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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE  
LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES OF  
UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH  
PREPARATORY PROGRAM STUDENTS,  
THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION  
STRATEGIES, AND ACHIEVEMENT

ASLI ERTÜRK

Lisansüstü Eğitim- Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliğinin İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi  
Anabilim Dalı için Öngördüğü YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak  
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## YEMİN METNİ

Yüksek lisans tezi olarak sunduğum “The Relationship between the Learning Style Preferences of Undergraduate English Preparatory Program Students, the Listening Comprehension Strategies, and Achievement” adlı çalışmanın, tarafımdan, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım yapıtların kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, bunlara gönderme yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve bunu onurumla doğrularım.

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## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, İngilizce lisans hazırlık programı öğrencilerinin algısal öğrenme biçimleri, dinlediğini anlama stratejileri ile dinlediğini anlama başarıları arasındaki olası ilişkileri araştırmaktır. Ayrıca bu çalışmada, katılımcıların algısal öğrenme biçim tercihlerinin, dinlediğini anlama stratejilerinin ve dinlediğini anlama başarılarının cinsiyete ve devam edilecek lisans programının eğitim diline göre anlamlı farklılık gösterip göstermediği saptanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Araştırmanın örnekleminde yer alan katılımcıların tamamı Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu İngilizce Hazırlık Programı'na devam eden orta düzey lisans hazırlık öğrencileridir.

Veri toplama işlemi, kişisel bilgi formu, Reid (1987) tarafından geliştirilen, Tabanlıoğlu (2003) tarafından Türkçe'ye çevirilen, "Algı İle İlgili Öğrenme Stilleri Tercih Anketi", Gerçek (2000) tarafından geliştirilen "İngilizce Dinleme Stratejileri Envanteri" ve Michigan Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili Enstitüsü (1983) tarafından geliştirilen "Dinlediğini Anlama Testi" kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Verilerin çözümlenmesi için kullanılan frekans, ortalama, yüzde, standart sapma teknikleri ile t-test ve Pearson korelasyon testi, algısal öğrenmeyle ilgili olarak katılımcıların en sık işitsel ve dokunsal öğrenme biçimlerine dair ifadeleri tercih ettiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Diğer taraftan, katılımcılar tarafından en az tercih edilen ifadeler, bireysel öğrenme, görsel öğrenme ve grupla öğrenme ile ilgili ifadeler olarak saptanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, yapılan istatistiksel çözümlenmeler, kadın katılımcıların algı ile ilgili öğrenme biçim puanlarının erkek katılımcıların puanlarına göre daha yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir.

Ayrıca, araştırma bulguları katılımcıların dinleme derslerinde yaygın olarak gösterdikleri davranışların 'açıklama isteme', 'öğrenme konusunda öz düzenleme/planlama' ve 'anlama denetimi' stratejileri ile ilgili olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Yanı sıra, 'duyduğunu eş zamanlı olarak değerlendirme' stratejisiyle ilişkilendirilen "etkinlik sırasında bilinmeyen bir sözcük, yapı duyulduğunda

dinlemekten vazgeçme” davranışının, ‘not alma’ stratejisi ile ilişkilendirilen “etkinlik sırasında her duyduğu sözcüğü not alma” davranışının ve ‘tahminde bulunma’ stratejisi ile ilişkilendirilen “etkinliğin başlığı ve görsel örgütleyiciler yardımıyla dinleme etkinliğinin ne ile ilgili olacağını tahmin etme ve kendini zihinsel olarak etkinliğe hazırlama” davranışının dinleme derslerinde en az gösterilen davranışlar olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Bununla birlikte, dinlediğini anlama stratejileri ve algı ile ilgili öğrenme stratejileri arasında ters yönlü ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Araştırma bulgularına göre, katılımcıların dinleme stratejileri ile dinlediğini anlama başarıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki kaydedilmemiştir. Son olarak, bu araştırmada katılımcıların dinlediğini anlama stratejilerinin ve dinlediğini anlama başarılarının cinsiyete ve devam edilecek lisans programının eğitim diline göre anlamlı farklılıklar göstermediği saptanmıştır.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the perceptual learning style preferences of the undergraduate preparatory program students, the listening comprehension strategies and achievement, and to determine whether the perceptual learning style preferences, the listening comprehension strategy use and achievement of the participants indicate statistically significant differences with regard to gender and the language medium of education after preparatory program.

The participants in the sample group of this study were intermediate level undergraduate preparatory program students at the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir.

The data were obtained by four instruments, namely a personal information form, the Turkish version of “the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire (PLSQ)” developed by Reid (1987), translated by Tabanlıoğlu (2003), “the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI)” developed by Gerçek (2000), and lastly, “the Listening Comprehension Test (LCT)” developed by English Language Institute, the University of Michigan (1983).

The data analysis conducted by means of frequency, mean, percentage, standard deviation techniques, *t*-test, and the Pearson’s product correlation coefficient revealed that the most frequently reported preferences for perceptual learning were related to ‘auditory’ and ‘tactile’ learning styles. On the other hand, the least frequently reported preferences were related to ‘individual learning’, ‘visual learning’ and ‘group learning’ styles. Moreover, when the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants were analyzed with regard to gender, it was found that female participants have significantly higher perceptual learning style scores than their male counterparts.

In addition to this, the findings were indicated that the most common behaviors displayed by the participants were related to ‘asking for clarification’, ‘arranging/ planning one’s own learning’ and ‘comprehension monitoring’ strategies.

“Quitting listening in case of any unknown vocabulary during the activity” behavior concerning ‘real-time assessment of input’ strategy, “taking notes of every word heard in the activity” behavior concerning ‘note taking’ strategy and “anticipating what the listening activity will be about with the help of the title of the activity, the visual aids, and prepare oneself mentally for the activity” concerning ‘prediction’ strategy were found to be the least common behaviors exhibited in listening lessons.

According to the findings, the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants was negatively correlated with their perceptual learning style preferences. Besides, no statistically significant relationship was found between the listening comprehension strategy use and the listening comprehension achievement.

The research findings also indicated that the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants demonstrated no statistically significant difference with regard to gender and language medium of education after preparatory program.

Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences between listening comprehension achievement of the participants with regard to gender and language medium of education after preparatory program.

## INTRODUCTION

Listening has long been acknowledged as ‘supplementary’ to reinforce the mastery of other skill areas of language learning, namely speaking, reading and writing, on which little attention has heretofore been devoted to. However, increasing interest in language acquisition and learning theory has underscored the primacy of listening in communication competence, which has excited not only psycholinguists, second language theorists and researchers, but also the language teachers. Therefore, listening comprehension, considered being the Cinderella of the skills of language teaching, and its components have only recently become a research interest for researchers.

Since it has been still a neglected area of language teaching in Turkey, listening comprehension processes need to be explored carefully, and the comprehension strategies employed by students should be identified so as to provide valuable insight into what Turkish students do in order to manage their own comprehension more effectively. Additionally, some characteristics of English preparatory program students, such as learning style preferences, gender, should be taken into consideration in order to reveal the picture of the listening comprehension strategy use and achievement.

In the first chapter of this study, theoretical background about learning style models and dimensions, language learning strategies and listening comprehension and listening comprehension strategy use have been presented. Besides, the purpose and significance of the study, the research problems, the limitations, the assumptions and the abbreviations used in this study have been introduced.

In the second chapter, the research carried out on perceptual learning style preferences and listening comprehension strategies have been explained.



In the third chapter of the study, the model, the universe and sample of the research, data collecting instruments, data collection and the process of data analysis have been described and examined.

In the fourth chapter, the findings and interpretations about the research problems are analyzed.

In the last chapter, conclusions and discussions related to the findings of the research have been conveyed and suggestions have been added.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. What is 'learning style'?

The period from the 1970s through the 1980s brought a trend towards research on good language learners within the field of education, particularly within the field of second language learning with an increasing interest, and later a controversy, in how good learners approach learning, how they process and perceive new information. The quest for identifying the features of 'good language learner' provided valuable insight into the learner factor, which received much attention after the decline of behavioristic theory. While studying on the characteristics of 'good language learner', researchers both in educational psychology and second language learning have observed that learners have similarities and dissimilarities in their preferred ways of organizing their own learning (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975). Learning style is one of those characteristics that account for some of the similarities and dissimilarities in how students build up a learning behavior.

As claimed by Cohen (2003), the styles and strategies "movement" has developed obviously in the last two decades, and sought to move the focus away from teacher as the core component of teaching, to individuals, who exhibit different likes and dislikes for learning.

According to Keefe learning styles are "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment" (Keefe, 1979: 4).

Skehan (1991:288) claims the term 'learning style' refers to "a general predisposition, voluntary or not, towards processing information in a particular way".

Dunn, Beaudry, and Klavas listed some of the prominent factors that learning style comprises as 'individual responses to sound, light, temperature, design, perception, intake, chronobiological highs and lows, mobility needs, and persistence...motivation, responsibility (conformity) and need for structure...' (Dunn, R., Beaudry, J. S. and Klavas, A., 1989:56).

Later, Dunn and Griggs revise their definition and classify those factors into two major groups: "Learning style addresses the biological uniqueness and developmental changes that make one person learn differently from another" (Dunn and Griggs, 2000:136). According to the model presented by the Dunns, learning style is defined as:

"... the way the individuals begin to concentrate (pay attention), process (analytic versus global), internalise (commit to memory) and remember (be able to bring back) new and difficult academic information" (Boström & Kroksmark, 2005).

Felder (1995:21) adds one more dimension to the widely accepted definition of learning style and postulate that learning style includes not only the ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains new information, but also the ways they retrieve the necessary information.

Oxford (2003a:273) proposes another definition for learning style by limiting the learning field to language learning and asserts that learning style is "the general approach preferred by the student when learning a subject, acquiring a language, or dealing with a difficult problem (Oxford 2001a; Reid 1995; Reid, 1998)."

Based on Dunns' approach to the learning styles, Reid suggests, "learning style refers to an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" (Reid, 1995: xiii).

The research literature contains a plethora of learning style definitions, as claimed by DeBello (1990: 203) "there are nearly as many definitions of learning styles as there are theorists".

Despite the fact that the body of definitions can lead deficiency of clarity and cohesion in this field, where a widely accepted, succinct, and clear definition has become an urgent need, majority of the learning styles theories could be evaluated at four dimensions. These four dimensions are:

1. Personality,
2. Information Processing,
3. Social and Situational Interaction, and
4. Instructional Methods (Curry, 1987).

### **1.1.1. Learning Style Models**

In educational psychology field, most of the figures credit C. G. Jung with his significant efforts for the seminal classification (sensation and intuition), which excited a great deal of interest in individual differences and many researchers felt inspired to examine individual's style of learning, and the possible learning methods. Jung's approach had a very profound effect on research field in that a variety of learning style models evolved from those classifications. In addition to those aforementioned efforts for identification and classification of learning style, the theories of John Dewey and Jean Piaget contributed to the theoretical background of individual differences in learning. Based on their theories, various systems were developed, all of which endeavor to group learning methods with clear explanations and examples of each 'type' of learner. These theoretical systems are called approaches to 'learning style' or 'learning style models'.

A first step in dealing with the research field of learning styles is to present some of the prominent models of learning style briefly for the sake of clarifying some issues in the research field of learning style which is claimed to be both extensive and conceptually confusing.

Curry (1987) reviewed the psychometric qualities of different learning style instruments and suggested "onion model", which has been seen as a useful, pragmatic way to present different models within broad categories (Coffield F., Moseley, D., Hall E., & Ecclestone K., 2004).

The inner layer of Curry's learning style onion is learner's basic characteristics of personality. Those characteristics are the most stable and therefore, the least subject to modification or change in response to teaching. Willing (1988) states that personality factors are "formed by the individual's cultural background". Personality models deal with the basic personality characteristics of the learner, and the influences of those characteristics on the preference for approaches to acquire and integrate new information. Models highlighting personality dimensions in learning include Witkin's (1954) construct of field dependence and field independence, reflectivity versus impulsivity models (Schmeck, 1988), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers, 1978) measuring extroversion versus introversion, sensing versus intuition, thinking versus feeling, and judging versus perception .

'Information processing' is the second layer of the model, which deals with the learner's preference for receiving and processing information. Examples of models based on information processing are Schmeck's (1983) construct of cognitive complexity and Kolb's (1984) model of information processing.

'Social interaction' is the third layer of the model, and it focuses on the social interaction behavior of learner. It assumes that settings and social situations which meets the social needs of learner and suitable for the social interaction model of that learner will promote the learning in and out of the classroom. According to Reichmann's and Grasha's (1974) classification of learners, learners can be independent/ dependent, collaborative/ competitive, participant/ avoidant.

The final layer of the model is multidimensional and instructional preference, which addresses learner's specific preference for learning environment and particular teaching methods. Contrary to personality dimension, multidimensional and instructional preference could easily be modified and influenced; however, it is less important than the previous ones (Coffield et al., 2004).

As in many cases, one system evolved from a previous one, with the new system trying to expand or clarify a previous system's weaknesses or limitations; undoubtedly, there are similarities in many of the key models.

Denzine (1999) claims the concept of learning styles typically has four core assumptions common to approaches dealing with it.

1. There are individual differences in learning.
2. An individual's style of learning is fairly stable across time.
3. An individual's style of learning is fairly stable across tasks/problems/situations.
4. We can effectively measure an individual's learning style.

Coffield et al. (2004) review the literature on learning styles and evaluate rigorously the most influential and potentially influential models and instruments of learning styles so as to present their merits and deficiencies. Among those 13 models mentioned in their in-dept report, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI), Herrmann's Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), Dunn and Dunn model and instruments of learning styles are the ones used in numerous studies in the field of ESL/ FL teaching.

Therefore, a brief outlook over those aforementioned models can promote valuable insight into their approach to theory of learner differences.

### **1. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (1978)**

Based on psychologist Carl Jung's theory of psychological types, the model classifies learners in terms of their reported preferences in inventories. Those groups are:

1. extraverts (try things out, focus on the outer world of people) or introverts (think things through, focus on the inner world of ideas);
2. sensors (practical, detail-oriented, focus on facts and procedures) or intuitors (imaginative, concept-oriented, focus on meanings and possibilities);
3. thinkers (skeptical, tend to make decisions based on logic and rules) or feelers (appreciative, tend to make decisions based on personal and humanistic considerations);

4. judges (set and follow agendas, seek closure even with incomplete data) or perceivers (adapt to changing circumstances, resist closure to obtain more data).

The MBTI type preferences can be combined to form 16 different learning style types. Therefore, one student may tend to be in different types of learning style at the same time. For instance, the student can be an ESTJ (extravert, sensor, thinker, and perceiver) and another may be an INFJ (introvert, intuitor, feeler, and judge).

## 2. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1984)

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, constructed by David Kolb (1984) and derived from the works of John Dewey, puts forwards that learning and development is grounded in experience. According to Kolb, knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, and the model is developed "to help individuals identify the way they learn from experience" (Kolb, 2005).

"Experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes that is responsive to contextual demands. This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned" (Kolb, 2005).

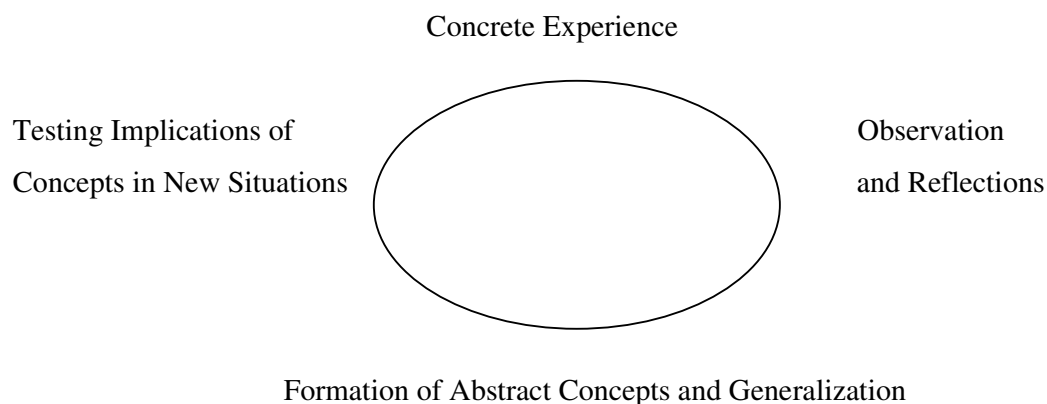


Figure 1.1. The experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 2005:3).

