



Review Article

Use of language learning strategies in the comprehension of Turkish as a foreign language in gifted individuals

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Abstract

Language is a systematic and human-oriented skill that is activated through reading, writing, listening, and speaking, accompanied by structural units made up of sounds, meanings and forms constructed by the consensus of individuals and formed in the brain, which is a highly complex mechanism. Hence, for these strategies to be effective, it is critical that foreign language learners are able to methodically understand texts produced in the target language. Language learning strategies are certain acts, behaviors, procedures, or approaches that people typically employ on a conscious basis to accelerate their acquisition of a second language. In this study, the use of vocabulary and language learning strategies by gifted individuals in making sense of Turkish as a foreign language was investigated. The study reveals that the use of language learning strategies by gifted individuals in making sense of Turkish as a foreign language is important. It is predicted that the information in the study will contribute to the knowledge background on language learning strategies in gifted individuals.

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Introduction

In the process of learning Turkish as a foreign language, the effective use of vocabulary and language learning strategies for individuals with special abilities can significantly facilitate and accelerate the learning process (Manning, 2006; Özüdoğru et al., 2021). The learning styles and strategies of gifted individuals often differ from traditional methods. Gifted individuals often have individual learning profiles and preferences. Therefore, it is crucial to adapt learning materials and methods based on individual characteristics. In the process of language learning, gifted individuals can use various methods such as establishing meaning relationships, learning words in sentences, or using repetition and reinforcement to better comprehend the usage and meaning of words (Okan & Ispinar, 2009).

Some individuals favor a top-down pedagogical approach, wherein the overarching concept is introduced initially, allowing learners to extract knowledge from that broader context. Others may like a bottom-up strategy, in which the student gradually gets to the larger picture by using the teacher's building blocks as a guide. Similar to this, some students approach challenges head-on and figure things out as they go, while others take a more deliberate strategy and plan in advance (Renzuli, 1998; Passet, 2015).

The use of language learning strategies by gifted individuals greatly affects their educational development and achievement. Gifted individuals are generally able to access information quickly and understand it in depth (Diezmann & Watters, 2006). Language learning strategies for gifted individuals can be specifically designed for them to quickly grasp complex language structures and vocabulary. Therefore, the learning process of gifted individuals shows a different

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pace and depth than other individuals. For this reason, gifted individuals need special strategies in their language learning process (Passet, 2015).

The process of learning Turkish as a foreign language for gifted individuals may differ from general language learning approaches (Innalı, 2017; Kırıcı & Ceylan, 2023)) and some special strategies and methods need to be developed considering the special abilities of such individuals. There are numerous studies demonstrating that the creativity and problem-solving abilities of gifted individuals provide a great advantage in the language learning process (Clark & Zimmerman, 2002; Demirekin, 2017; Gross, 2004; Okan & 2009).

Gifted individuals are generally able to better self-manage their personal learning processes (Sak, 2017). Manning (2006) states that gifted individuals are able to develop metacognitive strategies, have a high level of skills in analyzing, planning, and evaluating their own learning processes, and are also able to make progress in language learning by setting learning objectives. Moreover, gifted individuals are highly motivated to access enriched advanced contents (Seokhee & Doehee, 2003). Gifted individuals tend to access advanced resources (in-depth study of books, articles, and other language materials) (Tortop, 2015). In addition, since learning about culture and history can add insight to the language learning process, gifted individuals are more participatory in accessing information related to culture and history (Sak, 2017). Encouraging gifted individuals to interact with Turkish-speaking environments, to practice the language, to improve their language skills through movies, music, cultural events, and social activities can enhance their language learning skills while accessing the information they are curious about (Yewchuk, 1999).

The utilization of vocabulary and language learning strategies is crucial for gifted persons studying Turkish as a foreign language. The employment of vocabulary and language strategies for acquisition is essential for gifted individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language (Demirekin, 2017).

According to Oxford (1990), effective language learning strategies allow students to become more autonomous while achieving success in their studies. Furthermore, Macaro (2001) notes that strategic language use can significantly increase cognitive processing, which will aid children with exceptional abilities in studying new languages. When learning Turkish as a foreign language, gifted persons should focus on vocabulary and language acquisition methodologies. Such strategies are critical for improving language acquisition, allowing gifted students to maximize their learning processes and reach higher levels of competence (Demirekin, 2017).

