

**STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP STUDENT AUTONOMY AND  
THEIR RELATION WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
ACHIEVEMENT**

**ÖĞRENCİ ÖZERKLİĞİNİ GELİŞTİREN STRATEJİLER VE  
BUNLARIN YABANCI DİL BAŞARISI İLE İLİŞKİSİ**

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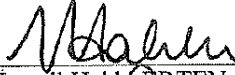
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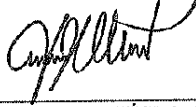
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## ONAY

Bu tez Hacettepe Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliği'nin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca yukarıdaki jüri üyeleri tarafından 24/06/2014 tarihinde uygun görülmüş ve Enstitü Yönetim Kurulunca 07/07/2014 tarihinde kabul edilmiştir.



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# ÖĞRENCİ ÖZERKLİĞİNİ GELİŞTİREN STRATEJİLER VE BUNLARIN YABANCI DİL BAŞARISI İLE İLİŞKİSİ

Ali REZALOU

## ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, bilişsel, üstbilişsel ve sosyal stratejilerin İngilizce yabancı dil öğrenme bağlamında, öğrenci özerkliği geliştirmesine neden olup ve olmadığını bulmaktır. Araştırmacı öğrenci özerkliğini geliştiren yararlı stratejileri savunuyor ve yabancı dil başarı ile ilişkilerini araştırmaktadır. Bu amacı göz önüne alarak, çalışma toplam 150 İngilizce öğretim bölümü öğrencileri ile yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmada 150 öğrenciyi seçmek için basit rastgele örnekleme tekniği kullanıldı. Katılımcılar cinsiyet ve yaş özelliklerine sahiplerdi. Bu çalışmanın araştırma tasarımı karşılaştırmalı ve ilişkiseldir. Çalışmanın amacı, öğrenci özerklik ve yabancı dil başarı arasındaki ilişkiyi bulmak, cinsiyet ve yaş değişkenleri etkilerini strateji kullanımı üzerinde göstermektir. Bu çalışma yapılan bir anket araştırmasına dayalı olarak açıklayıcı ve anlaşılандır. Ayrıca, çalışma nicel bir araştırma olarak kabul edilebilir.

Araştırmacı öğrenciler için bir anket uyguladı. Bu araç başlangıçta Chan, Spratt'tır ve Humphreys tarafından geliştirilen Öğrenen Özerkliği ve daha önceki Deci ve Ryan çalışmalarına dayalı bir anketten uyarlanmıştır. Veri toplama aracı iki bölümden oluşmuştur. İlk bölüm, katılımcıların kişisel özellikleri hakkındaki bilgiler ile ilgilidir. Anketin ikinci bölümü 30 maddeyi ve üç alt bölüm de bulunan bilişsel, bilişötesi, ve sosyal stratejiler içeriyor. Anketin Cronbachalfa değeri " $\alpha = 0,89$ " dur. Betimleyici istatistikler en çok tercih edilen ve en az tercih edilen strateji kategorilerini rütbelendirmek için kullanıldı. Spearman sıra korelasyon katsayısı ( $R_s$ ) öğrenci özerklik ve yabancı dil başarı arasında anlamlı bir ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmak için kullanıldı. Strateji kullanımı üzerinde cinsiyet faktörünün etkisinin belirlenmesi için Mann-Whitney U testi ve yaş faktörünün strateji kullanımının üzerinde etkisinin belirlenmesi için Kruskal-Wallis testi kullanıldı. Strateji kullanımı ve yabancı dil başarıları üzerinde etkili faktörlerin etkilerini belirlemek amacıyla, sıralı regresyon testi kullanıldı. Toplanan verileri analiz etmek için SPSS 17.0 versiyonu kullanıldı. Betimleyici istatistikler üstbilişsel stratejileri yabancı dil başarısında daha kullanışlı stratejiler olduğunu gösterdi. Öğrencilerin not ortalamaları (GPA) ve strateji kullanımı arasında pozitif korelasyon görüldü. Mann-

Whitney U testi yapılması cinsiyet faktörünün strateji kullanımı üzerinde belirgin etkili olmadığını gösterdi. Kruskal-Wallis testi sonuçları yaş faktörünün strateji kullanımı üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi olmadığı doğruladı. Nihayet regresyon analizi yabancı dil başarısında, üstbilişsel stratejileri, cinsiyet (sadece erkekler grubu) ve yaş faktörlerinin belirleyici olduğunu gösterdi. Öğrenciler orta düzeyde dil öğrenme stratejilerini kullandılar. Üstbilişsel stratejileri diğer strateji gruplara göre daha fazla kullanılmakta oldukları bildirildi.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Öğrenci özerkliği, yabancı dil başarısı, dil öğrenme stratejileri.

**Danışman:** Yrd. Doç. Dr. İsmail Fırat ALTAY, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

# **STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP STUDENT AUTONOMY AND THEIR RELATION WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT**

**Ali REZALOU**

## **ABSTRACT**

The major aim of this study is to find out whether cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies can lead to develop student autonomy in foreign language achievement. The researcher argues about the strategies that are useful to develop student autonomy and explores their relations with foreign language achievement. Considering this aim in the mind, the study was conducted with a total of 150 ELT students. Simple random sampling technique was used to choose 150 students for this study. The subjects (students) display variety in gender and age.

The research design of this study is comparative and correlational. The purpose of the study is to find out correlation between student autonomy and their foreign language achievement and indicate the effects of variables gender and age on strategy use. This study is also descriptive and inferential based on a survey research conducted. Moreover, the study can be considered as a quantitative research. The researcher administered a survey for students. This instrument was adapted from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire originally developed by Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002), based on earlier work by Deci and Ryan (1985) and modified by the researcher. The data collection instrument was consisted of two parts. The first part is related to information about the participants' personal characteristics. The second part of the questionnaire contains 30 items and three subsections (Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Social strategies). The Cronbach's alpha value of the questionnaire was " $\alpha = 0.89$ ". Descriptive statistics was used for ranking the most preferred and least preferred strategies categories. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $R_s$ ) was used in order to reveal any significant relation between the student autonomy and foreign language achievement. For identifying the impact of gender factor on strategy use Mann-Whitney U test and for the identifying the impact of age factor on the strategy use, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. To identify the effects of effective factors on strategy use and foreign language achievement, ordinal regression test was used. SPSS version 17.0 was used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive statistics

showed that metacognitive strategies are more useful strategies in foreign language achievement. Positive correlation was seen between the students' grade point average (GPA) and strategy use. Conducting Mann-Whitney U test indicated that gender

factor is not effective on strategy use noticeably. The results of Kruskal-Wallis test confirmed that age factor has not any effect on strategy use. Finally regression analysis indicated that metacognitive strategies, gender (only men group) and age factors are predictors in foreign language achievement. Students used language learning strategies at the medium level. Metacognitive strategies were reported being used more than other strategies groups.

**Key words:** Student autonomy, foreign language achievement, language learning strategies.

**Advisor:** Asst. Prof. Dr. İsmail Fırat ALTAY, Hacettepe University, Department of English Language Teaching.

## ETİK BEYANNAMESİ

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- başkalarının eserlerinden yararlanılması durumunda ilgili eserlere bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu,
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- kullanılan verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı,
- ve bu tezin herhangi bir bölümünü bu üniversitede veya başka bir üniversitede başka bir tez çalışması olarak sunmadığımı

beyan ederim.

Ali REZALOU

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In foreign language teaching and learning, student autonomy and developing student autonomy has been one of the major area of study for 30 years. Most researchers have written more about the nature of the student autonomy, rational of developing autonomy, promoting autonomy, and its implications for foreign language teaching and learning. For example some researchers (Camilleri Grima, 2007; Cotterall, 1995; Palfreyman, 2003) claimed that it improves language learning quality, promotes democratic contexts of language learning, prepares students for perminated learning process, and it allows students to use learning opportunities in the best way in the classroom and out of the classroom.

At the last twenty years, because of the changed views in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the role of learners have been very important. In other words, students have been put at the center of classroom organization respecting their needs, strategies, techniques and styles by most language teachers. By considering above mentioned points, we can easily understand the emergence of the notion of learner-centered education which views language learning as a collaborative process between students and teachers. According to Tudor (1993), learner-centeredness is not considered as a method or a set of rules. In fact, it is an approach, which views students and learners more active participants in the learning and teaching process comparing to the traditional approaches. For examples the structures of activities and exercices are decided by students themselves that increases students' interactions and motivation. On the other hand we can see a observable similar change in the teacher's role in learner-centered classrooms. Recently with using language learning strategies by students and learners there is a shift in foreign language learning and teaching from focusing on teachers and teaching to students and learning. Cohen (1998) defined this shift by stating that:

“[One potentially beneficial shift in teacher roles is from that of being exclusively the manager, controller and instructor to that of being a change agent – a facilitator of learning, whose role is to help their students to become more independent and more responsible for their own learning. In this role the teachers become partners in the learning process], (p. 97)”.

Language learning strategies and teaching strategies completely are different from each other. Actually, the learner exercises control over the procedures of the selected activity (O'Malley et al. 1985a). Since 1970s, there has been more attention in education especially in the western world. As a popular goal in education, autonomy nowadays is widely accepted, and “some teachers will disagree with the importance of helping learners become more autonomous as learners” (Wenden, 1991, p.11). Holec (1981) defined autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”, (p.3). Dickinson (1987) defined autonomy as “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for the decisions concerned with his/her learning and the implementation of these decisions”, (p.11). Pennycook’s (1997) presents political-critical viewpoint of the development of autonomy and agency that entails “an author of one’s own world”, (p.45). All the mentioned definitions of autonomy involve motivation of the learner to perform independently and in teamwork with others, so this learner is generally responsible person. Nowadays contemporary education places great value on the development of the learners’ autonomy. According to Nunan (1988) “humanistic education believes that learners should have a say in what they should be learning and how they should learn it, and reflects the notion that education should be concerned with the development of autonomy in the learner”, (p.20) .

According to above mentioned statements, this study addressed what developing student autonomy means to language teachers and language learners attending English Language language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University. In this study, it will be shown that student autonomy and developing student autonomy is a permanent dynamic process in language learning and in educational instructions. In addition, in order to help students to consider more control over their own learning, it is necessary that they become aware of their learning process and identify the strategies that they use.

### **1.1. Background to the Study**

By looking at the history of education, we can see absolutely new idea in foreign language learning field as the learner autonomy. In the last two twenty years, in the domain of foreign language learning and teaching, Holec's (1981) seminal

study increased more interests in the understanding the concept of learner autonomy. Thus the debate of the autonomy has been a main focus of foreign language teaching and learning programs (Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987; Dickinson & Wenden, 1995; cited in Finch, 2000; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Two inter-related directions can be understood from the autonomy debate. The first one (mainly in Europe) has been related to the development of learner autonomy or learner training as a primary needs of learning process out of the schools in societies with democratic conditions (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1980; 1988; Kohonen, 1987; 1989; cited in Finch, 2000;), and the second one (mainly in North America) has focused on defining successful language learners by emphasizing learner strategies and the notion of learning to learn (Benson, 2001; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Cited in Finch, 2000; Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

Gremmo and Riley (1995, p. 158) identified these ideas based on the background of these developments such as shifts in educational philosophy, reactions against behaviourism, linguistic pragmatism, easy access to education, developing internationalism, and easier availability of technology for education especially for language learning. Further, Finch (2000), Benson (2001), Xu and Zhan (2004) respectively did a comprehensive overview on learner autonomy in language learning. Based on their research, three dimensions are mentioned, that is, (1) the definition of learner autonomy, (2) the factors affecting learner autonomy and (3) the approaches to the fostering of learner autonomy. But in this study we discuss only two dimensions of three. According to the some educators (Oxford, 1990; Scharle & Szabo, 2000) language learning strategies have greater role on self-direction and autonomous language learning. Also, Duan (2006) stated Language learning strategies are necessary skills for developing student autonomy in education context.

In light of this literature review, this study investigated to explore how ELT students attending English language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University can develop their learning autonomy process for autonomous learning and foreign language achievement by using language learning strategies. To achieve this goal, it will be question whether the students to what extent will be able to set

language learning goals and work towards them through using some language learning strategies.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The central problem of this study is to identify the impact of the language learning strategies to develop student autonomy and their relation to foreign language achievement. The researcher attempts to find out the relationship between student autonomy and foreign language achievement to prepare implications for learner training and promote autonomous learning. For the reasons mentioned above and due to the fact that foreign language research studies are quite limited compared to some cases in second language research, it is necessary that more scientific studies be carried out in foreign language contexts for students to be more aware of using language learning strategies to develop their autonomy and be autonomous in foreign language achievement.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

This study intends to see how students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University use language learning strategies to develop their autonomy in autonomous language learning . It argues that which strategies are useful to develop student autonomy and explores their relations to foreign language achievement. In this respect, this study aims to highlight ELT students' awareness of language learning strategies and their roles in developing student autonomy in EFL context. This may also lead teachers to provide training on when, where and how the strategies should be used. Furthermore, students also need to learn to evaluate their use of strategies so that a positive outcome of strategy use can be achieved.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Most foreign language teachers have bad experience about the investing energy for their students without getting any positive feedback. All teachers have students that don't practice their homework, aren't eager to use the target language in



group work, do not learn from their mistakes, do not listen to each other, do not use opportunities to learn outside the classroom, and so on. Learner's over-reliance on the teacher is the main cause of such behavior and it is the autonomous learning which can help learners to change their behavior by encouraging themselves to have more control on their own language learning, to change their styles and attitudes in order to be successful language learner, and to be familiar with their language learning problems. However, all language teachers need to see how their students use language learning strategies to develop their autonomy or to what extent they are able to learn autonomously, and in what way teachers can help their learners to incorporate a greater degree of learner autonomy in the learning and teaching process. This study tries to show to what extent applying strategies are important in developing student autonomy and foreign language achievement.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

This study intends to see how students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University use some language learning strategies to develop their autonomy in foreign language learning in 2012-2013 academic year. In more detail, the present study attempts to respond to the following research questions:

1. What language learning strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social do the students utilize more in foreign language learning?
2. Is there any correlation between foreign language achievement and using strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social ?
3. Are there any differences in the strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social used by ELT students concerning their gender and age?
4. Which factors are more effective on developing student autonomy and their foreign language achievement?

