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The Concept of Foreign Language Learning
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Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Stratejileri Kavramı

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The Concept of Foreign Language Learning Strategies *

Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Stratejileri Kavramı

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Abstract: Countries world-wide have been connected to each other for a wide variety of reasons such as culture, industry, politics, education, trade, agreements and some other reasons in today's global world. The ongoing globalisation has had a great impact on every country and the people therein. Education has become an issue of great interest around the whole globe and with the rise of global neo-liberal ideology. With the use of the Internet, the information exchange of individuals has become widespread and effectual information exchange has started to occur and major steps have been taken. Thus, the countries are in need of competent persons who can communicate in two languages in order to integrate into the relations among the countries. To learn a foreign or second language helps students relate to other cultures, expand their understanding and have opportunities, and by using this knowledge improve their skills in their mother tongue. In language learning, attitudes have changed significantly since the 1960s. This research aims to explain the strategies of language learning and a number of issues which have influences on language learning. These strategies present ideas about effective learning and teaching activities. On the other hand, considering the innate factors of personality and age differences among students, the teacher should find a way to the heart of the learners and leave 'indelible imprints' upon their minds by implementing relevant teaching strategies. In addition, it is a necessity for the language teachers to perceive learners' language learning beliefs since they may influence the success of learning.

Keywords: Activity, English learning and teaching, method, strategy.

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"COPE-Dergi Editörleri İçin Davranış Kuralları ve En İyi Uygulama İlkeleri" beyanları: Bu çalışma için herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bildirilmemiştir. Bu çalışma için etik kurul onayı gerekmemektedir. Sorumlu Yazar: İrfan TOSUNCUOĞLU

Öz: Günümüzde küreselleşme ile birlikte dünyada yer alan ülkeler kültür, eğitim, sanayi, politik, eğitim, ticaret, anlaşmalar ve benzeri çok çeşitli nedenlerden dolayı birleriyle daima etkileşim halindedirler. Devam eden küreselleşme ile birlikte ülkeler ve ülkelerde yaşayan insanlar küreselleşmenin sonuçlarından etkilenmektedirler. Bu bağlamda küreselleşmenin etkisiyle yeni liberal akım ile birlikte eğitim, bütün dünyanın dikkatini üzerine çeken bir konu olmuştur. İnternet kullanımı ile dünyadaki ülkelerde yaşayan bireyler arasında bilgi alış verişi giderek artmakta ve yaygınlaşmakta ve bu alanda önemli adımlar atılmaktadır. Böylece devletler çağın gerekli kıldığı ve uluslararası alanda avantaj elde edebilecek en az iki dil bilen bireyler yetiştirme gayreti içerisinde olduklarıdır. Dil bilmenin bir çok faydası bulunmaktadır. İkinci veya yabancı bir dili bilmek diğer kültürleri yakından tanım fırsatları verdiği gibi, bireylerin anlayışlarını geliştirmekte ve onlara değişik fırsatlar sunmakta ve ana dillerini geliştirme olanağı da sağlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda 1960'lı yıllardan beri de dil öğrenimine olan tutumlarda çok önemli değişiklikler olmuştur. Çalışmada dil öğrenme stratejileri ve dil öğrenimine etki eden bir takım unsurlar açıklanmaktadır. Bu söz konusu stratejiler etkin bir dil öğretim ve öğrenim aktiviteleri konusunda bir takım fikirlere işaret etmektedir. Öğretmenler de öğrencilerin doğuştan gelen kişilik özelliklerini, öğrencilerin birbirleri arasındaki yaş farklarını göz önünde bulundurarak ve uygun öğretim tekniklerini kullanarak onlarda kalıcı yetiler meydana getirmelidir. Buna ek olarak öğretmenler öğrencilerin dil öğrenimindeki başarılarını etkileyen, dile karşı inanç ve inanışlarını da göz önünde bulundurmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aktivite, İngilizce öğrenimi ve öğretimi, metot, strateji.

