Students

The first question of the study was; *what are some of the most commonly reported VLSs of Turkish university students learning English in their native country?* Descriptive statistics were run to obtain the means of reported use for each strategy. Table 6 shows the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish EFL learners arranged in descending order by their means (i.e. the most often used to least used strategies). Based on the former survey studies (Oxford, 1995; Sheorey, 2000; Kudo, 2002) on a scale of 1 to 5, a mean of 3.5 and higher

TABLE 6: PERCEIVED VLSs AMONG TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The Vocabulary Learning Strategies Statements	M	SD
<i>High usage (M=3.5 or above)</i>		
22. Learning the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning	3.88	1.06
12. Using bilingual (English-Turkish) dictionary	3.85	1.13
33. Listening to radio, watching movies, reading English	3.74	1.08
21. Seeing the word written on paper to learn it	3.65	1.18
23. Learning new words while using computer (Internet, e-mail etc)	3.58	1.25
11. Making a list of new words and memorizing	3.5	1.35
<i>Moderate usage (M= between 2.5 and 3.4)</i>		
15. Checking to see if the guesses are right or wrong	3.44	1.14
26. Making a list with Turkish translation	3.43	1.37
14. Reading all the meanings of the word in the dictionary	3.42	1.25
10. Using the new words when speaking to someone	3.35	1.05
16. Trying to use the new words in writing	3.3	1.03
1. Using note-cards to remember new English words	3.26	1.25
27. Teacher using it in a sentence	3.22	1.18
29. Studying new words after a period of time to remember	3.18	1.2
28. Using cognates to understand the meaning	3.17	1.36
3. Guessing the meaning of words	3.16	1.04
6. Hearing the new word spoken to remember	3.05	1.17
7. Learning words from English songs	3.04	1.33
13. Making a note and learn it later	3.04	1.23
34. Repeating the words out loud several times	3.02	1.29
8. Using the vocabulary section of the textbook	3.02	1.28
24. Studying words' parts of speech (noun, verb, adj. etc)	2.98	1.2
19. Trying to connect the meaning with what is already known	2.9	1.18
25. Studying with peers or outside of the class	2.9	1.17
35. Using prefixes and suffixes	2.84	1.25
32. Keeping a vocabulary notebook	2.76	1.49
9. Make connection between the word and a picture	2.75	1.26
30. Writing the words several times.	2.72	1.38
20. Remembering a new word by writing it several times	2.69	1.37
5. Using the word in a sentence in my mind.	2.64	1.19
2. Using English-English dictionary	2.6	1.17
<i>Low usage (M=2.4 or lower)</i>		
18. Using antonyms and synonyms to remember words	2.37	1.15
17. Carrying a pocket dictionary	2.16	1.36
31. Asking someone the meaning of word	2.1	1.2
4. Grouping words according to their meanings	1.8	1.04
OVERALL MEAN	3.04	

was considered high use of the strategy, a mean between 2 to 3.49 represented moderate frequency of use, and a mean of 1.99 and below reflected low usage of the strategy.

According to Table 6, 17 % of the strategies (6 out of 35) fall in the high usage (mean of 3.5 or above) category. The majority of the VLSs (71%) however, fall in the moderate use range (25 out of 35). This category comprises 25 strategies with means ranging from 2.6 to 3.4. The remaining four strategies have means between 2.3 and 1.8, indicating low reported usage of these strategies. The overall average for perceived strategy use is 3.04 which reflects that the Turkish university students studying English as a foreign language in their native country typically perceive themselves using a variety of VLSs with medium frequency.

The 6 strategies that participants reported generally using the most when learning a new word in English are: *When I learn a new word I learn the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time.* (M=3.88; SD= 1.06); *I use a bilingual (English-Turkish) dictionary to learn meanings of new words.* (M=3.85; SD=1.13); *I listen to English radio, watch English movies, and read English magazines/newspapers to improve my vocabulary.* (M= 3.74; SD= 1.08); *I have to see the word written on paper to learn it.* (M=3.65; SD=1.18); *I learn new words when using the computer (e.g. surfing on the Internet, checking my e-mail).* (M=3.74; SD=1.08); *I have to see the word written on paper to learn it well.* (M=3.65; SD=1.18); *I make a list of the new words and their meanings and memorize them* (M= 3.5; SD=1.35). The high strategy use category is led by strategy 22 (M=3.88) learning the pronunciation, spelling and the meaning of new words, which is a metacognitive strategy where learners plan, analyze, and assess the learning process (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). The second highest strategy, using a

bilingual dictionary ($M=3.85$) is a direct meaning discovery strategy highly used among foreign language learners (Kudo 1999, Kobayashi 2000, and Al-Nujaidi 2000). Besides, according to McKeown (1993), the use of a dictionary, in general, provides an immediate and easy access to the meaning of the word, given the fact that learners are alone when they are studying and do not have the immediate help of a teacher or a native speaker.

Another type of strategy that is popular among this particular group of learners is the communication strategy where language learners acquire the meaning of the words through one or more of the four-language skills area, e.g. seeing the word written on paper (strategy 21). Finally, among the most popular strategy perceived to be used with high frequency is making a list of new words and memorizing them. This might seem a simple strategy however it is pretty popular among foreign language learners (Kudo 1999, Kobayashi 2000, and Al-Nujaidi 2000).

Strategies used with medium frequency involve various types of strategies (discovery, determination, and memory). Based on Oxford's (1990) classification of learning strategies, these are metacognitive, social, discovery, consolidation and memory strategies. Keyword method and mnemonics are not among the preferred ones, and this might be due to the fact that, according to Oxford (1990), they require more mental processing.

Finally, strategies used with lower frequency involved social strategies (asking someone the meaning of new word), semantic mapping and associational strategies (using antonyms and synonyms to remember words and grouping the words). Carrying a pocket dictionary is also among the least popular strategies ($M=2.16$).

*Second research question: Impact of Studying a Foreign Language
on the perceived of VLSs*

To answer the second research question, *whether Turkish learners who have studied a foreign language other than English report using VLSs more frequently than those who have not*, I used the independent t-test comparing the mean of each strategy used by participants who have studied a foreign language other than English vs. those who have not.