## **1.6. Method**

In order to see whether there is a significant relationship between using language learning strategies and developing student autonomy, one questionnaire with modified version for students was designed by the researcher which also received experts' opinions in the ELT field and was administered to the participants. At the beginning of the students' questionnaire, which consisted of two parts, students were asked to write their gender and age in foreign language learning. Second part of the questionnaire with 30 questions which consisted of three groups of strategies ( cognitive, metacognitive, social ) was designed and adapted from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire developed by Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002), based on earlier work by Deci and Ryan (1985). This descriptive and survey study, which employs quantitative data, was designed to see how students attending English language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University use strategies to develop their autonomy in foreign language learning. The sample of the present study consisted of 150 ELT students at Hacettepe University. The subjects (students) displays variety in gender, age and class of English.

## **1.7. Assumptions and Limitations**

The nature of this study is limited to the data collected from 150 ELT students studying at the English language Teaching Department of Hacettepe University. For this reason, it can be said that the study is limited to a small group of English language teaching students, which makes it hard to generalize the results in different groups of students in other educational settings.

Moreover, the areas of autonomous learning, that are investigated in this study, are limited to the relationship between the student autonomy and foreign language achievement, also strategies that are used by students for developing their autonomy in foreign language learning. Another limitation is that the results of the present study will be based on the quantitative data collected from participants through questionnaire. Interviews might have been conducted to gather more detailed information from the respondents.

Although the students are going to report use of some strategies, it is difficult to know whether they are actually using these strategies or not. So, further research

should incorporate more research methods like think- aloud protocols or interviews to further examine students' actual strategy use. The current study was conducted at the English Language Teaching Department of Hacettepe University in Turkey. Therefore, the results of the present study are valid for non-native learners of English. In addition, the results assumed to reflect the perceptions of mostly female participants since the study was conducted at the ELT department which is female- dominant. Consequently, the experiment and groups were non-homogenous in terms of gender disturbance.

### **1.8. Definition of the key Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following items will be defined as follows:

**1.8.1. Student autonomy** has been defined in a different ways in connection with language learning. According to Benson (2001, p.48), there are a few terms related to autonomy, which can be described in different ways. Sometimes the terms: self-instruction, self-access, self-study, self-education can not be considered as synonyms of autonomy and autonomous learning. These mentioned terms basically describe various ways and degrees of learning by yourself, but autonomy refers to abilities and attitudes to control over learning process. To defining the autonomy, may be the most often quoted definition is Holec's definition, who defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (1981, cited in Little, 1991; p.7).

**1.8.2. Foreign language achievement:** getting a degree of proficiency in foreign language learning by EFL learners.

**1.8.3. Strategies:** Brown (2001: 124) describes the strategies as 'the specific attacks that we make on a given problem'. There have been some contradictions in defining learning strategies. Wenden (1991:18) presented another definition of language learning strategies .He stated, language learning strategies are the "mental steps or operations that learners and students use to learn a new language and manage their efforts to do". Oxford (1990:8), represented a full and complete definition of learning strategies by saying that "They are specific actions and transferable to new situations that are used by the

learners to do easy, faster, enjoyable, self-directed, effective learning.” Faerch Claus and Casper (1983:67) define learning strategy in different way, as “an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.” According to Stern (1992:261), “learning strategies can be regarded as broadly intentional directions and learning techniques that are used consciously by learners in activities to achieve their certain goals of learning process.”

## **1.9. Conclusion**

The relationship between language learning strategies and learner autonomy is very important. Therefore any language expert can judge how autonomous ELT learners are from the strategies they employ in learning. This relationship is summarized by Little (1997), as he points out, focusing explicitly on the strategic capability of language learning and language use for the occupation of learner autonomy require, reversely should also be focusing on language learning strategies which should lead us to learner autonomy. Raising students’ awareness of the using language learning strategies to develop student autonomy is essential as many studies explore that there is a positive relationship between using strategies and developing student autonomy. Also, as there is an intimate relationship between student autonomy and effective language learning, raising students’ strategies awareness is essential as they lead to developing student autonomy. The main area of investigation in the present study is to explore the impact of the strategies used by ELT students in developing their learning autonomy and their relationship with foreign language achievement. Finally, some recommendations will be made for both language teachers and future researchers to study the same or related issue in the following years.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Because of the failure in teacher oriented approaches to help students become autonomous and independent in the process of language learning, the educationalists shifted their attention to the learner and learner centered approaches in order to gather information and see how the learners' proceed in the process of language learning. Especially, some researchers did studies regarding the good language learners. Oxford (1990) discussed importance of language learning strategies from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Most of the researchers believed that language learning strategies are behaviors contributing to the development of language system which affects their learning and there are lessons that we can learn from good language learners (Oxford 1990, O'Malley and Chamot1990). A lot of studies were done in some countries and different contexts to guide the education experts to help the students and learners reach a acceptable level of self-directed language learning. When we analyze Chamot et al (2007), we can find that these studies tried to make students suppose responsibility for applying the language learning strategies autonomously and consciously to improve the use of learning strategies, self-evaluation of strategy use and transmission of these strategies to new learning contexts. All above mentioned researchers tried to explore how the language learners learn and use the language learning strategies. It is rational that any educational decisions should be based on modern learning system. The language learning strategies classification and explanation elicited by the language learners and their correlation with other affecting variables were studied by the researchers. This study examined the interaction between 150 ELT learners' learning strategies use and their language achievement to show any correlation.

### **2.2. Autonomy**

There is general agreement in education on the value of autonomy as the fact that there is little consensus to its definition that often has been hidden. More definitions have tended to reflect broader educational and sociopolitical

derivations. According to Benson and Voller (1997, pp. 1,2) these definitions are classified in five categories:

- **Situations**, in which learners study completely on their own learning process.
- Using a set of **skills** that can be learned and used by students and learners.
- An inborn **capacity** which is undeveloped by institutional education.
- Exercising **learners' responsibility** for their own learning process.
- Learners' **right** in determining the direction of their own learning process.

Other researchers such as Holec (1980; 1981), Little (1991), Legutke & Thomas (1991) and Littlewood (1996), indicated that autonomy is an *ability* that must be acquired and is completely separate from the learning. By considering Holes' *self-directed learning* definition for autonomy (Holec 1980:27), there will be two different processes. The first process is a gradual deconditioning, that make cause the learner to avoid accepting ideas such as:

- Being only one desirable method for learning.
- Every teacher has one method.
- The mother tongue knowledge is not used for learning a second language.
- Any experience gained by learner of the matters cannot be transferred.
- The learner cannot do any valid evaluation of his/her learning performance.

The second one is that Holec's process consists of acquiring the knowledge to know and feel learning needs in order to assume responsibility for learning. In other words through the parallel operations language learner will gradually precede from dependence position to independence position. Although (Holec1980, p. 27) and (Little 1991, p.5) defined the autonomy as the "ideal" state (Little 1991, p.5), but in fact is not seen as a steady state (an independent learner can choose teacher- direction with freedom (Pemberton *et al.* 1996, p.3). It is clear and obvious in this way, taking responsibility for decisions will be undistinguished feature of the autonomy concerning the best way of learning:

- determining objectives,
- contents and developments definitions,

- selected methods and techniques to use,
- acquisition procedure monitoring,
- and v) evaluating what has been acquired (Holec 1980, p.4).

It is necessary to be said that, Holec (1985) and Little (1991) see autonomy as a capacity. In other words autonomy is in fact acquiring the some necessary capacities to do a self-directed learning process (Little, 1991, p.180). Later, Dickinson (1995, p.167) extends this definition as an attitude to learning, that it can occur in the classroom as well as in self-access learning centers. Most of the autonomy definitions agree on some responsibility aspects of the autonomy for learning that is activated by the learner, but there are other important shifts. For instance, Allwrights' (1990) defined autonomy as an "optimal state of equilibrium" and Hunt, Gow & Barnes (1989) defined as a "decision-making process." By considering these differences together Benson (1996) classified three main approaches of learner autonomy for language learning: technical autonomy, psychological autonomy and political autonomy which are related some social sciences schools (positivism, constructivism and critical theory). The definitions of three approaches are:

**Technical autonomy:** learning a language outside an educational institution without need to the teacher.

**Psychological autonomy:** a type of capacity that allows learners to take more control over their own learning.

**Political autonomy:** control over the learning processes and content of learning. (Benson 1996 and Pemberton *et al.* 1996, p.2).

According to Esch (1997), there are three common misconceptions to understanding the concept and implementation of learner autonomy in the foreign language language classroom setting that to be avoided. The first common misconception is the reduction of autonomous learning to a set of language learning skills or techniques. Second misconception related to definition and implementation of learner autonomy is the avoidance of specific issues of language learning. In order to understand and implement learner autonomy successfully, considering specific features of a language by any language learner should be taken into account. Third misconception is the considering autonomy as

isolation learning that was stated by Esch. The last three decades developments such as new technologies, self-learning materials brought a sense of freedom to language learning. However, this freedom makes some confusion with other concepts such as individualization, but none of these concepts is in fact relevant to autonomous learning. According to the mentioned arguments, we can summarize that learner autonomy concept taking control over and having responsibility for their language learning program. It does not mean isolation learning. All autonomous students learn language with teacher and peers.

### **2.3. Learner Autonomy**

As the learner-centered approaches, Learner autonomy has been one of the major concepts that extensively used in the study of foreign language learning. All language teachers should know about 'learner autonomy' as the new word which has been used frequently in different contexts without an anxiety (Little, 1991). In relation to foreign language learning, there are two basic arguments for teachers in order to creating effective language learning settings for autonomous learners: (1) interpreting the concept of learner autonomy, that really means in the context of foreign language and second language learning; and (2) putting the theory into practice by application of the some methods and procedures of fostering learner autonomy in language classrooms. In this part we try to explain the two mentioned arguments, a complete discussion of the definitions, misconceptions, and developing of learner autonomy by using language learning strategies in the context of foreign language learning.

Because of the change in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners in the language classroom we see the new concept in the field of foreign language teaching and learning that is called learner autonomy. Autonomy and independence are the main goals of the all learner-centered approaches in language learning contexts. In the field of the language learning and teaching, the concept of learner autonomy has been defined in a different ways. According to Benson (2001, p.48), we can see a number of terms that is related to autonomy. Most of the foreign language teachers have opinion that the two concepts of autonomy and autonomous learning are not synonyms with the terms self-



instruction, self-study, self-education. All the mentioned terms more or less refer to the different approach of learning by yourself and on the other hand the term autonomy refers to attitudes to control your own learning process. Although autonomous learners may be better than other learners, but they do not have to learn by themselves. For example, more researchs have been done on autonomy in the classroom settings and in relation to teacher autonomy over the last few years. Independent learning and self-directed learning also are the terms that refer to systems of learning by yourself. But these terms are usually used as synonyms of autonomy. By looking at these terms, checking the writere's mean exactly is very important. But one of the most often used definitions is the Holec's definition, who defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". Summary of Holec's definitions has been discussed in Finch's (2000) dissertation. Little (2002) stated learner autonomy is a challenging term because it is generally confused with self-instruction concept. There is general agreement that independent learners understand the aim of their learning process, accept responsibility for their learning, prepare the setting of learning goals. Also they plan and execute learning activities, and frequently review their learning .(cf. Holec 1981; Little 1991). In fact, learner autonomy requires a positive attitude, ability of giving reflection, and a readiness to be active in self-directed learning. This definition gives a holistic view of the language learner that promot us to engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and interaction of them.

Benson (2001) by elaborating the Holec's definition stated that learner autonomy is in fact the capacity which one use to control over own learning that this control or responsibility may take a different form in relation to different levels of the learning program. According to Benson (2001, pp.76-80), this control over or responsibility of learning with observable behaviors that students employ to manage their planning, organization and evaluation of learning can be described easily. In other words this type of control over is understood as a psychology matter in language learning. Also autonomous learners, by control over the learning process have the freedom to determine their own aims of language learning. Benson (2001, pp. 76-103) argued that a full desription of the autonomy concept in language learning should have at least three levels that a language

learner must exercise them: (a) control over learning management, (b) control over cognitive process and (c) control over learning content. All these three control levels are dependent to each other. In detail management of effective language learning depends upon control of the cognitive processes. On the other hand self-management of learning requires necessarily control of cognitive processes. Also, control over cognitive processes and self-management should involve decisions related to the choice of learning content (Benson , 2001, p. 50).

#### **2.4. Learner Autonomy and Foreign Language Achievement**

In comparing autonomous learning with non-autonomous learning, autonomous learning is more effective. In other words, the development of autonomy means the best way of language learning. According to Benson (2001, p. 189) advocates of autonomy basically are concerned with the ability to learn effectively to reach personal goals. It is clear that developing student autonomy ultimately may lead to having greater proficiency in language use. In recent years the contribution of practices related to the developing autonomy to language learning has been a critical issue for two reasons. Based on the view of the some language researchers, the first reason is that there is a close relations between autonomy and effective learning. But unfortunately to date this relationship has been widely explored at the level of theory. The second reason is the concern of proficiency gains in education that obligate language teachers to explain the effectiveness of their practices to develop their students autonomy. It is clear that increased autonomy also lead to more proficiency in language learning. Therefore, there is a urgent need for doing empirical research on the relationship between the development of student autonomy and foreign language achievement for practical and theoretical reasons. By considering this mentioned hypothesis empirical research can be demonstrated at two levels. The first level is that research can try to indicate a particular form of practice related to autonomy gains in language proficiency and the second level is that research can attempt to describe different ways of developing students proficiency as a result of some practices designed to foster autonomy.

Doing action research projects focusing on gains in autonomy is equal to apply research on proficiency gains or achievement. However, there are two additional problems research to doing research in this field. The first problem is the selection of relevant measures of achievement. The second problem is the programs aiming to foster autonomy (Benson, 2001, p. 191). Doing good studies that can be able to show the changes in the quality of language learning in such programs actually will increase our understanding of the relationship between the development of student autonomy and high degree of foreign language achievement. To date, only a few investigators such as (Ablard and Lipschultz, 1998; Corno and Mandinach, 1983; Risenberg and Zimmerman, 1992; Zhang and Li, 2004) explored the relationship between developing learner autonomy and developing language proficiency. Corno and Mandinach (1983, p. 89) stated that learner autonomy can help to learners to improve the language proficiency and to be the learners with high language proficiency. Ablard and Lipschultz (1998, p. 97) also found out that different high-achievement students applied different autonomous strategies. Risenberg and Zimmerman (1992, p. 120) in their research explored there is a high degree of learner autonomy among the high-achieving students with achieving high scores and the achieving the low scores by learner with low degrees of learner autonomy.

