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Vocabulary Learning Strategies of the “Good” Learner

Başarılı Öğrencilerin Kullandığı İngilizce Sözcük Öğrenme Stratejileri

Berna Çöker* - Vesile Gül Yılmaz**

Abstract: Within the existing literature of vocabulary research, there has long been a search for the characteristics of the *good* learner (Ellis, 1994, p. 546-50; Naiman et al., 1996; Stern 1975, p.316), which was most probably triggered with the observation that some learners somehow outperform the others receiving the same training (Pavicic-Takac, 2008, p. 58). This boasted the interest in the strategies learners employ to learn a new language. This interest also applies for vocabulary learning, which is a crucial element of language learning (Moir & Nation, 2008). By determining the shared pattern of strategies employed by *good* learners, it will be possible to distinguish the effective strategies used in vocabulary learning. In this respect, the purpose of this research is to determine the English vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by Turkish graduate students with high vocabulary-levels. To this end, data were collected from 128 Turkish graduate students pursuing their master’s or doctoral education at 27 universities in Turkey and 21 universities in the UK via Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al., 2001, p. 82-88) and a 54-item Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire, developed by the researcher. Students’ vocabulary levels were determined by calculating their correct answers at each of the five word-levels. The study data were analysed and 53 *good* learners who achieved 24 and above at all levels were identified. An average score of 24 and above out of 30 items meant the student had mastered that level. The results revealed that *good* learners most commonly used Discovery-Determination strategies which are employed to determine the meaning of a word when one meets it for the first time. Another finding of the research was that language learning context affected the overall use and choice of *good* learner’s VLSs. In the overall usage of VLS’s, a higher frequency of VLS’s were employed by EFL learners than their ESL counterparts. In the overall choice of VLSs, *good* learners from both the ESL and EFL context chose to use Discovery-Determination strategies and Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies more frequently than the other strategy groups.

Structured Abstract: Introduction: Vocabulary, which is regarded as the key element of language that connects the four language skills - namely; speaking, listening, reading and writing – together, is so crucial that without it – as Rubin and Thompson (1994, p.79) suggest - “one cannot speak, understand, read or write a foreign language”. Despite this great importance vocabulary is of, the actual teaching of it is also claimed to be impossible. Instead, “it could be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities, and expressed in all manner of associations (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, olfactory if one wishes)” since it is the

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Temel Eğitim Bölümü
Asst. Prof. Dr., Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education,
ORCID 0000-0001-7089-8061
bernacoker@gmail.com

**İngilizce Okutmanı, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu
English Instructor, Dokuz Eylül University, School of Foreign Languages
ORCID 0000-0002-6576-4648
vesilegul@gmail.com

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individual who learns it (Rivers 1983, p.86). This is the reason researchers have long been trying to find a way out of the ambiguity of the proper ways to study/learn vocabulary.

In this respect, many studies focussed on exploring the strategies of *good* learners as a result of the belief that developing an insight into the strategies good learners use while learning vocabulary could help to identify the vocabulary strategies that are more effective, and thus, become a guide for language learners who would like to improve their own learning outcomes (Pavicic-Takac, 2008, p. 64; Rubin, 1975, p.42; Stern, 1975, p. 304). By doing so, the researchers will be able to draw conclusions about the most frequently used VLSs by the *good* learner, and make generalisations about the VLS use patterns in each context, which will, in turn, have implications for language teachers and learners as well as curriculum developers with the goal of promoting effective strategy use in vocabulary learning in each/either context.

Purpose of the Study:

Since vocabulary is highly important in language learning yet cannot be directly taught, it is worth investigating how the *good* learner copes with all these requirements of vocabulary learning. Learning the way learners cope with this demanding task through the use of certain VLSs might help not only the language teacher, but also textbook writers, course and curriculum designers by providing an account of the VLSs that are conceived to be the most effective. In this respect, this study focuses on VLSs used by *good* learners, graduate students who have scored high (an average of 24 and above out of 30) at the five word-levels on the Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al., 2001, p. 82-88) administered by the researcher. Moreover, the study also examines whether context has any effect on the choice of vocabulary strategies. Therefore, the use of vocabulary strategies according to ESL and EFL context was also investigated. The following research questions (RQ) were posed for this purpose:

1. What VLSs does the *good* learner (students with high vocabulary-levels) use?
2. Does the *good* learner's VLS use vary in terms of the language learning contexts (ESL vs. EFL) they come from?