Introduction

There are more than 400 million speakers of the English language, being the most popular and used language in the world. In addition there are nearly 800 million people who communicate in English as a second language. The English language has an authorised position for use in 70 countries. The ongoing globalisation has great impact on every country and people. Turkey is a developing country with a population of over 80 million, and the individuals in Turkey as in the other parts of the world need to communicate with people all over the globe, in a common language, which has become the English language. Without doubt, the nations are in need of improving their profiles in language teaching and become aware of the components which effect the language learning. Considering the innate factors of personality and age differences among students, the teacher should find a way to the heart of the student and leave 'indelible imprints' upon their by mind implementing relevant teaching strategies. It is a necessity for a language teacher to understand students' attitudes and beliefs towards learning language since they may influence the success of learning.

The research on language learning strategies go back as far as the 1960s. Advancements in cognitive psychology in particular influenced most research carried out

in the field of learning languages (Williams & Burden 1997). In the majority of research on strategies of language learning, the main interest was in determining how successful language learners indicate they have learnt a language, either second/foreign, or activities which have proved useful. Rubin and Wenden (1987), describe learning strategies as “strategies that help the advancement of language practices in which the student forms and influences them straightforwardly.”

Language Learning Strategies

Oxford says that the learning strategy is an activity carried out by the students to make learning activities easy, more enjoyable, more effectual and more practical in new settings. In this vein, strategies of language learning refer to the features we wish to include in language learning activities in order to enable learners to be efficient students (Oxford, 1990). Strategies are the items for self-directed involvement required so as to advance communicative skills in the second language (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). The research in these fields have demonstrated that the conscious strategies are directly related to language learning.

A strategy is helpful if (a) the strategy is connected strongly to the second language activities, (b) the strategy meets the learners' language acquisition choice, (c) the learner uses the strategy efficaciously and connects it with other appropriate strategies (Oxford, 2003, cited in Shi, 2017).

Strategies of language learning are assumed to be affected by individual divergences and environmental and contextual issues. Hence, the efficient usage of language learning strategies are ascertained by various issues, comprising of learning and student variables. This active and complicated specialty of language learning strategies, represents its relevance to utilise a qualitative technique and to accept research into this matter (Nguyen and Terry, 2017)

To learn a new language is very a complex and difficult responsibility. It consists of the adoption of a new culture, style and thinking (Brown, 2000). Learners of a new language need to commit themselves, intellectually and emotionally in order to perceive the messages in the new language. Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013), hold that when a learner enters a class, they bring with them all of their personality, beliefs, and attitudes. Horwitz (1987), indicated that a learner's first contact with language learning might affect their beliefs towards the subject. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005), say that beliefs affect learners' motivational levels, and learning style choices.

It is a requirement for the teachers of language to be informed about learners' beliefs of language learning since they may influence the success of learning (Horwitz, 1987). Concerning this, Stern (1983) states that learning is influenced by the learners' internal characteristics. It can be said that the beliefs about learning a language and its

strategies have great importance. In addition to this, Wenden (1991), stated that language learning beliefs have a significant position in understanding how learners learn the language.

Moreover, Horwitz states that “learners’ beliefs are what the learners expect from learning activities” (1987). Beliefs are the key concepts in every kind of discipline, which include human behaviour and learning activity (Sakui and Gaies, 1999). In line with this, Gabillon (2005), indicates that in every subject which concerns learning and behaviour and learning a foreign language and İnozu (2011), said that the belief has capability to affect students’ language learning involvements and their future practices.

The Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies

Various terms have been used in a number of studies investigating these strategies. Wenden (1991), uses “learner strategies” while O’Malley and Chamot (1990) prefers “learning strategies” to express strategies, and Oxford (1990), denotes the expression of “language learning strategies” in her studies in the same way. Whatever the term is, there are common features which are accepted by researchers. Concerning this, Oxford classified her views about the main characteristics of strategies of language acquisition as in the following;

1. They contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
2. They allow learners to become more self-directed.
3. They are problem oriented.
4. They involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
5. They support learning both directly and indirectly.
6. They are not always observable.
7. They are influenced by some factors. (Oxford, 1990).