Table 7: List of strategies used significantly more by participants who reported studying a foreign language other than English

VLSs Statement	Studied a foreign language	N	Mean	SD	t-test
23. Learning new words by using the computer	N	642	3.5	1.28	t (924)= -3.059, p= .002
	Y	284	3.7	1.16	
28. Use cognate words to understand the meaning of words	N	646	2.91	1.33	t (929)= -4.290, p= .000
	Y	286	3.34	1.29	
33. Listen to radio, watch movies and read newspapers	N	646	3.13	1.17	t (931)= -5.33, p= .000
	Y	286	3.41	1.18	

As table 7 shows there are only three strategies used significantly more among participants who reported studying a foreign language other than English. These strategies were: *I learn new words when using the computer (e.g. surfing on the Internet, checking my e-mail), I think of cognate words to understand the meaning of a word, and I listen to English radio, watch English movies, read English magazines/newspapers to improve my vocabulary.*

The foreign languages other than English that students reported studying were French, German, Italian or Spanish. All of these languages share several words with English that are common by descent. Therefore *using cognates to understand the*

meaning of the words justifies why students who have studied one these foreign languages perceive themselves to use this strategy statistically more than those who have not.

Third research question: Variables Impacting Perceived Strategy Use of Subjects

To answer the multifaceted third research question, whether there are any differences in the use of strategies among these students according to certain background variables such as gender, self-reported English proficiency, use of strategies based on the number of years they have studied English, and educational background (that is, the type of high school they attended before enrolling at the university). The following sections explain in detail the statistical analysis run to answer this research question.

Impact of Gender on the Perceived use of VLSs

One variable who effect on the perceived use of VLSs, I wanted to investigate was the gender of the participants (male vs. female) by conducting an independent-samples t-test on the data. To do this, descriptive statistics including the means and the standard deviations of both males and females as well as the t-test of the difference between the two groups were calculated for each strategy. Table 8 introduces strategies with higher reported use by females and Table 9 lists the strategies that were reported to be used significantly more by male students.

Table 8: List of strategies female students perceived to use significantly more than male students

VLSs Statement	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-test
1. Use note-cards	M	545	3.03	1.24	t (930)= -6.54, p= .000
	F	387	3.57	1.2	
6. Hear the new word spoken	M	541	2.92	1.16	t (919)= -4.06, p= .000
	F	380	3.23	1.15	
7. Learn words from English songs	M	546	2.85	1.34	t (931)= -5.33, p= .000
	F	387	3.32	1.27	
8. Use the vocabulary section of	M	539	2.88	1.27	t (922)=-3.93, p= .000

my textbook to learn new words	F	385	3.21	1.28	
11. Make a list of the new words and memorize them	M	547	3.4	1.37	t (931)=-3.57, p= .000
	F	386	3.72	1.31	
13. Make a note of the new word and learn it later	M	545	2.85	1.2	t (927)=-5.70, p= .000
	F	384	3.31	1.23	
14. Read all the meanings of the word in the dictionary	M	546	3.3	1.23	t (930)=-3.54, p= .000
	F	386	3.59	1.26	
15. Check and see if the guesses are right or wrong.	M	541	3.36	1.13	t (922)=-2.41, p= .016
	F	383	3.54	1.15	
17. Carry a pocket dictionary	M	546	2.02	1.29	t (929)=-3.76, p= .000
	F	385	2.36	1.44	
18. Use antonyms and synonyms	M	545	2.27	1.15	t (930)=-3.03, p= .002
	F	387	2.5	1.15	
20. Writing it down several times	M	547	2.49	1.31	t (930)=-5.23, p= .000
	F	385	2.96	1.41	
21. Have to see the word written	M	545	3.51	1.16	t (926)=-4.19, p= .000
	F	383	3.84	1.18	
22. Learn the pronun., spelling, and the meaning at the same time	M	545	3.78	1.08	t (928)=-3.58, p= .000
	F	385	4.03	1.01	
24. Studying their part of speech (noun, verb, adj. etc).	M	547	2.87	1.15	t (932)= -3.18, p= .001
	F	387	3.12	1.25	
26. Listing words with Turkish translation and memorize them	M	542	3.31	1.37	t (927)=-3.16, p= .002
	F	387	3.6	1.34	
27. Remember the meaning better if the teacher uses it in a sentence	M	545	3.61	1.11	t (928)=-4.43, p= .000
	F	385	3.92	1.01	
29. Study words after a period of time in order to remember them	M	545	2.99	1.22	t (927)=-5.82, p= .000
	F	384	3.45	1.11	
30. Learn to spell a new word by writing it out several times	M	542	2.56	1.35	t (925)=-4.14, p= .000
	F	385	2.94	1.4	
31. Ask my teacher, a family member or my friends	M	546	2.95	1.28	t (930)=-2.16, p= .030
	F	386	3.13	1.3	
32. Keep a vocabulary notebook to jot down new words	M	544	0.12	1.43	t (929)=-6.58, p= .000
	F	387	2.48	1.49	
33. Listen to English radio, watch movies, read magazines/newspapers	M	547	3.13	1.2	t (932)=-2.57, p= .010
	F	387	3.33	1.13	
34. Try to learn the new word by repeating it out loud several times	M	544	1.87	1.11	t (930)=-4.38, p= .000
	F	387	2.22	1.28	
35. Try to make use of prefixes and suffixes when learning a word	M	547	2.75	1.25	t (932)=-2.45, p= .014
	F	387	2.96	1.24	

As shown in Table 8, female students perceived themselves to use 23 strategies (66%) significantly more than their male peers. According to Oxford's (1990)

classification of learning strategies, the listed strategies can be grouped into social, discovery and memory strategies. One explanation why female students perceive themselves to use social strategies more might be because in general female students, especially in Turkish culture, are more ready to ask the teacher for feedback than male students.

Compared to their female peers, male students, perceived themselves to use only two strategies significantly more. These strategies are listed in table 9.

Table 9: Strategies male students perceived to use significantly more than females

VLSS Statement	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-test
3. Try to guess the meaning of word	M	544	3.21	1.0	t (927)=1.96, p=.050
	F	385	3.08	1.01	
23. Learning new words by using the computer	M	543	3.65	1.24	t (926)= 2.00, p=.045
	F	385	3.48	1.26	

Self-reported English proficiency

The participants in the current study were asked to rate their English language proficiency by circling a number from 1 (below average) to 6 (excellent). I wanted to see whether English language proficiency was a variable affecting the learners' perceived use of VLSSs. I divided the subjects in two groups; eliminating the participants who circled the medium proficiency i.e. numbers 3 and 4. By ignoring the middle group, I was able to compare the two ends of the scale. I labeled all the participants who circled the ones and twos as "low" English Proficiency and those who circled the fives and sixes as "high" English proficiency. Table 10 introduces strategies that were perceived to be used significantly more by subjects who reported low English proficiency.