Method: With the goal of finding out the VLSs of the *good* learner, data from 128 Turkish graduate students pursuing their master's or PhD education at 21 universities in the United Kingdom (UK) and 27 universities in Turkey were gathered via a 54-item Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire and a Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al., 2001). There were 49 ESL (UK) and 79 EFL (Turkey) participants in the study. Students' vocabulary levels were determined by calculating their correct answers at each of the five word-levels (2,000, 3,000, 5,000, 10,000 and academic word level) and taking the average of all five to get one general average score. The study data were analysed and 53 *good* learners, learners who achieved an average score of 24 and above, were identified. Descriptive statistics (such as mean and standard deviation), *t* test, and analysis of variance, (ANOVA), were utilized in data analysis.

Findings and Discussion: The results revealed that *good* learners most commonly used Discovery-Determination strategies which are used to determine the meaning of a word when one meets it for the first time. The second most commonly used VLS by the *good* learners were Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies. The least preferred strategy group by the good learners was Consolidation-Social strategies, strategies which contribute indirectly to vocabulary learning such as practicing meaning with peers, or interacting with native speakers of English. Another finding of the research was that language learning context affected the overall use and choice of *good* learner's VLSs. In the overall usage of VLS's, a higher frequency of VLS's were employed by EFL learners than their ESL counterparts. In the overall choice of VLSs, *good* learners from both the ESL and EFL context chose to use Discovery-Determination strategies, and Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies more frequently than the other strategy groups. Determination strategies, which support gaining initial knowledge of words with the help of context as well as metacognitive strategies that help to assess and regulate one's learning seem to be a powerful combination in successful vocabulary learning.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

Many studies in the area of language learning have sought to determine the strategies the *good* learner uses (Brown, 2000; Lightbrown & Spada, 1997; Naiman et al., 1996; Nunan, 1995; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). This study sets out to discover the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by the good learners. Moreover, we also tried to discover whether vocabulary strategy use differed according to ESL and EFL context.

The results revealed that Determination and Metacognitive strategies, ranked as the first and second most used strategy groups among the *good* learners. In the overall use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) it is observed that the *good* learners (those with a high level of vocabulary as determined by the VLT) in the EFL context use VLSs at a higher frequency than their counterparts in the ESL context. The reason behind this could be the need to compensate for the limited access of potential English input available for the EFL learners.

Also worthy of investigation is the relationship between strategy choice of good learners and weak learners to gain an understanding of the way strategies work. Although learning about what the *good* learner does can help us a great deal to pinpoint the effective VLSs, exploring what the weak learner does could well improve our understanding of the way strategies work. Moreover, just like many other studies in the literature (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Kayacıoğlu, 2013; etc.), this study analyses learners’ VLS use categorically. However, an in-dept analysis of the individual VLSs can further expand our understanding of the way strategies work. That’s why further research into this topic is suggested.

Keywords: English language teaching, Vocabulary learning strategies, good learner, language learning context, graduate students, vocabulary levels, English as a Foreign language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL)

Öz: Alanyazında sözcük bilgisi üzerine yapılmış çalışmalarda, “iyi” (başarılı) öğrencilerin özellikleri uzun süredir araştırılmaktadır (Ellis, 1994; Naiman et al., 1996; Stern 1975). Bunun nedeni, büyük olasılıkla, diğerleriyle aynı eğitimi alan bazı öğrencilerin bir şekilde diğerlerinden daha başarılı olduğunun gözlemlenmesidir (Pavicic-Takac, 2008). Bu durum, yeni bir dil öğrenirken kullanılan dil öğrenme stratejilerine olan ilgiyi artırmıştır. Dil öğreniminin önemli bir ögesi olan sözcük öğrenme (Moir and Nation, 2008) de artan bu ilgiden payına düşeni almıştır. “İyi” öğrencilerin kullandıkları ortak stratejilerin belirlenmesiyle sözcük öğreniminde kullanılan etkin stratejilerin tespit edilmesi mümkün olacaktır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı, sözcük düzeyi yüksek lisansüstü Türk öğrencilerin İngilizce sözcük öğrenme stratejilerini belirlemektir. Bu amaçla, veriler (Türkiye’de 27, İngiltere’de ise 21 farklı üniversitenin çeşitli bölümlerde) yüksek lisans ve doktora eğitimlerine devam etmekte olan 128 Türk öğrenciden Sözcük Düzeyi Testi (Schmitt et al., 2001) ve araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen 54 maddelik Sözcük Öğrenme Stratejileri Anketi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Veri analizi sonucunda “iyi” (sözcük düzeyleri yüksek) 53 öğrenci belirlenmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, “iyi” öğrencilerin en sık kullandıkları sözcük öğrenme stratejilerinin (bir sözcükle ilk kez karşılaşıldığında anlamını belirlemek için kullanılan) Keşif-Belirleme stratejileri olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışmanın bir diğer bulgusu da, “iyi” öğrencilerin kullandıkları sözcük öğrenme stratejilerinin öğrencilerin bulunduğu dil öğrenme bağlamından etkilendiği yönündedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Dil Öğretimi, Sözcük öğrenme stratejileri, başarılı öğrenci, dil öğrenme bağlamı, lisansüstü öğrenci, sözcük bilgisi düzeyi, İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimi (EFL), İngilizcenin ikinci dil olarak öğretimi (ESL)