Language Learning Strategies of Gifted Individuals

Children with unusual talents have distinct traits and process information in various manners. They typically speak more languages proficiently. They may efficiently acquire, understand and transmit information through language thanks to their abilities (Chanderan & Hashim, 2022). Gifted individuals tend to enjoy language games, writing and speaking. They are sensitive to language structures, have a large vocabulary, can write with accuracy, and can memorize and learn various foreign languages (Seokhee & Doehee, 2003). The learning skills, personality traits and other demographic characteristics of gifted individuals may affect the strategies they use when learning a new language and their learning levels (Tortop, 2015). In addition, the cognitive levels of gifted individuals and their ability to cope with problems in language learning also affect their language performances (Sak, 2017).

In the context of education for gifted individuals, there have been few studies on language learning strategies (Zeidner & Matthews, 2017). Hattie's (2009) investigation into strategy adoption and retention in gifted persons emphasizes that gifted individuals comprehend the practicality of strategies and utilize them spontaneously to carry out tasks without explicit instruction. In a study conducted by Hsieh (2009), the relationship between self-efficacy, language learning strategies and achievement levels of individuals evaluating foreign language courses was examined, and it was found that those who could use language learning strategies well had higher levels of self-efficacy. Generally, gifted children have remarkable abilities and learning speed at an earlier age; nevertheless, not all gifted children follow the same level of progress. In particular, some gifted individuals may follow a slower pace in developing their conversational skills (Okan & Ispinar, 2009). Tuncer (2009) emphasizes that delayed speech in gifted individuals may reflect unique aspects of the way gifted individuals perceive and process the world. Studies conducted to find learning preferences among academically gifted individuals indicate that academically gifted individuals develop their own learning strategies

independently, that some gifted individuals do not like music or theater and need to be supported to be more creative, and that they may need ideas about appropriate ways to create a suitable environment for learning to take place (Gross, 2004; Sarıcaoğlu & Arıkan, 2009).

Each gifted individual has different characteristics. In terms of language learning strategies, each gifted individual has varying skills; their special abilities cannot be generalized because every individual has a unique developmental pattern (Chen, 2014). Yewchuk (1999) states that if gifted individuals' language learning efforts are not matched, they may experience frustration, loss of self-esteem, display boredom behaviors, and lead to laziness or academic failure. Therefore, it can be argued that gifted individuals have special learning needs related to language learning.

Language Learning Strategies

Language is formed in the brain, which is an extremely complex mechanism, accompanied by structural units made up of sounds, meanings and forms created by the consensus of individuals; in fact it is a systematic and human-oriented ability that is activated through reading, writing, listening and speaking (Onan, 2011, p.7). For this reason, in order to make these competencies effective, it is critical how learners of a foreign language can systematically make sense of the texts of the target language. Research on learning strategies used for better language comprehension is applied in the teaching and learning process of many languages (Macaro, 2001). At this point, it becomes important to conduct studies on how Turkish can be taught to a foreigner and what strategies foreign students learning this language should follow (Demirekin, 2017).

Understanding language learning strategies is essential to understanding how people acquire other languages. By offering structured procedures and tactics adapted to the needs of the learner, these strategies significantly influence the learning process and improve language acquisition (Seokhee & Doehee, 2003). In the language learning process, it is of great importance to know how gifted individuals master the language and how the language learning strategies they use affect their level of achievement (Özüdoğru et al., 2021).

Oxford (1990) defined language learning strategies as specific reactions, tasks, activities, or tactics that people typically employ to advance their development of second language skills. The internalization, storing, retrieval, and application of new language can all be facilitated by these strategies. Learning a language using different strategies allows the individual to monitor his/her own progress in language learning; it also promotes the individual's autonomy as he/she can control what strategy suits him/her best (Nation, 1990). In the Oxford (1990) inventory, strategies are divided into direct and indirect strategies in terms of their contribution to language learning. This inventory consists of a large number of interrelated questionnaire items on which language learners are asked to evaluate themselves. There are two sections of this inventory: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are practices in which language learners give feedback on the extent to which they have assimilated the instruction given directly to them. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, involve strategies that go beyond the instruction provided to the extent to which learners consciously engage in activities that can indirectly facilitate their own language learning processes. Both strategy categories consist of three sub-strategies (Griffiths, C. 2003; Chamot, 2005).

