# An Analysis of Relevant Studies on **Language Learning Strategies in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign** Language

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#### Abstract

It is clear that language learning strategies play very important roles in the understanding of language learning processes, as well as in the skills students develop in learning a foreign or second language. In this study, studies on language learning strategies in teaching Turkish to foreigners were examined. In this context, content analyses of 24 studies published by 2021 were carried out. While scanning design was used in most of the reviewed studies, the Oxford Language Learning Strategies Scale (1990) was used as a measurement tool. As a result of the studies, it was found that women from foreign students who learn Turkish as a foreign language use language learning strategies more effectively than men, and the use of language learning strategies remains as age increases. As a result of the research, the lecturers were advised to guide students' language learning strategies and to use their language learning strategies in lessons. Regarding the use of language learning strategies, it has been recommended to researchers at different language levels and to conduct research with larger populations.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish, Language learning strategies, Meta synthesis.

#### Introduction

We see in history that people learn each other's languages within social, cultural, historical, and other relations. The motives for learning languages vary greatly depending on needs. They include meeting new cultures, new developments in the world, desire to access and share knowledge faster, education, science, art, etc.

A language can be learned in many different ways. There are some determinant factors relevant to the learner, the teacher, and the environment. Language learning strategies, which vary depending on the learner, the teacher, and relevant factors, are emphasized by modern language teaching programs and activities.

Language learning styles are approaches to language learning, and language learning strategies are the behavioral patterns of students while they are learning a language (Cohen, 2003, p. 279). Oxford (1989, p. 235) defines learning strategies as the behaviors and actions of students to render language learning more efficient, self-acting, and fun.

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Richards and Platt (1992, p. 209) state that learning strategies are intentional behaviors and thoughts that learners use to better understand, learn, or remember new information while they are learning new things.

Factors such as age, sex, personality, motivation, self-conception, experiences, mode of learning, excitement, and anxiety affect learners' way of learning. Language learning strategies, which include certain actions, behaviors, strategies, or techniques, facilitate a learner's target language learning process (Hismanoglu, 2000).

With the increasing interest in the cognitive approach, student-focused approaches and analysis of differences in learning between learners have gained importance. In line with this approach to education, the learners' approaches to comprehend, learn, and remember new knowledge have been discussed, which has led to increasing interest in learning strategies (Bolukbas, 2013, p. 55).

It is clear that language learning strategies play an important role in understanding language learning processes, as well as in the students' skills while they are learning a foreign or a second language. It is known that language learning strategies have a critical role in academic success. The strategies are seen as pathways to actual learning for teachers and those who learn without focusing on the action of learning (Karatas, Balyer, and Alci, 2015, p. 1349).

# The Role of Teacher and Student in Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies have recently gained importance as a result of the transition from teacher-focused approaches to those that are centered upon the learners' active role in the learning process, (Gocer, 2017, p. 123). Teachers and researchers generally struggle in choosing the classification system they are going to follow while researching for strategies, increasing learners' independence through the strategies, including learners in the strategy training, or developing curriculums or materials related to the strategies (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, p. 368).

Teachers play a significant role in teaching language learning strategies. In this regard, teachers

need to be informed about language learning strategies (Demirel, 2012, p. 150). They should include students in the process of language learning and be exemplary to them in practice of such strategies (Ozbay and Boylu, 2015, p. 93). The introduction of the strategies by teachers to their classes will help learners become more efficient (Samida, 2012). It is possible to say that teachers' and learners' perceptions of language learning strategies coincide on many points (Griffiths, 2007, p. 98).

Students should be informed about the language learning strategies. Informing them about the language learning strategies will help students assess their learning processes and raise awareness of responsibility regarding their own improvement (Bekleyen, 2005, p. 121). Learners, who are at the very center of the learning process, must have the ability to make independent decisions and select the appropriate strategy according to their own needs (Varisoglu, 2018, p. 382).

# **Classification of Language Learning Strategies**

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), language learning strategies are classified into three as cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective strategies.

According to Stern (1992, p. 262-266), there are five main language learning strategies as cognitive, communicational-experiential, interpersonal, and affective strategies.

Oxford classifies language learning strategies into two as direct and indirect. According to this classification, direct strategies include strategies related to memory, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies while indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990).

When subdimensions are analyzed, it is seen that the strategies interact with each other either directly or indirectly. For example, when students ask a question to their friends, they use 'social' strategies. However, when they receive a response, use their knowledge to comprehend it, and form a new and meaningful sentence to maintain the dialogue, they use 'cognitive' or 'memory' strategies (Cesur and Fer, 2007, p. 51).