Table 10: Strategies perceived to be used significantly more by students who reported their low English proficiency

VLSs statement	English Prof.	N	Mean	SD	t-test
17. Carry a pocket dictionary	Low	180	2.89	1.55	t (43)= 2.61, p=.012
	High	98	1.37	1.06	
21. See the word written	Low	180	4.13	1	t (43)= 3.51, p=.001
	High	98	2.62	1.5	

As shown in Table 10, results of the statistical analysis showed that participants who reported low English language proficiency used only two strategies significantly more: *I carry a pocket dictionary to look up the words I don't know* and *I have to see the word written on the paper to learn it*. When there is no one around to ask the meaning of the word, the use of a dictionary, especially for the low English proficiency students, provide immediate and easy access to the word.

Looking up the meaning of the unknown word in a monolingual dictionary was the only strategy perceived to be used more by participants who reported high English proficiency. This is consistent with studies that have shown that monolingual dictionaries are used more extensively among language learners with higher language proficiency (Altun, 1995; Baxter, 1999).

Table 11: The one strategy perceived to be used significantly more among students who reported high English language proficiency

VLSs statement	English Prof.	N	Mean	SD	t-test
2. Use English-English dictionary	Low	180	1.81	1.17	t (43)=-3.04, p=.004
	High	98	3.25	1.38	

Effect of Length of Previous English Study

Table 12 shows the results obtained from the independent samples t-test to find out whether the length of previous English study had an effect on the perceived use of VLSs. In the background information section of the VLSs survey, subjects were asked to circle one of the four choices which approximately indicate the number of years they have been studying English: 0-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-8 years, or more than 8 years. To examine the answer to this research question, similar to the English proficiency question, I divided the participants into two groups: those who had studied English between 0 and 3 years, and those who had studied English more than 8 years, while ignoring the middle group so as to form two distinct groups.

Table 12: List of strategies used significantly more by participants who reported studying English between 0-3 years

VLSs statement	Length of Eng. study	N	Mean	SD	t-test
2. Use English-English dictionary	0-3 years	182	2.27	1.23	t (375)=-3.39, p=.001
	more than 8	195	2.7	1.21	
8. Use the vocabulary section of my text-book	0-3 years	180	3.26	1.22	t (372)=-3.71, p=.001
	more than 8	194	2.81	1.32	
12. Use bilingual (English-Turkish) dictionary	0-3 years	182	4.13	1.08	t (373)=2.214, p=.004
	more than 8	193	3.8	1.09	
17. Carry a pocket dictionary	0-3 years	183	2.67	1.52	t (375)=5.545, p=.000
	more than 8	194	1.89	1.18	
18. Use antonyms and synonyms	0-3 years	182	2.69	1.27	t (375)=2.501, p=.013
	more than 8	195	2.37	1.19	
20. Writing the words several times	0-3 years	183	3.14	1.4	t (375)=3.285, p=.001
	more than 8	194	2.67	1.41	
21. Have to see the word written on paper	0-3 year	181	4.02	1.06	t (374)=3.065, p=.002
	more than 8	195	3.65	1.23	
27. Teacher uses it in a sentence	0-3 years	181	3.91	1.03	t (373)=3.136, p=.002
	more than 8	194	3.56	1.11	
29. Study the words after a period of time	0-3 years	180	3.46	1.14	t (372)=2.622, p=.009
	more than 8	194	3.13	1.26	

32. Keep a vocabulary note-book	0-3 years more than 8	182 195	3.15 2.48	1.54 2.45	t (375)=-4.305, p=.000
34. Repeating the words out loud several times	0-3 years more than 8	82 195	2.25 1.96	1.27 1.09	t (375)=-2.415, p=0.16

Once again, according to Oxford's (1990) classification, strategies perceived to be used by students who have studied 0-3 years can be grouped as discovery strategies (the use of dictionary, both monolingual and bilingual), memory strategies (strategy # 20, 29, 34) and word form analysis (strategy # 18). The use of dictionary is popular among students who have studied English between 0-3 years compared to those who have studied more than 8 years. A possible reason for the popularity of this strategy might be due to result of the Turkish education system where, for the most part, interaction is one way (from teacher to student) and students are expected to learn new words on their own.

Compared to the 0-3 group, students who reported studying English for more than 8 years perceived to use only two strategies significantly more. This determination strategy, guessing the meaning from context is, according to Altun (1995), more efficiently used and more popular among learner with higher-level of English.

Table 13: List of strategies used significantly more by participants who reported studying English more than 8 years:

VLSs statement	Length of Eng. study	N	Mean	SD	t-test
3. Guess the meaning of the word	0-3 years more than 8	182 194	2.95 3.2	1.02 1.05	t (375)=-3.39, p=.001
7. Learn new words through songs	0-3 years more than 8	182 195	2.76 3.29	1.41 1.34	t (372)=-3.71, p=.001

Effect of Education background (high school attended, and the type of university currently attending) on perceived use of VLSs

I also wanted to find out whether the type of high school the subjects attended (i.e. public vs. private) and the type of university they were attending at the time they filled the survey (i.e. state vs. private) had an effect on their perceived use of VLSs.

Table 14: Strategies perceived to be used significantly more by participants who graduated from private high schools

VLSs statement	Type of HS attended	N	M	SD	t-test
7. Learn new words from English songs	Public	675	2.95	1.02	t (930)=-3.374, p=.001
	Private	257	3.2	1.05	
31. Ask someone about the meaning of the word	Public	674	2.76	1.41	t (929)=-4.206, p=.000
	Private	257	3.29	1.34	
33. Listen to radio, watch movies, read English books	Public	676	4.13	1.08	t (931)=-2.899, p=.004
	Private	257	3.8	1.09	

An independent samples t-test was calculated for each strategy comparing the participants graduated from public high schools and private high schools.

Compared to private school graduates, students who graduated from public high schools, used only one strategy, *making a list of the new words and memorizing them*, significantly more. This is no surprise since rote memorization is highly favored in the Turkish education system. It is not uncommon for language teachers to give students lists of words, and ask them to memorize them for an exam. This strategy is even more popular in public schools where there are crowded classes and foreign language education is limited to a few hours a week.

Table 15: The one strategy used more significantly by public high school graduates.

VLS statement	Type of HS attended	N	M	SD	t-test
11. Make a list of the new words and memorize them	Public	676	3.5	1.21	t (931)=2.999, p=.003
	Private	257	2.78	1.16	

Effect of VLS Instruction perceived use of strategy

To explore whether being instructed in VLSs has an impact on subjects' perceived use of VLSs, I conducted an independent samples t-test. Table 16 shows the list of strategies that were perceived to be used significantly more by students who reported receiving VLSs instruction than those who did not.