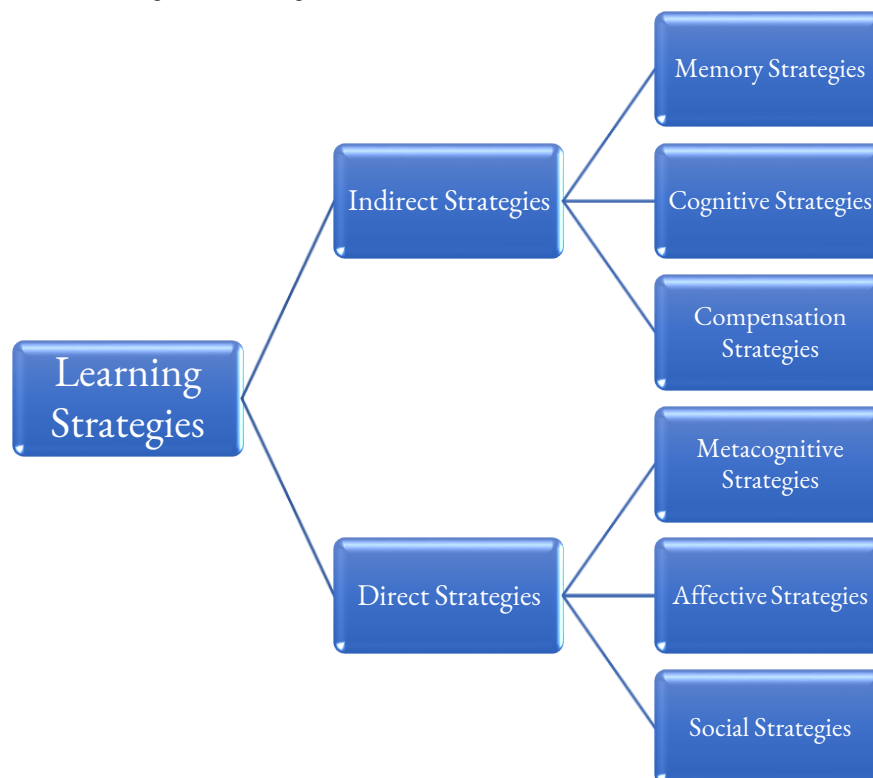
Direct learning strategies consist of memory tactics that involve the extent to which students can store in their minds the direct teaching they receive in their own language learning procedures; cognitive strategies that enable them to question the extent to which they can use the learning processes in their own minds; and compensatory strategies that they use to complete their learning processes by identifying the missing points in their learning processes (Seokhee & Doehee, 2003). Indirect strategies, on the other hand, involve metacognitive tactics that students use to support this cognitive process beyond the cognitive learning situations in the language teaching process that they are directly involved in; affective strategies that aim to control their own emotional states that may affect their language learning processes; and social strategies that test the extent to which students use the social environment and environments of the target language to improve their language learning processes (Demirekin, 2017). The strategies used directly and indirectly in language learning are summarized in Figure 1.

Table 1. Direct and indirect strategies of SILL (Oxford, 1990, p. 17)

| Type | Primary Strategies | Secondary Strategies |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Direct Strategies | Memory strategies | Creating mental linkages Applying images and sounds Reviewing well Employing action |
| | Cognitive strategies | Practicing Receiving and sending messages Analyzing and reasoning Creating structure for input and output |
| | Compensation strategies | Guessing intelligently Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing |
| | Metacognitive strategies | Centering your learning Arranging and planning your learning Evaluating your learning |
| Indirect Strategies | Affective strategies | Lowering your anxiety Encouraging yourself Taking your emotional temperature |
| | Social strategies | Asking questions Cooperating with others Empathizing with others |

As indicated in Table 1, direct and indirect learning strategies in language learning can offer different approaches to improve language skills. Both direct and indirect strategies are vital in developing language skills and, in general, function better when employed concurrently. Research shows that many individuals make word sense by using direct and indirect strategies. During listening and speaking skills, vocabulary learning strategies are needed more. However, the strategies used by individuals generally remain basic and at a limited level (Demirekin, 2017). In the background of this, it can be claimed that it would be more effective to teach grammar rules rather than wasting time with words.

Proposed to be used while learning a language, cognitive strategies consist of six elements: employing the senses for comprehension and retention; engaging with knowledge; deducing; interpreting nuances; grasping the entirety; and transcending the given content (Oxford, 1990). There are studies indicating that direct strategies are widely used by language learners (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Kocaman & Kızılkaya Cumaoglu, 2014; Zheng & Zhang, 2017). Figure 2 summarizes the systematics of cognitive strategies.