From the above stated points, it is clear that there is a urgent need for research that explores the relationship between the development of student autonomy and the increasing foreign language achievement. Such research from particular point of view, can help to validate ways of practice and using strategies aiming to develop student autonomy in foreign language achievement. On the other hand, from a theoretical point of view, it can help teachers and students to test and elaborate the better language learning theoretical hypothesis. Therefore at this stage such a valuable research can establish proficiency criteria and assessment tools relevant to autonomous learning and indicate the ways of interacting the development of autonomy and language proficiency (Benson, 2001, p. 191-192).

## **2.5. Factors influencing Development of Learner Autonomy**

This section aims to analyse to what extent the following factors influence learner autonomy: achievement, age, experience, gender, language learning strategies. The following are literature review concerning these factors and their impact on developing learner autonomy.

### **2.5.1. Achievement**

In language learning, achievement reflects students' performance assessment and self-assessment. Wang (2004) highlights the relationship between self-monitoring and higher language proficiency. Yamamori et al. (2003) stated that inefficient monitoring of learners' own learning affects learners' achievement negatively. Ames (1986, as cited in Gan et al., 2004) by writing a brief and useful definition of a successful language learner stated that he/she is an active participant, autonomous and confident person in directing his or her own learning.

According to Sternberg (1998, as cited in Gan et al., 2004), effective metacognition incorporates control of planning, monitoring and evaluation of learning process that in fact managing cognitive processes. Zhang (2007) stated that student awareness (meta-cognition - learners' understanding of themselves, of learning tasks and of learning strategies), cognitive control, regulation over learning can enhance learning process more effectively and produce a type of self-efficacy that fosters generally foreign language achievement. Therefore, knowing metacognitive knowledge about language learning is one thing, and implication of it is quite another. Repetition is very important in second. Kalaja (1995) by reinforcing this view, stated that the former process is not enough to obtain achievement in language learning. Yamamori et al. (2003) in their researchs found that successful language learners are always aware of the steps of their learning process. In fact, it is clear that students with high achievement, continuously show meta-cognitive understanding about their own learning behaviours, determining efficiently strategy use which increase their motivation in learning English. Dörnyei (2001) stated different view, that some language learners' success is related to their utilization of certain self-management skills to reach their aims and purposes. These learners using self-management skills in spit

of insufficient conditions and even without receiving any teacher help to improve their language proficiency. Researchers such as Grenfell and Harris (1999) debated that autonomy is a prerequisite for having language proficiency and actual competence in a language learning process. They also claimed that without a certain amount of autonomy someone as an “independent personality” (p. 34) can not be a successful language learner and a language user. According to these researchers there have been more implementations of autonomy in different educational settings such as social, political and cultural.

So according to these researchers’ point of views, learner’s dependence on the mentioned aspects is inevitable in order to understand the environment around him or her and being competent, to occurring real language, especially outside of the classroom context. Moreover, they acknowledge that language learners seeking opportunities to be linguistically competent, which is a sign of learning to learn. On the other hand, higher academic achievement is generally in relation with increased self-esteem (Hyland, 2008), learner responsibility (Johnson, 2007). Cotterall (2000) believes that the development of learners’ language proficiency is embedded in the language course design that allow the learners to have control over their own language learning process. Another solution is suggested by Nunley (2002) to facilitate autonomy to inform the grading system for each assignment in a student-centred environment where students can control their own learning process and get responsible for their grades.

### **2.5.2. Age**

Ability, personal confidence and self-esteem, are key terms for learner autonomy which are gained through learning especially in childhood (Mishan ,2004). Yilmazer (2007) indicates that children’s parents direct children’s personality traits in the early childhood and at the age of puberty throughout children’s psychosocial development. This parents’ awareness influences autonomous learning. On the other hand similarly, first language acquisition, which is actually a very individual, autonomous process that is controlled and directed by the child-learner in terms of pace and content in formal education. Benson (2001, p. 59) says “we are born self-directed learners.” He claims that there is correlation between

individual's earliest experiences of language learning and their autonomy, even at an early age. Consequently learners will have awareness of their own way of learning process. Therefore, learning only takes place when learners are ready to learn a language. Similarly, Stivers (2006) answers to the question that, is the college is just the start of a lifelong education or not? In other words, emerging lifelong learning is supposed at earlier stages of the life-span. Yu (2006) pointed out, that a learner's age is among the factors that affect the promotion of learner autonomy. He believes any language learner should be aware of this. Another researcher is the Kuykendall (1991) that takes into consideration the age factor in influencing autonomy. He express that peers have the heavy influence on the construction of self-image in the older children and teenagers. Perhaps, because of this limitation, Knowles (1975, 1980) by defining adults as naturally self-directed and self-educated learners highlights the importance of age for developing autonomy. Of course these features are universal human characteristics (Hiemstra, 2004) that are shaped mostly by the personal characteristics of the language learner (Mensch & Rahschulte, 2008). Therefore, any person should gain necessary components of autonomy at an early age. In spite of being peer pressure as a big barrier to being autonomous learner, any language learner can be equipped with the autonomous skills in early stages of his/her life. Schwanenflugel, Meisinger, Wisenbaker, Kuhn, Strauss and Morris (2006) conducted a study to developing autonomous reading in the early elementary school years, by means of assigning first, second and third-grade children with completing a series of reading tasks.

The study by concluding a simple fluency model of reading for the early elementary school years indicated that operating fluent word and reading text together with autonomous reading produce good comprehension. It might be, these findings were interpreted that the attempts aiming at fostering autonomy should be start at the early ages. Also, Yoshimoto, Inenaga and Yamada (2007) stated that students' being mature have impacts on the level of students' independence in language learning process with appropriate learning materials in a positive way. while young students may be able to seek support for learning activities both in-class and out-of-class.

### **2.5.3. Gender**

There are three debates about the influence of gender on autonomy. Firstly, Grenfell and Harris (1999) observed that girls have more feel in control of their learning and aware of some learning strategies. In other words, the girls tend to be more autonomous. Secondly, females tend to keep their relation with others while males are independent learners. Bynum and Kotchick (2006) similarly, highlighted autonomy in gender by stating that female adolescents are at more depression rather than younger female adolescents and male adolescents have higher self-esteem. Thirdly, Yilmazer (2007) states that gender is not considered as a factor influencing autonomy. Yet, males are very keen to become autonomous. By studying Griggs and Dunn's (1996) study we can find similarities between the culture of Hispanic-American people and the Turkish culture especially in the family commitment and the concept of gender in the form of dominant, strong males, and devoted females. Although these researchers found that the male in Hispanic community symbolizes more and earlier independence than female in the general U.S. population, but another study carried out by Black et al. (1991, cited in Griggs & Dunn, 1996) indicated lower levels of self-esteem and more field dependence in students that follow their careers. All these aspects show inevitably low level of learner autonomy. Dun and Honigsfeld (1996, cited in Sheridan & Steele-Dadzie, 2005) in a more informative study found out that female students were more parent motivated or self-motivated than the males. On the other hand males were more teacher-motivated and preferred to work alone. It is possible to talk about the dependence of the both genders but on different variables.

### **2.5.4. Language Learning Experience**

Experience is one of the important factors that influence situation awareness. In fact, it is not the actual knowledge acquisition process, but can be considered ultimate point of employing some cognitive and meta-cognitive processes during active participation in a task. Briefly, the more advanced and experienced language learners are more independent learners that they tend to learn autonomously (Zaphiris, 2005; Yu, 2006; Vickers and Ene, 2006; Eneau, 2008;

Leahy, 2008). Toman (2008) stated that the self-concept fosters the learners's experience and knowledge.

Maxfield (2008) in line with these explanations, describes self-directed learners that seeking meaningful educational experiences and practices enhancing individual learning. To be autonomus learner, one must direct his/her own learning, meta-cognitive knowledge and skills. According to findings of Fischer (2007), many learners, especially the inexperienced learners fail to make valuable decisions on how to direct their own learning process. Murphy (2008) pointed out, probably negative existing experience of learners in formal learning can prevent them to decide on their own learning consciously. Also, Murray (2004) clarifies the importance of all aspects of each learning experience for developing learner autonomy.

Black et al. (1991, cited in Griggs & Dunn, 1996) found out lower levels of selfesteem in some secondary school students demonstrated more field dependent behaviors. All these aspects are samples of other-directedness. Also, Faye and Sharpe (2008) observed that first-year university classes are not autonomous and self-organised. Parallel to this explanation, Wilson et al. (2008) reporte that students are unwillingn in taking responsibility for their learning in the freshman status. These researchers also state that learner autonomy develops through stages at college and university. They mentioned confidence and commitment as a means to reach higher levels of autonomy through relevant activities. Yıldırım (2008) in a study aimed to find out the perceptions towards learner autonomy of 90 first year and 89 fourth year Turkish ELT students. He found that fourth year students have not positive opinion about their ability to take more control over their learning process due to the experiences in their practice teaching courses.

### **2.5.5. Language Learning Strategies**

Research on foreign language learning strategies (Oxford, 2003, p. 274) started in 1975 with the contributions of Rubin and Stern studies. They described the good language learner as a mentally active learner. language learners monitoring the their learning process by using prior linguistic, general knowledge and some



memorisation techniques. It is necessary to be said that the literature concerning language learning strategies in the 1980s and early 1990s included mostly descriptive research and was followed unfortunately without any good results of language learning strategies use. Later, it was recognised that not only high-achievers but also less successful learners employ language learning strategies sometimes at the same frequency, but someways differently. In line with this studies, Larsen-Freeman (2001) highlighted the importance of learning strategies for language learning. According to Skehan (1998, p. 237, cited in Thanasoulas, 2000), similar to learning styles the language learning strategies, “may partly reflect personal preference rather than innate endowment.”

Strategies used by students are differenr for some reasons. To indicate this statement openly, Sternberg (1998, cited in Gan et al., 2004) indicated evidence that strategy use is changeable from one learner to another. In addition, Mori (2007) adds strategy use differs in accordance with the learners’s level. Parralel to the above mentioned points, Chamot (2005) mentions that there are important factors such as the learner’s goals, learning situation context and existing cultural values of the learner’s society that play a significant role in using language learning strategies language learners. It should be remembered that while a specific language learning strategy may be more useful than others for a language learner in a certain context in achieving learning goals, on the other hand the same language learning strategy in another context may fail in achieving other learning goals. Therefore, we can not say a particular learning strategy is better than others. In fact, there are no good or bad learning strategies. Language learning strategies are teachable and particular to each learner’s learning context. learner’s internal processing preferences always are in accordance with their own learning processes. Grenfell & Harris (1999) postulate language learning strategies have crucial significance in second language learning and teaching. In other words, they are related to the meta-cognitive, cognitive, social and affective language learning processes and that they help less successful language learners to become better language learners.

By considering this point that language learning strategies can be taught, it is very important to investigate on what fields this process can be applied. The teachers, materials, learning situation, cultural values, repetition, reflection and students

themselves play a significant role to achieve this aim. As Cotterall (2004) states, language teachers by instructing, modeling, practicing and giving feedback to their students and learners on the strategies, in fact let them practice these strategies themselves. According to the Chamot (2005), self report procedures are still the most utilized way of identifying language learning strategies, which are mainly unobservable behaviours.

Chamot informs that, using language learning strategy repeatedly make them to be permanent. Yamamori et al, (2003) suggest that learner's frequent use of special strategies do not demonstrate him or her to be a successful learner. learner's ability to organise and manage strategies in accordance with the task that he or she is asked to complete and his/her own learning style preferences, reveals the level of success in language learning process. Grenfell and Harris (1999) see strategies as main factors affecting every developmental stage of learner's learning process. To reach this aim, learners should be encouraged to manage their own learning by the shifting responsibility for learning from the teacher to student.

Fu (2007), by supporting this idea says that the learning strategy use is dependent on the shifts in the learner and teacher's roles. In fact the learner is more active and the teacher is the facilitator of learning. Zhang (2007) (Cited Chamot et al.(1999) claims student awareness of the using strategies is fostered by doing tasks such as teacher-modelling, student practicing in using new strategies and transferring them to new contexts and evaluating themselves. Therefore the idea of the strategy instruction should be integrated into the language curriculum. Zhang (2007) reports that teacher authority helps him to change learner behaviour by using language learning strategies. He also expresses that learners' control over strategy use, is a factor differing good and poor language learners from each other. Oxford (2001, cited in Nisbet et al., 2005) consider "self-management in language learning and self-reliance in language use" as the aim of language learning strategies use (p. 1).

Oxford (2003) in one of her more recent studies explains the importance of L2 learning strategies by indicating that they can help learners to perceive, receive, store, retent and retrieve language information. Additionally, Oxford (2003) states these strategies make language learning easier, enjoyable, self-directed, effective

and transferable to new situations and contexts. Graham (1997, p. 123, cited in Grenfell & Harris, 1999) indicates overall results of the students match with their strategies use to reach the immediate success. Students are expected to become more willing to use them and become more motivated to gain control over their own learning. Another study with 81 Japanese seventh-grade students of English as a foreign language (EFL) carried out by Yamamori et al. (2003). The participants were two groups: first group was the high achievers and motivated students with many learning strategies use and the second group was the students willing to learn and achieve with a lack of strategy use. Consequently, the second group of participants showed inefficient monitoring of their own learning. Therefore, their strategy use, willingness to learn and achievement declined.

Therefore, Yamamori and colleagues conclude that language learning strategies are the indicators of learners' consciousness and directing their own learning. Namely, learner strategies are key elements in developing learner autonomy and self-regulation. This statement was supported by a good number of researchers, apart from the above-mentioned ones, such as Holec (1980, cited in Murray, 2004), Kalaja (1995), Cotterall (2000), Block (2000), Dörnyei and Sheehan (2003, cited in Gan et al., 2004), Jacobs and Farrell (2003), Chang (2005), Schmenk (2005), Vandergrift (2005), Lopez-Fernandez and Rodriguez-Illera (2009) and Chan (2009). Similarly, Wenden (1991) defines the autonomous learner and explains that learner's acquisition of the strategies is in line with his being willing and self-confident to take responsibility to some extent, for his language learning. Additionally in a study, Ma (2007) demonstrate the relationships between learner autonomy, learner's control and learner training. learner autonomy involve learner's control, but the other is not guaranteed and that the learning training is the channel leading to learner autonomy. In other words, learner training can be achieved in the form of providing opportunities to practice along with teaching. Also, raising learners' awareness of their meta-cognitive skills and language learning strategies through reflection on their learning styles, management effective learning. On the other hand according to the Little (1997), the autonomous learner who can act independently within a given context should be trained both strategically and communicatively.

## **2.6 . Definition of Language Learning Strategies**

Many researchers have defined the term language learning strategy within the field of foreign or second language learning and teaching. Tarone (1983) presented a good definition of a learning strategy as “an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language – to integrate these competences into learner’s interlanguage competence” (p. 67). In the other way, Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) represented different definition of strategies as “ any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.”