As could be seen above, the learning cycle involves four processes that must be present for learning to occur. These processes are:

1. Concrete Experience: Feeling/Sensing; being involved in a new experience
2. Reflective Observation: Watching; developing observations about own experience
3. Abstract Conceptualization: Thinking; creating theories to explain observations
4. Active Experimentation: Doing; using theories to solve problems, make decision.

The model demonstrates learners' preferred mode of receiving information (abstract or concrete) and the mode of internalizing information (active or reflective). The basic characteristics of four learning styles that evolve from these ways of adapting to the world are:

1. Concrete, reflective learners (The Divergers): These learners rely primarily on concrete experience and reflective observation; are imaginative and aware of meanings and values; they view concrete situations from a variety of perspectives; adapt by observation rather than by action.
2. Abstract, reflective learner (The Assimilators): Their dominant learning abilities are abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. They prefer reasoning inductively and building theoretical models. They are very good at synthesizing disparate observations into an integrated explanation and are more concerned with theories and abstract concepts than with people.
3. Abstract, active learners (The Convergents): These learners emphasize abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. They are good at problem solving, decision making and the practical application of ideas
4. Concrete, active learners (The Accommodators): Their dominant learning abilities are concrete experience and active experimentation. They like doing things, carrying out plans and experiencing new things. They are good at suiting themselves to changing circumstances. They solve problems in an intuitive, trial-and-error manner (Felder, 1996).



In the latest version of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory -Version 3.1 (2005) , the four types of learner whom are previously called ‘diverger, assimilator, converger and accommodator’ have started to be called ‘the diverging style’, etc. due to the criticism that learning styles of individuals cannot be treated as static.

### **3. The Herrmann ‘Whole Brain’ Model and the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) (1989)**

The ‘whole brain’ model developed by Hermann (1989) puts forwards that learners can be classified by their preferences for thinking in four different modes based on the task-specialized functioning of the physical brain.

The four modes or quadrants in this model can be summarized briefly as follows:

1. Quadrant A (Theorists) (cerebral, left: the rational self): Theorists are said to have difficulty in accommodating the feeling self and the humanitarian style. Those learners are said to be logical, analytical, quantitative, factual, and critical.
2. Quadrant B (Organizers) (limbic, left: the safe-keeping self): Organizers are said to find it difficult to accommodate the experimental self and the innovatory style. They are known as sequential, organized, planned, detailed, structured learners.
3. Quadrant C Humanitarians (limbic, right: the feeling self): Humanitarians are said to encounter some difficulties while accommodating the rational self and the theoretical style. Those learners are said to be emotional, interpersonal, sensory, kinesthetic, and symbolic.
4. Quadrant D (Innovators) (cerebral, right: the experimental self): Innovators are said to find it difficult to accommodate the safe-keeping self and the organizing style. They are said to be visual, holistic, innovative learners. (Felder, 1996)

Although the model seems to be originally brain-based, Hermann (1989: 89–90) clarifies the role of biological determinism in his method by stating ‘the way a

person uses the specialized brain results from socialization – parenting, teaching, life experiences, and cultural influences –far more than from genetic inheritance’ (Coffield et al. 2004).

#### **4. The Dunn and Dunn Learning-Style Model and the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS)**

According to the Dunn and Dunn model, each learner has his/ her own unique ways of learning to deal with new and difficult subject matter with individual strengths and weaknesses (Dunn & Griggs, 1998; Dunn, 2000).

The model has its roots in Cognitive Style Theory, which is based on the idea that individuals process information differently depending on either learned or inherent traits, and Brain Lateralization Theory, which claims that the physical brain can be divided into two hemispheres as left brain and right brain having different functions, and specifies that the former is responsible for verbal-sequential abilities, whereas the latter is responsible for emotions-spacial holistic processing. The Dunns' Learning-Style Model divides learning style into 5 main strands called ‘stimuli’ that affect mastering new information. These stimulus strands are:

1. Environmental (Sound, Light, Temperature, Design)
2. Emotional (Motivation, Persistence, Responsibility, Structure)
3. Sociological (Self, Pair, Peers, Team, Adult, Varied)
4. Physiological (Perceptual, such as auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic; Intake (eating or not while studying); Time, Mobility (sitting still or moving around))
5. Psychological (Global versus Analytic, Hemisphericity, Impulsive versus Reflective)

The idea that learners’ potential and achievement are considerably affected by relatively fixed traits and characteristics is an important principle in the Dunn and Dunn model (Dunn and Griggs, 1988), which leads debates about how far individuals can remedy their low preferences or change their preferences altogether (Coffield et al. 2004:21). A close study of the model shows that some of these factors mentioned

above are biological, whereas others are developmental. Considering that the stimulus strands touched upon briefly above are mainly developmental, it could be expected that some change in learning styles may occur as time passes. In one of the recent overviews of the Dunn and Dunn model, Gremli (2003) raises the issue of change in learning styles to the notion that ‘the learning style of students changed substantially as they matured from adolescence into adulthood’ (Coffield et al. 2004:23).

### **1.1.2. Dimensions of Styles**

Research has demonstrated that there is whole panoply of factors which may have a considerable effect on learner’s information processing. However, at least, some theorists have agreed that those factors could be primarily divided into two as internal and external factors.

Internal factors that have a positive/ negative effect on learner’s achievement encompass personality types, cognitive and emotional processes, and previous learning experiences. External factors, on the other hand, play a substantial role in the learning process. Design of the physical setting where the learner is placed and physical factors, i.e. lighting, sound, temperature, comfort of setting, mode of delivery of information, and curriculum design are among those external factors that enhance or impede the learning process.

The aforementioned factors contributing directly or indirectly to receiving, processing and retrieving the new information belong to three general categories in the learning styles literature.

Personality factors include the affective components of the learner that includes motivation, values, emotional preferences and decision-making styles.

Perceptual modalities refer to those aspects of learning that are related to learner physiological preferences (i.e. auditory, visual kinesthetic, tactile). As defined by Keefe (1987:13) these physiological styles are, “biologically-based modes of response that are founded on accustomed reaction to the physical environment, sex-related differences, and personal nutrition and health.”

Information processing is the third dimension of learning styles and refers to the cognitive component of learning or how the learner perceives, organizes, stores and recalls information.

Oxford and Anderson (1995: 203) grouped the internal and external factors into six interrelated areas, namely, cognitive, affective, executive, social, psychological, and behavioral.

Cognitive aspect of learning style deals with how learner functions mentally, including processing activity such as with analytic or spatial information. Affective aspect includes learner's attitudes towards the new subject matter, his/ her attention while learning, and environmental distractions. Executive aspects involve learner behavior for managing and organizing his/ her learning. Social aspects refer to the extent to which learner prefers to work with other students while completing a task. Physiological aspects involve perceptual modalities. The last area of learning style is behavioral aspects which concern learner's habitual behavior to favor states and situations which match his / her way of learning.

It is noteworthy here that the grouping for the aspects of dimensions proposed by Oxford and Anderson's (1995) has some similarities with the Dunns' Learning-Style Model, which enumerates 5 stimuli, namely environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, psychological.

Among these interrelated areas of learning styles, the perceptual dimension attracts substantial attention and several researchers have tried to identify sensory preferences of various groups of learners so as to find out the impact of them on learners, and to assist those learners in the way they prefer to learn.

The Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model is one of the most significant one which deals with sensory modality as an aspect of learning styles. As claimed to be a useful and informative model for educators, the Dunn and Dunn Learning-Style Model describes the complexity of variables that potentially affect a learner's distinct approach to learning (Kinsella, 1995:171).

Building on the Dunns' model, Reid (1987) asserts that learners mostly engage four sensory learning modalities; namely, auditory (learning more effectively through hearing), visual (learning more effectively through seeing), tactile (learning more effectively through hands-on activities), kinesthetic (learning more effectively

through whole-body movement) (Reid, 1987; Reid, 1995). She also clarifies one issue that may be encountered in research literature on learning styles, haptic modalities, while representing the sensory learning styles. Reid states “Some researchers combine the tactile and kinesthetic modalities and call them haptic; the haptic learner learns more effectively through touch and whole-body involvement” (Reid, 1995: x).

In addition to perceptual modalities, Reid (1987; 1995) proffers two more styles of learning: group (prefer studying with others), and individual (prefer studying alone). Learners who acquire and master difficult subject matter easily while studying and communicating with others, value group interaction and class work, and retrieve the necessary information while participating in a group activity may have a tendency towards group learning style. In contrast, learners who perceive, organize and recall new information better whilst studying alone, and make better progress in learning when they work by themselves may have an inclination towards individual learning style.

Oxford, another key figure in the field of learner diversity in second/ foreign language learning, reiterates that sensory preferences can fall into four main areas: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement-oriented), and tactile (touch-oriented) and lists the activities which are mainly preferred by auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic learners (Oxford, 2003b). As suggested by Oxford (2003b), learners who prefer visual modality like to read and acquire better via visual stimulation. Lectures, conversations, and oral directions without any visual aid can be very bewildering for those learners. Contrary to visual learners, visual aids are not a prerequisite for gaining a profit from lectures, conversations, and oral directions for auditory learners; they like participating in role-plays. However, they may find written work challenging. Kinesthetic and tactile learners are the ones who prefer being physically involved in the activities and working with tangible objects and flashcards (Oxford, 2003b; Oxford 2001a).

### 1.1.3. Learning Styles and Learning

Notion of learner in education has changed dramatically over the past few decades, and the focus on learner and learning has led continuing interest in theory and research on learner differences.

As every individual has a different background, strengths and weaknesses, interests, ambitions, sense of responsibility, level of motivation, and approach to studying, it is almost impossible to claim that uniformity does exist in learning and could be achieved by means of stock approaches.

Probably, because of being the busiest field with learner diversity in education, many scholars in ELT have taken cognizance of the individual differences so as to account for the different outcomes of teaching.

Among with other individual differences, gender, cultural background and learning style on learner performance are subsumed under the heading of learner diversity in literature. Dunn (1982) asserts “Everyone has a learning style, but each person’s is different - like our fingerprints which come from each person’s five fingers and look similar in many ways” (Hein & Budny, 1999: 8).

Some learners are comfortable with theories and abstractions while others feel much more relaxed with facts and observable phenomena; some like engaging themselves in active learning and others prefer introspection; some can learn better with visual presentation of new information and others prefer verbal explanations for it (Felder, 2005:58).

The effects of learning style on learner performance are considered to be very important both for the learner and the teacher. Oxford posits that each style preference offers significant benefits for learning, and emphasizes that the identification of the style preferences for a specific task and the application of them are of key importance for learners (Oxford, 2003b).

Kinsella asserts that all educators must realize, respect and respond to an array of characteristics brought by the individual into the class, since those characteristics signify the uniqueness of the learner (Kinsella, 1995: 170).

Therefore, a critical awareness of learner differences has kept educators, curriculum designers and material developers occupied with exploring those

differences so as to help learners optimize their potentials in second and foreign language learning.

With regard to empirical research on the effects of learning styles, Riding & Grimley (1999) claim that learning style preferences can affect performance in learning settings and can hinder or enhance academic achievement in several respects.

However, it must be borne in mind that there is a deficiency in sufficient evidence for the possible relationship between instructional design of materials and style preferences in learning.

Yet another factor concerns how learning style preference affects the outcomes of learning is teacher-learner style preference matching. Dunn points out “a match between a student’s style and a teacher’s style will lead to improve student attitudes and higher academic achievement”. This is also advocated by some other researchers who underscore the importance of teacher awareness of the specific style preferences of a learner, and suggested that it will help both teachers and students deal with learning the same way (Felder & Henriques, 1995; Oxford & Anderson, 1995; Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

While trying to identify learning style preferences of learners and their influences on learning, researchers have come up with another question. If there is a relationship between style preferences of learners/ teachers and academic performance, then is there any learning style representing the best ways to learn? As stated by Felder, “One learning style is neither preferable nor inferior to another, but is simply different, with different characteristic strengths and weaknesses” (Felder, 2005).

Supporting the same view, Willing (1988:6) affirms that “At any period in the history of methodological fashions, there is usually the covert assumption of one particular learning style as basic. [However,] what makes the current interest in learning styles new is that several different ways of learning are now held to be equally valid”.

Dunn and Griggs’ assertion that learners’ potential and achievement are heavily affected by ‘relatively fixed traits and characteristics’ (Dunn and Griggs, 1988: 3) has been overviewed by Grelli (2003), who purports that ‘the learning

styles of students changed substantially as they matured from adolescence into adulthood' (Coffield et al. 2004).

It would appear that a learning style with different characteristic strengths and weaknesses is best seen as a continuum, which embodies gradual changes in preference. In other words, some changes in learning styles takes place over time. Besides, Ehrman and Oxford (1995: 69) noted, "Naturally, not everyone fits neatly into one or another of these categories to the exclusion of the other, parallel categories (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic)" and this assertion adds another dimension to the style research; namely, the degree of preference. A learner may have a tendency towards a learning style in different levels of use, ranging from slight preferences through a strong need, and finally to rigid preferences.

Suggesting that learning style preferences can also be defined as "comfort zones", Oxford (1993; 2003b) asserts that learners feel themselves comfortable when the new information is presented in a way that matches their preferred way of learning.

However, this is not to say that learner can have only one specific style of learning, e.g. only through eye or ear. When they are in a training program, most learners go beyond their "comfort zone" and alter the channel to meet the course requirements as long as possible.

While those learners are tackling a task that requires them operate outside their comfort zone, some of which may feel insecure about it and/or perform less than expected, a minority may stick to their learning style preferences which are more firmly set and cannot be altered easily. As process of learning embraces a diverse range of elements such as student, teacher, learning environment, curriculum, material, etc. the effects of any mismatch between them may impede the process itself and cause severe loss of efficiency on learner's side. Oxford (2001a) neatly summarized:

"If there is harmony between (a) the student (in terms of style and strategy preferences) and (b) the instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety" (Oxford, 2001a:359).



On the other hand,

“If clashes occur between (a) and (b), the student often performs poorly, lacks confidence, and experiences significant anxiety. Sometimes such clashes lead to serious breakdowns in teacher-student interaction. These conflicts may also lead to the dispirited student’s outright rejection of the teaching methodology, the teacher, or the subject matter” (Oxford, 2001a:359).

Addressing the issue of learner-teacher style clash, Felder exemplifies some unfortunate potential consequences of serious mismatches occurring between the learning styles of students in a class and the teaching style of the instructor and claims:

“The students tend to be bored and inattentive in class, do poorly on tests, get discouraged about the course, and may conclude that they are no good at the subject of the course and give up (Felder & Silverman, 1988). Instructors, confronted by low test grades, unresponsive or hostile classes, poor attendance, and dropouts, may become overly critical of their students (making things even worse) or begin to question their own competence as teachers” (Felder, 1995).

It is, therefore, possible to infer that teachers should be aware of their own learning style preferences and of their students’ and consider them carefully in order not to teach “rather automatically according to their own learning styles” (Oxford & Anderson, 1995:212) and subconsciously value some students more highly than others due to style matching.

At this point, despite the fact that style matching is theoretically possible, considering that a class normally encompasses a variety of styles, it cannot be acceptable to design the course according to the learning style of that learner.

One solution to this problem is that each lesson should present a wide range of activities to provide each learner with learning tools agreeing with his/ her learning style. According to Oxford (2003b:7), “the key is systematically offering a great variety of activities within a learner-centered, communicative approach”.

However, Felder (2005) raises the issue to the notion that it is not feasible for a teacher to find out everything that affects what a student learns in a class. Moreover, even if it were possible for a teacher to know the best teaching styles for all students in a class, it would not be possible to use them simultaneously in a class of more than two students. It is, therefore, crucial that teachers should challenge

learners to move “beyond the stylistic comfort zone” (Oxford, 2001a: 361), and learners must also “extend themselves beyond their stylistic comfort zones to adopt strategies that might not initially feel familiar or easy”.

Kroonenberg (1995:80) emphasizes “flexing” style preferences and states, “they (learners) also need to open the idea of ‘style flex’ – that is students should be encouraged to diversify their style preferences.”

However, Nunan does not agree with this view, because he claims that few learners are psychologically or academically flexible enough to encounter different learning situations successfully (Nunan, 1995; Nunan, 1996).

### **1.1.5. Methods for Identifying Learning Style Preferences**

Since by now there appeared a number of profound models proposed by several researchers in learning style literature. As being an extensively discussed issue in educational research, not only defining and classifying the learning styles learners possess, but also diagnosing and interpreting them has been a matter of quest to date.