Introduction

Vocabulary is widely accepted to have a crucial role in language learning in general. It is regarded to be the element that connects the four language skills - namely; speaking, listening, reading and writing – together. It is so crucial that without it “one cannot speak, understand, read or write a foreign language” (Rubin & Thompson, 1994, p. 79). Despite being important, the actual teaching of it is also claimed to be impossible. Instead, it could be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities, and expressed in all manner of associations (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, olfactory if one wishes) since it is the individual who learns it (Rivers, 1983, p. 86). This actually is in line with today’s understanding of vocabulary learning which entails indirect exposure to as well as explicit instruction of words (Diamond & Gutlohn, 2006). Yet, it is “not possible for students to learn all the vocabulary they need in the classroom” (Sökmen, 1997, p. 245). And this is where VLSs step in by equipping the learner with the necessary tools to learn a word. In this respect, the process of helping learners become autonomous by making them aware of VLSs is of great importance. In other words, it is students’ responsibility to find powerful methods to make

vocabulary learning easier and quicker.

Vocabulary learning, as all types of learning, is also a process which involves some steps. Brown and Payne (1995, p. 383) suggest five steps of learning vocabulary in a foreign language; (1) having sources for encountering new words, (2) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words, (3) learning the meaning of the words, (4) making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meanings of the words, and (5) using the words. And, as Fan (2003, p. 223) claims, all VLSs should be more or less related to these five steps of learning vocabulary in a foreign language identified by Brown and Payne.

By definition, VLSs are steps taken by the language learners to acquire new English words (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011, p. 85). They are specific techniques, actions and devices adopted by learners to ease and boost their vocabulary learning (Rashed, 2018, p. 40). A more detailed definition of VLSs suggests that they are the steps or actions taken by language learners to discover the meaning of unknown words, to store their meanings in the long-term memory, to recall and produce them when necessary, either orally or in a written form (Catalan, 2003, p. 56).

Although a variety of definitions of VLSs could be made, it would actually be a futile effort as they can be anything that affects learning (Schmitt, 1997, p. 203). In this respect, Nation (2001, p. 217), rather than defining VLSs, lists the four characteristics of a strategy. According to him, a strategy should (1) involve choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from, and (2) be complex, that is, there are several steps to learn. Also, a strategy should (3) require knowledge and benefit from training, and lastly it should (4) increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use.

All these definitions of VLSs provided above suggest that word knowledge is more of a multi-dimensional character than simply knowing the meaning, which in turn requires the use of a variety of strategies. Thus, getting a deeper insight into what knowing a word actually means could be of great use at this point.

Knowing a word is generally considered as a matter of knowing the word's meaning. However, although knowledge of a word's meaning is of great importance, knowing a word is actually much more than that. The knowledge of the word's meaning composes only part of the knowledge required to know a word. Knowing a word "means learning much more than just its meaning, with the word's form, associations, collocations, and grammatical patterns among other things also needing to be acquired" (Brown, 2010, p. 254). Schmitt (2000, p. 5) also acknowledges that it is not enough to know its meaning to master a word, but that the individual should learn its register, association, collocation, grammatical behaviour, written form, spoken form and frequency, and that all these properties are known as "word knowledge". This is why vocabulary is not a list of individual words.

The fact that word knowledge is so rich and grift in meaning with a variety of aspects of the word required to be acknowledged by the learner, yet that it cannot be directly taught inspired researchers to find a way out of this difficult situation, which lead to research of the *good* learner. Research on the concept of the *good* learner, which has long been discussed in the literature (Reiss, 1985; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975), yielded various characteristics attributed to the *good* learner (Brown, 2001; Lightbrown & Spada, 1997; Naiman et al., 1996; Nunan, 1995; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1983). The *good* language learner can be defined as "someone who actively involves himself in the language learning process, either right from the beginning or later; he also finds ways to overcome obstacles, whether linguistic, affective or environmental; he monitors his own performance; he studies, practices, and involves himself in communication" (Naiman et al., 1996, p. 39).