Table 16: Strategies perceived to be used significantly more by subjects who reported they received vocabulary learning strategies

VLSs statement	Received VLSs	N	M	SD	t-test
1. Use note cards to remember the new words	Y	368	3.42	1.22	t (930)=-3.374, p=.001
	N	562	3.15	1.26	
2. Use English-English dictionary	Y	367	2.77	1.12	t (929)=-4.206, p=.000
	N	562	2.48	1.2	
4. Grouping the words according to their meanings	Y	364	1.98	1.09	t (919)=-2.899, p=.004
	N	557	1.68	.98	
5. Use the word in a sentence	Y	367	2.78	1.19	t (927)= 3.219, p=.001
	N	563	2.56	1.19	
6. Hear the word spoken to remember it	Y	360	3.19	1.12	t (927)=3.615, p=.000
	N	559	2.95	1.19	
9. Making connection between the new word and the picture	Y	366	2.9	1.22	t (919)=4.336, p=.000
	N	556	2.65	1.27	
10. Try to use the new words	Y	365	3.49	1.03	t (928)=2.798, p=.005
	N	558	3.26	1.05	
13. Make a note of the word	Y	365	3.18	1.19	t (924)=2.723, p=.007
	N	561	2.95	1.25	
16. Try to use the words as much as possible	Y	367	3.48	.99	t(926)=3.258, p=.001
	N	561	3.26	1.04	
18. Use antonyms and synonyms	Y	366	2.55	1.19	t(927)=3.868, p=.000
	N	563	2.25	1.12	
19. Try to make connection with the meaning of the word	Y	364	3.07	1.16	t(924)=2.814, p=.005
	N	562	2.84	1.18	
24. Studying the parts of speech	Y	367	3.11	1.2	t(929)=2.761, p=.006
	N	564	2.89	1.19	
25. Learning words while studying with others	Y	366	3.06	1.17	t(922)=3.599, p=.000
	N	558	2.78	1.16	
28. Using cognates	Y	367	3.32	1.35	t(924)=2.714, p=.007
	N	559	3.07	1.35	

29. Studying the word after a period of time	Y	366	3.33	1.18	t(924)=3.148, p=.002
	N	560	3.08	1.2	
30. Writing the word several times	Y	364	2.91	1.39	t(922)=3.272, p=.001
	N	560	2.6	1.36	
31. Ask someone the meaning of the word	Y	366	3.28	1.25	t(927)=4.853, p=.000
	N	563	2.86	1.3	
32. Keep a vocabulary note-book	Y	365	2.93	1.52	t(926)=2.961, p=.003
	N	563	2.63	1.45	
33. Listen to radio, watch movies and read books	Y	367	3.38	1.12	t(929)=3.573, p=.000
	N	564	3.1	1.23	
35. Use pre-fix and suffixes to remember the meaning	Y	367	3	1.21	t(929)=3.193, p=.001
	N	564	2.7	1.27	

As shown in Table 16, twenty one out of thirty five strategies (close to 63%) were reported to be used significantly more among students who reported receiving vocabulary strategy. On the other hand there was no single strategy used significantly more among students who reported they did not receive any specific strategy training.

In the following section, I discuss these findings in light of the purpose of the current study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The previous chapter presented the findings on perceived VLSs of EFL Turkish university students. In this section, I discuss these findings as related to different background variables of the subjects such as studying a foreign language other than English, gender, self-reported English proficiency, length of previous English study, educational background, and the impact of VLS instructions on the perceived use of VLSs of Turkish students. After that, I present some of the pedagogical implications of my findings on the perceived use of VLSs of these students. Finally, in the closing section, I suggest possible topics for further study.

First research question: Perceived vocabulary learning strategies of Turkish Students

The first question of this study sought to ascertain what types of vocabulary strategies Turkish university students report or perceive they generally use when learning English as a foreign language in their native country. The results indicate that Turkish university students reported VLS use, as measured by the VLSs survey, ranges from high (6 of 35 vocabulary learning strategies with a mean of 3.5 or above) to medium (25 out of 35 vocabulary strategies with $M= 2.6$ to 3.44). The results showed that EFL learners in Turkey are well aware of most of the vocabulary strategies used in the current study however they perceive using them generally with either medium or low frequency (29 out of 35 strategies).

Strategies perceived to be used with high frequency

The findings of the study show that Turkish students believe they use memory and discovery strategies with high frequency strategies such as making lists of words and using dictionaries. Strategies that require use of authentic materials and technology were also among the highly used group, e.g. reading English texts, listening to the radio, watching TV, and learning words while using the internet. Most of these strategies that fell in the high frequency use require only low level mental processing; students seem to rely on strategies that mainly require rehearsal and meaning determination, and not any kind of deep processing.

Strategy 22 (*when I learn a new word I learn the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time*) a consolidation strategy, received the highest mean among the 35 strategies included in the survey ($M=3.88$). This finding was to be expected because the subjects in this study are all well aware that knowing a word means knowing its meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. In other words, the student participants view vocabulary learning as a complex task and know that it consists of knowing everything in relation to the word that is, its meaning, spelling, pronunciation etc.

The use of a bilingual dictionary (English-Turkish) received a mean of 3.85 (second highest mean among all the strategies) and was the most frequently used metacognitive strategy. The popularity of this strategy is also to be expected because the use of a bilingual dictionary is a common practice among foreign language learners. Bilingual dictionary use is one of the independent vocabulary acquisition strategies and is especially popular among students at the beginning level in Turkey, as it is believed to

lead to better understanding of the word. Besides, the use of a dictionary, in general, provides an immediate and easy access to the meaning of the word, given the fact that learners are alone when they are studying and do not have immediate help of, say, a teacher or a native speaker (McKeown, 1993; Nist & Olejnik, 1995).

One explanation why the use of a bilingual dictionary is pretty common among Turkish language learners is that the grammar-translation method is widely practiced in the foreign language classes in Turkey. In Turkish classrooms, for the most part, interaction is one way (from teacher to students) and students are expected to learn new words on their own. This finding is also consistent with the results of the studies reported by Kudo (1999), Al-Nujaidi (2000), and Schmitt (1997) with, respectively Japanese ESL, Saudi EFL, and Japanese EFL learners. In all the three studies the use of the bilingual dictionary was not only among the most highly-utilized vocabulary learning strategies but also perceived to be among the most effective strategies as well. Moreover, studies have shown that most learners, even the highly proficient ones, tend to prefer a bilingual dictionary (Laufer & Hander, 1997).

Even though the use of a bilingual dictionary and a monolingual dictionary are not mutually exclusive, the findings of the study revealed that the high usage of the bilingual dictionary seems to result in the relatively less frequent use of ($M= 2.6$) a monolingual dictionary (English-English). This result, too, is consistent with Kudo's finding with Japanese ESL students. One explanation she gives, which is also true for Turkish learners, is that "Without a certain amount of vocabulary, however, it is hard to understand the definitions of new words in the monolingual dictionary; students would

find themselves looking up word after word, as unknown word in one definition leads to other definition” (p. 17).