Researchers such as O’Malley and Chamot (1990) defined that language learning strategies are “the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (p. 1). Richards and Platt (1992:209) stated that learning strategies are “intentional behavior and thoughts that are used by language learners in learning process to help them to understand, learn, or remember new information.” Oxford (1990) gave a broad definition of learning strategies by saying this statement that they are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, enjoyable, self-directed, effective, and transferable to new situations” (p. 8).

learning strategies are used in two ways in the language classroom, consciously or unconsciously in processing new information and performing learning activities. language classroom environment is a problem-solving environment. In this environment language learners, are eager to experience new input and difficult tasks that are given by their instructors to them. Therefore learners attempt to find the easiest way to do what is required, by using language learning strategies.

## **2.7. The importance of Language Learning Strategies for Students**

Weinstein and Mayer (1986: 315), stated that the main goal of strategy use in language learning is to “affect the learner’s motivational state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or interacts new knowledge.” According to Oxford et al (1990), strategy training has more benefits for language learner, because of encouraging greater responsibility and self-direction in the language learner. Language learning strategies are special ways to help people to realize, to

learn, and to memorize new knowledge. As an old Chinese saying goes “Teaching a man how to fish is better than giving him a fish.” Teachers can not always teach the learner throughout his/her life, so these strategies play an important role in developing learner autonomy. Learners can make the best use of these strategies to establish the ability of self-directed learning. The recent trends in foreign language teaching show that the language learning strategies (LLS) can help students to develop their autonomy in foreign language learning. Using appropriate language learning strategies often make improved proficiency in language learning (Thompson and Rubin, 1996; Oxford et al., 1993). If people use these strategies efficiently, they can learn by themselves and self-examine their own progress. Gradually, they can set up their self-confidence. Therefore, having proper learning strategies can improve learners and enhance their abilities of language.

The shift from teacher-centered methodology has led to a new type of instruction in language teaching. The new instruction necessitates to focus on students as unique learners and to deal with learning with a deep awareness. Learning strategies have been a part of this new instruction and are important for different reasons. According to Chamot (2001:250), learning strategies are important in the language learning process for two major reasons. First, if the current strategies of learners are discovered, language learning process including cognitive, social, and affective process will be understood. Second, identifying the strategy profile of foreign language learners will provide useful insights for training less successful learners who are thought to lack of the awareness of strategy use in the learning process. Oxford (1990:1) points out that language learning strategies are important in language learning process by considering the learning strategies as the tools that reinforce self-directed involvement, and she states that (1990: 22) learning strategies help learners take control of their learning in the learning process.

## **2.8. The Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies**

Although there is not uniform terminology for definition of the strategies, but when we analyse the learning strategies, we can see that different scholars use different

terminology to refer to the strategies. For example, Wenden and Rubin (1987) use the term “learner strategies”, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) use the term “learning strategies”, and Oxford (1990) uses the term “language learning strategies.” This scholar recommends that language learning strategies should help learners to develop both practicing communication and building language system. There are a number of basic characteristics accepted for Language Learning Strategies. Summary of the Oxford (1990, p. 9-14) view of LLS are below twelve key features:

**1. Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.** Learning strategies can foster particular aspects of learners’ communicative competence that are competence; grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic competence (Williams, Burden, 1997, p. 151).

**2. Allow learners to become more self-directed.** For language learners, self-direction is very important, because they will not always have access to the teacher to guide them in using the language outside the classroom.

**3. Expand the role of teachers.** As Harmer (1983) states, “The teacher instructs. This is where he or she explains exactly what the students should do” (p. 203). Teachers traditionally view themselves as authority figures, identified with roles like director, manager and leader. Therefore, a new role of becoming facilitator may have a bad feeling to some teachers who feel that their position is being challenged.

**4. Are problem oriented.** In fact students and learners use learning strategies problem to solve a problem, to complete a task, or attain to objective (Williams, Burden, *ibid*, p. 152).

**5. Are specific actions taken by the learner.** They are specific behaviours accomplished by learners to enhance their learning. These behaviours, for example, include learning for a language task, guessing the meaning of the word, self-evaluating, taking notes.

**6. Concerning many aspects of the learner.** Learning strategies are not restricted only to mental processes that the learner deals with while learning a foreign language. Strategies also include meta-cognitive functions like planning, evaluating; emotional, social and other functions as well.

**7. Supporting directly and indirectly learning process.** Mental processing of the language are used in direct strategies. To do this processing three groups of direct strategies: memory, cognitive and compensation are used in a different way and for various purposes (Oxford, 1990, p. 37). One should realize, that direct strategies are aimed at pupil's ability to identify what is important, unknown and uneasy for them in the process of learning. Indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social), as already described in this work, support and manage language learning indirectly, that is, without the including of target language. Oxford (1990) says that they are interrelated with direct strategies and are (in a way) their exact opposite.

**8. Are not always observable.** Most of the times degree of observability regarding learning strategies is questionable, since some are not readily observable to the human eye. For example, regarding cooperating, a strategy in which a learner cooperates with someone else is immediately observable. However, the mental associations, an important memory strategy used while learners are working on some task, cannot be seen. Consequently, teachers often find it difficult to know about learning strategies their learners use (Oxford, 1990), p. 12).

**9. Are often conscious.** Level of consciousness can be seen as a rather controversial issue. On the other hand, some researchers in the field of learning strategies debate whether consciousness is a condition for them to be considered strategies. Cohen (1998) states that on the base of recent discussions of the role of consciousness in the field of foreign language learning, he suggests that language learning strategies are either within the focal attention of the learners, or within their peripheral attention, in that learners can identify them if asked about what they have just done or thought (p. 11). Ellis (1994) pointed out that if learning strategies become so automatic for the learners that they are not able to identify them while employing them, learning strategies lose their significance as strategies and they may be simple referred to as processes (p. 72). On the other hand, automatically appropriate learning use that is unconscious, is often the most desirable thing in strategy training.

**10. Can be taught.** Comparing to learning styles, for example, learning strategies can be taught. This process can be done usefully by strategy training as an

essential part of language education. Its goal is to help learners to be aware of the strategies that they use to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate ones and as Cohen (1998) adds, to explore ways that the learners can learn the target language more effectively (p. 69).

**11. Are flexible.** We can not find Language learning strategies always in predictable patterns. According to Williams and Burden (1997, p. 152), learners exercise the way they use, combine and sequence strategies. However, Oxford (1990, p.13) stated combining strategies in a predictable way sometimes by learners. For example, in reading a text, learners use skimming or scanning techniques to preview the passage and then they read it more closely by guessing to fill in any gaps and organize the material by taking notes and summarizing.

**12. They are influenced by different factors.** As Williams and Burden (1997) suggest some factors influencing strategy choice. For instance, stage of learning, task requirements, degree of awareness, age, sex, general learning style, personality motivation and purpose for learning the language (p. 152). According to Oxford (1990), learners who are more aware, advanced and motivated seem to use a greater range of appropriate strategies. With regard to the motivated learners, motivation is related to the way learning strategies are used by learners (p. 13). For example, the learners who want to learn a foreign language only for interpersonal communication will use different strategies from those learners who want to fulfil graduation requirements.

As mentioned in the above description, some learning strategies are behavioural and can be directly observed, others are mentalistic and not directly observable. Moreover, strategies are sometimes labelled as belonging to “successful” or “unsuccessful” learners. Strategies have also been divided according to whether they influence language learning directly or indirectly.

The list of key features of learning strategies has provided us a basic notion about them while discussing their characteristics including problematic features, like consciousness, for instance. This review can offer a helpful background to a following part of the theses that deals with classification of language learning strategies. Enhancing communicative competence of the language learners is main goal of language learning.



Therefore language learners by using these strategies can foster any aspect of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences to become more self-directed in learning and to take control of their own learning. The other important feature of learning strategies is that they are influenced by a variety of factors. For example, stages of learning, task requirement, age, sex, and nationality, general learning style, personality, motivation and purpose for learning the language. The features mentioned by Oxford above focus on one main aspect called "learner". Learner, being one of the key points in the learning process can regulate his or her learning even after the school by the help of the learning strategies. Awareness of the learning strategies and using them flexibly and appropriately broaden the view of the learner in the learning process. Learner autonomy is another important goal for the application of language learning strategies. By definition, "learner autonomy" refers to the learner's willingness and ability to take greater responsibility for his or her own learning, the competence to use strategies for accomplishing a variety of learning tasks, and the flexibility to transfer strategies to novel learning tasks (Hsaio & Oxford, 2002). "Learner autonomy" is also closely related to the concept of self-regulation in cognitive psychology (Hsaio & Oxford, 2002, p. 369). All of the metacognitive strategies emphasize planning, organizing, evaluating, and monitoring to help learners manage and control their own learning and thus achieve greater learner autonomy. In fact, all strategies, when used by the learner to meet a goal, lead to increased autonomy.

## **2. 9. Classifications of Language Learning Strategies**

At the 1970s research on language learning strategies was started. According to the Williams and Burden (1997), some progress in cognitive psychology had a great effect on the research studies on language learning strategies. One of the main issues in more research studies done on language learning strategies, was that identifying good learners' learning strategies to learn a second or foreign language. Various taxonomies of strategies have been developed in different times. In 1971, a study was conducted by Rubin in which the main focus was the identifying the strategies that successful language learners use. She discuss in her study that such strategies could be offered to less successful learners. By

considering direct and indirect processes of language learning which contribute to language learning, Rubin (1975) classifies learning strategies in two categories. The first category is: classification, monitoring, memorization, guessing, deductive reasoning, and practice. The second category includes strategies which contribute learning indirectly such as creating practice appropriates and using production tricks such as communication strategies.

Wenden (1986) states discussing the strategies of good language learners can help students to get aware of the concept of learner's strategies. The language learning strategies that learners apply in a foreign language learning process or a new language have been identified and described by many researchers. Moreover, Wenden and Rubin (1987) suggest another three strategies following Rubin's taxonomy. These are Learning strategies, Communication and Social Strategies in which they can be grouped into direct (learning strategies) and indirect (communication and social strategies). Therefore, many professional experts (Oxford, 1990; Bialystok, 1981; O'Malley, *et al.* 1985; Willing, 1988; Stern, 1992; Ellis, 1994) in the field of language learning have classified language learning strategies. It should be said that, Oxford (1990) developed the most inclusive language learning strategy classifications and identified them in six types. Her classification consists the features of the previous classification (as cited in Williams and Burden 1997). Oxford divided language learning strategies in two main categories. The first one is direct strategies include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies which contribute directly to new language learning. Also, direct strategies are more useful to the students to store and recover information. As Oxford's (1990) states, "mental processing is necessary for all direct strategies" (p.37). Second category is the indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social Strategies that affect language learning indirectly. Indirect strategies help learner to regulate the learning process.

This classification progress helped to classifying the learning strategies and relating them to a different cognitive processing phases during language learning. However, most of these attempts to classifying language learning strategies show the same classification of language learning strategies without any fundamental changes. By referring to the literature, three types of strategies (cognitive,

metacognitive, social) are used in this study in identifying use of strategy by male and female students. Each main strategy is discussed below.

**Cognitive strategies:** These strategies affect language learning directly. Cognitive strategies promote learners to realize and make use of language; it contains practices, reception of language. They include techniques such as practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input which enable learners to make their language learning meaningful and understandable. When you find something you can't memorize easily, you can use the strategies. The analyzing and reasoning strategies are used by adult learners. These are used to understand the meaning and expression of the target language.

**Meta-cognitive strategies:** Meta-cognitive strategies is placed under indirect learning strategies in Oxford's taxonomy and are the strategies that learners use to unite the process of language learning. These types of learning strategies (metacognitive) permit the learners to control their own learning. Only when you are concentrating can you get knowledge easily. They help to the learners to plan language learning in an efficient way. It contains focusing on one goal, drawing up a learning target, and evaluating oneself. O'Malley and Chamot (1990:8) say that "Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without directing and ability to review their progress, accomplishments, and further learning direction."

**Social strategies:** These strategies contribute to learning indirectly like metacognitive strategies. Social strategies help learners learn through asking question, cooperating with others, and realizing other peoples' feeling. If you contact others, then you are using these strategies. Our relationship between people is important, and the relationship can help us to do something that we can't finish it by ourselves. In such case, Social strategies are very important. Because of the cooperation with others there is not any competition. Students by cooperative learning increas their self-esteem and confidence foreign language achievement.

## **2.10. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Learning Achievement**

Foreign language learning entails a learner to develop special effort or ways of learning to acquire the target language effectively. The more important reason for this fact is that foreign language learning context is likely to be determined by the classroom setting in which it is the only inevitable opportunity to the learner. In other words, learners are not likely to get an opportunity of incidental learning. Therefore, learning a foreign language is highly dependent on conscious learning. Consequently, a learner is expected to develop his/her own ways of learning to overcome the challenges of foreign language context. Kouraogo (1993: 169) writes:

Language learning strategies must be used in fact with more attention to the context where unconscious acquisition caused by exposure to an abundant second language input outside the classroom. Therefore, to facilitate and make learning easy, a foreign language learner has to be aware of the use of language learning strategies as to how such techniques are useful for a particular task to go through. This can have an effect in enhancing a learner's self-reliance in foreign language learning. Cook (2001:129) recommends that "Students must be encouraged to develop independence inside and outside the classroom." For achieving this, the knowledge of using appropriate strategies could be the possible realistic way. There is also an assertion that appropriate strategy use is related to better learning performance (Ehrman and Oxford, 1988; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1990, as cited in Oxford, 1994). Moreover the attribution of language learning strategies to independence, infact they enable learners to explore more efficient learning. Most Studies indicate, there is positive relationships between performance and frequent use of language learning strategies (Oxford and Burry, 1995, as cited in Oxford and Ehrman, 1995). In developing learners' independent learning behaviours, the role of teachers is also due attention. Richards (1990) suggests that as teachers are observers of students' learning behaviours, they are expected to give their own feedback that enable learners to use better strategies for various tasks. On the other hand, learners' charge of their learning is given significant place. Cook (2001:129) writes: The chief moral is that the students often know best. It is the learners'

involvement, the learners' strategies and the learning ability to go their own ways that count, regardless of what the teacher is trying to. It can be said that learner's self-regulation and the ability to cope with new learning tasks result from the goals of strategies instruction; and learners self confidence and the ability to choose appropriate learning strategies is also related with strategies instruction (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Looking at the findings in the area of language learning strategies show that the use of language learning strategies often leads to better proficiency or achievement in mastering the target language (Lee, 2003; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Rahimi *et al.*, 2008; Griffiths, 2003; Hong, 2006; Oxford, 1993).