After the initial attempts to list the characteristics of the good language learner, studies on the *good* learner set out to discover the ways *good* learners study language and the language learning strategies they use. One of the most striking findings of studies on the *good* learner is that these learners have a rich repertoire of strategies (Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Sanaoui, 1995), and they are capable of using them flexibly (Ellis, 1994). Many studies in the area have sought to determine the strategies the *good* learner uses. A remarkable number of studies have revealed that the most commonly used strategies by the *good* learner is “metacognitive” strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Kayacıoğlu, 2013; Nazri et al., 2016). In addition, research in the field of strategies reveals that learners use more strategies in vocabulary acquisition than in any other area of language learning. In this respect, the strategies good learners employ to learn second language vocabulary constitutes the focus of this study.

The notion of *good* learner remains somehow vague despite the characteristics attributed to him. The *good* learner in this particular study, on the other hand, has been determined on the basis of vocabulary achievement; with only 53 out of the total 128 participants actually displaying high performance. That is, the *good* learner, here, refers to the participants who have high vocabulary levels, to be more precise, learners with a total average score of 24 and above out of 30 items at all of the five word levels on the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT).

Purpose of the study

Since vocabulary is highly important in language learning yet cannot be directly taught, it is worth investigating how the *good* learner copes with all these requirements of vocabulary learning. Learning the way learners cope with this demanding task through the use of certain VLSs might help not only the language teacher, but also textbook writers, course and curriculum designers by providing an account of the VLSs that are conceived to be the most effective. In this respect, the present study attempts to explore the use of English vocabulary learning strategies by Turkish graduate students with high vocabulary levels in order to determine the shared pattern of strategies employed by “good learners”. Moreover, the study also investigates whether context makes a difference in the strategy choice good learners make. Therefore, the use of vocabulary strategies according to ESL and EFL context was also investigated.

The following questions were posed in the study:

1. What VLSs does the *good* learner (students with high vocabulary-levels) use?
2. Does the *good* learner’s VLS use vary in terms of the language learning contexts (ESL vs. EFL) they come from?

Finding an answer to the question posed above might help us in many ways: (a) The exploration of VLSs language learners use can help facilitate our understanding of the learning process of vocabulary in a foreign/second language. (b) It can help us understand whether context makes a difference in the choice and use of strategies by successful language learners. (c) Some strategies that are used more frequently by the *good* learners might emerge as effective strategies in vocabulary learning. (d) Language teachers might use the information from the study in their classes to facilitate a more efficient use of VLSs and thus a more effective vocabulary learning. (e) Curriculum planners and textbook writers, as well as language teachers, can benefit from the findings to determine the strategies that are beneficial in ESL and EFL contexts.

Method

Participants

In total, 128 graduate students pursuing their master’s or PhD education at 27 universities in Turkey and 21 universities in the UK took part in the study. The participants of the study consisted of 58 males and 70 females. Participants’ age ranged from 23 to 45, with a mean age of 28. 79 of the

128 participants, constituting 62%, were master's level learners while the remaining 49 (38%) were doctoral students. The distribution of participants across the two language learning contexts in terms of gender and educational level has been provided on Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants According to Context, Gender, Educational Level, and Academic Major

		UK(ESL) (n=49)	%	Turkey (n=79)	(EFL)	%	Overall (n=128)	%
Gender	Female	22	45	48		61	70	55
	Male	27	55	31		39	58	45
Educational Level	Master's	15	31	64		81	79	62
	PhD	34	69	15		19	49	38

Materials

Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ): A 5-point rating scale Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ) developed by the researcher in accordance with Schmitt's (1997, p. 205-206) taxonomy of VLSs was used in the data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 54 items (each related to one of the six subcategories of VLSs) with a section on frequency of use of each VLS in Likert form, as well. The questionnaire was piloted before its use for the purposes of the study. The reliability of the VLSQ, as measured by *Cronbach Alpha* coefficient was calculated to be .95. See Appendix 1 for VLSQ items and Schmitt's taxonomy of VLSs. In addition, personal information on students were collected through the use of a personal information sheet consisting of questions on participants' age, gender, university, academic major and so on.