Although it may be seemingly daunting, researchers have been using self-report tools, careful observations and assessment instruments in order to discover preferred ways of learning.

There is a variety of style assessment tools developed in attempt to identify style preferences of learners. Though the number of the assessment tools appears to be adequate for an in-depth identification of learning styles, those assessment tools have been criticized in several respects. Coffield et al. (2004) has reviewed 13 models and assessment tools of learning style in considerable detail, and concluded that some of those instruments are not designed to be used in mainstream practice, whereas others are developed for practitioners who use them widely in diverse contexts, and consequently, they are also not all alike nor of equal worth and, as a result, it matters fundamentally which instrument is chosen.

As claimed by Oxford (2003b), the written survey, revealing the particular style preference of the learners, is the most common type of assessment tool used by researchers while conducting research on learning styles.

One of these assessment tools used by the researchers in this field is the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) developed by Dunn (1983). It is a self-reporting questionnaire that enabled university students to identify their learning style preferences. The first version of the inventory grouped learners into three major groups: audio-visual, analytic, and functional learners. A later version (Dunn 1984) also identified learners as analytic versus holistic.

Dunn's classification stimulated Reid to modify the last version and design another instrument to identify adult ESL students' perceptual-style preferences. Reid's instrument is "the Perceptual Learning Style Preference (PLSP) Questionnaire" (Reid, 1987). Her classification of learning styles and PLSP Questionnaire includes six categories; visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, individual, group learning, four of which belong to perceptual and two of which belong to social learning style preferences.

Despite the fact there is considerable criticism about both learning style models in terms of theoretical coherence and a common conceptual framework, and the style identifiers in terms of validity and reliability, teachers, curriculum designers and material developers could gain valuable insights into learner diversity by assessing the learning styles of their students, in that such identification may promote deeper understanding towards learner preferences (Oxford, 2003b).

## **1.2. What is 'strategy'?**

The current interest in language learning strategy, as a result of studies on learner-centered approach, has brought new issues; such as defining terms, drawing comparisons between the definitions, evaluating the precise degree of control and consciousness, for researchers to deal with in the research field. As cited by several important figures in this field, learning strategies in connection with learner differences have raised tremendous interest among researchers in recent years (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Oxford, 2001a). In this section, some key issues will be dealt with drawing on some prominent figures' approaches to the problematic points.

Strategies are usually described as mental procedures that enhance learning and that occasionally can be accompanied by overt activities. Even a short review of

the research literature shows that there have appeared a number of definitions on this issue, which have focused on different aspects of strategies employed by successful learners. An early definition of learning strategies by Rigney (1978) identified the learning strategies as “operations employed by the learner for acquiring, retaining, retrieving or performing” and has formed the core of definitions developed by several major figures in the field such as O’Malley et al. (1985) and Oxford (1990a).

### **1.2.1. What is ‘learning strategy’?**

Learning strategies can be defined as certain behaviors or thoughts that a learner engages in during learning which appeared to influence the learner's encoding process. According to Weinstein and Mayer (1986), learning strategies aim at facilitating learning, and are planned or intended on the part of the learner. Hence, the goal of strategy use is to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or interacts new knowledge" (Ok, 2003:7). Also Stern (1992) states "the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques” (Hismanoğlu, 2000).

To define strategy in terms of education psychology has been a starting point for new debates on the subject of learning strategy preferences of learners, the criteria for definition of learning strategy and classification of these selected strategies.

One of the main issues for debate is the degree of learners’ consciousness of strategies they employ before, during and after the task. The fact that learners can choose and control strategies they employ leads Chamot and Küpper (1989), Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990; 1996) to discuss the addition of a further dimension to definition of language learning strategies: the level of consciousness. Although the precise degree of consciousness has been debated, most researchers (Cohen, 1990, Cohen, 1998; O’Malley and Chamot 1990) have agreed on the necessity of some degree of control, consciousness, awareness, and intentionality in using learning strategies.

Drawing on Schmidt's (1994) findings, Cohen (1998:11) posits that language learning strategies are either within the focal attention of the learners or within their peripheral attention, in that learners can identify the strategies if asked about what they have just done or thought. For Cohen (1998), the conscious choice factor is important to the language learning strategy concept because when learners are not able to identify any strategy associated with the behavior, and if a strategy becomes so habitual that it is no longer within the learner's conscious awareness and control, the behavior would simply be referred to as a process, not a strategy. Besides, Ellis (1994) also comments on the same issue that "if strategies become so automatic that the learners are no longer conscious of employing them, they are no longer accessible for a description through verbal report by the learners and thus lose their significance as strategies" (Cohen, 1998:11).

According to Pressley & McCormick the term strategy implies conscious movement toward a goal. "Strategies must be controllable", as the learners employ them in order to manage their own learning and achieve desired goals (Pressley & McCormick, 1995:28). Thus, as these learners are conscious of selecting strategies with regard to the task requirements and have control over those strategies, they can easily explain the strategies they select out and why they employ them (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

In his article, Cohen focused on the possible link between style preference and strategy choice with task, contending that "different tasks may evoke the use of different strategies" (Cohen, 2003: 279). In order to present task and strategy relationship Chamot and Kupper (1989) assert that successful language learners tend to select strategies that work well together with the requirements of the task. Thompson & Rubin (1993) has reached similar findings reiterating that the conscious, "tailored" use of appropriate strategies for the task is related to language achievement and proficiency (Tercanlioglu, 2004).

### **1.2.2. Language Learning Strategy**

After a brief introduction to the learning strategies in respect of education psychology field, it is highly essential to mention the learning strategy definitions and

characteristics mainly proposed by researchers and teaching specialists working in ESL/ EFL field so as to highlight language learning strategies of language learners.

Many researchers have endeavored to define language learning strategies, which would provide the literature with sufficient explanation for the nature of strategies employed in language learning process. However, to reach a consensus on this matter is not as easy as it may appear. A reading through the extensive body of literature on language learning strategies reveals a number of confusing terms (such as 'strategies', 'tactics', 'techniques', 'learning behaviors') suggested throughout the studies on the issue of learning strategies. As a result of this confusion, the concept of language learning strategies has been variously described as 'elusive' (Wenden, 1987:7) and 'fuzzy' (Ellis, 1994:529) by some researchers, when some others call it a field of 'no consensus' (O'Malley et al., 1985:22) and of 'conflicting views' (Cohen, 1998:3).

The term language learning strategy has been defined by many researchers and strategy specialists within the language instruction field. In one of the early articles in research literature concerning language learning strategies, Tarone (1983:67) defined a strategy as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language ... to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) study has a significant effect on the language learning strategy research. They referred strategies as intentional cognitive or affective actions taken by the learner in order to learn both simple and complex material, and defined learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990:1).

Following this, language learning strategies are defined by Scarcella & Oxford (1992: 63) as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques--such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task--used by students to enhance their own learning".

Oxford's (2001b) "language learning strategy" definition is used as key definition in this study, since it may provide a more remarkable insight into the issue. She expands the definition of language learning strategies by saying:

“(Language learning strategies are) operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information, specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.” (Oxford, 2001b: 166)

It could be clearly seen that a number of definitions in connection with language learning strategies have been appeared in literature; however, a change over time may immediately be noticed. The previous focus was on the product of language learning strategies (linguistic or communicative competence), whereas now the particular attention is on the processes and the saline characteristics of language learning strategies.

Although some specific terms suggested and used by different researchers in the field are not always uniform, such as the strategies used in ESL/ EFL are called ‘learner strategies’ by Wenden & Rubin (1987), ‘learning strategies’ by O’Malley & Chamot, (1990); Chamot & O’Malley, (1994), and ‘language learning strategies’ by Oxford (1990a; 1996), research has demonstrated that there are a number of basic characteristics on which researchers have generally agreed. Lessard-Clouston (1997) has listed some of the characteristics of language learning strategies.

As stated by Lessard-Clouston, language learning strategies:

1. are learner generated; they are steps taken by language learners.
2. enhance language learning and help develop language competence, as reflected in the learner's skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the ESL or EFL.
3. may be visible (behaviors, steps, techniques, etc.) or unseen (thoughts, mental processes).
4. involve information and memory (vocabulary knowledge, grammar rules, etc.).

In addition to the basic characteristics noted above, Oxford (1990a:9) lists seven additional key features of language learning strategies, which summarize her view of language learning strategies.

Oxford (1990a:9) states that language learning strategies:

1. allow learners to become more self-directed,
2. expand the role of language teachers,
3. are problem-oriented,
4. involve many aspects, not just the cognitive,
5. can be taught,
6. are flexible,
7. are influenced by a variety of factors. (Oxford, 1990a:9)

### **1.2.3. Language Learning Strategies and Learning**

New approaches to teaching and learning within the field of education have introduced many new concepts, questions and debates about the role of teacher, student and the curriculum. Implications of numerous studies into these issues and various discussions about current methodology have led to “a significant shift resulting in less stress on teachers and teaching and greater emphasis on learners and learning” (Nunan, 1988).

Making the learner the centre of attention required rigorous study in order to provide insights into factors affecting the learner performance in connection with factors that account for the differences in how students learn and for the factors particularly affecting the performance of learners dealing with a specific task. The way successful learner manages his/ her own learning process is one of the questions that researchers have sought an answer for.

In the seventies, many researchers followed the new trend towards research on ‘good language learners’ (hereafter GLL) in an attempt to describe successful language learners (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975).

In addition to defining GLL, researchers also attempted to explain how those learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they employ to understand, learn or remember the information (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). The identification of particular learning strategies used by successful learners for tackling a learning task heightened the awareness of language learning



strategies and researchers working in this fledging field started to list language learning strategies that are utilized by successful learners. One of the most influential studies was done by Rubin (1975), who adopted the theoretical framework built by Stern (1975).

Rubin's findings provide valuable help for identification of some strategies that learners employ in order to master successful language learning. The methods she used were mainly interviews and observations. With the help of those interviews and observations, Rubin (1975) identified the following general strategies as the most significant. She suggested that the GLL:

1. guesses willingly and accurately;
2. is eager to communicate and to learn from communication;
3. takes risks and views errors as a useful tool for learning;
4. focuses on both form and meaning;
5. seizes every opportunity to practise;
6. monitors his own speech and that of others.

In addition to Rubin's list, Naiman et al. (1978) named six strategies of GLL:

1. selecting language situations that allow one's preferences to be used;
2. actively being involved in language learning;
3. seeing language as both a rule system and a communication tool;
4. extending and revising one's understanding of the language;
5. learning to think in the target language; addressing the affective demands of language learning.

To sum up at this point, GLLs manage their own learning primarily through strategies, such as paying attention, self-evaluating, and self-monitoring. Employing strategies such as asking questions and developing cultural understanding, they cooperate with others to accomplish a task to learn the target language. In order to store necessary information into long-term memory and retrieve it when needed for communication, GLLs utilize strategies, such as grouping, semantic mapping, or using imagery. They learn the target language with strategies, such as practising naturalistically, analyzing contrastively and summarizing. They also control feelings,

motivations, and attitudes related to language learning, with the help of strategies, such as anxiety reduction and self-encouragement while performing the task. In the absence of complete knowledge of grammar or vocabulary, strategies, such as guessing unknown words, adjusting or approximating the message, and using synonyms enable GLL to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language.

As a result of great emphasis on learner as the center of any learning process and the communicative approaches to language teaching which aim at equipping the learner with every essential skill facilitating his/her real language use, the substantial role of communicative competence in language learning has become an overriding concern for education experts. Furthermore, the significant efforts of prominent researchers reveal that building communicative competence and developing it is strongly stimulated by language learning strategies, which also help the learner become more independent and autonomous (Lessard-Clouston, 1997:3) This view has been borne out by Oxford (1990a:1; 1992/1993:18), who highlights the particular contribution made by language learning strategies to the development of the communicative competence of the learner, stating that language learning strategies "... are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence".

However, those studies on GLLs not only have yielded findings concerning the characteristics of GLLs and learning strategies employed, but also introduced many new discussions about the nature of strategies, definition and classification of them.

First, researchers tried to discern what makes a strategy positive and helpful for a given learner so as to assert the close relationship between language learning strategies and communicative competence.

According to Oxford (2001a) a strategy is useful if the following conditions are present:

1. the strategy relates well to the ESL/ EFL task at hand;
2. the strategy fits the particular student's learning style preferences to one degree or another;
3. the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies (Oxford, 2001a: 362).

Strategies that fulfill these conditions contribute to language learning and “make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990a: 8).

Although the lists of strategies suggested by key researchers in the field revealed that there are a number of strategies that assist learners in their own process of learning, there appeared longitudinal debates about the differences between successful and less successful learners’ characteristics of strategy use.

According to literature concerning the strategy use of language learners, there are three distinct points of view exist in the studies with respect to strategies, which differentiate the strategy use of successful learners on the basis of awareness of strategy use, type and number of strategies they employ, and orchestrated use of those strategies.

The first perspective is that successful learners are generally aware of the strategies they employ before, during, and after the learning task. Nyikos (1987) claims that less successful learners do not really know what strategies they use; they cannot readily report the strategies they apply. Within the research literature it has been noted that this issue still of importance to the researchers who collect data on language learning strategies derived from learners responses; therefore, the role of consciousness will be dealt again in the following sections so as to gain deep insights into this subtle issue.

The second perspective is related to the type and number of strategies that language learners actively employ. One major finding of early research conducted on language learning strategies asserted that successful language learners in general use more and better learning strategies than do less successful learners (Oxford, 1993; Stern, 1975; Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978).

Fedderholdt (1997:1) states, “the language learner capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve his language skills in a better way”. This citation neatly summarizes that the number of the strategies applied by learners is related to the enhancement of learning, but it also introduces a new criterion to the literature on language learning strategies, that is ‘the appropriate use of strategy’ which leads to achievement in learning.

Vann and Abraham (1990:191-192) pointed out that although both groups of learners- successful and less successful learners appeared to be active users of similar language learning strategies, it's noteworthy that less successful learners "failed to apply strategies appropriately to the task at hand". In other words, successful language learners employ strategies more appropriately than do less effective language learners.

This conclusion by Vann and Abraham (1990) was also foreseen by Skehan (1989:76), who states, "there is always the possibility that the 'good' language learning strategies... are also used by bad language learners, but other reasons cause them to be unsuccessful".

Oxford (2003b) indicates that a learning strategy cannot be categorized as either good or bad, and she also adds that (a given strategy) "is neutral until the context of its use is thoroughly considered" (Oxford, 2001a: 362). Moreover, according to Chamot et al. (1996) employing appropriate learning strategies to the task at hand can not only facilitate learner's achievement, but also enable learners to become more independent, autonomous, motivated, and confident in the process of learning (Oxford, 2004).

"Orchestrated strategy use", a term used by Swaffar and Bacon (1993) to imply learner's selection of appropriate language learning strategy for the task and use them in a systematic manner is the third perspective which underlines the fact voiced by Cohen (1998:266-267) as "no single strategy will be appropriate for all learners or for all tasks, and individual learners can and should apply the various strategies in different ways, according to their personal language learning needs". This could be especially true in the case of less successful language learners who are aware of their language learning strategy and apply just as many as do the successful learners, but employ the strategies without choosing them intentionally, and without selecting and using them in a systematic way while working on the task. Thus, if learners can coordinate, organize, and make associations among various strategies, in other words, manage orchestrated strategy use, then that well-functioning strategy repertoire will facilitate the process of language learning (Cohen, 2003).

Based on these ideas, it can be concluded that despite the comprehensive lists of language learning strategy used by successful language learners, there is no

“one-size-fits-all” set of learning strategies that could assist a learner in every step of his/ her progress in learning.

#### **1.2.4. Language Learning Strategies and Learning Style Relationship**

With the developments in cognitive psychology and theory, and the influences of the new approaches towards the concepts of learning and teaching processes in the field of ESL / EFL education, researchers have focused on "learner-centeredness as language education" (Tudor, 1996) and "the learner-centered curriculum" in language teaching and learning (Nunan, 1995). Furthermore, the notion of good language learner has postulated that effective learners have some characteristics which may also affect their language learning strategies use. Researchers, such as Oxford (1990a) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990), have underscored that these learners use a variety of different strategies and techniques in order to solve problems that they face while acquiring or producing the language.

Researchers, education psychologist and theorists have realized that learners vary in the ways they process and perceive information and “one of the factors why they do it this particular way or another is their learning style” (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Therefore, they have carried out various studies and posed several questions to highlight the possible relationships between learning style preferences of learners and the language learning strategies employed.