For instance, findings in a study (O'Malley *et al.*, 1985), showed that successful language learners have reported to use more and wider range of learning strategies than less-successful students. Similarly in another study (Green and Oxford, 1995) the same conclusion has been reached in which language learning strategies of all kinds were used more frequently by more proficient students and learners. In (Griffiths, 2003) study, a strong positive correlation between learning strategy use and language proficiency has been discovered. The final findings showed that advanced language learners have reported to employ language learning strategies more frequently than elementary students. Therefore in this case, language instructors should take their students learning strategies into considerations and try to recognize and identify students' learning strategies in order to support less successful student to achieve success and master the target language or foreign language. Foreign language teachers can identify these strategies through observations, language diaries, questionnaires, interviews and so on. Finally by doing so, EFL teachers will be able to assist language learners and students to recognize and appreciate the power of language learning strategies in the process of foreign language learning. Through language learning strategies, teachers can also help the students to maintain their motivation, autonomy, confidence, keep on going and try to accomplish the goal of foreign language achievement. According to the points stated above, there is the need to learner training to achieve students' self-reliance or self-regulatory behaviour in foreign language learning. Hence, The idea of learner training shades over into self directed learning, in which the students take on responsibility for their learning

(Cook 2001:129). By considering the above mentioned bases, the contribution of language learning strategies in a foreign language context seems to be significant. There will be good results when learners are in charge of their learning in and out side of the classroom in spite of the teacher's presence or absence.

### **2.11. Research on Variables Affecting the use of Language Learning Strategies**

A lot of researches on language learning strategies (Politzer & Groarty, 1985; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Ehrman & Oxford, (1989) have investigated connections between strategy use and learner variables such as language proficiency level, gender, motivation, learning styles, culture, and age. On the whole, all these variables have been found to affect learners' choices of language learning strategies (Al-Otaibi, 2004: 42).

Studies have shown that there are significant gender differences between males and female language learners in which females have demonstrated to use more and wider range of strategies than males (Zare, 2010; Lee, 2003; Green, and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989). In addition, many research studies have explored the relationship between language learning strategies and learners' proficiency in which the findings have indicated that more advanced and proficient language learners use a greater variety and often a greater number of language learning strategies (Rahimi *et al.*, 2008; Griffiths, 2003; Lee, 2003; Anderson, 2005; Bruen, 2001; Green and Oxford, 1995; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Ehrman, and Oxford, 1989). Another influential variable is motivation which has been widely examined with respect to its relationship with language learning strategies. Research findings have demonstrated that learners with high motivation use a significantly greater range of learning strategies than less motivated students (Oxford, 1990; McIntyre and Noels, 1996; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989). Moreover, the role of learning styles of language learners is crucial role in choice of language learning strategies. It has been argued that learning styles and language learning strategies of an individual learner can work cooperatively with a given instructional methodology (Oxford, 2003). If a harmony exists between these factors, the learner will perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety

(Oxford, 2003). Often studies in the area have shown that an individual's learning style preferences influence the type of learning strategies that they use (Rahimi *et al.*, 2008; Chamot, 2004; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989). For instance, extroverts students have demonstrated strong preference for social strategies, while introverts students use metacognitive strategies more frequently (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989). Learners who favor group study are shown to use social strategies, such as interacting with peers or requesting clarification (Rossi-Le, 1995). The research findings studies in the area of language learning strategies provide a greater understanding of strategy use among EFL/ESL learners and support language instructors and curriculum developers to improve their approaches toward teaching and learning goals. These findings also strengthen the fact that strategy use is a complex phenomenon that interacts with a number of variables. These variables have influences on the use of overall strategies, strategy categories, and individual strategies in different ways. So, to obtain a clear idea of learners' patterns of strategy use, it is important to take all these aspects into consideration (Rahimi *et al.*, 2008).

### **2.11.1. Gender**

Research (Poltizer, 1983; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989) has shown that there is a significant difference between males and females in the use of language learning strategies (Alotaibi, 2004: 49). Ehrman & Oxford (1989) reported that females from different cultures studying in the USA were more intuitive than males, who were more sensing oriented. Females were more feeling-oriented as well. They also noticed that feeling- and intuition-oriented learners demonstrated superiority in learning strategies use, which could explain the female superiority in learning strategies use. According to Bacon (1993), women use more metacognitive and cognitive strategies than men and that there are no significant differences between comprehension levels of men and women (Saleh, 1997: 61). More studies have been conducted to show the effect of gender differences in LLS use. In a study of adult language learners, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) by comparing males and females found that females significantly use language learning strategies more than males in four categories: general strategies, functional practice strategies, strategies for searching, communicating

meaning, and self-management strategies. In another study, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) by contrasting males and females found that females used language-learning strategies significantly more than males in three of five strategy factors: formal rule-based practice strategies, general study strategies, and conversational input elicitation strategies. Ehrman and Nyikos (1989) state that the results obtained from their study fully support the findings of other studies concerning the effect of sex on second language learning. They assert that some other variables such as female superiority in verbal aptitude and social orientation, and possible sex differences in integrative motivation, in addition to psychological type, play a role in these sex differences.

Kaylani (1996) also reports significant differences in strategy use between males and females. For the main sample of 255 students, there were significant differences at the  $p < .001$  level for ANOVA results with a main effect of sex on the SILL. Among the strategy categories used in the SILL, female students used significantly more memory, cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies than male students. There was no significant difference in the use of metacognitive and social strategies between the two genders. The findings of Green and Oxford (1995) also indicated higher levels of strategy use by females than by males. Fourteen strategies, some of which are the use flashcards to remember words, reviewing English lessons often, connecting words and locations, skimming and reading carefully, seeking L1 words similar to L2 words, making summaries of information, etc., were used significantly more often by females in that study. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) also reported that in their study, besides the conversational input elicitation strategies reflecting social interaction, two more types of strategies – general study strategies and formal rule-related practice strategies- were used significantly more often by females rather than by males.

The researchers relate this result to factors such as the females' desire for good grades, a need for social approval, their verbal superiority to males, and females' greater willingness to conform to conventional norms. Grace (2000) investigated the gender differences in retention of the vocabulary and understanding translations for beginning language learners in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The analyses of the results revealed that when students were given bilingual multiple-choice tests, it can not be seen any significant differences



between males and females on their short-term and long-term retention scores. Moreover, there were no significant differences in the amount of spent times used by males to look-up translations. It was also reported that the findings of the survey suggested that males and females could equally benefit from a CALL environment. Ehrman and Oxford (1990), also reported that the number and kind of strategies used by females were similar to those used by males.

### **2.11.2. Age**

Scarcella & Oxford (1992) stated age relation to language learning success. Johnson & Newport (1989) revealed that early-age (3 to 7) learners acquired second language better than older L2 learners because early learners are more likely to attain fluency, native-like pronunciation, and very basic grammatical rules (cited in Ehrman & Oxford, 1995: 68). Young L2 learners have less language anxiety when they learn a second language. A number of studies (Burt & Krashen, 1982; Oyama, 1976; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1978) proved this connection. Some other well-known studies (Burling, 1981; Schmidt, 1983; Schumann, 1978) also suggest that adults seem to find it hard to develop a new language (Griffiths, 2003: 48). On the contrary, adult learners have advantages in understanding the grammatical structure and patterns, and easily transmit their knowledge to the language learning context (Chang, 2003: 36). Bialystok (1981) also studied the relationship between learners' language learning strategy use and their ages. The results showed that older students used language learning strategies more than younger students and that made a difference in their successes (cited in Tamada, 1997: 11). Ehrman and Oxford (1989) maintain that in their study age did not seem to be the key point to understanding language learning performance though this view contradicted with the view of many experts in the field that language-learning ability declines with age. Rather the motivational orientation of the adult learners, who were learning the language for immediate career purposes, might have had a greater factor than age. Generally, the studies conducted in the field with respect to learning strategies have focused on either the strategies manipulated by adults or by children. Such studies focus on the strategies employed by the effective and less effective students. Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) conducted research with respect to children's learning strategies in immersion classrooms. Their findings

are similar in temperament with the results reported by Vann and Abraham's (1990). That is, the effective young learners were more flexible with their repertoire of strategies and more effective at monitoring and adapting their strategies than their less effective counterparts. The good young learners in the study reported a variety of strategies they tried for a particular task, indicating that they recognised the need for flexibility in their use of strategies to achieve the language learning tasks. Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) assert that across age levels, effective language learners appear to be capable of examining and adjusting strategies.

## **2.12. Techniques of Language Learning Strategies Assessment**

In the field of language learning strategies research, various researchers have made use of numerous methods for the identification of the patterns of strategy use among language learners ranging from questionnaires to computer tracking. The main reason for utilizing such a wide span of data collection techniques is that not all assessment techniques are appropriate for the identification of every type of strategy. Therefore, researchers must consider this point carefully while designing the data collection methodology of their research studies. There have been some techniques researchers have applied to identify the profile of the strategy use of foreign language learners (Chamot, 2001: 26; Oxford, 1990; Grendfell & Harris, 1999: 53). The techniques to identify the strategy profile of learners can be divided into two main categories: observation and self-reports. Self-reports have also a total number of four categories: (1) Questionnaires (2) Retrospective interviews (3) think-aloud protocols (4) Simulated-recall interviews.

### **2.12.1. Observation**

Observation of language learners in the language context is one of the ways to provide data on learning strategies. In the observation stage, learners' use of learning strategies is observed. Although observation is used as a technique to identify learning strategies, it has some drawbacks. Chamot (2001:26) states that generally, strategies are not directly observable. So, observation of learners may not provide adequate information on learning strategies used by learners.

### **2.12.2. Self-reports**

Self-reports have been widely used to identify learning strategies. Chamot (2001: 26) says that unobservable mental learning strategies of learners can be identified by using self-reports approach. In this approach, learners' thinking processes are identified by using different techniques. Following techniques are used to explore how learners consider their own learning process.

#### **2.12.2.1. Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are the most preferred way to collect data on learning strategies. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for language learning (SILL) (Oxford: 1990) has been widely used to explore the learning strategies of EFL and ESL learners. It is easy to administer questionnaires. In addition, in SILL, learners are asked to rate how frequently they use certain strategies. The major disadvantage of the questionnaires is that learners may not understand the questions and they may choose the preferred answers.

#### **2.12.2.2. Retrospective interview**

Retrospective interview is one of the ways to collect information on strategy use of EFL learners. In retrospective interviews, learners are given a task and after they have completed it, they are wanted to reflect retrospectively on the strategies that they have used. They are asked some open-ended or specific questions on the task. This technique has some advantages. One of the advantages is that if immediate retrospection is done, learners' ideas on their strategy uses are identified easily. Moreover, according to Chamot (2001; 26), this technique provides flexibility in that if the interviewer notices that learner has understood the question asked to him or her, he/she can be clarify the question or comment on it. In addition, in retrospective interviews with a group of learners, learners have a chance to listen to each others' comments, and they remember the strategies that they have used. This technique has some disadvantages as well as advantages. Grendfell & Harris (1999: 53) point out that it may be difficult to find a task appropriate to the level of learners and including a variety of learning strategies. Learners may not have used the strategies they have claimed as they choose the

preferred answers. Finally, if immediate retrospection is not conducted, learners may not remember the strategies they have used.

### **2.12.2.3. Think-aloud Protocols**

“A think-aloud protocol involves a one-on-one interview in which the language learner is given a target language task and asked to describe his/her thoughts while working on it. The interviewer may prompt with open-ended questions such as, ‘what are you thinking right now/ why did you stop and start over? Think-aloud protocols are recorded and transcribed exactly, then analyzed for evidence of learning strategies (Chamot: 2001: 27).”

Anderson & Vandergrift say “Using think-aloud protocols and other verbal formats is a beneficial metacognitive activity and helps students become more aware of the options available to them in understanding language and being a better language learner.” Although this technique provides valuable data on learning strategies of the learners, it has some drawbacks. First of all, the presence of interviewer may create an artificial atmosphere. Second, this technique is time consuming (Chamot, 2001: 27).

### **2.12.2.4. Simulated-recall Interviews**

In simulated interviews, the learner is given a task. When the task has been completed, the interviewer immediately conducts the interview by playing the videotape, and asking student questions about their ideas at the specific moment of the task. This technique’s main drawback is its being time consuming and its dealing with task-specific strategy (Chamot: 2001: 27).

All of the techniques described here are valuable for checking the students use of learning strategies in the process of foreign language learning. As a consequence, it is difficult for the teachers to choose the assessment technique that will provide the desired type of information for the given study. With respect to all these factors and after a detail study of variety of assessment methods, I have decided to use a highly structured questionnaire for the my research. Reliability and validity of the given method enables to provide the desired information that the main part of the

research deals with. Finding out what strategies the learners use in the process of learning foreign language is a next step in the learning strategies issue. This is helpful for both the learners and the teacher. Learners become aware of the strategies they use and, on condition the teacher releases the results in the classroom, also of their classmates. Besides, identifying students current strategies use enables the teacher to come to the decision which strategies should they focus on in the instruction.

### **2.12.3. Conclusion**

In this chapter a general view about learner autonomy and variables affecting to developing learner autonomy was given. Then the definition of language learning strategies, characteristics, relationship between language learning strategies and foreign language achievement, variables affecting the use of language learning strategies, were explained. Finally, techniques of language learning strategies assessment briefly discussed. Therefore, there is a need for much more research to see if there is any relationship between language learning strategies and developing student autonomy. In the next chapter, the methodology followed during the implementation processes of the current study in detail and data analysis procedures are mentioned briefly.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This study explores the effect of three types of language learning strategies on developing student autonomy and their relations with foreign language achievement. This chapter first focuses on the overall design of the study. Then it presents the research questions and some information about the participants. After that, the data collection instrument along with the data collection procedures is explained. Finally, information with respect to the analysis of data is provided.

#### **3.2. Design of the Study**

The research design of this study is both comparative and correlational in nature. The purpose of the study is to find out if there is correlation between student autonomy and foreign language achievement and indicate the effects of variables gender and age factors on strategy use. The researcher did not carry out any experiments or manipulate data in any way; data were just collected through questionnaire. This study is also a descriptive and inferential based on a survey research conducted for the purpose of making descriptive and predict of important factors on considerable variables and assertions about some research population. Descriptive statistics was employed to compute the students' language learning strategies use to develop their autonomy in foreign language learning. Moreover, the study can be considered as a quantitative research because no qualitative research methods such as interviews, observation and case studies were employed in the study. In this study quantitative data were collected through questionnaire, which aimed to identify students' preferences of language learning strategies to develop student autonomy. The purpose was to collect data without changing and manipulating the context. Finally, as the study tries to compare mean ranks of variables between groups, such as males and females, to discover the potential significant relationship between them in relation to variables under investigation, it could be identified as a comparative study.