Vocabulary Level Test (VLT): Data on students' vocabulary levels were collected via VLT by Schmitt, et al. (2001, p.82-88). The VLT consists of five word-levels – namely 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, 10,000 and Academic Word Level. The test has a form-recognition matching format, where the stem is the definition and the options are the target words (Schmitt, 2010, p.197). There are ten clusters (as opposed to six in the original version) of words per frequency level and each cluster is composed of six target words to be matched with three definitions next to them, making three of the words' distractors. Thus, participants need to consider sixty words in each frequency level. In other words, test takers are required to match 30 definitions to 30 out of 60 words (Xing & Fulcher, 2007, p.183) in each frequency level, which makes the total number of maximum possible correct answers 150.

Data Collection Procedure

Data on frequency of use of VLSs, vocabulary levels and personal information were collected from graduate learners attending a variety of departments at 27 universities in Turkey and 21 universities in the UK over a two-month period via VLSQ and VLT. Consent forms prepared in the participants' native tongue (Turkish) were signed by the participants as to let them know of their rights and expectations from them.

Data Analyses Procedure

Descriptive statistics (such as mean and standard deviation) were utilized. In addition, *t* tests were conducted to capture differences in reported frequency of use of VLSs, if any, between ESL and EFL contexts. Students' vocabulary levels were determined by calculating their correct answers at each of the five word-levels and a total average score for each student were given to indicate their overall word-level. The *good* learners, those with an overall average of 24 and above out of 30 items on the VLT, were identified. An overall average of 24 (out of 30) refers to a cumulative score of 120 and above on the total 150 items of all the five word-levels. As there are five word-levels, 120 divided by 5 is 24, which is the threshold accepted in this particular study.

Findings

Students displaying high performance were identified in accordance with the analysis of the VLT given to all 128 students. The criterion of success – here – is a total average score of 24 and above (out of the maximum possible score of 30) on the overall VLT.

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Students who Mastered Each Word Level in the ESL and EFL Contexts

Group	2,000 WL	3,000 WL	5,000 WL	10,000 WL	AWL	Total Average
UK (ESL) (n=49)	46 (93.88%)	38 (77.55%)	28 (57.14%)	5 (10.20%)	29 (59.18%)	30 (61.22%)
Turkey (EFL) (n=79)	48 (60.76%)	28 (35.44%)	26 (32.91%)	7 (8.86%)	17 (21.52%)	23 (29.11%)

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of EFL and ESL students who have achieved an average score of 24 and above at the five word levels from the Vocabulary Levels Test. It is observed that while almost all of the ESL students who took the VLT (93.88%) mastered the 2000 level, this is not the case among EFL students mastering the 2000 level (60.76%). Moreover, the percentage of ESL students who mastered the 3,000, 5,000 and academic level is twice that of the EFL students. However, both groups have a low percentage of students mastering the 10,000-word level: 10.2% among ESL and 8.86% among EFL students, respectively.

In addition to the scores of the participants at each of the five word levels, the need for one overall score for each participant on the whole test emerged so that one can compare and contrast learners use of VLSs with regards to their success on the VLT. Thus, a total average score was calculated for each participant by adding up their scores (out of 30) on each word level and dividing the sum into 5, which is the number of word levels on the test. Accordingly, when the total average scores of the participants on the VLT were taken into account, 61.22% (30) of the ESL learners and 29.11% (23) of the EFL learners passed the threshold of 24 out of 30 on the test as an overall score. Thus, the total number of students that have successfully mastered all levels is (30+23) 53.

Distribution of these 53 *good* learners (those with an overall average of 24 and above at the five word levels on the VLT) has been provided on Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of the Good Learners According to Context, Gender, and Academic Major

		UK (ESL) (n=30)	%	Turkey (EFL) (n=23)	%	Overall (n=53)	%
Gender	Female	15	50	16	69.57	31	58.49
	Male	15	50	7	30.43	22	41.51
Academic Major	Arts & Humanities	20	66.67	19	82.61	39	73.58
	Science	10	33.33	4	17.39	14	26.42

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of EFL and ESL students who have achieved 24 and above at all levels of VLT according to gender and academic major. It is observed that while in the ESL context the number of female and male students who have mastered all levels are equal, in the EFL context females outnumber males, constituting around 69% of the EFL students who have scored 24 and over at all levels.

In terms of academic distribution, it is observed that in both EFL and ESL contexts the students majoring in Arts and Humanities outnumber the students in Science and make up approximately 73% of the students who have achieved 24 and above at all levels.

Findings concerning RQ 1: What VLSs does the *good* learner (the students who scored an average of 24 and above at the five word levels on the VLT) use?