Although there are significant advancements, the systems to classify language learning strategies require further improvement and standardization (Liu, 2010, s. 104). According to Pawlak (2019), new methods and approaches related to language learning strategies are urgently needed. Consequently, this study aims to determine the language learning strategies of those who learn Turkish as a foreign language. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- How are the studies distributed based on publication types?
- How are the studies distributed based on methods and designs?
- How are the studies distributed based on samples?
- How are the studies distributed based on research instruments?
- How are the studies distributed based on demographic variables?
- What do studies suggest to researchers and practitioners in terms of language learning strategies in teaching Turkish as a foreign language?

# Method Design

In this study, in which language learning strategies while learning Turkish as a foreign language are researched, the meta-synthesis method was used. Meta-synthesis is integrating ideas and themes using research results that are obtained one by one (Welch, 2008). It is a systematic review of qualitative studies on a subject with a holistic approach (Glesne, 2013). In other words, it is an effort to acquire new findings based on the general aspects of the studies on a specific subject. Meta-synthesis provides great convenience for researchers and teachers who cannot track the advancements in the educational studies due to reasons such as inaccessibility and workload (Calık and Sozbilir, 2014, p. 34-36).

This study aims to analyze the tendencies of the studies on language learning strategies of those who learn Turkish as a foreign language, using the qualitative research method.

According to Norris and Ortega (2007), the characteristics of the meta-synthesis studies are as follows:

• The criteria regarding the selection of studies should be stated clearly.

- The findings of studies should not be subject to a general evaluation. Rather, the findings should be evaluated individually.
- In order to evaluate the studies, a coding list should be kept.

# The Analysis of Data and the Criteria for the Inclusion of Studies in the Research

Certain selection criteria were determined before starting the research. The criteria are as follows:

- To be the whole texts of articles and theses in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners,
- To be original publications,
- To be accessed via ERIC, TR Dizin, Google Academic search engine, EBSCO, and Council of Higher Education Thesis Center,
- To be focused upon language learning strategies in teaching Turkish to foreigners. Since all of the studies have been carried out in the last decade, there are no year restrictions.

## The Process of Data Collection and Analysis

An evaluation form was prepared in line with the research criteria to collect data. Through this form, studies were browsed on the databases that were determined by the researcher. The studies were saved into a computer and coded as S1, S2, S3... S22. Then, the publication types, method and designs, sample sizes, research instruments, demographic variables, and suggestions to researchers and practitioners were categorized. In the third step, evaluations were made to reach common themes. The studies were coded by two different encoders in line with the form that was prepared. The comparative reliability of the encoders was calculated based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula [Consensus / (Consensus + Dissensus) x 100], and the result was 95%. A reliability result of over 70% is considered adequate for the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the last step, the forms were combined and an individual form was acquired.

# **Findings**

This part of the study includes the publication types, method and designs, sample sizes, research instruments that were developed for/used in the study, demographic variables, and suggestions to researchers and practitioners.

Table 1: Distribution of Studies Based on Publication Type

Publication Types	Studies	f
Doctoral Thesis	Sengul, 2016; Demirekin, 2017	2
Master's Thesis	Silahsizoglu, 2004; Bayezit, 2013; Akyali Mills, 2014; Mohammad, 2014; Barut, 2015; Boylu, 2015; Harputoglu, 2015; Ergin, 2018; Yalcin, 2018; Baz, 2019; Keskin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019	12

Article	Bolukbas, 2013; Demir, 2013; Bayezit and Cubukcu, 2015; Gocer, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017; Varisoglu, 2018; Kurt and Ozer, 2018; Sahin and Ergin, 2019;	9
	Sahin and Ergin, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020	

According to Table 1, approximately half of the studies that were analyzed in the study are articles. There are 11 master's theses, 2 doctoral theses, and 9 articles among the studies related to language learning strategies in teaching Turkish to foreigners.