### **3.3. Research Questions**

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What language learning strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social do the students utilize more in foreign language learning?
2. Is there any correlation between foreign language achievement and using strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social ?
3. Are there any differences in the strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social used by ELT students concerning their gender and age?
4. Which factors are more effective on developing student autonomy and their foreign language achievement?

### **3.4. Participants**

The study involved 150 ELT students. Simple random sampling technique was used to choose 150 students for this study. Sample of students has been chosen from a total of 240 students attending English language Teaching Department in Hacettepe university in Turkey, where English, although not the official language of the country, is the primary medium of instruction. All the students involved were Turkish and selected from second, third and fourth classes of ELT department, BA program, that were 117 females and 33 males, ranging in age from 18 to 22 and upper. As these students had studied in the English Language Teaching Department for four years and passed the proficiency examination, this sample group was expected to represent distinguishing features of a language learner. The main population of the students were 240 students.

**Table 3.1. Demographic Description of Participants (Students)**

	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	33	22.0
	Female	117	78.0
	Total	150	100.0
<b>Age</b>	18-20	28	18.7
	21-22	85	56.7
	23-uper	37	24.7
	Total	150	100.0
<b>Class</b>	Class A (second year)	50	33.3
	Class B (third year)	50	33.3
	Class C (fourth year)	50	33.3
	Total	150	100.0

### **3.5. Instrument**

In this study, instrument was used with the purpose of collecting quantitative data. The study researcher administered one questionnaire. This instrument was adapted from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire originally developed by Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002), based on earlier work by Deci and Ryan (1985) and modified by the researcher. The data collection instrument consisted of two parts. The first part sought information about the subjects' personal characteristics, including gender and age of the participants. The second part of the questionnaire contained 30 items and three subsections (Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Social strategies) related to develop student autonomy. The questionnaire was first piloted by the researcher with 50 students and then participants were invited to comment on ambiguous items as a measure of content validity. Its validity was confirmed by advisor, reader of the thesis and other experts in ELT department of university. During the piloting of questionnaire the concerns, such as students' claims that they have difficulty in differentiating two items from one another and even spelling mistakes, raised by the students were taken into consideration and the statements in the questionnaire were improved accordingly. The piloting of the questionnaire also helped to determine the time that would be given to students during the actual administration of the



questionnaire. The students were able complete the questionnaire in 15 minutes time and the gathering of the questionnaires took around 10 minutes. Depending on the timing during the piloting, it was decided that half an hour was ideal for students to respond to the questions, transfer them on the scoring sheet, and found the totals for each category. In order to test the reliability of the students' view on the "Learner Autonomy Questionnaire" as a whole, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients was calculated. The "Students' view on Learner Autonomy Questionnaire" exhibited a high degree of reliability ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) therefore we place considerable confidence in it. As a result, the reliability of questionnaire was confirmed. The questionnaire was completed by 150 ELT students.

### **3.6. Data Collection Procedures**

The data for this study were collected through one questionnaire consisting of 30 items measuring student autonomy based on using strategies by students. The type of the questionnaire was a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from Always(5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Seldom (2) to Never (1). For this reason data collection of this research is quantative (ordinal). The questionnaire was administered to 150 ELT students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University in June month of 2012-2013 academic year. Prior to the implementation of the data collection instrument, the permission of the Head of Hacettepe University English Language Teaching Department was taken via submitting the proposal of the study, which included the aim of the study, the method that was followed during the study with the sample instrument and the contributions of the study for Hacettepe University.

The questionnaire administered to the students. The classroom teachers, who were informed about the aim of the study and the administration procedure, carried out the administration. Also, the respondents were explained the purpose of the study before requesting them to answer the questions. For collection data, each class instructor was given a packet of surveys, the survey had a 'directions' or 'instruction' part, written in English, explaining the purpose of the survey and asking their permission or consent to participate. In order to produce more thoughtful responses, participant were asked to complete the measures one at a

time. Students' grade point averages (GPA) were gathered from English language Teaching Department. Students' GPA were gathered at the end of spring semester of 2012-2013 academic year.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

In the present study, descriptive statistics were used to rank order the strategy categories from the most preferred to the least preferred category. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $R_s$ ) was used in order to reveal whether there was a significant relationship between the student autonomy and foreign language achievement. For identifying any statistically significant difference and the impact of gender factor on strategy use, Mann-Whitney U test and for the identifying the impact of age factor on the using strategies, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. To identifying the effective factors on strategy use and foreign language achievement, ordinal regression test was used. After the codification of data, the researcher used SPSS version 17.0 for windows to analyse the collected data for the quantitative part.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

In this chapter, a general overview of the design of the study was given in order to produce the methodology of this study. The overview of this chapter has in depth included the participants under investigation, the instrument used in the study, the procedures followed during data collection and finally the method preferred while analyzing the data. In the following chapter, the results of data analysis have been handled more elaborately and the findings of this study have been discussed in detail. This chapter presented the methodology of research study that investigated the relationships developing student autonomy and foreign language achievement among second, third and fourth classes of English Language Teaching (ELT) students, BA program.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Introduction

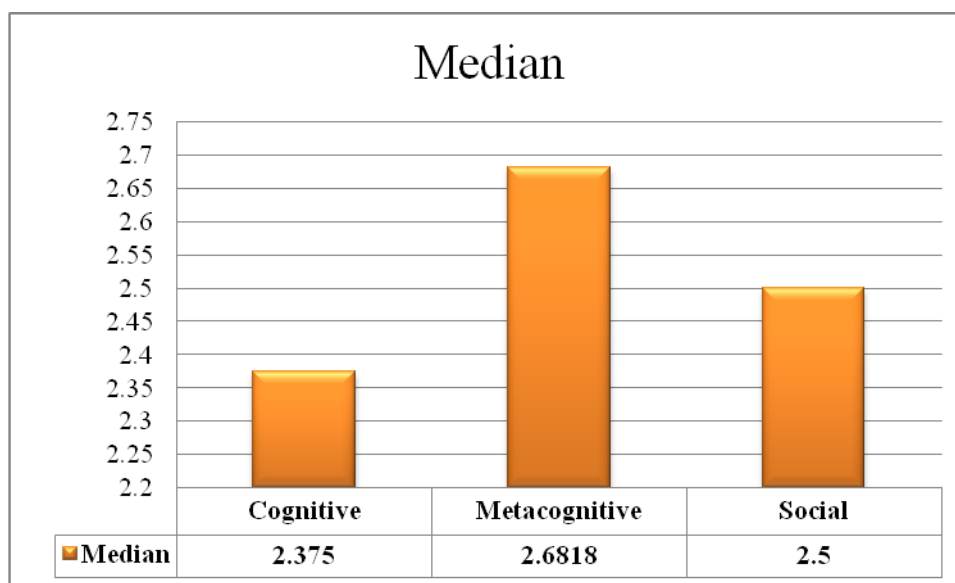
In this chapter, statistical information based on the analysis of students' responses to Learner Autonomy Questionnaire will be explained. Furthermore, the results obtained from the questionnaire will be compared in terms of the similarities and differences in strategy preferences and strategy use. Finally, the relationship between language learning strategies and foreign language achievement will be examined and reported. The purpose of using the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was to identify the language learning strategy preferences of the students who participated in this study. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items, which identified the strategy preferences of the respondents. The strategies were grouped under the main three categories: cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies. As a result in this research, this study aimed to answer 4 research questions as follows:

### **4.2. Research question 1. What language learning strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social do the students utilize more in foreign language learning?**

The interpretation of the findings is made based on the median scores of the use of the strategies as the following criteria: low use, if the score is between 1 to 2; medium use, if the average score is between 2 to 3.5; and high use if the average score is between 3.5 to 5. As we can see in Table 4.1. metacognitive strategies with 2.68 total median were used by students more than other two strategies groups, cognitive and social strategies. In Figure 4.1. findings of the Table 4.1. were indicated in histogram model. So, respectively metacognitive, social and cognitive strategies were used by the students.

**Table 4.1. Frequency of Strateg Use between Students**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>
<i>Cognitive</i>	150	2.375
<i>Metacognitive</i>	150	2.681
<i>Social</i>	150	2.5



**Figure 4.1. Histogram of Strategy Use between Students**

**4.3. Research question 2. Is there any correlation between foreign language achievement and using strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social ?**

By looking at the results of spearman correlation test between independent variables: cognitive, metacognitive, social strategies and dependent variable students' GPA, we can see that all Correlation Coefficients with 0/99 confidences are significant, ( $p < 0.01$ ). According to the Correlation Coefficients that are all positive, in spite of that existing significant Correlation Coefficient, there are weak correlations between mentioned variables, ( $R_s < 0.40$ ). The results indicated Correlation Coefficient between metacognitive strategies and students' GPA is more power than other strategies.

**Table 4.2. Spearman's Correlation between Students' GPA and Strategy Use**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Cognitive</i>	150	0.203	0.013
<i>Metacognitive</i>	150	0.328	0.000
<i>Social</i>	150	0.245	0.003

**4.4. Research question 3. Are there any differences in the strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social used by EFL students concerning their gender and age?**

The fourth question investigates to see any differences in using strategies by ELT students concerning their gender, age, and class. To find out any difference between male and female students in using strategies according to their gender, the researcher used Mann-Whitney u test. After conducting Mann-Whitney u test for any type of the strategies, the result revealed that mean ranks of the males and females in using cognitive strategies similar to each other, ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $sig = 0.289$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Like cognitive strategies in metacognitive strategies, ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $sig = 0.130$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and social strategies, ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $sig = 0.871$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Consequently there was not statistically significant difference between strategy use and gender between students. So gender has not any effect on strategy use.

**Table 4.3. The Effect of Gender Factor on Strategy Use between Students**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Cognitive</i>	Male	33	82.58	-1.061	0.289
	Female	117	73.50		
<i>Metacognitive</i>	Male	33	85.59	-1.514	0.130
	Female	117	72.65		
<i>Social</i>	Male	33	76.58	-0.163	0.871
	Female	117	75.20		

For analyzing the effect of age on strategy use, Kruskal-Wallis test was used by the researcher. After conducting Kruskal-Wallis test, the results showed that there were not considerable significant differences between three age groups of students and using three groups of strategies. The result of Kruskal-Wallis test analysis revealed that there is not a significant difference between every type of strategies and age factor. By looking at the result we can see that mean rank of strategy use between three age groups of the students nearly are the same. In other words there are not noticeable differences between age groups in strategy use. P value in three types of strategies is higher than 0.05, ( $p > 0.05$ ), cognitive strategies, (sig= 0.757), metacognitive strategies, (sig= 0.970) and social strategies, (sig= 0.673). These results confirm that age factor has not any effect on strategy use between students in our sample study.

**Table 4.4. The Effect of Age Factor on Strategy Use between Students**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Cognitive</b>	18-20	28	75.02	0.757
	21-22	85	77.54	
	23-uper	37	71.19	
<b>Metacognitive</b>	18-20	28	73.68	0.970
	21-22	85	75.92	
	23-uper	37	75.92	
<b>Social</b>	18-20	28	74.05	0.673
	21-22	85	73.61	
	23-uper	37	80.95	

#### **4.5. Research question 4. Which factors are more effective on developing student autonomy and their foreign language achievement?**

Because of the using nominal, ordinal independent variables and ordinal dependent variable to response the question 6 in this study, using linear regression can not predict precisely and distinctly dependent variable value according to the independent variables values . Ordinal logistic regression (often just called 'ordinal regression') is used to predict an ordinal dependent variable given one or more independent variables. As with other types of regression, ordinal regression can also use interactions between independent variables to predict the dependent variable. For example, we could use ordinal regression to predict the belief that "tax is too high" (ordinal dependent variable, measured on a 4-point Likert item from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"), based on two independent variables: "age" and "income". Alternately, we could use ordinal regression to determine whether a number of independent variables, such as "age", "gender", "level of physical activity" (amongst others), predict the ordinal dependent variable, "obesity", where obesity is measured using using three ordered categories: "normal", "overweight" and "obese". Having carried out ordinal regression, we will be able to determine which one of our independent variables have a statistically significant effect on our dependent variable. This guide shows us how to carry out ordinal regression using SPSS and explain what we need to interpret and report. However, before doing this procedure, we need to understand the different assumptions that our data must meet in order for ordinal regression to give us a valid result. We discuss these assumptions next. To get a valid result, our data must passses four assumptions that are required for ordinal regression. let's take a look at these four assumptions:

**Assumption 1:** Dependent variable should be measured at the ordinal level. Examples of ordinal variables include Likert items (e.g., a 7-point scale from "strongly agree" through to "strongly disagree").

**Assumption 2:** One or more independent variables that are continuous, ordinal or categorical (including dichotomous variables). However, ordinal independent variables must be treated as being either continuous or categorical.

**Assumption 3:** There is no multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when we have two or more independent variables that are highly correlated with each other. This leads to problems with understanding which variable contributes to the explanation of the dependent variable and technical issues in calculating an ordinal regression. Determining whether there is multicollinearity is an important step in ordinal regression.

**Assumption 4:** We have proportional odds, which is a fundamental assumption of this type of ordinal regression model; that is, the type of ordinal regression that we are using in this guide (i.e., cumulative odds ordinal regression with proportional odds). The assumption of proportional odds means that each independent variable has an identical effect at each cumulative split of the ordinal dependent variable. It is tested in SPSS using a full likelihood ratio test comparing the fitted location model to a model with varying location parameters.

We can check assumptions 3 and 4 using SPSS. Assumptions 1 and 2 should be checked first, before moving onto assumptions 3 and 4. We test these assumptions in this order because it represents an order where, if a violation to the assumption is not correctable, we will no longer be able to use ordinal regression. So in these conditions using ordinal regression model is rational. This model is a particular type of the generalized linear models. These models by applying cumulative Likelihood estimation in levels of the dependent variable and using significance independent variables can predict any levels of dependent variable.