Using materials that involve authentic language use (listening to the radio, watching English movies, and reading English magazines/newspapers and books) is also listed among the strategies that were perceived to be used with high frequency. One possible explanation for the popularity of this metacognitive strategy might be because of the availability of such materials. Besides, authentic materials are undoubtedly good for learning new words in context. This finding is congruent with Bada and Okan’s (2000) study with Turkish EFL learners where powerful media (television and video) received a high percentage of preference (83.9%) followed by learning from written material (77.4%) among English language learners.

Another vocabulary strategy perceived to be used with a relatively high frequency was learning new words while using electronic media (Internet, e-mail etc). This finding is not surprising either as the number of students using these kinds of strategies can be expected to increase in the future because of the role of modern technology in learners’ life. Especially in the last few years the number of people, mainly the young generation, who use computers, e-mail and the Internet has increased enormously. This shows that language teachers, if available, can use computer programs designed for English language education to help their students improve their vocabulary considerably. Those students who are confident in using technology, would in this case improve their vocabulary immensely.

Finally, strategy number 11 (*making a list of new words and memorizing them*) was also among the strategies perceived to be used with high frequency. This finding supports Schmitt’s (1997) study of Japanese EFL learners in which learning the

meanings of the words using a word list was among the most popular VLS among this particular group of learners. The popularity of this strategy among Turkish learners was predictable because the Turkish school system favors memorization not only in language learning but also in other subject areas as well. It is not uncommon for language teachers to ask their students to memorize a given list of words and later give written/oral tests exams to assess students' vocabulary knowledge. According to Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) learning words from lists is only an initial stage and there should be extra exposure to the words with other VLSs. If, however, language teachers have students using this strategy extensively, then they should advice them to repeat the newly learned words at regular intervals for a better recognition. One reason is that research studies (Seibert, 1927) have shown that forgetting occurs immediately after initial encounter.

As simple and traditional as it may sound, making a list of new vocabulary items and memorizing them is not necessarily a poor strategy for learners, particularly those at the early stages of language learning. This strategy introduces learners to a large number of words in a short time and it has been one of the most popular ways of learning words among Turkish EFL learners.

In short, the results of the study showed that Turkish students learning English in their native country perceive themselves using vocabulary strategies which are, for the most part, simple and direct and which involve low level mental or mechanical processing. They are mainly memory and meaning determination strategies and may involve the use of technology e.g. making a list of the new words, using dictionaries, the computer, and other media and written texts. These strategies may be termed

“simple” or “direct” because they are popular among language learners and they aim at getting the meaning through simple activities.

Strategies perceived to be used with medium frequency

The majority of the strategies (25 out of 35) fell under strategies perceived to be used with medium frequency. As a result there are a variety of strategies in this group, including metacognitive, social, discovery, consolidation and memory strategies. However, keyword and mnemonic devices were among the strategies that received the lowest mean among all the strategies in the medium group. One reason for this perceived low usage might be that these strategies require more mental processing. Nonetheless, according to Kang and Olden (1994) mnemonic strategies such as the key word method have proven to be helpful in committing words to memory.

The strategy that received the highest mean in this group is the discovery strategy, that is, checking to see whether one’s guesses are right or wrong (M=3.44). This finding matches Al-Nujaidis’ (2000) study of Saudi EFL learners. One explanation he gives, which is also for true for Turkish learners, is that Saudi learners do not tolerate ambiguity and they think they might not get the gist of the meaning if they do not have access to the meaning of every word. Sheorey (2000) found a similar reluctance among college-level student in India. Similarly, Turkish students, when they come across many unknown words in a text, tend to value knowing every word, which they seem to think will solve the mysteries of the texts for them.

Strategy 26, a memory strategy *I make a list of new words with Turkish translation and memorize them*, fell under the strategies used with medium frequency, but it still received a relatively high mean among the strategies (M=3.43). This finding

is not surprising since memory strategies are well used among the learners because the rote learning is still popular, not only in foreign language classes, but also in other subject areas as well.

Keyword method and mnemonic strategy (trying to connect the meaning of the word with what is already known and making connection between the word and a picture) did not receive a high mean and so was not perceived to be used with high frequency. One possible reason for this somewhat low usage might be that the subjects in this study are in an EFL environment and this reduces the constant demand on memory support strategies.

Though mnemonics devices cannot be used with every word the learners encounter, they are according to Hulstjin (1997), very helpful in learning difficult words. Therefore, the results need to be looked at carefully as several studies have shown the effectiveness of the keyword method and mnemonic devices in enhancing second language vocabulary (Levin, Glassman, and Nordwall, 1992). The low frequency use of these strategies might also be attributed to the teachers' lack of training in instructing the students in the use of key word and mnemonic strategies. Based on my experience both as a language learner and teacher, mnemonics devices are hardly ever practiced in classrooms. In most cases language teachers themselves are not knowledgeable about the effectiveness of these strategies.

Trying to infer the meaning of the word by using prefixes and suffixes is one of the strategies perceived to be used with low frequency. This associational strategy is a major strategy instructors can use to help their students develop their vocabulary, which may lead to increased learning and retention of the unknown words (Kang and Golden,

1994; Haastруп, 1989; Nation and Coady, 1988). Furthermore, Romance languages such as German, French, Italian, and Spanish are, after English, among the most commonly studied foreign languages. Therefore teachers should especially encourage students who have studied any of these languages to make use of analyzing the word part in order to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

Other strategies that fell in this group include verbal and written repetition of the word, taking notes of new words in class, studying the spelling of a word, and determination strategy, guessing the meaning from context. According to Al-Nujaidi (2000) most of these strategies are also popular in the learning of L1 vocabulary among native speakers.

Strategies perceived to be used with low frequency

Strategies that were perceived to be used with low frequency involved social strategies (asking someone the meaning of a new word), semantic mapping and associational strategies (using antonyms and synonyms to remember words and grouping the words). Carrying a pocket dictionary also was among the least popular strategies (M=2.16).

Social strategies requires learners to actively engage in the process of learning, negotiating, and conscious studying. This might be one of the reasons why VLSs that involve social interaction are not highly favored by Turkish learners. Besides, learning a word does not necessarily require social interaction. Another possible explanation might be the fact that the traditional Turkish education system is for the most part based on individualism and so group works, collaborative learning are rarely promoted. This result

is congruent with the findings of previous studies on VLSs (Kudo, 1999; Al-Nujaidi, 2000; and Schmitt 1997).