According to literature concerning learning style preferences, learning styles refer to a learner's "natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" (Reid, 1995:viii). Another definition for language learning strategies suggests that they are "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques--such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task--used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992:63).

From the definitions provided above, it is obvious that learning styles and language learning strategies are two overriding notions in the research area that embody some major differences.

Brown (2001:210) clarifies the difference between learning styles and strategies by stating that styles are an appropriate characterization of how a learner generally behaves. For language learning strategies, he notes “strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information”.

In addition to being conscious movements toward a goal, language learning strategies are “widely variable within any one individual”, but styles tend to be “more consistent and predictable” (Brown, 2001:210). However, that is not to say styles are completely immutable tendencies.

While learning styles are generalized ways of processing information, learning strategies are more task-specific. In other words, a language learner may utilize various learning strategies in dealing with a specific task, but cannot utterly alter his/her learning style preferences according to task requirements.

Drawing on Brown (1991: 86), who has made some further clarification of the relationship between learning style and language learning strategies, it could be stipulated that “learning strategies do not operate by themselves, but rather are directly tied to the learner’s underlying learning styles and other personality-related variables (such as anxiety and self-concept) in the learner”.

Shortly, the fundamental difference between styles and strategies is the intentionality of employing particular learning strategies: the former is often the less conscious, consistent and internal behavior employed by the learner to absorb, process, and retain new information and skills whereas the latter could be seen as conscious, specific skills or tendencies employed by learners to influence the effectiveness of learning.

Ehrman & Oxford (1990) have investigated adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting and conclude that learning styles and strategies do not function separately from each other but learning style determines strategy use. For instance, a visual learner may enjoy lessons in which (s)he can work on semantic maps, arrange new concepts visually. On the other hand, a more kinesthetic learner may feel uncomfortable with semantic maps, and may prefer being involved in activities require physical response or sensation for remembering the material (s)he has presented with.

As stated by Oxford (2001a: 362), learner employs learning strategies that reflect his/ her basic learning style, if there is no special focus on the use of a certain set of strategies either by teacher or lesson (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1996; Oxford, 1996a; Oxford, 1996b).

Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003a) also elucidate that learning style preferences and language learning strategies are seen to complement each other, with styles made obvious by learning strategies. Furthermore, strategies which are consciously selected by the learner and fit the learning task and the style preference of that learner become “a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning” (Oxford, 2003b).

Ehrman & Oxford (1990; 1995) claim that the agreement between learner’s style preferences of learning and language learning strategies use influences the achievement and development in language learning, contending that successful language learners systematically select and combine strategies relevant to the language task at hand and to their own learning style preferences. The results of a study conducted by Rossi-Le (1989) has demonstrated that learner’s style preference influences the types of learning strategies that he/ she employs in acquiring a second language. As an example for this, learners who preferred group study used social strategies such as working with peers, requesting clarification, and asking for correction.

Those claims and findings have led Brown (2001:210) to conclude that once learners are cognizant of their own style preferences the task requirements as regards language learning strategies, they can take the responsibility of their own learning and manipulate both the learning style preference and the language learning strategies they employ.

The awareness of learning style preferences and the kinds of language strategies available stimulate learners and they may feel encouraged to expand their repertoire of language strategies. Moreover, even if their preferences for specific strategies do not change, the learners may gain new insights into how, when, and why to use those same strategies.

### 1.2.5. Language Learning Strategies: Different Classification Systems

Efforts for identifying the characteristics of the "good language learner" (Naiman et al. 1978; Rubin 1975) have led researchers to carry out research into what learners do to learn a new language. They tried to build a theoretical base for language learning strategy to provide answers to the question of how some learners can do better in language learning. However, only half of the challenge is defining language learning strategies and distinguishing them from other terms. The other half of the challenge is establishing a comprehensive classification system for language learning strategies. The attempts to develop a comprehensive classification system for language learning strategies have resulted in the identification of specific strategies used by learners.

The persistent problem of establishing a classification framework of learning strategies employed by language learners primarily stems from the different approaches towards the concept of language learning strategy.

Oxford conveys the same by stating:

“In the short history of language learning strategy (LLS) research, there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is –or ever will be– possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies.” (Oxford, 1990a: 17)

Language learning strategies have been classified by many researchers working on this issue (Ellis, 1994; O'Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Earlier researchers observed learners' performance to describe language learning strategies (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975), relied on categories derived from research in mother tongue contexts (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), or developed a list of learning strategies derived from many sources (Oxford, 1990a).

Data collected in descriptive studies sought to list learning behaviors of learners in some specific tasks, and different researchers have classified the lists of behaviors they have observed according to various criteria, such as whether these behaviors contribute directly or indirectly to learning (Rubin, 1981); whether they are cognitive or metacognitive (O'Malley et al., 1985) and whether they are practised in the classroom, in individual study or during interaction with others (Politzer, 1983; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985).



As suggested by Chamot (2004) the need for comprehensive, multi-leveled, and theoretically motivated classifications for strategies employed by learners encourage further divisions made by various researchers and strategy specialists (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990a).

When compared and contrasted some of the prominent approaches to language learning strategies, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) claim that each existing classification system entails an implicit theory about the nature of language learning strategy and even, to some extent, about the learning in general. For instance, if affective domain (feelings/ attitudes/ motivations) in learning and social strategies which lead to increased interaction with the target language are subsumed under the general heading of a system as separate groups of strategies, the implicit theory of the system puts an emphasis on the use of these strategy groups and suggests that emotional requirements such as confidence and social interaction are highly important for learners in language learning.

Likewise the number of language learning strategies that assist learners in ESL/ EFL learning and the appropriate way for classifying language learning strategies, the definitions and classifications of certain strategies are still open to debate. As an example, for some researchers using gestures is merely a communication strategy which is not useful for learning whereas it is regarded as learning strategies by some other researchers.

In order to provide research field with conclusive proofs for the most comprehensive classification system, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) conducted a comparative study of O'Malley & Chamot's (1990), Oxford's (1990a), and Rubin's (1981) taxonomies.

Therefore, the following part will particularly focus on these classification systems in attempt to present the similarities and differences in definition and classification of learning strategies, particularly those employed by language learners.

### **Oxford's (1990a) Classification of Language Learning Strategies**

According to Oxford (1990a: 8) learners need to develop their communicative competence in order to involve themselves actively in language

learning. Therefore, the use of appropriate language learning strategies appeared to be indispensable for those language learners who want to participate in ongoing communication. She divides language learning strategies into two major classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into 6 groups, and 19 sets that stimulate the growth of communicative competence in different ways (1990a: 18-21).

Language learning strategies, "which directly involve the subject matter, in this case a new language", are defined as direct strategies by Oxford (1990b: 71), and can be distinguished from indirect language learning strategies, which "do not directly involve the subject matter itself, but are essential to language learning nonetheless".

Direct strategies require mental processing of the target language. Memory strategies for remembering and retrieving information, cognitive strategies for comprehending and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite limitations of knowledge are subsumed under the direct strategies and it's noteworthy that each group deals with this processing "differently and for different purposes" Oxford (1990a: 37).

Oxford (1990a: 14) provides a useful analogy for both classes that is really germane to the discussion about two main strategy classes. Direct strategies can be likened to the performer in a stage play, dealing with the language itself under a variety of circumstances.

Indirect strategies, although not directly involving the target language, are nevertheless essential or helpful for learning the language. These strategies "contribute indirectly but powerfully to learning" and they are composed of metacognitive strategies for managing the learning process, affective strategies for managing emotions, and social strategies for learning language with others (Oxford, 1990a: 12).

While the direct strategies is like the performer in a play, indirect strategies can be compared as the director of the play, organizing, coordinating, guiding, correcting, supporting and encouraging the performer. In addition to all these, the director is also responsible for ensuring that the performer works cooperatively with other actors on stage (Oxford, 1990a: 14-15).When learner takes more responsibility

for his/ her own learning, the roles of both the performer (direct strategies) and the director (indirect strategies) become part of him/her.

### **I. Direct Strategies:**

Memory strategies assist learners in placing information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication". They fall into four sets:

1. Creating mental linkages
  - a. Grouping
  - b. Associating/elaborating
  - c. Placing new words into a context
2. Applying images and sounds
  - a. Using imagery
  - b. Semantic mapping
  - c. Using keywords
  - d. Representing sounds in memory
3. Reviewing well
  - a. Structured reviewing
4. Employing action
  - a. Using physical response or sensation
  - b. Using mechanical techniques

Cognitive strategies, such as analyzing and reasoning, "are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language" Oxford (1990b: 71).As they are particularly used by the learner to manipulate or transform the target language in some direct way, they are quite necessary for the learner. The 4 sets of cognitive strategies are:

1. Practicing
  - a. Repeating
  - b. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems
  - c. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns
  - d. Recombining
  - e. Practicing naturalistically
2. Receiving and sending messages
  - a. Getting the idea quickly
  - b. Using resources for receiving and sending messages
3. Analysing and reasoning
  - a. Reasoning deductively
  - b. Analysing expressions
  - c. Analysing contrastively (across languages)
  - d. Translating
  - e. Transferring
4. Creating structure for input and output
  - a. Taking notes
  - b. Summarizing
  - c. Highlighting

Compensation strategies, such as guessing unknown words intelligently while listening and reading or coining words in speaking and writing, “are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language” (Oxford, 1990b: 71). These strategies help learners comprehend or produce the new language in the absence of complete knowledge of grammar or vocabulary. With the help of compensation

strategies learners may survive when experiencing a temporary breakdown in oral or written communication.

1. Guessing intelligently
  - a. Using linguistic clues
  - b. Using other clues
2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
  - a. Switching to the mother tongue
  - b. Getting help
  - c. Using mime or gesture
  - d. Avoiding communication partially or totally
  - e. Selecting the topic
  - f. Adjusting or approximating the message
  - g. Coining words
  - h. Using a circumlocution or synonym

## **II. Indirect Strategies:**

In Oxford's classification system, metacognitive strategies "help learners exercise 'executive control' through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their own learning". Learners' use of those strategies provides a way for them to coordinate their own learning process.

Metacognitive strategies are made up of three sets:

1. Centering your learning
  - a. Overviewing and linking with already known material
  - b. Paying attention

- c. Delaying speech production to focus on listening
2. Arranging and planning your learning
    - a. Finding out about language learning
    - b. Organizing
    - c. Setting goals and objectives
    - d. Identifying the purpose of a language task (purposeful listening/reading/speaking/writing)
    - e. Planning for a language task
    - f. Seeking practice opportunities
  3. Evaluating your learning
    - a. Self-monitoring
    - b. Self-evaluating

Affective strategies "enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning". Therefore, they are concerned with the learner's emotions, attitudes, motivations and values.

1. Lowering one's anxiety
  - a. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation
  - b. Using music
  - c. Using laughter
2. Encouraging oneself
  - a. Making positive statements

Affective strategies (continued)

- b. Taking risks wisely
- c. Rewarding oneself

3. Taking one's own emotional temperature
  - a. Listening to one's own body
  - b. Using a checklist
  - c. Writing a language learning diary
  - d. Discussing one's own feelings with someone else

The last language learning strategy group is made up of social strategies, which "facilitate interaction with others, often in a discourse situation" (Oxford, 1990b: 71). The selection of appropriate social strategies such as *asking for clarification, cooperating with others, becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings*, plays key role in communication occurs between or among language learners. The significant role of language as a form of social behavior necessitates the active involvement of learners in the process of learning.

1. Asking questions
  - a. Asking for clarification or verification
  - b. Asking for correction
2. Cooperating with others
  - a. Cooperating with peers
  - b. Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
3. Empathizing with others
  - a. Developing cultural understanding
  - b. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings

(Oxford, 1990a:21)

Despite the fact that all strategies of language learning are classified into 2 major classes and many groups regarding the direct involvement of language being learnt and the level of contribution to the process, it is important to note that those direct and indirect classes and their subgroups are not totally apart from one another.

For instance, a student may work in pair and ask questions to his/ her partner in order to interact socially. When the student gets the answer he/she may also develop some cultural understanding of target language and empathize with other learners. Later, the same student may employ a direct memory strategy, for example, *associating/ elaborating* to link new language information to concepts already exist in memory in order create associations in memory for further use of the information and finally, (s)he may integrate the previously stored information into a natural conversation with someone in the target language. As seen in the example, it is clear that language learning strategies can provide continuous mutual support one to the other and improve each others' effects in the process of language learning, hence this depicts the way language learning strategies are 'inter-connected' (Oxford, 1990a: 14-16).

After a brief introduction to the Oxford's classification, two influential classification system of language learning strategies designed by Rubin (1981) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990) will be outlined below.

### **1.2.5.1. Comparing Rubin's and Oxford's Systems**

The pioneering classification of language learning strategies was introduced to the research field of language learning strategy by Rubin (1981), as she has identified strategies as operations that contribute directly to language learning and others that are indirectly involved with language learning. Though direct/indirect dichotomy proposed by Rubin (1981) led Oxford to classify language learning strategies regarding the direct contribution they provide for language learning and to enumerate them as direct and indirect strategies, there could be seen an obtrusive degree of difference in the placement of language learning strategies into some categories.

Rubin categorizes the language learning strategies into three and enumerates them as 'learning strategies', 'communication strategies', and 'social strategies'. Learning strategies, being the first category of Rubin's language learning strategy classification, are made up of two main types as 'cognitive learning strategies' and 'metacognitive learning strategies'.

Cognitive learning strategies are the operations used by learner while dealing with a problem or learning, which implies direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis



of learning materials. As listed by Rubin, *clarification / verification, guessing / inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring* are the 6 main cognitive strategies contributing directly to language learning.

Metacognitive learning strategies refer to the steps to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. *Planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management* are among the various processes involved in metacognitive learning strategies.

Communication strategies, being the second category of Rubin's language learning strategy classification, mainly focus on the process of learner's taking part in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. Therefore, when compared to other categories, communication strategies are less directly related to language learning.

Learners generally use these strategies when their communication breaks off due to the misunderstandings occurring in the transmission of message.

With the help of social strategies, the last category of language learning strategy identified by Rubin, learners are able to participate in activities where they have the opportunity of exposure to helpful knowledge for further interactions and put into practice what they have already had. Despite providing exposure to the target language, social strategies are claimed to contribute indirectly to learning as they do not have a direct effect on the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language (Wenden and Rubin, 1987:23-27).

For the comparison, Hsiao and Oxford (2002:370) remind that the comparison "is not always clear-cut". They provide a clarifying example for this and convey that "Rubin's *direct guessing/ inductive inferencing* and *indirect production tricks* could be classified as direct cognitive strategies and direct compensation strategies in Oxford, respectively".

#### **1.2.5.2 Comparing the O'Malley & Chamot System and the Oxford System.**

With the introduction of Anderson's (1985) cognitive psychological concepts into the field, there appeared novice but rather concerted attempts to classify strategies employed by learners in language learning. O'Malley and Chamot's (1990)

classification system is one of those, which has roots in cognitive psychology and as a result, has become focus of attention in language learning strategy research field since its appearance. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) distinguish three types of learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective (or sometimes called socioaffective or social-affective).

Like Oxford's, the cognitive strategies of O'Malley and Chamot involve learner's manipulation or transformation of the target language in some direct way, which makes them quite essential in language learning. It is noted that cognitive strategies listed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) approximately correspond to a combination of memory and cognitive strategies listed by Oxford (1990a).

*Repetition, resourcing, translation, note taking, deduction, recombination, and transfer* strategies are categorized as 'cognitive strategies' by both O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990a). However, as could be seen in Table 1.1., it is evident that some of the strategies listed as cognitive strategies by O'Malley and Chamot are presented in the list of memory strategies of Oxford's classification system. For instance, *grouping, imagery, elaboration, and contextualization* are all part of memory strategies in Oxford's classification system.