Table 4. shows the mean scores for the use of VLSs of *good* learners, who have scored an average of 24 and above at the five word levels on the VLT.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for VLS Use of the Good Learners
(Irrespective of Context)

Overall (n=53)			
Strategy type	Mean	SD	SE
D-Determination	3.63	.57	.08
D-Social	2.98	.97	.13
C-Social	2.69	.71	.10
C-Memory	3.06	.80	.11
C-Cognitive	2.71	.97	.13
C-Metacognitive	3.35	.94	.13
General Average	3.08	.64	.09

(D and C stand for Discovery and Consolidation strategies, respectively)

Table 4 reveals that the most frequently used category of VLSs among EFL and ESL students who achieved an overall VLT score of 24 and above is Discovery-Determination Strategies with an average of 3.63 (SD=.57). Consolidation – Metacognitive and Consolidation-Memory Strategies are the second and third most frequently used strategy categories with averages of 3.35 (SD=.94) and 3.06 (SD=.80), respectively. Discovery-Social (2.98, SD=.97) and Consolidation – Cognitive Strategies (2.71, SD=.97) come next in the ranking of most frequently used VLS categories. The least frequently used category by the *good* learners is Consolidation- Social Strategies with an average use of 2.69 (SD=.71).

Findings concerning RQ 2: Does the *good* learner's VLS use vary in terms of the language learning contexts (ESL vs. EFL) they come from?

Table 5 presents the statistics of the average use of the six strategy groups by the *good* learners (those with an overall average of 24 and above on the VLT at all levels) in relation to ESL and EFL context.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for VLS Use of the Good Learners (Overall and across the ESL and EFL Contexts)

Strategy type	ESL (n=30)		EFL (n=23)		ESL vs. EFL		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
D-Determination	3.48	.52	3.82	.59	-2.194	.033*	.29
D-Social	2.74	.97	3.30	.88	-2.180	.034*	.29
C-Social	2.59	.69	2.83	.72	-1.193	.238	.16
C-Memory	2.80	.72	3.40	.79	-2.910	.005*	.38
C-Cognitive	2.44	.85	3.05	1.02	-2.385	.021*	.32
C-Metacognitive	2.92	.88	3.91	.71	-4.409	.000*	.53
General Average	2.84	.55	3.39	.62	-3.378	.001*	.43

(* marks statistically significant *p* values, D and C stand for Discovery and Consolidation strategies, respectively)

According to Table 5, the *good* learners in the ESL context most frequently used the Discovery-Determination strategies (the VLSs that are used by learners to discover its meaning when they meet the word for the first time) with an average use of 3.48, (SD=.52). Consolidation-Metacognitive and Consolidation-Memory strategies are the second and third most frequently used VLS categories with the average use of 2.92 (SD=.88) and 2.80 (SD=.72), respectively. Discovery-Social strategies are the fourth most commonly used strategy category (2.74, SD=.97). Consolidation-Social strategies come next in the ranking with an average of 2.59 (SD=.69). The least frequently used VLS group in ESL context is Consolidation-Cognitive strategies with an average of 2.44 (SD=.85). The *good* learners in the ESL context used VLSs (in general) with an average of 2.84 (SD=.55).

As for the EFL context, the most commonly used VLS category by the *good* learners is Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies with a mean use of 3.91 (SD=.71). The second most frequently used strategy group in this context is Discovery-Determination strategies (3.82, SD=.59) followed by Consolidation-Memory strategies (3.40, SD=.79). Discovery-Social strategies rank as the fourth with a mean use of 3.30 (SD=.88). The fifth most frequently used strategy category is Consolidation-Cognitive (3.05, SD=1.02) while the least frequently used category is Consolidation-Social with an average use of 2.83 (SD=.72). The *good* learners in the EFL context used VLSs (in general) with an average of 3.91 (SD=.71).