The finding has important implications for EFL classes in Turkey. It seems that learners tend not to cooperate when learning new vocabulary items. Working in groups both in and outside the classroom would help encourage cooperative learning, which can help students learn words from each other during such activities (Kudo, 1999; Cagiltay and Bichelmeyer, 2000). Part of the reason for the low usage of this strategy may be the context learning, namely that subjects in this study are learning English in an EFL environment where there is no need to negotiate the meaning of the word in communicative situations.

Another reason why social strategies do not seem to be favored among Turkish learners might be the fact that some of the social strategies stated on the survey included asking someone the meaning of the word (teacher, a family member such as brother, sister, father or friends). Learners taking this survey might not necessarily have access to someone who speaks and knows the language well enough to help them with words. The absence of a person to ask for the translation explains the high mean for strategy 12 (use of the bilingual dictionary).

The associational strategy (using antonyms and synonyms to remember words) the semantic mapping of the words (grouping them according to their meanings) and received the lowest mean among all the 35 strategies listed in the vocabulary survey (M=2.87 and 1.8 respectively). These strategies, however, have been found to facilitate and improve the recall of newly learned words (Cofer, Bruce, and Reicher, 1996; cited in Schmitt 1997).

This finding is disappointing because previous research has revealed that these strategies are effective in learning vocabulary (Cohen & Aphek, 1982; Brown & Perry, 1991). Chanell (1981) and Nation (1990) recommended semantic mapping for classroom use. Furthermore, according to Nattinger, (1988) manipulating relationships among words such as semantic mapping, and grouping words are very useful for classroom activities to increase learners' recall of words. This finding needs to be taken seriously because it shows that even very basic associational strategies such as the use of antonyms and synonyms, are not frequently use by the learners. One reason might be that these strategies are either not practiced or not introduced at all in the EFL classrooms in Turkey. Teachers need to explain these strategies by giving examples of antonyms and synonyms, and go into detail on how to use semantic mapping, relate words together that would facilitate the vocabulary learning process.

*Second research question: Impact of Studying a Foreign Language
on Perceived Use of VLSs*

With respect to the effect of variables on VLS use, I sought to examine whether there were any significant differences in the perceived use of vocabulary strategies among subjects who had studied a foreign language other than English. Information available from the background questionnaire indicated that the number of subjects who had not studied a foreign language was almost twice as high as the ones who had. Surprisingly, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups. In other words, previous second language learning experience has no particular impact on the VLSs of Turkish students.

Romance languages such as German, French, Italian, and Spanish are the most commonly studied languages in Turkey following English. Learners who have already studied one of these languages could make use of certain strategies such as using cognates, prefixes, and suffixes more effectively compared to those who have not. Cognates and loan words are also likely to help learners guess word meaning. Interestingly, the morphological analysis of words, that employs prefixes and suffixes to find the meaning of a word, received a rather low mean ($M=2.84$) and was ranked relatively low among the strategies used with medium frequency. Nation (1990) suggests that learners should make use of structural analysis and practice analyzing roots and suffixes in inferring the meaning of the unknown word.

Languages borrow words from each other. These words bear similarities to the original words facilitating the learning process for those who are familiar with one of the languages. This, according to Kobayashi (2000), is likely to help learners guess the meaning of the words. Furthermore, subjects who have already studied a foreign language, I assume, would be more familiar with the process of learning vocabulary and so would be expected to be better strategic learners in their acquisition of vocabulary.

One possible reason why there is no significant difference between the perceived use of VLSs of students who had studied a foreign language and those who had not, might be that learners are not aware of the existence of such possible strategies. Many of these strategies might not have been introduced by their English teachers. If this is the case, then the English language teachers in Turkey need to take this finding seriously. Teachers should provide students with necessary training to use cognates, loan words, and use of

morphological analysis in vocabulary learning especially with the students who have already studied a foreign language.

Second Research Question: Impact of different variables on Perceived

Strategy Use of the Subjects

One of the variables I examined in this study was the choice of perceived vocabulary strategies according to subjects' gender (male vs. female). Even though the number of male subjects is more than that of the females' (M=547, F=387), the results showed that female learners use the majority of the strategies (23 out of 35) significantly more compared to their male peers. The results are consistent with Nyikos' (1987), Politzer's (1983), and Oxford, Par-Ok, Ito, & Sumrall's (1993) studies, all of which found that female learners use more VLSs than male learners.

The t-test of significance showed a significant difference in the VLS used by male and female learners, favoring female students with the majority of the strategies (23 out of 35). These strategies can be grouped into social, discovery, and memory strategies. Not surprisingly female students perceived to use social strategies significantly more because in general female students seem to be more sociable and willing to ask a classmate, teacher, friends, family member etc. Additionally, female students, especially in Turkish culture, are more ready to ask the teacher for feedback than male students.

Female students perceive using the discovery strategies (using note-cards, reading all the meanings of the word in the dictionary, studying the part of speech, analyzing part of speech, and analyzing affixes and roots) significantly more than their male peers. One explanation for these differences might be that female students in the Turkish society

tend to readily resort to a dictionary or some individual ways to discover the meaning of the unknown words.

Once more, a significant differences were also found in the use of memory strategies as perceived to be used by males and females (making a list of the new words, making a note of the word and learning it later, using antonyms, synonyms, writing the words several times, learning the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time, studying words after a period of time to remember them, writing the words several times, learning the word by repeating it several times.

The only two strategies that male students use significantly more than female students are strategy 3 (I try to guess the meaning of the word I don't know) and 23 (I learn new words when using the computer, e.g. surfing on the Internet, checking my e-mail). Male students did use these two strategies significantly more but the mean difference between the genders was rather small. Apparently, male students have either more interest or access to the Internet and are willing to take more risk in guessing the meaning of unknown words.

Effect of Self-reported English proficiency on the perceived use of VLS

Another variable I studied was the effect of self-reported English proficiency on the perceived use of VLSs. The results showed that there was no significant difference between students who reported their English to be highly proficient students vs. those who reported that their English proficiency is low.

The statistical analysis of the data showed that the level of English proficiency of learners did not affect their perceived use of strategy use. This result is inconsistent with the current findings where learners with higher English proficiency tend to use more

strategies compared to those with low English proficiency (Gu, 1994; Sanaoui, 1992). According to Gu, to help low English proficiency learners, teachers would be better off in guiding them “pushing the wheel chair of the strategically disabled” (p. 16).

One other possible explanation of this result is that whether they have low or high English proficiency, subjects simply are not aware of various vocabulary strategies. This finding suggests that teachers can help low English proficiency students to develop their own self-sufficient vocabulary learning strategies which would eventually lead them to be autonomous learners.