Table 2: Distribution of Studies Based on Methods and Designs

Method	Design	Studies	f
		Demir, 2013; Varisoglu, 2017; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020;	9
	Survey	Sahin and Ergin, 2019; Akyali Mills, 2014; Boylu, 2015;	
Quantitative		Keskin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019; Baz, 2019	
	Correlational survey	Ergin, 2018	1
	Experimental	Bolukbas, 2013	1
	Case Study	Gocer, 2017; Keskin, 2019	2
Qualitative	Document Analysis	Silahsizoglu, 2004; Bayezit, 2013; Bayezit and Cubukcu, 2015; Harputoglu, 2015; Varisoglu, 2018; Kurt and Ozer, 2018; Yalcin, 2018	7
	Survey	Mohammad, 2014; Demirekin, 2017	2
Mixed	Explanatory Sequential	Barut, 2015	1
		Sengul, 2016	1

According to Table 2, it can be said that qualitative and quantitative methods were equally used in the studies. It is seen that surveys were more prominent in the quantitative studies, while document

analysis dominates in the qualitative studies. It was detected that only 1 study was conducted by using correlational survey, experimental, and case study designs each.

**Table 3: Sample Related Distribution of the Studies** 

Sample Group	Studies	
< 50	Bolukbas, 2013; Sengul, 2016; Gocer, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017	4
50-100	Akyali Mills, 2014	1
101-150	Mohammad, 2014; Barut, 2015; Ergin, 2018; Sahin and Ergin, 2019	4
>150	Demir, 2013; Boylu, 2015; Demirekin, 2017; Baz, 2019; Keskin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020	7

According to Table 3, the majority of the studies (f: 6) have a sample size of over 150. The sample

size in the case studies and experimental studies was observed to be below 50.

Table 4: Distribution of the Research Instruments Used in the Studies

Research Instruments	Studies	f
Oxford Language Learning Strategies	Bolukbas, 2013; Akyali Mills, 2014; Mohammad, 2014; Barut, 2015; Boylu, 2015; Sengul, 2016; Demirekin, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017; Ergin, 2018; Kurt and Ozer, 2018; Yalcin, 2018; Baz, 2019; Keskin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020; Sahin and Ergin, 2019	16
Survey: Attention Strategies	Demir, 2013	1
Teachers' Interview Form	Gocer, 2017	1
Classifications of O'Malley and Chamot (1990)	Bayezit, 2013	1

According to Table 4, the most frequently used (f: 15) research instrument is Oxford Scale of Language Learning Strategies. Bayezit (2013) used O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification. While

Demir (2013) prepared a survey of language learning strategies, Gocer (2017) prepared a language learning strategies interview form for teachers.

Table 5: Distribution of the Studies Based on Demographic Variables

Variables	Result	Studies	f
Sex	Distinctive	Barut, 2015; Boylu, 2015; Demirekin, 2017; Sengul, 2016; Varisoglu, 2017; Ergin, 2018; Keskin, 2019	7
	Not distinctive	Baz, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020	3
A ~~	Distinctive	Demirekin, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017	2
Age	Not distinctive	Boylu, 2015	1
Language level	Distinctive	Barut, 2015; Sengul, 2016; Varisoglu, 2017; Sahin and Ergin, 2019; Keskin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019	6
	Not distinctive	-	-

In Table 5, it was analyzed how the learners' use of language learning strategies in learning Turkish as a foreign language differ depending on demographic variables. It can be seen that the majority (f: 6) are the studies suggesting that language learning strategies differ depending on the sex variable for those who learn Turkish as a second language. Although Barut (2015), Demirekin (2017), Varisoglu (2017), Sengul (2016), and Ergin (2018) detected in their studies that female students used language learning strategies more frequently than male students, Boylu (2015) deduced that male students tended to use them more frequently.

There are two studies (Demirekin, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017) suggesting that the use of language learning strategies differs depending on the age variable for those who learn Turkish as a foreign language. In both studies, it was detected that the use

of strategies increased in parallel to the age variable. Boylu (2015), on the other hand, concluded that the age variable did not statistically affect the use of language learning strategies by foreign learners of Turkish.

In five studies (Barut, 2015; Sengul, 2016; Varisoglu, 2017; Sahin and Ergin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019), in which the language learning strategies used by learners of Turkish as a foreign language are analyzed, it was statistically deduced that the use of language learning strategies increased in parallel to the language level.

During the research, it was detected that suggestions were made both for the practical aspects and to researchers in relation to the language learning strategies. These suggestions are as stated in the following tables.