Basically one of the ordinal regression model characteristics comparing to the linear regression model is the identifying predictions based on the favorite response. In other words in normal regression only the value of the response is important, but in ordinal regression model because of the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, value of the one response is not significance and only one of the total values must be chosen as a favorite response. Consequently in ordinal regression model, the magnitude of the probable choosing of different levels of the dependent variable by using independent variables' predictors is done. The first important point in conducting ordinal regression models is identifying link function that is identified according to the type of dependent variable distribution. Since obtaining  $GPA_1 = 2.5 - 3$ (low),  $GPA_2 = 3 - 3.5$ (medium),  $GPA_3 = 3.5 - 4$ (High) for all the students are not the same, so the type of the link function must be identified



according to the values of the pseudo R- Square. Therefore we estimated regression model in five different states that finally link function logit with high R- Square value was chosen and interpreted. Types of the link functions are: (1) probit (2) complementary log- log (3) logit (4) negative log- log (5) cauchit.

The second important point is identifying location variables in regression model that consists of significance independent variables. The favorite regression model contains all effective predictors that have effect on dependent variable. To identifying effective independent variables in our model, firstly we entered in regression model all independent variables that we believed have significant and rational effects on dependent variable value. Then to optimization our model, gradually unimportant and insignificant variables are drew out of the model. The final regression model contains all variables have significant effects on dependent variables. At the first step, variables that are believed have effects on the dependent variable and are considered important identifiers (factors) in students regression model that are three types of strategies and gender. In contrast, variable age has been considered as covariate. Primary results indicates, regression model structure is significant according to the independent and dependent variables. The results of model fitting information are as follow:

-2loglikelihood = 216.902, chi- square = 4.495, df = 9, sig = 0.000

The results of the final regression model indicates variables such as gender (only men), age and metacognitive strategies (B1, B2) as independent variables in identifying levels of the dependent variable or degree of students' GPA,  $GPA_1= 2.5-3$ (Low),  $GPA_2= 3-3.5$ (Medium) statistically are significant. So the final model is represented as follow:

**Table 4.5. Results of Ordinal Regression**

<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<b>Threshold coefficients</b>	GPA 1(DV)	Low	2.073	0.685	9.156	0.002
	GPA 2(DV)	Medium	0.355	0.661	13.288	0.062
<b>Location coefficients</b>	Age(IV)	-	0.627	0.335	3.507	0.041*
	Gender (men) (IV)	-	1.144	0.415	7.611	0.006**
	Metacognitive strategies B1 (IV)	Low	-0.730	0.544	6.802	0.056
	Metacognitive strategies B2(IV)	Medium	-0.644	0.463	10.243	0.034*

- \*\*Significant with 0.99 confidence
  - \* significant with 0.95 confidence
- DV = dependent variable  
IV = independent variable

As we can see in Table 4.5, age variable has positive relation with degree of Students' GPA,  $GPA_1 = 2.5-3$ (low),  $GPA_2 = 3-3.5$ (medium). So by increasing age, the students' GPA increase and vices-versa. Estimate coefficient for the gender variable indicates only estimate coefficient of the men groups of the students statistically is significant and has positive relation with increasing GPA. As we can see in Table 4.5., estimate coefficients of the three groups of strategies indicated that only metacognitive strategies have effects on identifying degrees of students' GPA or foreign language achievement between students that this point was shown in research question 1 by frequency. In addition results of the the three independent variables (Age, Metacognitive Strategies B1 and B2) statistically with 0.95 confidence are significant and similarly variable gender (only men) statistically with 0.99 confidence are significant. Also the result of the **parallel lines test** indicated that regression model has validity and reliability, ( $p > 0.05$ ).

-2loglikelihood = 208.534, chi-square = 8.368, df = 9, sig = 0.498

By considering  $H_0$  hypothesis in this regression model, we can see that estimate coefficients of the model for different levels of the dependent variable are rational or not. That is this model with high validity confirms this hypothesis. At the end, statistical value of **pseudo R- Square** (cox and shell = 0.56) indicates that 0.56 magnitude of the different levels of the dependent variable precisely has been predict and the remaining magnitude of the dependent variable levels is dependent to other factors such as family income, education, native, non-native, distance and.....that are not considered in our model that may be have effects on students' foreign language achievement.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

In this chapter the descriptive and inferential statistics were used to interpret of the data that gathered from ELT students to find any significant difference between learners' preferences of language learning strategies and developing student autonomy in EFL context according to the effects of factors such as age, gender factors. First, descriptive statistics was used for the first research question analysis and indicating result. Second, in research questions 2 to 4 for analysis of the data, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis test and regression analysis were used by investigator. The findings revealed a significant relation between using strategies and foreign language achievement(FLA).

Descriptive statistics showed that according to the the students'views metacognitive strategies are more useful strategies in foreign language achievement. The data also showed that there were positive correlation between students' GPA and using strategy espicially, between metacognitive strategies and students' GPA. The effectiveness of gender on strategy use only in men group of the students was indicated. These results confirmed that age factor has not any effect on strategy use between students in our sample study. Finally regression analysis indicated that metacognitive strategies, gender (only men group) and age factors are predictors of students' foreign language achievements. In Chapter five discussion and conclusions and findings of the study will be provided. Also, some

pedagogical implications of the results and recommendation for future research will be discussed and presented.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1. Introduction

In the present study, the researcher has investigated the relationship between using three types of language learning strategies by ELT learners and developing student autonomy to see whether cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies have effects on developing student autonomy in EFL context. Herein, the results of the data analysis given in the previous chapter are discussed in detail in relation to the research questions. In this chapter, we discuss the main findings regarding the research questions. At the end of the discussion part the researcher will come up with conclusions, suggestions and recommendations for further studies in foreign language learning. In this chapter in 5.2 - 5.5, the researcher will discuss the main findings regarding research questions.

### 5.2. Discussion of the research question 1. What language learning strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social do the students utilize more in foreign language learning?

Descriptive statistics was employed to investigate the effect of the three types of language learning strategies on developing student autonomy and foreign language achievement that results indicated, in general, ELT learners report using metacognitive strategies in medium-use level. According to the medians of the frequency of use, the most frequently used strategy was metacognitive strategies. Figure 1 illustrated that the frequency of overall strategy use was 2.51, which was approximately at a medium level (with a range from 1 to 5). According to the results of figure 1, the most frequently used strategies were metacognitive strategies ( $Md=2.68$ ) and followed by social strategies ( $Md =2.50$ ), cognitive strategies ( $Md =2.37$ ). In line with the previous studies (Chang & Huang, 1999; Ho, 1999; Klassen, 1994; Teng, 1999; Yang, 1993, 1994), the finding of the current study revealed that metacognitive strategies were most frequently used. In addition, the frequency of overall strategy use was showed in medium use. The results showed that these learners did not apply strategies as frequently as they could in learning English as a foreign .

### **5.3. Discussion of the research question 2. Is there any correlation between foreign language achievement and using strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social?**

Conducting spearman's correlation test to find the Correlation between three types of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, social strategies and students' GPA in three classes indicated that there is Correlation between independent variables: cognitive, metacognitive, social strategies and dependent variable (students' GPA). P value in any type of strategies is lower than 0.05, ( $p < 0.05$ ), (cognitive strategies, sig = 0.013), (metacognitive strategies, sig = 0.00), (social strategies, sig = 0.03), that there is statistically significant relation between strategy use and foreign language achievement. All Correlation Coefficients for three strategies groups are positive (cognitive strategies, *Correlation Coefficient* = 0.203), (metacognitive strategies, *Correlation Coefficient* = 0.328), (social strategies, *Correlation Coefficient* = 0.245), but the results indicated Correlation Coefficient between metacognitive strategies and students'GPA is more power than other strategies groups. Consequently, it is understandable that students prefer and use metacognitive strategies more than other strategies groups in foreign language learning. In line with these results, referring to previously mentioned studies in literature review, Sternberg (1998, as cited in Gan et al., 2004), has stated effective meta-cognition incorporates control of planning, monitoring and evaluation of learning process. Also, similarly Zhang (2007) stated that student awareness (meta-cognition- learners' understanding of themselves, of learning tasks and of learning strategies), cognitive control , regulation over learning can enhance learning process more effectively and produce a type of self-efficacy that fosters generally foreign language achievement. As a result, knowing metacognitive knowledge about language learning is one thing, and implication of it is quite another.

#### **5.4. Discussion of the research question 3. Are there any differences in the strategies: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social used by EFL students concerning their gender and age?**

Conducting Mann-Whitney u test for any type of the strategies revealed that mean ranks of the males and females in preferring strategies nearly are similar to each other. In cognitive strategies, we can see z and p values as, ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $\text{sig} = 0.289$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Like cognitive strategies in metacognitive strategies, z and p values are ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $\text{sig} = 0.130$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and in social strategies, ( $z < 1.96$ ), ( $\text{sig} = 0.871$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). According to the z and p values, there was not statistically significant difference between strategy use and gender factor between students, but mean rank of the males are a little higher than females. So only male gender has weak effect on strategy use. After conducting Kruskal-Wallis test for analyzing the effect of age on strategy use, the results showed that there were not considerable significant differences between three age groups of students and using three groups of strategies. The result of Kruskal-Wallis test analysis revealed that there were not significant differences between every type of strategies and three age groups (18-20, 21-22, 23-upper) of the students. P value in three types of strategies is higher than 0.05, ( $p > 0.05$ ). In addition, mean ranks of the strategy use between all three age groups of the students nearly are the same. Therefore, based on the results we can say surely age factor has not any effect on strategy use in this study. In contrast to previous researches (Politzer, 1983; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989) and similar researches (Zare, 2010; Lee, 2003; Green, and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989) that have shown a significant difference between males and females in the use of language learning strategies (Alotaibi, 2004: 49), in research question 3 in line with the study of Saleh (1997:61), there are not significant differences between comprehension levels of males and females. Only mean ranks of the males are a little higher than females groups. This means that the significant differences are not noticeable between two groups. By considering the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test and comparing these results with the other well-known studies (Burling, 1981; Schmidt, 1983; Schumann, 1978) that suggest adults seem to find it hard to develop a new language (Griffiths, 2003: 48), we can say that the results of the conducting Kruskal-Wallis test meet the results of the mentioned studies.

#### **5.5. Discussion of the research question 4. Which factors are more effective on developing student autonomy and their foreign language achievement?**

The results of the final regression model indicated variables such as gender (only men), age and metacognitive strategies: B1= median < 2.5(Low), B2 = median 2.5-3 (Medium ) as independent variable in identifying levels of the dependent variable or degree of students' GPA,  $GPA_1 = 2.5-3$  (low),  $GPA_2 = 3-3.5$  (medium), statistically are significant. Final regression model indicated, age variable has positive relation with degree of GPA ( $GPA_1$ ,  $GPA_2$ ). Estimate coefficient for the gender variable indicated only estimate coefficient of the men groups of the students statistically is significant and has positive relation with increasing GPA. Estimate coefficients of the three groups of strategies indicated that only metacognitive strategies have effects on identifying degrees of GPA or foreign language achievement between students that this point was shown in research question1 by frequency and descriptive statistics. In addition, the results showed that the the two independent variables (Age, Metacognitive strategies: B1and B2) as predictors statistically with 0.90 confidence are significant and similarly other variable, gender (only men) statistically with 0.95 confidence is significant. Also the result of the **parallel lines test** indicated that regression model has validity and reliability, ( $p > 0.05$ ).

-2loglikelihood = 208.534, chi-square = 8.368, df = 9, sig = 0.498

At the end, statistical value of **pseudo R- Square** (cox and shell = 0.56) indicated that 0.56 magnitude of the different levels of the dependent variable precisely has been predict and the remaining magnitude of the dependent variable levels is dependent to other factors such as family income, education, native, non-native, distance and.....that are not considered in our model that may be have effects on students' foreign language achievement. According to the above mentioned results of the regression tes analysis, we can conclude that previous studies about the effectiveness of gender factor on ststrategy use, do not support our findings in this study. By referring to the Ehrman and Oxford (1989), Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Bacon (1993) studies that found that females significantly use language learning strategies more than males, reversely in this study males use language learning strategies significantly more than females. Considering



regression analysis for age factor and comparing the result with Bialystok'(1981) study, that showed that older students used language learning strategies more than younger students and that made a difference in their successes (cited in tamada, 1997: 11), in our sample study too, age factor in line with Bialystok study is effective factor in using strategies between older students. Also, studies (Chang & Huang, 1999; Ho, 1999; Klassen, 1994; Teng, 1999; Yang, 1993, 1994), supported the findings of this study like research question1 that revealed metacognitive strategies were most frequently used and are as a effective factor foreign language learning.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

Language Learning strategies as tools are used by language learners to assist their language learning process. As independent variables factors, they differentiate successful language learners from less successful language learners. Like other studies these results can help to inform English language teachers to train the less successful learners to become more successful and autonomous learners. Based on the above mentioned results from the study we can conclude briefly the results of the findings and discussion as below:

- Descriptive statistics indicated that according to the the students'views metacognitive strategies are more useful strategies in foreign language achievement.
- Conducting spearman's correlation test, indicated that there is statistically significant correlation between strategy use and foreign language achievement.
- The effectiveness of gender on strategy use only in men group of the students was indicated.
- These results confirmed that age factor has not any effect on strategy use between students in our sample study.
- Finally, regression analysis indicated that metacognitive strategies, gender (only men group) and age factor are predictors of strategy use.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to identify strategies that ELT students use at Hacettepe University to develop their autonomy in foreign language learning. To achieve this aim, one questionnaire was distributed to the students. The Cronbach's alpha values of the questionnaire was ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) There were two reasons for choosing the second, third and fourth years ELT learners studying at the department of ELT in Hacettepe University. Firstly, it was assumed that these learners learned English in English learning Institutes before entering to the university. Secondly, they had fewer problems with the language strategies as they were expected to use these strategies in their first year of learning instruction. So, it was assumed that they were more aware of the language learning process. The results of research questions showed that students used all language learning strategies at the medium level, with a median of 2.51. Metacognitive strategies were reported being used more than other strategies groups with a median of 2.68.

The results of the questionnaire revealed the metacognitive strategies were used with a median of 2.68. Metacognitive strategies are considered the heart of the language learning strategies. As they are about the thinking process, the other learning strategies are somewhat dependent on them. It means that all the language learning strategies are interrelated and they are gathered under the umbrella of the metacognitive strategies. Moreover, a learner who has developed metacognitive strategies is aware of the other language learning strategies, too. This study showed that learners used metacognitive strategies more than other two strategies groups.