As far as the difference between the general average scores of the learners with a total average score of 24 and above on the VLT are concerned, the analysis did reveal significant difference between the ESL and EFL contexts [*t* (51) =-3.378, *p*<.05]. The difference between the ESL and EFL contexts is significant (*p*<.05) for all but one of the six strategy groups which is Consolidation-Social Strategies (*p*=.238) [*t* (51) =-1.193 *p*>.05]. Two groups are significantly different from each other (in favour of the EFL group) in the frequency of use of Discovery-Determination (*p*=.033) [*t*(51) =-2.194, *p*<.05], Discovery - Social (*p*=.034) [*t*(51) =-2.18, *p*<.05], Consolidation-Memory (*p*=.005) [*t*(53) =-2.91, *p*<.05], Consolidation-Cognitive (*p*=.021) [*t*(51) =-2.385, *p*<.05], and Consolidation-Metacognitive (*p*=.000) [*t*(51) =-4.409 *p*<.05] types of VLSs as well as the frequency of use of overall VLSs (*p*=.001) [*t*(51) =-3.378, *p*<.05]. A calculation of the effect sizes indicated a large sized effect (*r*=.53) for Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies and a medium sized effect (*r*=.30-.49) for the rest of the significant results.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

Many studies in the area of language learning have sought to determine the strategies the *good* learner uses (Brown, 2000; Brown, 2001; Lightbrown & Spada, 1997; Naiman et al., 1996; Nunan, 1995; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). This study sets out to discover the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by the *good* learners. Moreover, we also tried to discover whether vocabulary strategy use differed according to ESL and EFL context.

The results revealed that Determination and Metacognitive strategies ranked as the first and second most used strategy groups among *good* learners when context was not taken into account. The strategy group most frequently used by the *good* learners are Discovery-Determination strategies which are strategies to understand the meaning of the word at first encounter. These results indicate that *good* learners prefer to use Discovery-Determination strategies to gather information about new words such as using a dictionary, analysing the word, and guessing words from context. The second most used strategy group among *good* learners were Metacognitive Strategies. This finding is in tune with other studies that show Metacognitive strategies were the most commonly used strategy group by successful learners (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Kayacıoğlu, 2013; Nazri et al., 2016). Studies have shown (Sanaoui, 1995; Gu & Johnson, 1996) that the choice in the combination of vocabulary strategies and their consistent use has a considerable influence on the outcomes of L2 learning. Gu and Johnson's study (1996) reveal that the two metacognitive strategies, self-initiation and selective attention, that help to regulate learning were the best predictors of overall proficiency in EFL learning followed by contextual encoding. Our study also revealed similar results. *Good* learners from both the ESL and EFL context chose to use Discovery-Determination strategies, and Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies more frequently than the other strategy groups. Determination strategies, which support gaining initial knowledge of words with the help of context as well as metacognitive strategies that help to assess and regulate one's learning seem to be a powerful combination in successful vocabulary learning.

The least preferred strategy group by the *good* learners was Consolidation-Social strategies, strategies which contribute indirectly to vocabulary learning such as practising meaning with peers, or interacting with native speakers of English. This finding is also similar to that of Putri and Wahyuni's (2019) and Hamzah et al.'s (2009) studies which found social strategies to be the least employed learning strategy by higher-achiever students. However, it is interesting to note that the Discovery-Social strategies are more frequently used than the Consolidation-Social strategies in both ESL and EFL contexts. The *good* learners in our study preferred to use social strategies to discover the meaning of the words (Determination-Social) rather than to remember and retain the meaning of words (Consolidation-Social).

Another finding of the research is that language learning context affected the overall use and choice of the *good* learner's VLSs. In the overall usage of VLSs, a higher frequency of strategies was employed by EFL learners than their ESL counterparts. EFL learners preferred to use Discovery-Determination, Discovery-Social, Consolidation-Memory, Consolidation-Cognitive and Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies at a significantly higher frequency than ESL learners. In only one category, Consolidation-Social, was there no significant difference in the frequency of VLS use between the two groups.

In the overall choice of VLSs, our study revealed that there were some differences in VLS preferences between the EFL and ESL learners. The findings revealed that the *good* learners in the EFL context highly preferred Metacognitive strategies. The Consolidation-Metacognitive strategies on the VLS Questionnaire such as keeping a vocabulary notebook for new words and going over them regularly or solving vocabulary tests were chosen at a higher frequency by the EFL learners than any other strategy group. Metacognitive strategies were followed by Determination strategies, and to a lesser extent Consolidation-Memory, Discovery-Social, and Consolidation-Cognitive

strategies. Consolidation-Social strategies were the least preferred. On the other hand, the *good* learners of ESL highly preferred Determination strategies followed by Metacognitive strategies, and to a lesser extent, Consolidation-Memory, Discovery-Social, Consolidation-Social strategies. Cognitive strategies were the least preferred category

It is very important that language learners be encouraged to explore and employ the strategies that have proven to be beneficial for language learning. Teachers need to make use of vocabulary strategies in their classrooms to enrich the learning environments. However, it is important for teachers to recognize that the use of certain strategies in combination can be more effective than others. In our study the good learners both in the EFL and ESL context preferred to make use of Determination and Metacognitive strategies the most. The explicit instruction of Metacognitive strategies (Razek & Ranjary, 2003; Zhao, 2009) and Determination strategies to discover the meaning of words by using contextual clues (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Shokouhi & Askari, 2010), dictionary strategies (Fraser, 1999) or word formation strategies (Sadeghi et al., 2011; Xinjie, 2011) have proven to have positive affects on language learning.