Some Studies on Language Learning Strategies

Nisbet, Tindall and Arroya (2005), prepared a study about the connection between language learning strategies preferences and English competency between Chinese learners. The results indicated that learners’ meta-cognitive strategies were remarkably correlated with their English levels.

Nacera (2010), conducted a research so as to find out what kinds of language learning strategies were utilized by the learners in the English Department while learning English and its relation to vocabulary sizes. The study indicates that learners used both direct and indirect language. Learning strategies and metacognitive strategies

were revealed to be the most favoured strategies. Furthermore, a difference was found between the learners' with higher vocabulary size and learners' having lower vocabulary size.

Özmen and Güleroglu (2013, cited in Kaplan, 2016), conducted a descriptive study so as to determine if learners in 2010 used direct or indirect language learning strategies. Initially, students were found to deploy each category of language learning strategies at a medium level, and at a high level and memory strategies were mostly preferred by the learners. It was observed that female students used strategies more often than the male ones and statistically there was a difference in the usage of language learning strategies, especially memory related, compensation, metacognitive and affective strategies between the genders

Factors Influencing on Language Learning

There are some basic issues that affect language learning. These are the innate factors of personality and age. There is a close connection between personal capacity and second language learning. This was noticed by Gardner and Lambert (1972). As another example, Pimsleur (1968), said that a learner's average marks in all subjects in the school were generally a good means of interpreting how good they would be at successful language acquisition. Pimsleur included these so-called marks in his tests for language.

As we might think, intelligence and language aptitude have generally been found to relate to the 'more academic language' skills best, and which are often stressed at schools in Turkey. Attitudes and motivation on the other hand, seem to be linked particularly with the ability to use language for interpersonal communication. Language aptitude and motivation are the issues which have predicted a satisfactory achievement more regularly in the various research studies. Nonetheless there is still a great deal of variety between the learners that cannot be explained. As an illustration, Gardner (1972), analysed the results of twenty-nine groups of Canadian learners of French. He found that their scores on his 'attitude - motivation index' accounted, on average, for 14 per cent of the variation in proficiency. For their results in the modern language aptitude, Gardner could only account for 27 per cent of the variation. In other words, there was still 73 per cent of the variation in the learners' success that was due to other factors.

There have been other suggestions of innate factors which may influence the success in language learning. For example, since learners have suitable generalisations about language, it seems reasonable that one such factor could be a person's strategy in categorising experience. Naiman et al.(1975), therefore examined whether success was linked to category width, that is, whether a person tends to form broad or narrow cat-

egories. They found no significant link. They did however find that proficiency (in listening and imitating sentences) seemed to be related to 'field independence', that is, being able to perceive individual items without being distracted by background material.

With innate factors, personality characteristics are accepted to influence foreign/second language learning. These suggestions are often supported by scholars and psychologists. This means that the link between personalities and second language learning success are weaker than had been supposed. We might note here that unimportant actual learning is not useful. For example, students may become more involved in more social contacts, they can have more attention from their teachers and they can be more accepted when asked to show their proficiency and may perform confidently in communication situations.

Conclusion

English, which has now earned the characteristic of being a global communication language, is being taught widely all over the world and in Turkey. Although predefined criteria vary, as an outcome of learning English as a foreign language, learners are expected to acquire communicative and interactive skills in the foreign/second language, and obtain proficient level in listening, speaking, reading & writing, and acquire the structures, pronunciation and lexicon in the so-called foreign/second language (Doğan, 2008).

The proficient level of a foreign or second language helps students relate to other cultures, expand their understanding and have opportunities, and by using this knowledge improve their skills in their mother tongue. The key factor to interesting activities in language learning is the involvement of the students directly. The teacher's primary responsibility is to include and motivate every student into the activities in the classroom. At the same time, the teacher should have endless patience with the students who have low levels of proficiency and experiences in a learning environment. The teacher should find a technique in order to reach to the heart of the learner and leave 'indelible imprints' upon their minds by implementing relevant teaching strategies.

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