Table 1.1. A Comparison of Two Major Strategy Classification Systems

O'Malley & Chamot (1990)

O'Malley & Chamot,

Stewner-Manzanares,

Küpper, & Russo (1985)

**Metacognitive Strategies**

Advance Organizers

Directed Attention

Selective Attention

Self-Management

Functional Planning

Self-Monitoring

Oxford (1990a)

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Table 1.1. A Comparison of Two Major Strategy Classification Systems (continued)

**Metacognitive Strategies**

Self-Evaluation Metacognitive Strategies

Delayed Production Metacognitive Strategies

**Cognitive Strategies**

Repetition Cognitive Strategies

Resourcing Cognitive Strategies

Translation Cognitive Strategies

Grouping Memory Strategies

Note Taking

Cognitive Strategies

Deduction Cognitive Strategies

Recombination Cognitive Strategies

Imagery Memory Strategies

Auditory Representation Memory Strategies

Keyword Memory Strategies

Contextualization Memory Strategies

Transfer Cognitive Strategies

Inferencing Compensation Strategies

**Socioaffective Strategies**

Cooperation Social Strategies

Question for Clarification Social Strategies

Self-Talk Affective Strategies

(Hsiao and Oxford, 2002: 371)

According to Hsiao and Oxford (2002), despite serving cognition, memory strategies seem to possess a very specific function that distinguishes them from many cognitive strategies. Learners employ some specific actions as memory strategies while tackling a task as to move information to long-term memory to store in and retrieve it from long-term memory when needed for use. Therefore, researchers cite

the level of contribution to deep processing of language information as the main reason for this intentional separation of memory strategies from the category of cognitive strategies. Researchers also assert that most of particular memory devices employed by learners are not likely to contribute to deep processing of language information, although cognitive strategies do contribute to deep processing.

The metacognitive strategies, the second type of strategies dealt in O'Malley and Chamot's system (1990), are the executive skills that are related to learner's planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating of his/ her own learning. As Wenden (1999: 127) suggests "good language learners as well as self-directed language learners exhibit metacognitive behaviors", and metacognitive strategies such as *advance organizers*, *selective attention*, *self-monitoring*, *self-evaluation/ self reinforcement*, and *delayed production* play key roles in the development of learner's self-direction towards learning.

As presented in Table 1.1, the metacognitive strategies identified by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) generally correspond with those of Oxford (1990a).

The strategies that enable learners to manage their own feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning (affective strategies) and the strategies facilitate interaction with others (social strategies) are mentioned by both systems by reason of their nature of being a very important part of learner. However, O'Malley and Chamot didn't classify affective strategies and social strategies as separate groups, but built a category known as 'socioaffective strategies', 'social-affective', or 'socio-affective' whereas Oxford (1990) have grouped them as separate categories and suggested many additional affective and social strategies. *Cooperation with others*, *questioning for clarification*, and *self-talk* are major socioaffective strategies listed by O'Malley and Chamot, the latter of which is identified as one of the affective strategies by Oxford (1990a). Shortly, notwithstanding some significant differences exist between O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) and Oxford's (1990a) strategy systems, the comparison of those systems points out that there is a considerable degree of agreement between those systems.

It's noteworthy to say that, with the help of those studies on language learning strategy use within different contexts, with different groups of learners' ongoing modifications concerning language learning strategy classification systems

have been proposed to clarify the confusing issues in research literature. In other words, it seems that different or revised classification systems would exist, as long as strategy specialists and researchers continue to investigate the language learning strategies in various contexts. However, due to the certain inconsistencies in defining and classifying strategies, while conducting formal/ informal strategy research, involving learners in strategy instruction, or designing and developing syllabus and material to assist appropriate language learning strategy use, researchers and teachers are often bewildered as to which classification system to follow (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002:370).

Consequently, classification of strategies is of great importance for both researchers and language education experts in that a well-designed classification system can enable researchers to describe the correspondence between mental processes and strategic processes (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Therefore, for the studies concerning language learning strategy to be valid and the findings to be comparable, it is essential to build comprehensive, multi-leveled, and theoretically motivated classifications of language learning strategies. Moreover, research still continues to demonstrate that strategies assist learners to enhance autonomy and proficiency in language learning process (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990a).

#### **1.2.6. Methods for Identifying Language Learning Strategies**

Researchers have been collecting data on factors affecting the variety and frequency of strategy use among language learners by means of several different approaches. It is crucial that data which will provide researchers with valid and reliable information for generating and testing hypotheses must be collected by researchers regarding a number of issues influencing assessment method and procedure.

The issues which may have strong influence on the selection of appropriate method, as proposed by Cohen (1998) include the following:

1. The purpose of the study (to apply a quantitatively or qualitatively oriented research method to generate hypotheses or to focus on one learner and conduct a detailed case study),

2. The number of learners and researchers (large-scale studies that includes large number of respondents and need to be conducted by several researchers),
3. The resources available,
4. The strategies to be studied (e.g., studying of cognitive processes and events themselves are often available through verbal report,
5. The types of tasks for which the strategies are used (e.g., listening, speaking, or reading),
6. The context in which the language learning takes place (e.g., a university class or a three-month visit to a foreign country).

Moreover, as cited by Cohen (1998: 26), “language learning strategies are generally internal or mentalistic processes, certain research approaches may fail to reveal adequately which strategies learners apply”. To avoid this problem, dissecting the advantages and disadvantages of every assessment method with regard to the issues listed above is essential for researchers.

In many studies conducted on overall language learning strategy use of learners, researchers have tried to identify the learning strategies employed by the learners by means of different assessment methods. Chamot (2004) underlines the same and states that strategy identification and classification have been data-driven through different strategy assessment methods (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999).

According to Cohen (1998), researchers investigating language learning strategy use of language learners have been adopting methods that could be grouped into six a general approaches to assessing language learning strategies. These approaches are ‘learning strategy interviews and written questionnaires’ (Oxford, 1990a; Oxford, 1996; Politzer, 1983; Wharton, 2000), ‘observation’, ‘verbal report’ (Naiman et al., 1978), ‘diaries and dialogue journals’ (Carson & Longhini, 2002), ‘recollective studies’, and ‘computer tracking’.

However, each of the methods has some limitations, but at the same time, almost each provides important insights into observable/ unobservable learning strategies. Moreover, as proffered by Cohen (1998), if selected according to the purpose of the study, the number of learners and researchers, the resources available,

the types of language tasks, and the context in which language learning takes place, these methods may make important contributions to the research of the field of language learning strategy studies.

### **1.3. What is listening comprehension?**

In the field of ESL/ EFL, the teaching theories and programs developed till 1960s had only focused on reading, writing, and an extreme for those years, speaking attributing little importance to listening beyond the sound discrimination related with pronunciation. As this was the case for listening, an awareness of the importance of listening comprehension in ESL/ EFL and concerted emphasis on it could emerge during the late 1960s (Morley, 1990).

Even the British Situational Approach to language teaching and the American Audiolingual Approach, which underlined the importance of listening in the language learning, did not pay much attention to listening beyond its role in grammar and pronunciation drills and learners' imitation of dialogues (Morley, 2001: 69). In other words, although listening played an important role in audio-lingual methods, students only listened to repeat and develop a better pronunciation, and unfortunately this was applied for the purpose of speaking.

Later on, the 1970s witnessed a major breakthrough in the notion of information processing, and work by Asher, Postovsky and Winitz brought attention to the role of listening as a tool for information processing and a key factor in facilitating language learning. After that, listening has emerged as an important component in the process of second language acquisition (Vandergrift, 2002b). Besides, Krashen's ideas about comprehensible input, which gained prominence in the 1980s, lent support to James Asher's Total Physical Response method. As they reinforced the pre-eminence of listening in learning, especially in the early stages of language learning, listening has become a research interest again (Nunan, 1998:1).

In addition to these rigorous efforts to highlight the substantial role of listening comprehension in language instruction, researchers doing research on second language acquisition (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982) suggested the need for language experiences which provide many opportunities for listening comprehension

particularly at the early stages of language learning. Additionally, Rubin (1994) points out that the communicative approaches to language teaching have also placed increasing importance on listening comprehension, which has resulted in an increased number of listening activities in student textbooks.

After having a brief look at the background of listening in education, mainly in language teaching, it is necessary to present several definitions for listening, proposed by various theorists and researchers carrying out research on listening.

To date the definitions of listening and listening comprehension suggested have been varied in number and nature as the approach towards listening has evolved.

Early definitions particularly underscored ‘the ability to understand spoken language’ as the most significant characteristic of listening. Underlining that listening implies more than hearing or perceiving sounds Underwood (1989: 1) defines listening as “the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear” (Thanajaro, 2000: 11).

According to Purdy (1997:8), listening is by definition “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal), needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (Thanajaro, 2000: 11)

Rost (2002: 13) compiled the characteristics of listening listed above into a broad definition and suggested that “(listening is)... a process of receiving what the speaker actually says (receptive orientation); constructing and representing meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (collaborative orientation); and, creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (transformative orientation). Therefore, it can be concluded that listening is a highly complex skill, which encompasses different processes.

Dealing with listening, research from cognitive psychology has established that comprehension requires listener to extract meaning from incoming speech, to match speech with prior knowledge about the topic, and to make appropriate inferences essential to comprehending the message given in the speech (Vandergrift, 2002b).

Moreover, comprehension could also be categorized into three: main-idea comprehension, detail comprehension, and full comprehension (Lund, 1990).



The recognition of vocabulary and actual comprehension of the messages could be subsumed under the heading of main-idea comprehension, while detail comprehension embodies getting specific information. Detail comprehension may operate on its own, not necessarily depending on main-idea comprehension, when the listener has a prior knowledge for what information (s)he is asked to listen for. The last category of comprehension is called 'full comprehension', which is the goal of listening instruction, involves understanding the whole message given in the speech, i.e. the main ideas and the details.

### **1.3.1. Listening Comprehension in Language Learning and Teaching**

In the field of education listening had been regarded as a skill that occurred naturally, developed by learners on their own and that did not require any teaching on purpose. At different levels of language instruction, it has gained the same reputation, as a nonessential skill of instruction, in that listening tasks tended to be viewed as supplementary to reinforce grammar learning. Hence, the listening skill has received little attention in language teaching and learning till the research in cognitive psychology on comprehensible input allowed valuable insights into the role of listening and listening comprehension in the language learning.

Recently, however, many psycholinguists and second language educators have been emphasizing the importance of improving listening skills and list it as the first skill to be mastered in language learning. This is not only due to its natural occurrence in first language acquisition, but also due to the frequency of its use in communication. One of the earliest studies of listening, conducted by Rankin (1930), suggested that adults spend 42.1% of their communication time listening, in contrast with 39.1% speaking, 15% reading and 11% for writing (Feyten, 1991).

This primacy of listening in communication was confirmed in more recent studies. As it is cited by Morley, "On average, we can expect to listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read and five times more than we write" (Morley, 2001:70). Wolvin and Coakley (1988) contended that both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time when compared to other forms of verbal communication.

Research has also demonstrated that listening is the most frequently used language skill in the classroom (Ferris, 1998; Morley, 1999; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Vogely, 1998). However, it is noteworthy that the significance of listening in language learning has only been acknowledged relatively of late (Oxford, 1993; Vandergrift, 2002a).

Although the processes of first language acquisition and second language learning are appeared to be different from each other in some respects, these two processes require the same steps toward comprehension. As it is the case for children who listen and respond to language before they learn to talk, and later, who still need to listen so as to receive the necessary information to do what they are asked to, a language learner experiences much or less the same. It is evident that listening is not only a skill for decoding sounds, but, moreover, a starting point for developing language competency. Therefore, listening is even more important for learners since listening is the first skill that is used as the primary medium of learning at all levels of education.

Additionally, learners have to listen to lectures, conversations and discussions so as to understand and keep the information for later recall, and to use that information in any skill of production. In other words, much of the education process is based on listening skills.

Those skills are also of great importance for ESL learners, who are surrounded by the target language both in the community and in the school; they need to use them effectively for everyday survival (Carrier, 1999; Thanajaro, 2000). Consequently, as stated by Nunan (1998: 1), learners could never achieve effective communication without developing effective listening skills (Nunan, 1998).

On the other hand, for most people, having competency in language means particularly developing speaking, reading and writing skills in that language. Hence, despite the fact that the significance of the listening skills for developing language competency has long been recognized, listening and reading are still seen as “secondary skills - means to other ends, rather than ends in themselves” (Nunan, 1998:1). Contrary to this belief, it is clear that listening comprehension skills facilitate the initial contact with target culture as well as the emergence of other language skills in the language classroom.

To conclude, listening was often classified as one of the skills of reception rather than production like speaking; it seems, therefore, a passive skill. However, research shows evidence to assert that listening is a highly integrative skill and active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know; thus, could be recognized as critical to second language learning and deserving of systematic development as a skill in its own right (Thanajaro, 2000; Vandergrift, 1999; Vandergrift, 2002b; Morley, 1999).

### **1.3.2. Process of Listening Comprehension**

The awareness of listening and listening comprehension in second language instruction during the late 1960s brought many new questions that have led a major breakthrough in many areas (e.g. curriculum design, teaching methodology, lesson planning, material design, learning training). Those questions primarily focused on the role of listening and listening comprehension lesson planning.

Stages in listening comprehension lessons were as follows:

1. pre-teaching of new vocabulary;
2. extensive listening where questions about general context are answered;
3. intensive listening where detailed questions are answered;
4. examination of vocabulary and/or exponents of grammar;
5. use of play and repeat/play and predict/recall words (Field, 1998:110).

However, listening was still seen as a way of reinforcing language input and the listening comprehension lessons were based a relatively consistent format till 1970s. Later, the model of the late 1960s and the approach to listening comprehension lessons has evolved; and the “listening to repeat” approach of the audio-lingual period, followed by the “question– answer” comprehension approach have been replaced by a more recent approach, real-time listening in real time, focusing on communicative tasks, which are the key activities in communicative methods, and/or interaction with native speakers (Morley, 1999).

Involving some or all of the following stages, the new model of listening comprehension lessons combines “learning to listen” and “listening to learn” together.

The stages are:

1. pre-listening (for context and motivation);
2. extensive listening - questions to establish the situation;
3. pre-set questions or pre-set task;
4. extensive listening;
5. review of questions or task;
6. inferring new vocabulary/ examination of functional language (Field, 1998:110).

The approaches to listening comprehension lessons emerged after late 1970s in the research field have been paying attention to the learner needs and suggesting that listeners are active processors of information rather than passive receivers of oral stimuli. Besides, by the mid-1980s the notion of listening for language practice replaced by the notion of listening for meaning, and this marked shift was widely accepted in education field (Rost, 2001).

Rejecting a conceptualization of listening as a passive act and “the learner-as-sponge” (Nunan, 1998), passively absorbing the information presented through the learning tasks, Anderson and Lynch (1988) underline the role of listeners, the interpretations they made while hearing the spoken text in respect of their own purposes for listening and previous knowledge they have (Morley, 2001: 84).

Consequently, listening is a constructive process in which the learner is an active participant (Nunan, 1998), and it involves different (physiological and cognitive) processes at different levels (Rost, 2002).

### **1.3.2.1 Top-down Processes and Bottom-up Processes in Listening Comprehension**

In recent years much research and discussion has been carried out in order to identify processes which are involved in listening comprehension and how they pertain to listening instruction.

In accounting for the complex nature of listening, it is generally agreed that there are two significant processes: internally based “top-down processes” and

externally based "bottom-up processes." Though they seem to be two distinct modes, they are complementary in the listening comprehension.

The 'top-down processing' involves the learner using context and prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture, and other schema knowledge in long-term memory) to anticipate, predict, and infer meaning and understand the message given in incoming speech. This internal resource, which listener uses while listening, enables the listener to actively reconstruct the original meaning. By means of these processes listener builds a conceptual framework for comprehension (Morley, 2001; Vandergrift, 2004).

On the other hand, 'the bottom-up processing' involves the learner devoting full attention to linguistic elements; e.g. the sounds of a language into words, clauses, sentences, etc. in the speech (s)he listens to, and gradually uses his/ her knowledge of grammatical or syntactic rules to interpret meaning of the message given in that speech (Morley, 2001:74).

Anderson and Lynch (1988) name this processing as the "listener as tape-recorder" view of listening in that there is assumed to be a great similarity in the way a tape recorder receives and stores messages and a listener does (Nunan, 1998:17). Sequentially, sounds are decoded and linked together to form words, words are linked together to form phrases, phrases are linked together to form utterances, and utterances are linked together to form complete meaningful texts.

Both 'top-down processing' and 'the bottom-up processing' have received much attention so that researchers have tried to shed some light on the problem of what to do with these processes, how to apply them to listening instruction. For instance, Oxford (1993), Rost, (2002), Rubin (1994) are among those who highlight the critical importance of the two processing mode in listening comprehension.

In addition, in the study of O'Malley et al (1985) it was found that effective second language learners used both top down approaches of listening for intonation or phrases and bottom up approaches for words, while ineffective listeners concentrated on the bottom up process (Peterson, 2001).