Also worthy of investigation is the relationship between strategy choice of *good* learners and *weak* learners to gain an understanding of the way strategies work. Although learning about what the *good* learner does can help us a great deal to pinpoint the effective VLSs, exploring what the *weak* learner does could well improve our understanding of the way strategies work. Moreover, just like many other studies in the literature (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Kayacıoğlu, 2013; etc.), this study analyses learners’ VLS use categorically. However, an in-dept analysis of the individual VLSs can further expand our understanding of the way strategies work. That’s why further research into this topic is suggested.

One of the limitations of the study is that it only covers the vocabulary strategies presented in Schmitt’s taxonomy (Schmitt, 1997). Furthermore, the information on learners’ vocabulary levels is limited to the data collected via Schmitt et al. (2001).

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Appendix 1.

VLSQ items and Taxonomy of VLSs by Schmitt (1997: 205-206)

A. Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning	
a. Determination strategies	D-DET 1 (<i>Item 1</i>) Analyse part of speech
	D-DET 2 (<i>Item 2</i>) Affixes and roots
	D-DET 3 (<i>Item 3</i>) Check for L1 cognate
	D-DET 4 (<i>Item 4</i>) Analyse pictures and gestures
	D-DET 5 (<i>Item 5</i>) Guess from textual context
	D-DET 6 (<i>Item 6</i>) Bilingual dictionary
	D-DET 7 (<i>Item 7</i>) Monolingual dictionary
	D-DET 8 (<i>Item 8</i>) Word lists
	D-DET 9 (<i>Item 9</i>) Flash cards
	D-DET 10 (<i>Item 10</i>) Ask teacher for L1 translation
b. Social strategies	D-SOC 11 (<i>Item 11</i>) Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word
	D-SOC 12 (<i>Item 12</i>) Ask teacher for a sentence including new word
	D-SOC 13 (<i>Item 13</i>) Ask classmates for meaning
	D-SOC 14 (<i>Item 14</i>) Discover new meaning through group work activity
	D-SOC 15 (<i>Item 15</i>) Ask teacher for L1 translation
B. Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered	
a. Social strategies	C-SOC 16 (<i>Item 16</i>) Study and practice meaning in a group
	C-SOC 17 (<i>Item 17</i>) Teacher checks students' flashcards or word lists for accuracy
	C-SOC 18 (<i>Item 18</i>) Interact with native speakers
	C-SOC 19 (<i>Item 19</i>) Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning
	C-SOC 20 (<i>Item 20</i>) Image word's meaning
b. Memory strategies	C-MEM 21 (<i>Item 21</i>) Connect word to a personal experience
	C-MEM 22 (<i>Item 22</i>) Associate the word with its coordinates
	C-MEM 23 (<i>Item 23</i>) Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms
	C-MEM 24 (<i>Item 24</i>) Use semantic maps
	C-MEM 25 (<i>Item 25</i>) Use scales' for gradable adjectives
c. Cognitive strategies	C-COG 26 (<i>Item 26</i>) Verbal repetition
	C-COG 27 (<i>Item 27</i>) Written repetition
	C-COG 28 (<i>Item 28</i>) Word lists
	C-COG 29 (<i>Item 29</i>) Flash cards
	C-COG 30 (<i>Item 30</i>) Note-taking
	C-COG 31 (<i>Item 31</i>) Use vocabulary section in textbooks
	C-COG 32 (<i>Item 32</i>) Listen to tape of word lists
	C-COG 33 (<i>Item 33</i>) Put L2 labels on physical objects
	C-COG 34 (<i>Item 34</i>) Keep vocabulary notebook
	C-COG 35 (<i>Item 35</i>) Verbal repetition
d. Metacognitive strategies	C-MET 36 (<i>Item 36</i>) Use L2 media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)
	C-MET 37 (<i>Item 37</i>) Testing oneself with word tests
	C-MET 38 (<i>Item 38</i>) Use spaced word practice
	C-MET 39 (<i>Item 39</i>) Skip/pass new word
	C-MET 40 (<i>Item 40</i>) Continue to study word over time