Effect of Length of Previous English study on the perceived use of VLS

Results of the independent t-test showed that those who have been studying English between 0-3 years use 11 strategies (strategy 2, 8, 12, 17, 18, 20, 21, 27, 29, 32, 34) significantly more than those who have been studying English more than 8 years. According to Oxford’s (1990) classification, these strategies could be grouped as discovery strategies (the use of dictionaries), and memory strategies. The popularity of the dictionary use might be due to the Turkish education system where, for the most part, interaction is one way (from teacher to student) and students are expected to learn new words on their own.

Subjects who studied English for more than 8 years, on the other hand, use only two strategies (guessing the meaning of the word, and learn new words through songs) significantly more than the 0-3 group. This, according to Altun (1995) is because such determination strategies are more efficiently used and are more popular among learners with high-level of English.

Effect of education background on the perceived use of strategy use

Interestingly the mean score for these two groups of students were exactly the same. Students who have an opportunity to study in private high schools have chance to study in relatively smaller classes, received more English instructions per week, get to interact with native speakers of English and have better access to the Internet, library, text books, library etc. Based on all these variables, I assumed that there would be a significant difference between learners in the two groups. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no study that compares students in private and public institutions therefore; it is impossible for me to make a generalization.

Effect of VLSs instruction on the perceived use of strategy use

With respect to the effect of variables on VLS use, I sought to examine whether there were any significant differences in the perceived use of vocabulary strategies among subjects who received VLSs and vs. those who did not. As expected, the result showed that learners who had received instructions perceived to use VLSs significantly more than those of their peers who had not. This finding is congruent with current findings (Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1998; Misulis, 1999) which have reported that students who have received vocabulary instructions have a better vocabulary knowledge measured by vocabulary tests.

This result clearly explains that vocabulary strategy instructions are either ignored or not effectively used by the language teachers in Turkey. This would confirm Laufer's (1997) and Zimmerman's (1997) statement that VLSs tend to be ignored in ESL classrooms. It seems that this statement also applies to EFL classrooms in Turkey. The need for strategy training is further supported by researches that showed students who frequently used language VLSs tended to be better language learners.

Conclusion

This study showed that overall Turkish university students perceive to using VLSs either medium or low frequency. Nevertheless, strategies such the key word method, mnemonics, and semantic mapping were not among the most popular strategies. Memory strategies were among the strategies that learner perceived to use with high frequency, and mnemonic strategies especially the ones which require cognitively deeper processing such as the keyword method were perceived to be used with low frequency. The most significant and popular way of mastering new words is by using memory, direct and simple cognitive strategies. This is mainly because the traditional teaching in Turkish education system encourages rote learning not only in foreign language classes but also in all subject areas. Students can pass their exams by simply memorizing, without interpreting and without group work (Cagiltay & Bichelmeyer, 2000). Learners lack the use of associational strategies even for some basic ones such as the use of synonyms and antonyms. The social strategies were used with either medium or low frequency perhaps because of the traditional educational system where students rarely work in groups.

Implications

In the light of the significance of the VLSs in the successful learning of any foreign language, the results of this study have several implications. First of all, this study showed that, even though it is not to a wide variety, Turkish university students do indeed make use of vocabulary learning strategies. However, looking at the large number of strategies with medium and low frequency it seems safe to assume that most subjects either were not aware of some strategies or simply did not make use of them. In fact a

few of the students wrote that they were not aware of so many different ways to learn a new word. Based on these responses, it is safe to state that foreign language learners would benefit from further exposure to VLS instructions.

Vocabulary itself is an area that is neglected in the EFL classrooms in Turkey. As Oxford and Crook all (1990) have pointed out ‘Vocabulary is not explicitly taught in most language classes’ (p. 9) and EFL classes in Turkey are certainly no exception. Learners are not aware of the existence of numerous strategies to learn words other than mostly making lists and rote memorization. In fact, during interviews for the pilot study with Turkish students, some of the subjects pointed out that they were not aware of the existence of so many different ways to learn word. One of the reasons for their lack of awareness on this area might be that teachers themselves are not trained or knowledgeable in this area. Therefore in order to be able to help their students maximize the strategies, language teachers first need to be aware of the types of vocabulary strategies their students use. This way teachers can make the learners be aware of additional strategies that can help them better comprehend/learn the meaning of the new vocabulary items which would eventually assist foreign language learners in improving comprehension of target language.

Unfortunately, based on my personal experience as an EFL instructor and a language learner, I can easily say that most of foreign language instructors in Turkey are unaware of the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in learning a foreign language. And those who are aware of these strategies are not certain how best to integrate vocabulary strategies to foreign language teaching curriculum without significantly sacrificing the limited amount of class time they have with their students. It

is clear that EFL teachers (or any foreign language instructor for that matter) need to be educated and be well informed in this area. If teachers could be trained in VLSs, then they can help students increase their vocabulary size and help them eventually become more successful language learners.

Instructors and students would benefit from taking advantage of existing instruments such as the VLSs survey used for this study. Although this survey is specifically designed for Turkish foreign language learners, it consists of 35 different strategies and can be easily adapted to any group of students. For instance, subjects who filled out the vocabulary strategies survey were introduced at this early stage of their university education to some alternative vocabulary strategies. Filling out the survey, would not necessarily guarantee the use of the stated strategies but may encourage some students to at least try and use some of the listed vocabulary strategies. Besides, this survey can be used as a diagnostic measure as to find about what strategies learners perceive to use and with what frequency. The mean score on this survey can make both teachers and students aware of learners' use of vocabulary strategies.

Based on the reasons mentioned, vocabulary strategy training should be part of the foreign language curricula and needs to be taught systematically. I would suggest that for each of the strategies teachers need to spend at least 3-4 hours, spread over several weeks. Learners need to understand the goal of each strategy and the conditions under which it works well. They need to gain the knowledge which is needed to see the strategy and they need enough practice to feel comfortable and proficient in it. This way they will choose which strategy works best for them. This takes time but it is paid off by gains learners get from being able to use strategy well.