However, related research shows that whether to use top-down processes or bottom-up processes is dependent on the listener's purpose for listening; it is,

therefore, extremely necessary for a listener to learn when and how to operate both processes and take the advantage of them.

Concurring with the claims above, Vandergrift (2002a: 3) proposes 'an integrated model' for ESL/EFL listening comprehension and clarifies the issue by stating that: "Listening comprehension is not either top-down or bottom-up processing, but an interactive, interpretive process where listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding messages". Vandergrift also affirms that there are several factors, such as knowledge of the language, familiarity with the topic or the purpose for listening, determining the mode of processing.

While these two views of listening have been dominating language teaching over the last twenty years, there has also been a considerable effort to list the features of an effective listening lesson. With regard to Nunan (1998: 7), it could be posited that an effective listening course will be characterized by the following features:

1. The materials should be based on a wide range of authentic texts, including both monologues and dialogues.
2. Schema-building tasks, based on schema theory, should precede the listening. This theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help learners make sense of new experiences and it is appeared to be support the top-down processes.
3. Strategies for effective listening should be incorporated into the materials.
4. Learners should be given opportunities to progressively structure their listening by listening to a text several times, and by working through increasingly challenging listening tasks.
5. Learners should know what they are listening for and why.
6. The task should include opportunities for learners to play an active role in their own learning.
7. Content should be personalized Nunan (1998: 7).

### 1.3.3. Major difficulties

As being probably 'the least explicit' (Vandergrift, 2004:3) and the most neglected language skill of the four, it is widely accepted that listening requires a special attention in language learning/ teaching today. However, it has taken almost two decades to identify it as not being a natural skill, which emerges without any formal instruction, and as not being a passive activity, in which listener only receives and stores the information.

At this point, while trying to defining listening, cognitive processes involved in listening comprehension and the characteristics of an effective listening, researchers, such as Reid (1998) and Underwood (1989), have discovered that there are several difficulties listeners experience in listening classes or in real-life situations (Chen, 2005; Goh, 2000).

Basically, difficulties faced in listening comprehension lessons could be mainly grouped into two: the factors related to the listener himself, such as gender, age, level of proficiency, memory, attention span and background, i.e. ethnicity, culture, education, and the factors related to the nature and requirements of listening instruction and learner preferences, e.g. cognitive processes required by the listening task at hand, learner's preference of listening comprehension tasks, the authentic material and real language use, etc.

Underwood (1989) lists the major listening problems as follows and concludes that these problems often occur when there are differences in approach to oral communication tradition, stating that students whose culture and education includes a strong storytelling and oral communication tradition do "better" at listening comprehension compared to those from a reading and book-based cultural and educational background.

The major listening problems organized by Underwood (1989) are:

1. lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak ,
2. not being able to get things repeated,
3. the listener's limited vocabulary,
4. failure to recognize the "signals,"
5. problems of interpretation,

6. inability to concentrate, and
7. established learning habits (Chen, 2005).

Goh (2000) investigated the comprehension problems of adult ESL listeners in an EFL setting, relating each problem to one of three cognitive processing phases, namely, perception, parsing, and utilization, which are proposed by Anderson (1995).

Before presenting the comprehension problems and the processing phases they occur in, it would be helpful to remember the cognitive processing stages put forward by Anderson. As defined by Anderson (1995: 37), “perceptual processing is the encoding of the acoustic or written message. In listening, it involves segmenting phonemes from the continuous speech stream.” Parsing refers to encoding the input to build a meaningful representation in short-term memory, and utilization concerns using the background knowledge to interpret the input for storage.

Based on Anderson’s cognitive processing phases of comprehension, Goh (2000) lists those difficulties identified by the listeners themselves in her study.

During the perception phase, the possible listening difficulties are:

1. not recognizing words they know;
2. neglecting the next part of a text when thinking about meaning;
3. not chunking streams of speech;
4. missing the beginning of texts; and
5. concentrating too hard or not being able to concentrate.

During the parsing phase, the possible listening problems are:

1. quickly forgetting what is heard;
2. not being able to form a mental representation from words they heard;  
and
3. not understanding subsequent parts because of earlier problems.

Finally, during the utilization phase, the possible listening problems are:

1. understanding words but not the message and
2. confusion about key ideas in the message (Vandergrift, 2003b).

It could be noticed that the difficulties listed by Underwood (1989) and reported by Goh (2000) are similar to some extent; but, of course, the difficulties or



problems faced by the listeners may also vary in connection with strategy use for listening comprehension, particularly with the selection of appropriate LC strategies to the task.

#### **1.3.4. Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use**

The goal of second-language and/or foreign-language instruction is to develop learner's communicative competence and oral fluency. Therefore, proficiency in productive skills, namely writing and speaking, could be achieved through an instruction particularly focusing on listening comprehension, which is an active process of constructing meaning to fulfill task requirements and assists learner with linguistic input (Thanajaro, 2000; Vandergrift, 2003a). However, when the listener is actively engaged in constructing meaning from a variety of contexts and sources, (s)he often faces some difficulties and/or problems.

In the light of the internal and external factors affecting listening comprehension ability, listeners employ strategies for comprehension so that they match linguistic signals with existing knowledge to meet the task requirements. Brown (1995:104), comparing those strategies used by learner in the process of language learning to 'battle plans', defines them as: "specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information."

Brown (1995:104) also adds that they are "contextualized 'battle plans' that might vary from moment to moment, or day to day, or year to year."

Strategies and the ability to use them effectively are particularly important in second language listening in that developing learners' awareness of the processes underlying their own learning is affected by wide range of effective learning strategy repertoire of these learners (Nunan, 1998:7).

Since by now there have been a number of studies focusing on the types of strategies are used by learners in listening (Murphy, 1987; O'Malley et al, 1985; O'Malley, Chamot, & Küpper, 1989; Bacon, 1992; Vandergrift, 1997a; Vandergrift, 1997b; Vandergrift, 1998; Goh, 1998b), how they could be classified (Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1987; O'Malley et al, 1989; Vandergrift, 1997a, Vandergrift, 1997b,

Vandergrift,1998) and how they are used by the learners (Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1987; Bacon, 1992; O'Malley et al, 1985; Vogely, 1995; Goh, 2002b).

O'Malley et al. (1989) conducted a pioneering study specifically focusing on LCS in language second language acquisition, and they tried to classify the listening comprehension strategies used by second language learners. According to their classification model, listeners employ metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective strategies to facilitate comprehension and to make their learning more effective (Vandergrift, 2002b).

### **1.3.5. Classification of Listening Comprehension Strategies:**

O'Malley et al. (1989) Model:

#### **A. Metacognitive Listening Comprehension Strategies**

1. Directed attention: It is the elimination of some unrelated parts of the language and maintaining attention on a particular part of the language which learners decide in advance to attend to a learning task and to ignore all irrelevant distracters.
2. Selective attention: It refers to the decision made by learner in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will help him/ her with receiving and retaining information.
3. Self-management: It could be defined as understanding the conditions that assist learning, and arranging for the presence of those conditions.
4. Self-monitoring: It refers to checking, verifying, or correcting learner's comprehension at the local level and consists of maintaining awareness of the task demands and information content. Self-monitoring is generally supported by selective attention and directed attention.
5. Self-evaluation and self-reinforcement: These are based on learners' judgment of the outcomes of their own listening comprehension against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy. Rewarding one's own performance after successfully completing a task helps self-reinforcement (O'Malley et al. 1985).

## B. Cognitive Listening Comprehension Strategies

1. Repetition: It is the limitation of the language model including overt practice and silent rehearsal.
2. Directed Physical Response: It refers to relating new information to physical action as with particular instructions. Some learners favor imitating the physical actions that take place in a learning task, whereas the others favor only listening to the instructions without any physical response and imitation.
3. Translation: It is the use of the mother tongue as a basis for understanding and/ or predicting the information presented in target language.
4. Grouping: It is the reordering or reclassifying the material learner is asked to listen. Listeners can group items that are similar to each other in respect to a specific characteristic.
5. Note taking: It deals with writing down the main ideas, important points and outline, or making a summary of information presented orally or in writing.
6. Deduction: It proceeds from a generalization to particular facts which support those generalization made by learner. Learners consciously apply rules to produce or understand the ESL/ EFL and form some generalizations, then test them.
7. Imagery: It is building connections between new information and visual concepts in memory, and relating that information to visual concepts via familiar, easily retrievable visualizations, phrases or locations.
8. Auditory Representation: It deals with the retention of sounds for words, phrases or longer sequences.
9. Key word: It is the process of remembering a new word in the target language by identifying a familiar word in the mother tongue of the learner. This identification could be achieved by establishing sound or form similarity between the new word and the word already existed in his/ her mother tongue.

10. Contextualization: It could be defined as placing a new word in a meaningful language sequence.
11. Elaboration: It is the strategy for relating new information to other concepts in memory.
12. Transfer: It is employed for facilitating a new language learning task by using previously acquired linguistic and conceptual knowledge.
13. Inferencing: It is the use of information at hand to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.
14. Resourcing: It refers to using target language reference materials.

C. Socioaffective Listening Comprehension Strategies (or sometimes called socioaffective or social-affective).

1. Cooperation: It deals with the understanding of verbal messages depending on the people around the listener.
2. Question for clarification: It could be defined as asking a teacher or a native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation or examples.

All of these three groups of listening comprehension strategies identified by aforementioned researchers are of crucial importance for ESL/ EFL learners as each group contribute to comprehension in a unique manner. For instance, the role of metacognitive strategies is to oversee, regulate or direct the language learning process, whereas cognitive strategies' is to manipulate the material to be learned or apply a specific technique to a listening task. Socioaffective strategies, on the other hand, are on the stage when learners collaborate with others. Learners incorporate them to verify understanding or to lower anxiety (Vandergrift, 2002). In addition to these attempts in identifying comprehension strategies of listeners, Goh (1998a; 2002a) makes an outline of listening comprehension strategies. Based on Goh's research, the listening comprehension strategies and their definitions are as follows:

### Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS):

#### A. Cognitive Strategies:

1. **Inferencing:** While listening, learners fill in missing information such as meanings of unfamiliar words and parts of a text with the help of context, key words, knowledge about target language and speaker's body language and visual aids.
2. **Elaboration:** Learners relate new information to prior knowledge of a specific topic to produce a more complete interpretation as they listen to a text/ speech. It also refers to the process by which listeners make an interpretation richer with details to make it more meaningful for them.
3. **Prediction:** It enables listeners to anticipate the next part of a text by predicting the contents from the title or topic before listening or anticipating details in the next part while listening.
4. **Contextualization:** It refers to the attempts to relate new information to a wider context or situation in order to produce an acceptable general interpretation of it.
5. **Translation:** It refers to changing words, sentences into mother tongue.
6. **Visualization:** It refers to forming a mental picture of what is heard.
7. **Fixation:** It refers to paying close attention to a small part of the spoken text in order to understand it.
8. **Reconstruction:** It involves using words from the text and sometimes background knowledge to construct the meaning of the original input.

#### B. Metacognitive Listening Strategies:

1. **Directed Attention:** It could be defined as concentrating on the message given and avoiding distraction, by maintaining concentration as much as possible, listen closely to every word and continue listening in spite of problems.
2. **Comprehension monitoring:** It is the process of checking and confirming how well one understands the input during listening by making use of both external and internal resources which include information in the text, visual element, context and prior knowledge.
3. **Real-time assessment of input:** This strategy is necessary for achieving their comprehension goals during listening. It involves determining the potential

value of unfamiliar words and noticing problems during listening and deciding what to do about them.

4. Comprehension evaluation: It is the process of checking the accuracy and completeness of listeners' comprehension. It can be done any time after an individual has finished and arrived at some tentative interpretation.
5. Selective attention: Learners' special attention to specific aspects of the input results in different purposes for listening, such as listening for gist, listening for familiar or key words noticing the way information is structured, listening for repetition, paying attention to meaning in groups of words and heeding intonation.
6. Pre-Listening Preparation: Preparing oneself mentally or emotionally for listening task.

(Gerçek, 2000; Goh, 2002a: 192-193)

Consequently, listening comprehension, which was once taken for granted as a passive skill contributing less to the learning, has come into focus with the advancement in cognitive psychology, and as a result of research conducted on information processing approaches. Furthermore, an awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension strategies employed by learners in the listening tasks can help them organize the language input they are receiving in a very efficient way. Therefore, learners need to be strategically competent listeners, who actively select, employ, and continually consider the effectiveness of their listening strategies in order to successfully construct meaning from linguistic input.

The substantial role listening comprehension plays in the process of language learning/ acquisition, facilitating the emergence of other language skills makes it a focal point of recent studies in second language/ foreign language research.

### **1.3.6. Methods for Identifying Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS)**

The researchers have employed different research tools to identify LCS used by language learners. Think-aloud protocols, along with related retrospective verbal reports (Anderson & Vandergrift, 1996; Murphy, 1985; Murphy 1987; O'Malley, et al. 1989; Vandergrift, 1997b; Vandergrift, 2003a) or on-going response (Bacon,

1992) and self-revelation (Rost & Ross, 1991), interviews, diaries (Oxford et al., 1996), inventories, e.g. drawing item types and certain content from Oxford's SILL, Cohen & Chi's Language Strategy Use Survey (LSU) are the most common listening comprehension strategy assessment tools in the field.

#### **1.4. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the possible relationship between the perceptual learning style preferences of the students, the listening comprehension strategies employed by them and their listening comprehension achievement.

In addition to this, this study also aims to find out whether the listening comprehension strategies and the level of listening comprehension achievement of the students indicate significant differences with regard to gender and the language medium of education after preparatory program.

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

The current research focuses on the relationship between perceptual learning style preferences of the participants, the listening comprehension strategy use and achievement. The most/ least preferred statements in the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire (PLSPQ) and the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) indicates the frequency of the preference or behavior regarding the learning style preference and listening comprehension strategy use. In addition, the overall scores the participants got in the scales reveal whether there are differences in style preference, listening comprehension strategy use and achievement with regard to two factors, namely gender and the language medium of education after preparatory program.

The first dimension of the study is identification of the style preferences of the students in relation to physiological and social learning styles. The most/ least frequently selected statements related to the 4 subsets of the perceptual learning style (auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, visual) and two of social learning style (group learning, individual learning) will help the researcher draw an overall picture of the preferences

of the students participated in this study. Besides, gender factor will be examined in the case of style preferences of the participants.

The second dimension of the study involves the identification of the listening comprehension strategy use. The behaviors which are reported to be displayed in the listening comprehension activities may point out the ways the participants comprehend the information in listening lessons. Moreover, the possible relationship between strategy use and learning style preferences, and strategy use and achievement in listening comprehension will indicate whether these issues are interrelated to each other as some of the previous research in the literature has demonstrated.

The third dimension of the study is the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants. The identification of the level of achievement will reveal the highest and lowest scores of the participants in a standardized comprehension test, which may also help find out whether there is linkage between strategy use and achievement in listening comprehension. Any difference in strategy use and achievement in listening comprehension with regard to gender may demonstrate significant difference between female participants and their male counterparts in the research context. Besides, any difference in strategy use and achievement in listening comprehension with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program may indicate performance difference between the Turkish-medium students and their English- medium counterparts.

Based on these identifications and examinations, it is supposed here that there is a relationship between these three dimensions of the study.

Previous research conducted in Turkey has mainly investigated the relationship between the perceptual learning style preferences and achievement, or the overall language learning strategy use, without confining the research interest to any skill area. Moreover, there are foreign research findings on the listening comprehension strategy use, supporting the strategy use and achievement relationship for listening. The current research focuses on the strategy use and achievement in listening, with an interest on the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants.



If this study indicates similar results with other studies conducted in Turkey, as well as abroad; in other words, if this study reveals that there is a significant relationship between perceptual learning style preferences, listening comprehension strategy use, and achievement, it may introduce some practical implications for EFL learning and teaching.

After identifying the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants and the listening comprehension strategies employed by them, suggestions can be made for EFL teachers who want to highlight the strategy awareness and use in their listening lessons.

Additionally, in the light of research findings on the strategy use in listening, course book writers and curriculum developers may gain new insights into material selection and activity design emphasizing the appropriate use of listening comprehension strategies in listening tasks and promoting the integration of listening comprehension strategy training into curriculum.

### **1.6. The Statement of the Problem**

The aim of this study is to find out whether there is significant relationship between the learning style preferences of undergraduate English preparatory program students, the listening comprehension strategies, and achievement.