**Figure 1.** Classification of learning strategies (Oxford: 1990)

Direct strategies: This consists of 3 sub-strategies aimed at retaining the information directly learned in the formal language learning process in memory, passing it through mental processing and making up for any deficiencies (Oxford, 1990; Demirekin, 2017).

Memory strategies are learning strategies that help learners organize the information needed for language learning, store it in their minds and recall it when needed.

Cognitive strategies are active learning strategies that encourage learners to reflect on how they interpret and process information in the target language in their minds.

Learners use compensation strategies to identify and correct points they have not understood.

Indirect strategies: These are the tactics that enable learners to organize their own learning outside of the official language learning process are known as indirect strategies to regulate their emotions, and to interact in social settings where the language is widely spoken (Oxford, 1990; Alhaisoni, 2012; Demirekin, 2017).

Metacognitive strategies are indirect learning activities that learners use to foster their cognitive development in addition to the cognitive learning processes they are directly involved in when learning a new language.

Affective strategies allow learners to deal with their own sentiments and emotions, such as anxiety or which might impair their ability to learning.

Social strategies are indirect learning strategies that involve learners interacting in the social conditions and settings of the language they are learning (Uğurluel, 2010; Bölükbaş, 2013; Yeşilçınar, 2014).

On the other hand, many research studies have revealed that language learning strategies, which are presented in various classifications as above, can provide more effective results when they are integrated with an array of variables, including learners' attributes, educational history, background in society, and level of language proficiency (Kunasaraphan, 2015).

Boosting student achievement requires integrating language learning tools into the teaching process. It is essential to comprehend how these strategies affect how successful language acquisition is. Instructors may identify which approaches are most helpful by investigating the relationship between different language learning tactics and the learning outcomes attained during the process. This grasp make it possible to optimize teaching strategies, which in turn allows students develop the language with greater effectiveness and become more proficient speakers of languages (Navaro Saydı, 2007; Lee, 2010; Demirezen, 2020).

As can be clearly perceived, individuals who are intensively exposed to cognitive strategies and who use these strategies by making sense of them can be more successful in gaining the language skills taught. While individuals who are able to use cognitive strategies effectively acquire receptive language skills more effectively, they also make faster progress in acquiring speaking and writing skills, which comprise productive language skills (Demirekin, 2017).

Factors Affecting Language Learning Strategies of Gifted Individuals

Numerous factors influence the choice and applicability of language learning strategies in gifted individuals (Vandergrift, 2003). Personal variations constitute one of the variables. The diversity of gifted individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds affects how they learn a language. This situation is more evident in second language learning (Okan & Ispinar, 2009). Many studies have been conducted on the language learning strategies used by individuals affected by different demographic variables (Bölükbaş, 2013; Chandaran & Hashim, 2022; Chen, 2014; Kocaman & Kızılkaya Cumaoglu, 2014; Seokhee & Doehee, 2003; Uzun, 2004). Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that little investigation has been undertaken about learning foreign languages among gifted persons.

There are many factors that affect language learning for gifted individuals, such as motivation, support at home and school, previous grammar experience, learning environment, use of teaching strategies, comprehensible input, student personality, age, and attitudes that support language learning (Diezmann & Watters, 2006). When there is interest in learning a language and when language learning is seen as necessary for life, faster learning strategies are developed. Since gifted individuals have a desire to research and discover, they feel the need to learn a language in order to obtain data. Therefore, gifted individuals are aware that language learning is necessary for life, and accordingly, they frequently utilize language learning strategies (İlman-Güllühalı, 2019). Language learning also benefits greatly from the

usage of a new language in the home setting. Motivating gifted individuals to use language learning strategies is facilitated by emphasizing the value of learning a second language and encouraging them to use it at home (Seokhee & Doehee, 2003). The prior language knowledge and experiences of gifted individuals play a critical role in the development of language acquisition processes. Their capacity to understand a language's rules and patterns allows them to quickly acquire the ability to translate between languages, even if their vocabulary in the new language is different (Gross, 2004). Furthermore, the setting of instruction is one of the most significant aspects influencing the language learning processes of gifted people. When gifted persons are at ease in their language learning environment, it profoundly influences their drive to acquire and articulate the language (Manning, 2006).