The results of the questionnaire shed light on the learner autonomy profile of the ELT learners. The results of this study revealed that the subjects (students) of this study used strategies at a medium level, with a median of 2.51. By comparative analysis of the strategies profile and learner autonomy profile of each learner, two major conclusions were drawn. The first one was that learners who developed more metacognitive strategies were found being more autonomous than those who developed fewer metacognitive strategies. The second one was that a strong correlation between the metacognitive strategy use and learner autonomy profile of the ELT learners has been established. More than half of the learners reported

using metacognitive strategies at a medium level and having nearly the same frequency of the learner autonomy profile. In conclusion, it can be said that this study revealed the language learning strategy use profile, especially metacognitive strategy and learner autonomy profile of the Turkish ELT learners studying at the department of ELT in Hacettepe University. This study has also revealed that the more one employ metacognitive strategies, the more s/he becomes autonomous, and the more s/he takes charge of his or her own learning even after graduating university, as there is no end to the language learning process and one has to take control of his/her own learning if s/he wants to be a part of this endless language learning process. There may be different reasons for failure in learning a second/foreign language. The lack of using strategies is considered one of the reasons. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate strategies awareness or effect to develop student autonomy in EFL context.

Finally, in any sort of second/ foreign language research, there are inevitable limitations. That means in any research, variables and conditions cannot be completely taken under control by researchers. This study aimed to examine the effect of three types of strategies on developing student autonomy in EFL context. By examining the subjects' responses to the questionnaire, the results revealed that metacognitive strategies can help learners to become autonomous in foreign language achievement. So, further research should incorporate more research methods like think – aloud protocols or interviews to further examine students' actual strategy use in order to obtain persuasive results. It was also hoped to see whether strategies can foster EFL learners' foreign language achievement. The researcher suggests more studies to see whether all types of strategies can develop student autonomy or not in other EFL contexts.

### **6.1. Pedagogical Implications**

The study has shed light in the significance of developing student autonomy for learners studying at Hacettepe University and presented the necessity of autonomy in the foreign language classrooms. In the light of the finding which has been discussed so far, we can draw four educational implications. The first one is that autonomy should be developed at universities. Promoting autonomy and

autonomous learning make students to become more competent to have control on their own learning. Generally students with different experiential backgrounds and learning achievements enter university, and we know little about their autonomous positions. Therefore, in higher education context as University, developing autonomy is necessary need for learning. Learners have needs to learn metacognitive strategies, since learners are required to take responsibility and find their own methods of gathering, synthesizing and evaluating information at university. It is an essential step at universities due to the fact that the learners, when they find themselves as students at university, do not know lost of strategies which help them in their future education career. Through the autonomy implementation, this situation could be improved so that they might not face any difficulty in learning. To developing autonomy at universities, considering below key points is necessary.

- At the universities, syllabuses and assessment models should be designed in accordance with the principles of autonomy.
- Assessing the course books at the universities whether it encourages autonomy or not.
- Lectures ought to be trained on learner autonomy and some in- service training should be fulfilled.

The second one is that autonomy gives the learners the ability to control their own learning. Therefore considering developing autonomy at Primary Schools programs will lead the students and learners to take more responsibility for their own learning. Training responsibility for primary school students and learners make them to feel better for their own learning in the future education. Because of the existing poor knowledge of the teachers about autonomy at primary schools, teachers should be informed about the basic principles of autonomy by pre-service training. The third one is that strategy training could be provided for the Turkish university ELT learners studying at the department of ELT. Metacognitive strategies are considered the major component of the language learning process and they are interrelated with the other strategies. Moreover, a strong correlation between the metacognitive strategy use and learner autonomy profile of the learners has been observed in this study. The suggested training might offer a

path for learner autonomy, and thus the learners could learn how to take charge of their own learning. Besides, as the learners who study at the department of ELT, they will be English teachers or instructors after graduating and they will need to be aware of the language learning strategies to help their own students take control of their own learning. It can be said that language learning strategies training could be made a component of the methodology course.

The fourth one is that language learning strategies, especially metacognitive strategies, could be taken into consideration during the preparation of the syllabus for different courses during the first-year of Turkish university ELT learners studying at ELT department and different contexts. Learners could be given instruction on metacognitive strategies in order to be aware of the learning process. Finally, learners could be encouraged to be more autonomous by letting them learn from each other and then move towards independent position. As stated earlier, learner autonomy could be developed if the necessary steps were followed and each individual was guided properly.

## **6.2. Recommendation and Suggestions for Further Research**

This study has revealed that using language learning strategies in the foreign language classrooms has increased the degree of autonomy for the learners studying English at ELT Department. Three suggestions could be made for the further research based on the driven information from the findings of this study.

- a) This study could be repeated with a larger number of the subjects so that the results may be gained more reliably.
- b) Action research is particularly suited to the field of autonomy, since it can help us to develop our own autonomy as teachers. Also, it is an ideal approach and successful when it addresses specific questions. Therefore, this study could be fulfilled with action research for the further studies in order to practice the research implementation at the same time and control the students' development autonomy.
- c) It is generally assumed that more autonomous learners are regarded as more successful learners. This study could be repeated by focusing on the relation between the grades of the students and level of learner autonomy.

As the results of the study are closely analyzed, it is logical to say that students of English at ELT department of Hacettepe University do not use language learning strategies at a desired level. One reason for this might be the fact that they do not receive instruction related to learning strategies. Hence, together with foreign language instruction, they should also be provided with language learning strategy instruction. Teaching learning strategies is based on two questions: (a) if good language learners use strategies more effectively than others, how teachers can help less effective language learners to improve their learning with the help of learning strategy instruction? And (b) if so, how strategies instruction can be applied? (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins, 1996:179-180). The intent of strategy instruction is expressed as helping all students become more self-directed, autonomous, and effective learners through improvements in the use of language learning strategies. Teachers and administrators were unaware of the possibility of strategy instruction for the sometimes. However, they observed that some students had high scores on language aptitude tests but did not manage to develop language proficiency. One reason for that difference was due to the fact that language aptitude tests did not take into account the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an individual's language learning strategies.

Following researches have indicated that successful language learners tend to use more strategies and apply them more appropriately than less successful learners. Many researchers (Crookall, 1983; Nyikos, 1991; Oxford, 1990b, 1993b; Rodgers, 1978; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Wenden, 1991) mentioned the benefits of strategy instruction such as increased motivation, improved language performance, greater autonomy and self-reliance (Oxford & Leaver, 1996: 227-229). There is evidence that strategy instruction has positive effects on second language learning. For example, instruction in reading strategies has greatly improved the reading comprehension of poor readers, and instruction in problem-solving strategies has considerably influenced students' achievement in mathematics. Likewise, strategy instruction related to writing performance has been proved useful in studies where learning – disabled students were provided with strategies for planning, composing, and revising their writing (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins, 1996:179-180). Researchers have concluded different frameworks for strategy

training. The first one was advocated by Pearson & Dole (1987). Some key features:

1. Modeling of the strategy initially by the teacher, by giving explanation about the using strategy,
2. Giving guided practice to the learner for better applying strategy,
3. Helping students to identify the strategy and decide when it might be used,
4. Practicing independently with the strategy,
5. Applying the learned strategy to new situation and activities (Cohen, 2003: 3).

The second framework was put forward by Oxford et al. (1990). They outlined the characteristics of the system as follows:

1. Introducing the strategies with emphasizing to explicit strategy awareness,
2. Doing discussions about the benefits of strategy use,
3. Doing functional and contextualized practice with strategies,
4. Having Self- evaluation of language performance,
5. Giving some suggestions to demonstrate the transferability of the strategies to new activities (Cohen, 2003: 4).

The third framework was developed by Chamot & O'Malley (1994). It is useful when students have already enough practice in implementing a variety of strategies in different contexts. There are four- stages problem-solving processes in the third framework:

1. Planning: learners plan the best ways of learning a language task,
2. Monitoring: student monitor their performance by considering their strategy use and checking comprehension,
3. Problem-solving: students try to find useful solutions for learning problems,
4. Evaluation: students practice to evaluate the effectiveness of the applied strategy to a learning task (Cohen, 2003: 4).

As a final word, strategy instruction could be integrated in schedule or curriculum for foreign language instruction at ELT Department of Hacettepe University. In this

way, the level of language learning strategies use can be increased, and it will most probably better the quality of foreign language education in institution.



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## **APPENDIXES**

# Appendix I. ETİK KURUL ONAY BİLDİRİM BELGESİ



T.C.  
HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
Genel Sekreterlik

Yazı İşleri Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 88600825 / 433-2232

20 Haziran 2013


Konu :

## SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi: 07.05.2013 tarih ve 2209 sayılı yazınız.

Enstitünüz Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı yüksek lisans programı öğrencilerinden Ali REZALOU'nun Yrd.Doç.Dr. İsmail Fırat ALTAY danışmanlığında yürüttüğü "Strategies and techniques to develop student autonomy and their relation to foreign language achievement" konulu tez çalışması gereği anket uygulama isteği, Üniversitemiz Senatosu Etik Komisyonunun 06 Haziran 2013 tarihinde yapmış olduğu toplantıda incelenmiş olup, etik açıdan uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

  
Prof. Dr. Ömer UĞUR  
Rektör a.  
Rektör Yardımcısı

Ek: Tutanak


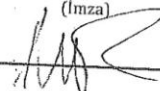
HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
Tarih: 24 Haziran 2013  
Sayı: 3714

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Genel Sekreterlik, Yazı İşleri Müdürlüğü, 06100 Sıhhiye-Ankara  
Telefon: 0 (312) 305 1008 - 1039 • Faks: 0 (312) 310 5552  
E-posta: yazimd@hacettepe.edu.tr

Ayrıntılı Bilgi için:



## Appendix II. TEZ BAŞLIĞI DEĞİŞTİRME FORMU

 <b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ BAŞLIĞI DEĞİŞİKLİĞİ FORMU</b>		
<b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE</b>		
Tarih: 11.06.2013		
Anabilim Dalı Akademik Kurulu kararına göre aşağıda bilgileri verilen öğrencinin tez başlığının önerildiği şekilde değiştirilmesi uygun görülmüştür.		
Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.		
Yapılan Anabilim Dalı Akademik Kurulu:		
Tarih: 11.06.2013	Saat: 14:00	Yer: Yabancı Diller Bölümü Toplantı Salonu
Prof. Dr. Mehmet DEMİREZEN (İmza) 		
<b>ÖĞRENCİ BİLGİLERİ</b>		
Adı Soyadı:	Ali Rezalou	
Öğrenci No:	N10222860	
Anabilim Dalı:	Yabancı Diller Eğitimi	
Programı:	İngiliz Dili Eğitimi	
Statüsü:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y.Lisans	
<b>ESKİ VE ÖNERİLEN TEZ BAŞLIĞI İLE İLGİLİ BİLGİLER</b>		
ESKİ TEZ BAŞLIĞI	Strategies and Techniques to Develop Student Autonomy and Their Relation to Foreign Language Achievement	
YENİ TEZ BAŞLIĞI (TÜRKÇE)	Öğrenci Özerkliğini Geliştiren Stratejiler ve bunun Yabancı Dil Başarısıyla İlişkisi	
YENİ TEZ BAŞLIĞI (İNGİLİZCE)	Strategies to Develop Student Autonomy and Their Relation to Foreign Language Achievement	
Detaylı Bilgi: <a href="http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr">http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr</a>		
Telefon: 0-312-2976860	Faks: 0-3122992147	E-posta: <a href="mailto:sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr">sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr</a>



## Appendix III. QUESTIONNAIRE

### Learner Autonomy Questionnaire

Dear students,

This survey has been structured to research students' perceptions of the strategies used by ELT students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University to develop student autonomy in English language learning. Please note that the data collected will be used as the main data collection tool of a thesis on developing student autonomy. *Any information identifying the respondent will not be disclosed under any circumstances.* There are 30 items in this survey. Please follow the instructions to complete it. Thanks in advance for your help and frank answers.

#### Section I: Personal Information:

Name and Surname (Optional): .....

Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )	Age:
-----------------------------------	------

#### Section II: Students' Perceptions of Using Strategies to Develop Student Autonomy

	Items	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Seldom (2)	Never (1)
	<b>Cognitive strategies</b>					
1	I do assignments which are not compulsory.					
2	I take note of new words and their meanings.					
3	I read newspapers in English.					
4	I visit teacher about work.					
5	I read books or magazines in English.					
6	I watch English TV programs.					
7	I listen to English songs.					
8	I talk to foreigners in English.					
9	I practice using English with my friends.					
10	I do grammar exercises.					

11	I do group studies with my classmates in English lessons.					
12	I attend the language lab/ library for self-study.					
13	I ask the teacher questions when I don not understand.					
14	I make suggestions to the teacher.					
15	I plan lesson/study.					
16	I activate prior knowledge while studying.					
	<b>Metacognitive strategies</b>					
17	I make inferences about the lesson.					
18	I do classifications while studying.					
19	I do summarize while studying.					
20	I take notes while studying.					
21	I use resources while studying.					
22	I work cooperatively with my friends.					
23	I use the internet in English learning.					
24	I send e-mails in English.					
25	I listen to English radio programs.					
26	I take opportunity to speak in English.					
27	I choose learning activities.					
	<b>Social strategies</b>					
28	I evaluate my learning.					
29	I watch English movies.					
30	I decide how long to spend on each learning activities.					

## Appendix IV. ORJINALLIK RAPORU

The screenshot displays the iThenticate Professional Plagiarism Prevention interface. At the top left is the iThenticate logo and the text "Professional Plagiarism Prevention". Below the logo is a search bar and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar is a "Trash" button. The main content area is divided into two sections: "My Folders" and "My Documents".

**My Folders:** Contains "My Documents" and "Trash".

**My Documents:** Contains a table with the following data:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Title	Report	Author	Processed	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP STUDENT AUTONOMY AND THEIR RELATION WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT	5%	Ali REZALOU AMI EBST	July 4, 2014 11:29:20 AM EST	

Below the table, there are tabs for "Documents" and "Settings". The "Documents" tab is active. The page number "page 1 of 1" is displayed at the bottom right of the table.

**Submit a document:** A section with a plus icon and the text "Submit a document". Below it, it says "99,460 Pages remaining".

**Upload a File:** A link to "Upload a File".

**Zip File Upload:** A link to "Zip File Upload".

**Multiple File Upload:** A link to "Multiple File Upload".

**Cut & Paste:** A link to "Cut & Paste".

## RESUME

<b><i>Name and Last name</i></b>	Ali REZALOU
<b><i>Place of Birth</i></b>	IRAN
<b><i>Birth Date</i></b>	25.05.1974
<b><i>Marital Status</i></b>	Single

## EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC STATUS

<b><i>High School</i></b>	Madani High school	1993 year
<b><i>Bachelor's Degree</i></b>	Marand Azad University	2004 year
<b><i>Foreign Language</i></b>	English	2004-2014 years
<b><i>Work Experience</i></b>	8 years	2007-2014 years