### **1.7. The Research Problems**

This study also intends to find an answer to the following questions:

1. What are the perceptual learning style preferences of undergraduate English preparatory program students?
2. What are the listening comprehension strategies employed by undergraduate English preparatory program students?
3. What is the level of listening comprehension achievement of undergraduate English preparatory program students?

4. Is there any significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategies employed by undergraduate English preparatory program students and their perceptual learning style preferences?
5. Is there any significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategies employed by undergraduate English preparatory program students and their level of listening comprehension achievement?
6. Are there any significant differences between the perceptual learning style preferences with regard to gender?
7. Are there any significant differences between the listening comprehension strategies employed by undergraduate English preparatory program students with regard to gender?
8. Are there any significant differences between the level of listening comprehension achievement of the undergraduate English preparatory program students with regard to gender?
9. Are there any significant differences between the listening comprehension strategies employed by the undergraduate English preparatory program students with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program?
10. Are there any significant differences between the level of listening comprehension achievement of the undergraduate English preparatory program students with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program?

### **1.8. Limitations**

1. The first limitation of the current study is that, the research only covers the intermediate level undergraduate English preparatory program students of the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University.
2. The listening comprehension strategy use and listening comprehension achievement are examined only with regard to gender and the language medium of education after preparatory program. Other factors which may

affect the listening comprehension strategy use and listening comprehension achievement (previous experience in language learning, the task, etc.) are not included in this survey.

### **1.9. Assumptions**

1. It has been assumed that the subjects in the sample of the current research have responded to the questions in the scales sincerely.

### **1.10. Abbreviations**

DF: Degree of Freedom

ESL: English as Second Language

EFL: English as Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

GLL: Good Language Learner

LCS: Listening Comprehension Strategies

LCT: Listening Comprehension Test

N: The Number of the Students in the Sample

PLSP: Perceptual Learning Style Preferences

r: Pearson Correlation

sd: Standard Deviation

SL: Second Language

SIG: Degree of Significance

t: *t*-value

X: (Arithmetic) Mean

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relevant to the present study is presented in this chapter in two major categories: Learning styles, particularly perceptual learning style preferences, and listening comprehension strategies.

#### **2.1. Research on Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP)**

Despite the theoretical incoherence and conceptual confusion led by different approaches to learning styles, in their efforts to account for individual differences according to the particular manner in which learners process information from their environment, the researchers still continue to carry out research on learning styles, and other variables germane to those differences brought by language learners into the classroom.

During the last decade the researchers have carried out numerous research on learning styles and the possible relationships between learning styles of learners and the variables such as gender (Oxford & Anderson, 1995; Reid, 1995;), degree of motivation and attitude towards FL learning (Cheng and Banya, 1998), culture and ethnicity (Oxford & Anderson, 1995; Park, 2001; Park, 1997b; Reid, 1987; Reid, 1995; Willing, 1988), level of education (Park 1997a, Park, 1997b; Reid, 1987), foreign language anxiety (Cheng and Banya, 1998; Bailey, P., Daley, C. E., & Onwuegbuzie, J., 1999), type of task, and achievement (Green & Oxford, 1995).

However, as there is no consensus on even the definition of learning styles and, therefore, on the classification of styles, comparison and contrasting of the research findings and drawing a conclusion based on these findings is almost impossible. Additionally, the persistent problem of theory in research literature, therefore, limits the number of studies mentioned below.

Building on the Dunns' model, Reid (1987) categorized the perceptual learning modalities as auditory (learning more effectively through hearing), visual (learning more effectively through seeing), tactile (learning more effectively through hands-on activities), kinesthetic (learning more effectively through whole-body movement) adding group (prefer studying with others), and individual (prefer studying alone) learning style, and conducted a fascinating study on 1,388 ESL students from different multicultural groups. The results of PLSP questionnaire demonstrated that students from Asian cultures, mainly Korean, Arabic and Chinese students, were often highly visual, with the Korean students being the most visual. Reid also found that Hispanic learners were frequently auditory and Japanese tend to be very nonauditory. ESL students from a variety of cultures were tactile and kinesthetic in their sensory preferences.

Her findings suggested that ESL students from different cultures vary significantly in their perceptual learning preferences and this led many researchers work on perceptual learning styles in terms of cultural diversity.

Oxford and Anderson (1995) conducted research on the learning styles of the learners as global and analytic, field dependent and field independent, feeling/ thinking, impulsive and reflective, intuitive-random and concrete-sequential, closure-oriented and open, extroverted/introverted, visual, auditory and hands-on and their ethnic backgrounds and cultural differences. They reached the conclusion that along with other variables, the culture learner belongs to, has some influences on learner's style preference. Therefore, some style preferences could be favored in some cultures whereas some others could be neglected.

Individual or group learning styles have also been investigated in the studies on perceptual learning style. In the aforementioned study carried out by Reid (1987), the individual or group learning preference of respondents were analyzed. It was found that every culture had a minor or negligible preference for group work, with English speakers having the lowest score.

Gender is another variable that has received much attention in both learning style and language learning strategy research. Again Reid (1987) claimed that both graduate and undergraduate students participated in her research strongly preferred

visual and tactile learning; males preferring visual and tactile learning significantly more often than females.

In her article on gender difference as an individual difference, Oxford (1995) discusses gender difference in learning style preferences and claims that gender differences have often been found in different aspects of learning style. Drawing on some studies conducted by other researchers, Oxford (1995:36) claims that as males appear to be better in some tasks which particularly favor tactile and kinesthetic style preference, it might be expected that students whose style preferences are tactile and kinesthetic would more often be males than females. Also, with the caveat that the relationship between gender and auditory preferences is not clear, she states that listening studies reveal that when males and females are examined according to their auditory ability in FL, it could be seen that females are better than males.

The relationship between learning style and achievement has been a research interest for the researchers since the characteristics of GLL and the steps they follow to be successful in language learning started to be investigated. However, as the proposed models of learning styles vary in the way they approach to learner and vary in classifying a learner as A or B, the researchers have demonstrated different findings related to learning style and achievement linkage.

Park (1997a) investigated the relationship between perceptual learning style preferences of Asian American (Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese) students in secondary schools and their achievement. The findings of her study indicated that among high, middle, and low achievers, high achievers were the most visual and low achievers were the least visual, and that middle and low achievers had a minor preference and high achievers had a negative preference for group learning.

Administering Reid's (1987) self-reporting questionnaire of perceptual learning styles to 1283 secondary school students, included 319 Anglos, 276 Korean-Americans, 401 Mexican-Americans, and 287 Armenian-Americans, Park (1997b) investigated the four basic perceptual learning styles of those students and their preferences for social learning. Across the four ethnic groups, girls ( $X = 18.40$ ) had higher preference for kinesthetic learning style than boys ( $X = 18.01$ ), although both boys and girls had major preference for it. Furthermore, the four ethnic groups revealed that there were statistically significant differences among high achievers,

middle achievers, and low achievers in auditory, visual, group, and individual learning style preferences. Both high achievers ( $X= 18.04$ ) and middle achievers ( $X= 18.06$ ) had major preference for auditory learning whereas low achievers ( $X= 17.72$ ) had minor preference. Both high achievers ( $X= 17.45$ ) and middle achievers ( $X= 16.83$ ) had minor preference for visual learning style whereas low achievers had negative preference. High achievers had negative preference for group learning whereas both low achievers ( $X= 17.50$ ) and middle achievers ( $X= 16.67$ ) had minor preference. For individual learning style, high achievers had major preference ( $X= 18.24$ ) and middle achievers had minor preference ( $X= 17.15$ ), but low achievers had negative preference. Depending on these findings, it is possible to infer that high and middle achievers appear to have multiple learning style preferences, exhibiting all four basic (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) learning styles and individual learning style except for group learning style as either major or minor learning style preferences.

Rossi-Le (1995) conducted a study on 147 adult immigrants, representing Chinese, Laotian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Polish and Other (a sampling of different languages including Cambodian, Japanese, Polish, and Korean) linguistic backgrounds in two community college ESL environments, one in the Northeast and one in the Midwest, in the United States.

The researcher investigated the role of perceptual learning style preference in learning behaviors and the possible relationship between participants' perceptual learning style preference and language learning strategies they employ. In this study, PLSP questionnaire (Reid, 1987) and SILL (Oxford, 1986) were administered. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents appeared to have tactile and kinesthetic modes as their major learning style preference. Additionally, all respondents expressed a learning style preference for group learning; however they expressed only a minor learning style preference for individual learning. The findings also revealed relationships between perceptual learning styles and respondents' backgrounds. As stated by Rossi-Le, "visual learning is preferred by older students and by students with higher language proficiency. The more the language learner has exposure to the written word, the more he/ she feels comfortable learning visually" (Rossi-Le, 1995: 120).

The researcher also correlated the perceptual learning style preferences of the respondents and their learning strategies; and found that respondents who preferred the visual learning style reported choosing visualization as a strategy for learning. The participants whose preferred perceptual learning styles are tactile and kinesthetic modes reported that they seek out native English speakers; actively participate in conversations and also engage others in those conversations.

### **Research in Turkey**

Though research on perceptual learning style preferences of Turkish EFL students is considerably few in number and limited in variety, the growing interest in learner-centered approach to the language instruction and learner differences in the field of education has stimulated researchers to carry out research to identify the preferred perceptual styles of EFL students, and the relationship between these preferences and some other variables, e.g. gender, the level of education, and teacher's style.

Çekiç (1991) conducted a study in order to find out the relationship between academic achievement of EFL preparatory school students at Anadolu University and the level of matching of their preferred learning styles and their teachers'. The sample of the study was comprised of 60 elementary and intermediate students, studying in preparatory program. Two instruments, a style preference questionnaire and a standardized reading and grammar test were administered for the research purpose. In this experimental study, the researcher placed the students who had matching perceptual learning styles with their teachers' teaching styles in the experimental group. The control group of the study involved the students who had unmatched preference with the reported teaching styles. In order to collect data for academic achievement, pre- and posttests were done. After that, the scores of the groups were compared with the help of *t*-test performed on the data. The analysis of the data revealed that the most preferred perceptual learning mode is kinesthetic, whereas the least preferred one was auditory mode. According to the *t*-test results, there was no statistically significant relationship between student- teacher perceptual learning style matching and academic achievement of those students. However, the findings of this



study also showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and reported visual learning mode, on the part of females.

Tabanlıoğlu (2003) investigated the perceptual learning style and language learning strategy preferences of pre-intermediate students studying English for Academic Purposes at the School of Foreign Languages and Informatics at the University of Bahçeşehir. Two instruments were administered to obtain quantitative data for perceptual learning style preference and language learning strategy. In order to identify the perceptual learning styles of the sample the Turkish translation of PLSP Questionnaire (Reid, 1987) was employed by the researcher. The SILL (Oxford, 1990) was the second instrument used in this study. Both of the instruments were translated into Turkish so as to avoid any misunderstanding of any item presented in the questionnaires. A pilot study with 30 students was carried out to check the language validity and determine the duration of the actual administration of the translated versions of the questionnaires. The reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha proved highly reliable ( $r=0.90$ ). In addition to quantitative data collected by the two aforementioned instruments, think-aloud protocols were performed to gather qualitative data concerning the actual strategy use. The data provided by the actual think-aloud protocols of six participants were transcribed word by word and analyzed by two instructors other than the researcher. The results of the think-aloud protocols revealed that participants employed many cognitive and metacognitive strategies to understand the text and tackle the problems they faced while reading it.

Based on the results obtained from the statistical analyses, the researcher found that auditory and individual learning style modes were identified as the two major perceptual learning styles of most of the participants. In parallel with Reid's (1987) findings, the participants of this study demonstrated a negative preference for group learning. Besides, it was found that there was a statistically significant gender difference in the preference for tactile learning mode between male and female participants, the former favoring tactile learning mode more than the latter. These findings were congruent with Reid's (1987) findings about different perceptual learning style preferences with regard to gender. The Pearson product-moment correlation demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between perceptual learning style preferences and the language learning strategy preferences of the

participants. The results indicated that there was statistically significant relationships were between the auditory learning style mode and memory and cognitive strategies. Additionally, the auditory learning styles also had significant relationships with affective and social strategies. Thus, it could be interpreted as the students who reported auditory learning mode as their major perceptual learning style were aware of the ways to control their emotions about learning; they were able to ask questions without any hesitation and furthermore they could manage good cooperation while learning together and empathize with others.

Considering the findings obtained from this study, the researcher concluded that they appeared to concur with the findings of the studies conducted by Rossi-Le (1989; 1995), in which a significant relationship was identified between the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants and their language learning strategy use.

Gorevanova (2000) investigated the relationship between the perceptual learning style preferences, language learning strategies and English vocabulary size of sophomores from the English and American Literature Departments of Bilkent University and the Philology Department of Ferghana State University, Uzbekistan. The sample of the study involved 57 participants, 47 students from the English and American Literature Departments of Bilkent University and 10 students from the Philology Department of Ferghana State University, in total 11 males and 46 females. In order to gather data, the researcher administered 4 instruments, namely a background information form, the PLSP Questionnaire (Reid, 1987), Oxford's SILL (Version for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English, 1990), and the revised versions of I.S.P. Nation's 2000 Word Level and University Level Vocabulary Test.

The results of analyses showed that kinesthetic learning style was the most preferred perceptual learning mode (78.9 %), and it was followed by visual learning style, preferred by 41 students (71.9 %). Auditory and tactile learning styles were reported to be favored by 40 students, constituted 70.2 % of the sample. The individual learning style was reported to be favored by 35 students (61.4 %), and being the second social learning style, group learning style was negligible in this study as it was favored by only 24 students (42.1 %). The percentages added up to more than 100% in the study as the analyses of data revealed that most of the

participants had multiple major perceptual learning style preferences. The chi-square performed to find any significant difference in the frequency of the perceptual learning style preferences among the participants yielded no statistically significant difference. The results of the SILL demonstrated that an average of overall frequency of strategy use was 3.22, which was claimed to fall under the category of medium frequency. According to chi-squared analysis performed to identify any difference in strategy preference, the three most popular strategies were compensation, metacognitive and cognitive. On the other hand, the least preferred strategies turned out to be memory strategies in this study. The Pearson product moment correlation analysis revealed that some strategies significantly correlated with certain styles. Auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and individual learners reported using compensation strategy more frequently. Besides, the students who reported a major preference for visual and group learning also reported metacognitive strategy use. However, the data analyses indicated a negative correlation between two perceptual learning modes, namely visual and individual learning style preferences, and the vocabulary test scores. This result was said to be unexpected as it implied that the students who appeared to favor visual and individual learning style did not do well on the test.

## **2.2. Research on Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS)**

Among the four basic skills in language learning, listening has heretofore been relegated to a secondary position. However, the developments in language acquisition theory, especially the comprehensible input theory suggested by Krashen (1982), have underlined the significance of comprehension-before-production. Then, listening, ‘the Cinderella of the skills’ in language instruction (Vandergrift, 1997a), has started to be a focal interest in the field.

Listening, neglected as an area of instruction and an unattended area of research, needs in-depth research that will lead sufficient theoretical and practical implications for comprehension. This was also highlighted by several researchers (Oxford, 1993; Rubin, 1994; Vandergrift, 1997a) who assert that listening comprehension still remains a “fledgling field” that merits greater attention. On the other hand, as claimed by Vandergrift (2004), conducting research on listening

comprehension is relatively rather challenging for some reasons. First of all, it is the least explicit of all the language skills on account of its nature of processes. Moreover, comprehension cannot be externally observable as these processes are covert. Without listeners' overt responses to the speech, it could only be possible to infer what has been comprehended by those listeners. It is therefore research on listening comprehension requires special techniques which assist researcher in the study. Yet another factor that brings about difficulties for researcher is the lack of instruments to assess and evaluate listening comprehension. The efficacy of instrument is a primary determiner which provides valuable insight into what has been comprehended by listener. If not designed well, the instrument would not help with the comprehension problems of listener.

The research literature involves a multitude of investigations, which mainly focus on overall strategy use of a specific group of learners regarding some particular characteristics, such as ethnicity, language background, level of proficiency, gender, achievement. Many researchers conducted research on the relationship between language proficiency and overall language learning strategy use (Park, 1994; Park, 1997b; Rossi-Le, 1989).

After those previous studies on overall strategy use of language learners, the research attention regarding language learning strategy has focused on the specific strategies in the skill areas other than listening and speaking.