Even though the findings of the study revealed that generally speaking Turkish university students used various VLSs, some strategies such as key word method, semantic mapping, and mnemonics were among the least popular ones. Since studies have proven that (Schmitt, 1997) leads to better retention of memory, language learners would benefit from knowing these strategies. Therefore English teachers should introduce various mnemonic techniques, keyword method with examples and exercises, and encourage their students to try out these strategies while learning new vocabulary items in English.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, learner autonomy is highly valued in foreign language education. However, learner autonomy is a cooperative effort between the teacher and the learner. To be able to help the learner to learn the language on his/her own he or she needs to be aware of the various strategies in the literature. Teachers need to confer with students and introduce to them the various ways of learning vocabulary. By informing the students about the various ways they can learn vocabulary the language teacher is helping the learners to enhance learner independence which would lead to learner autonomy and ultimately to a point where learners take charge of their learning. The survey questionnaire used in this study can be used as a starting point to identify what strategies students are aware of, which ones they are using and which ones they are not. When filling out the survey the students need to think effectively whether they use/are aware of such a strategy. Teachers can take the results of the survey as a starting point and teach and practice the listed VLSs so that students can choose and explore the strategies that suit them. Teach one strategy, see how it works as a class, maybe have

conferences with students, see how it works. If it works fine, if not move to another strategy see whether the learner feels comfortable with that.

The discussion on the belief about the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning suggests that Turkish EFL learners, like the other L2 learners, believe that they need a good EFL vocabulary to succeed in their EFL language learning. This belief is very important to the discussion of teaching Turkish EFL students to about the various VLSs and respond to vocabulary instructions. Therefore, I believe that learners at every level would highly benefit from vocabulary instruction.

Mostly because of the crowded classes, and partly because of culture and education system, by and large students in foreign language classes in Turkey are passive and ready to be spoon-fed. Although there are few exceptional cases, generally in language classes the teacher is viewed as an authority and is mostly seen as director, the person in charge, leader. These roles “will stifle communication in any classroom, especially the language classroom, because they [teachers] force all communication to go to and through the teacher” (Oxford, 1990, p. 10). It is time for foreign language teachers in Turkey to switch their roles to being an assistant, coach, adviser, and helper. One way of doing this is, in this case, identifying learners’ VLSs, training them on various strategies and finally helping them to become autonomous learners which would lead learners to take more responsibility of their learning. And when this happens, “students take more responsibility, [and so] more learning occurs, and both teachers and learners fell more successful.” (Oxford, 1990, p.11).

Besides the training of strategies, it is also crucial for language teachers to explain learners why they are being trained in various VLSs. This would make the training more

beneficial. Teachers should also emphasize that even the more proficient learners can benefit from strategy training. Both ESL and EFL teachers should be aware of the importance of teaching vocabulary. Teaching of vocabulary should receive more attention in universities in Turkey.

Limitations

Naturally, there are some limitations in a large-scale study like this. First of all, since the questionnaire is self-reported, it is impossible to assume whether subjects in this study actually use the strategies they indicated in learning vocabulary. The results are based on their beliefs or thoughts that they have about their use of vocabulary strategies. It is highly possible that some of the participants may have inadvertently responded inaccurately to the statements listed on the survey which would mean that the numbers they circled were not true reflection of the strategies they use when dealing with a new word in English and there is always a possibility that the results are not true reflection of the strategies students use when dealing with a new word in English.

To find out the subjects actually use strategies they have marked, researchers must observe classes where vocabulary learning is taking place, use think-aloud protocol procedures, and interview students to find out what they actually do while acquiring a new vocabulary item. Thus further research would be useful to gain insights into VLSs.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES SURVEY

After reading statement, circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) which applies to you. There are **no right or wrong answer responses** to any of the items on this survey. Therefore, please express **your true opinion** in answering this survey.

1. I use note-cards to remember new English words.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I look up new English words in an English-English dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I try to guess the meaning of words I don't know.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I study new words by grouping them according to their meanings.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I learn the meaning of a word by using it in a sentence in my mind.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have to hear the new word spoken to remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I learn new words from English songs.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I use the vocabulary section of my textbook to learn new words.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I try to make a connection between the new word and a picture.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I try to use new words I've learned when I speak to someone.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I make a list of the new words and their meanings and memorize them.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I use a bilingual (English-Turkish) dictionary to learn meanings of new words.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I come across a new word, I make a note of it and learn it later.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When I look up a word in the dictionary, I read all the meanings of the word.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I check to see if my guesses about the words are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I try to use the new words I've learned as much as possible in my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I carry a pocket dictionary to look up the words I don't know.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I use antonyms and synonyms to remember word meanings.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I try to connect the meaning of new words with what I already know.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I remember a new word best by writing it down several times.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have to see the word written on paper to learn it well.	1	2	3	4	5
22. When I learn a new word I learn the pronunciation, spelling, and the meaning at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I learn new words when using the computer (e.g. surfing on the Internet, checking my e-mail).	1	2	3	4	5
24. I try to learn new words by studying their part of speech (noun, verb, adj. etc).	1	2	3	4	5
25. I learn new words while studying with others (group work) in or outside of the class.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I make a list of new words with Turkish translation and memorize them.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I remember the meaning of the word better if the teacher uses it in a sentence.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I think of cognate words to understand the meaning of a word	1	2	3	4	5

(yogurt-yogurt).					
29. I study new words later (after a period of time) in order to remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I learn to spell a new word by writing it out several times.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I ask my teacher, a family member (brother, sister, father) or my friends the meaning of words I don't know.	1	2	3	4	5
32 I keep a vocabulary notebook to jot down new words I want to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I listen to English radio, watch English movies, read English magazines/newspapers to improve my vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I try to learn the new word by repeating it out loud several times.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I try to make use of prefixes and suffixes when learning a word (e.g. <i>un</i> -decided, <i>in</i> -correct).	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

Oklahoma State University

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 11/25/2003

Date: Tuesday, November 26, 2002

IRB Application No AS0335

Proposal Title: THE VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF TURKISH COLLEGE STUDENTS

Principal
Investigator(s):

Sadi Sahbazian
246 N. University #207
Stillwater, OK 74075

Ravi Sheorey
205 Morrill
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITAE



Sadi Sahbazian

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: PERCEIVED VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF TURKISH
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Major Field: TESOL/Linguistics

Bibliography:

Personal Data: Born in Tehran/Iran on September 10, 1971.

Education: Graduated from Dogus High school, Istanbul, Turkey in June 1989; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Foreign Language Education from University of Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey in June 1993. Received Master of Arts in Linguistics from University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas in June 1999. Received doctorate degree in TESOL/Linguistics from Oklahoma State University.

Experience: Taught EFL for three years at an English Language Institute in Istanbul, Turkey (1993-1996). Worked as an ESL teacher at Fort Worth ISD (1999-2000), worked as the Assistant Director (AD) of ESL composition courses, research assistant and teaching associate at Oklahoma State University (August 2000- May 2004).

Professional Memberships: Departmental representative to Graduate and Professional Student Government Association (GPSGA), 2003-04. Member of recycling Committee at Oklahoma State University, 2003-04. President of the Baha'i Club at Oklahoma State University, 2000-2003