Yewchuk (1999) underlines the significance of offering gifted individuals' additional chances to study languages on their own. To facilitate more in-depth learning for these students through individualized learning, a range of blended learning models should be used (Okan & Ispinar, 2009). Gifted people who are motivated and have good digital technology skills can gain from well-known internet applications. Participating in simulations might augment their understanding and be advantageous in formulating strategies for learning a new language (Kaplan-Sayı, 2013). Furthermore, giving gifted individuals the chance to share their research can help them develop better strategies for learning languages since it can give all students access to more information and a better learning experience without requiring them to spend more time on the same material (Gregory, 2020).

Gifted people's language learning practices are often influenced by their learning preferences. Like their peers who are typically developing, they learn best when the syllabus suits their hobbies and interests (Kaplan-Sayı, 2013). Gifted students who get satisfaction in answering open-ended questions put out more effort to learn a new language when they are given more open-ended assignments to do after finishing standard course subjects. Their incentive to create novel ways to learn a language is further increased when they are encouraged to consider several options (Gollif, 2008).

Most gifted individuals are eager to learn new information, even if it is complex (Tortop, 2014). Being taught complex information and going through detailed learning processes is quite motivating for gifted individuals (Manning, 2006).

Language learning is significantly impacted by the strategies used by language teachers. Multiple approaches to learning are addressed through activities like writing and performing plays in the target language as well as watching movies in that language. Furthermore, one of the most effective approaches to learn a target language is to use coding strategies for unfamiliar terms (Tuncer, 2009). To keep brilliant people motivated, it is imperative to make sure they believe they can advance to the next level of learning (Vandergrift, 2003). Individuals that are introverted typically hesitate to make mistakes. As has been noted that gifted but introverted persons who tend to withdraw from social situations require longer to pick up a new language (Gollif, 2008; Sarıcaoglu & Arıkan, 2009). In the same manner, gifted people frequently exhibit perfectionism (Sak, 2017). As a result, it's critical to foster an atmosphere where they recognize that making mistakes is a necessary part of learning and that communication is more important than perfection.

Research on language learning techniques place a strong emphasis on figuring out the factors that lead to these difficulties in addition to identifying the learner's shortcomings in particular domains. Individuals and instructional strategists should both consider these factors, create a plan for resolving them, and offer feedback once the objectives are achieved. For gifted people who wish to learn strategies for learning a language which enable them to comprehend the language holistically, this method is crucial. As a result, it enables individuals to get the most out of using effective strategies for learning.

Conclusion

The application of strategies for language learning to help gifted people comprehend Turkish as a foreign language is an essential element that raises the efficiency of the process of learning a new language. In a scientific context, the cognitive traits and learning capacities of gifted people need to be considered in addition to discussing the significance of these strategies. Deep comprehension skills, quick learning speed, and excellent cognitive capacities are characteristic traits of gifted people. By incorporating efficient techniques into their language learning procedures, learners can enhance their

language proficiency more quickly and acquire a language more thoroughly. Examining how and why direct and indirect learning processes are so crucial for these people is essential from a scientific standpoint.

Direct strategies for learning encompass specific approaches including vocabulary development, grammar rules, and hands-on tasks. These strategies help gifted people quickly grasp grammatical principles and the structural components of language. They can swiftly understand complicated grammatical rules and structures thanks to their cognitive ability. Conversely, indirect learning strategies emphasize learning a language in context and the development of language skills through natural interactions. These strategies include things like cross-cultural exchanges, situational education, and innovative methods. Gifted individuals show a strong ability to adjust when learning a language through social interactions and involvement with cultural aspects.

Indirect strategies for learning encourage natural language use and provide opportunity for students to use their language skills in real-world settings. This way of teaching enables students to get a better knowledge of the meaning and application of language. Metacognitive methods must also be implemented by gifted individuals as part of their language acquisition process. These individuals are frequently better at understanding and managing their own learning processes. Metacognitive strategies enable students to plan, monitor, and assess their language acquisition processes. The proper application of such strategies helps talented persons achieve their language learning objectives and improves their overall learning experience.

Finally, gifted persons who employ language learning strategies to comprehend Turkish as a foreign language benefit from faster and more effective language skill development. The combination of direct and indirect strategies for learning delivers a language instruction environment adapted to their cognitive capacities while broadening the breadth of the language development process. Applying these strategies with a scientifically informed approach enhances the quality of the language learning process and allows individuals to develop their language skills to their full potential. As a result, this study emphasizes the need of adopting language learning methodologies to assist gifted persons in comprehending Turkish as a foreign language.

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