**Table 6: Practice Related Suggestions in the Studies** 

Suggestions	Studies	f
Learners should be guided in terms of language learning strategies.	Bolukbas, 2013; Mohammad, 2014; Barut, 2015; Boylu, 2015; Demirekin, 2017; Gocer, 2017; Yalcin, 2018; Ergin, 2019; Kutukoglu, 2019; Sahin and Ergin, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020	11
Language learning strategies should be used in classes.	Silahsizoglu, 2004; Barut, 2015; Bayezit and Cubukcu, 2015; Harputoglu, 2015; Sengul, 2016; Varisoglu, 2018; Baz, 2019	7
Teachers should be provided with in-service training.	Kutukoglu, 2019; Sahin and Ergin, 2019	2
Teachers should track academical studies.	Demir, 2013	1
Guidebooks for teachers should be prepared.	Kurt and Ozer, 2018	1

According to the results in Table 6, it was demonstrated that teachers should guide (f: 11) learners and use the strategies in classes for those

who learn Turkish as a foreign language to use (f: 7) language learning strategies more effectively.

**Table 7: Suggestions to Researchers in the Studies** 

Suggestions	Studies	f
Studies should be carried out with wider populations.	Akyali Mills, 2014; Barut, 2015; Demirekin, 2017; Ergin, 2019; Keskin, 2019	5
Studies that focus on different language levels should be carried out.	Demir, 2013; Demirekin, 2017; Baz, 2019; Baz Bolluk and Bagci, 2020	4
Activities in which language learning strategies are used should be designed.	Boylu, 2015; Sengul, 2016; Yalcin, 2018	3
Studies should be carried out on students from different nations, where they are taught Turkish.	Mohammad, 2014; Varisoglu, 2017	2
The variables that affect language learning strategies should be determined.	Bayezit, 2013; Akyali Mills, 2014	2
The reason why students use affective strategies so little can be investigated.	Sahin and Ergin, 2019	1
The use of language learning strategies should be examined in detail in student's books.	Bayezit, 2013	1
Experimental research should be carried out.	Demir, 2013	1
Studies on how language learning strategies can be applied in distance learning should be carried out.	Bayezit, 2013	1

According to Table 7, in the studies related to the language learning strategies of those who learn Turkish as a foreign language, the suggestions that researchers should work with wider sample sizes (f: 5) and with different language levels (f: 4) are the most prominent among all the suggestions directed to researchers. The activity suggestions related to education in language learning strategies and the expressions that question why students use affective strategies less are also notable.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study analyses the studies related to the language learning strategies in teaching Turkish to foreigners, in terms of content. The publication types, method and designs, sample sizes, research instruments, demographic variables, and suggestions made in the light of the research results were presented.

For the studies that were examined, it can be said that qualitative and quantitative methods were

equally used. The survey method is demonstrated to be prominent in the quantitative studies, while document analysis was demonstrated to be prominent in the qualitative studies. It was detected that correlational surveys were used with 1 experimental study and case study each. For the studies related to language learning strategies in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, it was deduced that the sample sizes were mostly 150 and over. This result confirms that the survey method is used in the majority of the studies. It is seen that the sample sizes below 50 belong to case studies and experimental studies.

In the majority of the studies where language learning strategies in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are analyzed, it was detected that Oxford Language Learning Strategies (1990) was mostly used as the research instrument. It could be normal to interpret the scales by transforming since the systematic teaching of Turkish to foreigners has started later than some other languages. During the research, it was also detected that a survey and an interview form were contributed to the literature.

In some of the studies in the literature (Barut, 2015; Demirekin, 2017; Sengul, 2016; Varisoglu, 2017; Ergin, 2018), it was determined that female learners who learn Turkish as a foreign language use language-learning strategies more effectively than male learners. Therefore, events, where women and men can mutually participate, should be organized (Sukraini, 2021). Participants will thereby have the opportunity to observe how others use language learning strategies.

One of the variables in language learning is the age variable. It was understood that the frequency of the use of strategies by those who learn Turkish as a foreign language increased in parallel to the age variable (Demirekin, 2017; Varisoglu, 2017). This is also valid for those who learn English as a foreign language (Chen, 2014; Sepasdar and Soori, 2014).

In the studies that were analyzed, certain suggestions were made to instructors in terms of the use of strategies. Guidance to learners in learning language learning strategies and the use of these strategies in classes are emphasized. Certain suggestions were made also to researchers in terms of the use of strategies. Suggestions to conduct research with different language levels and wider

populations are repeated several times. Thus, the role of strategies can be determined more accurately.

# **Suggestions**

It is seen that the researches are mostly done by scanning method. The levels at which language learners use language learning strategies with their attitudes have been determined. By conducting more experimental studies, the effectiveness of language learning strategies can be tested.

Studies have not examined the effects of language learning strategies on language skills. Studies on the level of the relationship between language skills and language learning strategies can also be conducted.

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