Though studies in listening comprehension are relatively limited in number and scope, studies in listening comprehension strategy are even more limited in number and scope (Rubin, 1994). McDonough (1999) calls for further investigation into the linkage between listening comprehension strategy and proficiency in the skill areas (especially listening and speaking), since it is undoubtedly necessary to discern the relationship between proficiency (in terms of both level of knowledge and task completion achievement) and the listening comprehension strategy use in order to elucidate the understanding of successful listeners and their strategy use.

In her review of second language listening comprehension research, Rubin (1994) groups research topics on listening comprehension strategy in second and foreign language teaching. These topics particularly involve listening comprehension strategy identification (the types of strategies) at different proficiency levels,

contrasting cognitive and metacognitive strategy use, listening comprehension strategy preference in relation to factors such as listener's background, task, setting, etc.

In attempt to explore the types of listening comprehension strategies employed by second language learners, Murphy (1985; 1987) carried out research with university students. Think-aloud protocols were employed by the researcher. The oral and written responses to listening selections were analyzed. Twelve specific strategies were identified and classified into four groups: *recalling*, (paraphrasing, revising, checking), *speculating* (inferring, connecting, personalizing, anticipating), *probing* (analyzing the topics, analyzing the conventions of language, evaluating the topics), and *introspecting* (self-evaluating, self-describing). The results showed that both high achievers and low achievers reported to differ in the frequency of strategies they employed. High achievers applied the strategies of *elaborating*, *anticipating*, *conclusion drawing*, *self-describing*, and *inferencing* more often than low achievers.

O'Malley et al. (1989) investigated the strategies employed by ESL listeners during the three cognitive processing phases of listening comprehension. Additionally, this study discerned any difference between more skilled and less skilled listeners' strategy use during the perceptual processing, parsing and utilization phases.

A qualitative analysis of the listener think-aloud protocols revealed that during the perceptual processing phase, *selective attention* and *directed attention* were the strategies which were highly employed by more skilled listeners.

During the parsing phase, more skilled listeners employed *grouping* and *inferencing* strategies which facilitated processing larger chunks and inferring when encountered anything unknown. Less skilled listeners, on the other hand, tried to catch what they heard by a word-by-word approach.

During the last phase, utilization phase, *elaboration* was the key strategy. It was also reported that the level of effectiveness was determined or highly affected by the degree of *elaboration* strategy use. Besides, the qualitative analysis demonstrated that more skilled listeners preferred using *self-monitoring*, *elaboration* and *inferencing* more than less skilled listeners.

Following O'Malley et al. (1989; 1990) on the relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and proficiency, Vandergrift (1996; 1998; 1999)

conducted a series of studies focusing on the types of listening comprehension strategy used by listeners at different levels of proficiency. With the help of retrospective self-report technique, researcher came up with explicit examples of both metacognitive, such as *planning* and *monitoring*, cognitive, such as *linguistic inferencing* and *elaborating*, and socio-affective strategy use, such as *questioning* and *self-encouragement*. Listeners were reported to employ metacognitive strategies more frequently at higher levels of proficiency. Interestingly, female participants reported a greater number of metacognitive strategies than male participants. The findings of this study validated O'Malley and Chamot's classification and later, stimulated the researcher to propose a pedagogic plan (Vandergrift, 1999) for helping listeners employ the metacognitive strategies at all levels of proficiency (Rost, 2001:7-14)

Vandergrift (1998) conducted a case study to analyze the think-aloud protocols of three groups of secondary school Core French students from different course levels. The purpose of the research was to understand how these students achieved comprehension. Listening comprehension protocols of successful and less successful listeners compared at 3 different levels of language proficiency. They revealed that novice listeners needed to use extra-linguistic contextual clues in order to predict and make inferences on a meaningful interpretation of a text. On the other hand, intermediate level listeners made effective use of both these clues and increased linguistic knowledge, which enabled them "to comprehend more details and deal with less ambiguity" Vandergrift (1998: 374). Researcher affirms that listening is a selective process; consequently, successful comprehension requires a careful selection of strategies. As it was demonstrated by the analysis of think-aloud protocols, metacognitive strategies play a key role in successful listening comprehension. Among the metacognitive strategies reported in the study, *monitoring of comprehension* appeared to be suggested as a superordinate strategy, directing other metacognitive strategies such as *prediction* and *selective attention* in addition to cognitive strategies such as *inferencing* and *elaboration*. Therefore, listeners' use of metacognitive strategies is of crucial *importance*. The findings of this study supported the previous research (O'Malley et al., 1990), in that, both studies suggested that metacognitive strategies have a potential role for enhancing success in second language listening (Vandergrift, 1999).

In another study conducted by Vandergrift (2003b), the types of strategies used by adolescent learners of French while engaged in listening to authentic texts and differences between more skilled and less skilled learners in the use of strategy were examined. The analyses of think-aloud data showed that statistically significant differences were identified in the use of metacognitive strategies and individual strategies for *comprehension monitoring*, *questioning for elaboration*, and *translation*. Furthermore, quantitative analysis of representative think-aloud protocols also revealed the same differences: more skilled listeners employed twice as many metacognitive strategies as less skilled listeners. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of think-aloud data underscored the orchestration of a cycle of cognitive and metacognitive strategies performed by the more skilled listeners to deal with the listening task.

Goh (1998b) carried out a study to identify the cognitive and metacognitive strategies and tactics employed by high ability and low ability listeners and to compare the use of two strategy groups through retrospective verbal reports. It was found that metacognitive strategies were used by the majority of both high ability and low ability listeners. *Selective attention*, *directed attention*, *real-time assessment of input*, *comprehension monitoring* and *comprehension evaluation* were among the metacognitive strategies reported as frequently employed by the high ability participants. On the other hand, low ability group did not report employing *real-time assessment of input* or *comprehension evaluation*. According to Goh (1998b: 142), low ability listeners were not able to employ metacognitive strategies in all three areas of *planning*, *monitoring* and *evaluation*; and this also revealed the difference between two groups in the study.

Bacon (1992a; 1992b) is another researcher who further examined the comprehension processes of listeners' learning Spanish at university. These processes of comprehension were dissected regarding to different factors such as level of comprehension and learning (1992b), gender (1992a), and the use of authentic input for comprehension (1992c). It was found that during the perceptual processing, participants were not able to make efficient use of context or advance organizers. Finally, the results indicate that participants found it difficult to use their prior knowledge and consider the appropriateness of their inferences due to time

constraints. Contrary to the expectations, researcher reported that monitoring strategy tended to be applied equally by both more skilled and less skilled listeners. Additionally, Bacon stressed that more skilled listeners were better at evaluating their comprehension (1992b:131). In the same series of research, Bacon (1993) examined the gender-based strategy use of foreign language learners of Spanish. The results indicated that female listeners reported to use more metacognitive strategies than male participants (Young and Oxford, 1997). Despite being not statistically significant, this result tends to concur with the findings of Vandergrift (1996), regarding gender factor.

Goh (2002b) carried out a study on comprehension strategies, which are used for facilitating understanding during listening, and learning strategies, which are used for improving listening ability in general, for listening employed by 118 ESL learners from China. In order to see whether there was an interaction between gender and strategy use she used a questionnaire. Though some studies on strategy use (Vandergrift, 1996; Bacon, 1993) have reported differences between female and male listeners, Goh's study (2002b) pointed out that differences between two genders appeared to be small, which indicated no statistically significant difference in strategy use. To the contrary, the findings revealed some similarities between two gender groups.

The research literature on perceptual learning style preferences and listening comprehension strategy use has recently provided some fascinating insights into the relationship between these two variables. In his state-of-art overview of general style preference and specific strategy choice in relation to language tasks, Cohen (2003:281) underlines the difficulty in determining the influence of style preferences on strategy choice of learner in a given task as there are some other factors such as age, prior experience in target language and other previously learnt languages, the current and intended level of proficiency in target language, the attitude and motivation towards the target language, personality and gender characteristics, and contextual variables (e.g. teacher and peer variables, setting, and so forth).

One recent study carried out by Chi (2001) considered the issue of style preferences and listening comprehension strategy use of university students who were all studying at English Center of Midwest University in the U.S (Cohen, 2003).



Participants of the study were 13 advanced ESL learners (9 females and from males; 10 from Asian countries, 1 from Russia, 1 from Tunisia and 1 from Mali). Researcher administered a Learning Style Preference Survey, which has items drawn from Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (1995) and Ehrman & Leaver's (2001) E&L Questionnaire. The second instrument administered to participants was a Listening Strategy Use Survey, which has item types and certain content from Oxford's SILL (1990), from Vandergrift (1997b) and Thompson & Rubin (1996). These studies and questionnaires were consulted while designing the second instrument. As a third instrument, a short comprehension quiz, consisting of seven short answers and 3 multiple choice questions, were employed. The quiz required the participants to make inferences and be aware of the visual aids.

After watching a seven-minute video, the aforementioned retrospective questionnaire and the listening quiz were completed by the participants. The retrospective questionnaire revealed the strategies participants used most before watching the video, while watching it for the first time, while watching it for the second time, when encountered any unknown vocabulary or did not comprehend something, and after watching it. The results of this study pointed out statistically significant relationships between various preferences for learning style and language learning strategies. In perceptual style preference perspective, learners who were reported to be more auditory and tactile-kinesthetic in style preference found to employ more social strategies. For the learning style preference and language learning strategy choice relationship, Oxford and Anderson (1995: 203) conclude that learner's culturally-influenced learning style has a prominent influence on strategy choice.

While identifying what listeners do throughout a listening activity, how they comprehend ongoing speech, and what strategies they employ to expedite their learning, researchers have also focused on the relationships between listening comprehension strategy use and several variables such as overall or task achievement in target language, level of course, gender, awareness towards listening comprehension strategy, etc.

In addition to these research interests in listening comprehension field, strategy instruction and its impact on listening comprehension strategy awareness and

achievement has become another profound focus of research in listening to date. There are several studies in listening comprehension strategy instruction in different settings (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Ross & Rost, 1991; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 1999; Vandergrift, 2002b; Vandergrift, 2003b).

### **Studies in Turkey**

Due to some difficulties in conducting research on listening comprehension which have also been faced by researchers investigating same issues abroad, the studies in listening comprehension strategy use are relatively small in number in Turkey. Another reason for limited research on listening comprehension strategy in Turkey could be a major focus on general learning strategy use, which yields general findings about language learning strategies, not specifically focusing on any particular strategy use in any basic skill. All in all, there could be seen an increasing attention to what specific strategies are employed by learners and the linkage between strategy use and, mainly, achievement, in four skills in language learning, which promises further developments in language learning research specialized in those skills.

In one of the earliest studies, Cinemre (1991) investigated the listening comprehension strategy types of EFL learners so as to find out the strategy types that differentiate good listeners from poor ones. Participants in this study were 16 graduate students enrolled in preparatory program at Karadeniz Technical University. Being designated as good or poor listeners by their teachers depending on the scores they had on listening comprehension tests, the research group consisted of 8 good and 8 poor listeners. Of the 16, 9 were females and 7 were males who had an intermediate level of general proficiency. Data on listening comprehension strategy use were collected through a student interview guide, which was developed and employed by the researcher himself. The instrument included six questions for metacognitive strategy use, fifteen questions for cognitive strategy use and one question for socio-affective strategy use; in total, 22 questions were answered by the participants during individual interviews. Each subject listened to a ten-minute tape before answering the questions in the interview guide. Researcher analyzed the taped interviews by tabulating the number of strategy types used and calculating the simple percentages of

each strategy group, following the same data analysis procedure in the study of O'Malley et al. (1985). According to the findings of this study, the number of cognitive and metacognitive strategy employed differentiated good listeners from the poor counterparts.

The results further demonstrated that the only metacognitive strategy that showed a significant difference in use between good and poor listeners was the reinforcement strategy. Besides, the study reported that there were only slight differences between two groups in the use of other metacognitive strategies such as *selective attention*, *self-management* and self-evaluation. Therefore, in contrast to O'Malley et al. (1985) the results revealed that there was almost no difference between good and poor listeners in terms of metacognitive strategy use. On the other hand, it was also found that the cognitive strategies which appeared to distinguish good listeners from the poor ones in descending order of significance were: *transfer*, *contextualization*, *questioning for clarification*, *resourcing* and *elaboration*. The most frequently used strategy by poor listeners was reported to be translation (8.2 %).

In order to pinpoint the possible effect of listening classes on the frequency of listening comprehension strategy use of the students who attended preparatory school before moving onto study at ELT department, Gerçek (2000) carried out a study at the ELT Department at Anadolu University. The sample of the study was comprised of 139 freshmen and it was divided into 2 depending on whether they had attended Preparatory School at university or not; 59 of the participants attended preparatory school and the remaining 80 did not. Researcher developed a Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) for the research purpose and it was administered twice; as an initial administration and a retest of the initial administration. The findings indicated no difference in the frequencies of listening comprehension strategy use between the participants who attended preparatory school and who did not.

In other words, as no significant difference was found between two groups, they are said to use listening comprehension strategies equally frequently ( $t = -1.1$ ,  $p < .26$ ). Moreover, the mean frequencies suggested that both groups used listening comprehension strategies in the medium range ( $X = 3.47$ ). In addition to these, the frequencies of individual strategy use were calculated for each group so as to

determine whether there was any difference in the frequencies of individual listening comprehension strategy use between the two groups. However, the *t*-test result demonstrated that the frequencies of individual strategy use did not vary significantly across the Prep-group and the Non-prep group.

Tütüniş (2001) designed a classroom-based research project to examine the effect of strategy training on listening performance. Besides, their learning style preferences and listening comprehension strategies were identified. Participants were 46 students enrolled in the preparatory year of the English Language Education Department at Trakya University. They were divided into 2 groups (experimental and control groups) randomly. As determined by a pretest administered at the beginning of the academic year, there was no significant performance difference between the experimental and control groups. For the research purpose, Cohen and Chi's Language Strategy Use Survey (2000) which was developed according to language skills and Oxford's Learning Style Preferences Survey (1993) were employed. Cohen and Chi's Language Strategy Use Survey (2000) demonstrated the frequent use of cognitive strategies such as *elaboration* and *inferencing*, and metacognitive strategies such as *monitoring*, *planning* and *organization* by the participants. Data collected via aforementioned instruments demonstrated that similar strategies, such as *elaboration* and *inferencing* were reported to be employed by the participants with audio-visual and global styles. However, no correlation was found between the learning style preferences and listening comprehension strategies of the participants. In the second part of the study, while the experimental group underwent explicit cognitive strategy training, the control group was deprived of such training. The two groups had a listening post-test which would present any performance difference between them. The post-test results indicated a significant performance difference between the experimental group and the control group; the former showed improvement in listening performance.

There can be cited two more studies on listening comprehension strategies, focused on strategy training, investigated the impact of awareness raising activities, strategy training and specifically the effect of combined metacognitive strategy training in listening comprehension. Uzakgören (2003) and Yeşilbursa (2002) tried to

see the impact of strategy training on learner's achievement. However, neither of these studies identified the listening comprehension strategies of learners.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD**

In this chapter of the study the research model, the universe and the sample of the research, data collecting instruments used in the research, the process of data collection and analysis are described and explained.

#### **3.1. The Model of the Research**

This is a descriptive study based on a survey research.

#### **3.2. The Universe and the Sample of the Study**

The universe of the current research is the intermediate level undergraduate Preparatory Program students at the School of Foreign Languages, Dokuz Eylül University in the spring term of 2005-2006 academic years.

There were a total of 209 intermediate level students involved in the data collection process. However, the students who either marked more than one choice in any of the instruments or left any item unanswered have been disregarded in this research. After 9 participants have been removed from the sample group and their responses have been eliminated, finally, the sample of the research consists of 200 participants.

In Table 3.1. the distribution of the participants involved in the sample of the research is demonstrated.

Table 3.1. The Distribution of the Participants in the Sample with regard to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	82	41.0
Male	118	59.0
Total	200	100.0

As it can be seen in Table 3.1. of all the 200 participants in the sample of the research, 82 of them are female and 118 of them are male.

The distribution of the participants involved in the sample of the research with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. The Distribution of the Participants in the Sample with regard to the Language Medium of Education after Preparatory Program

The Language Medium of Education After Preparatory Program	Frequency	Percent
English	83	41.5
Turkish	117	58.5
Total	200	100.0

The sample of the research is composed of 83 participants who will be English –medium students after preparatory program and 117 participants who will be Turkish-medium students after Preparatory Program.

### 3.3. Data Collecting Instruments

In this research, 4 instruments have been used with the purpose of collecting the data. A personal information form has been used in order to obtain data for gender and the language medium of education of the participants in the research. In order to collect data on the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants and listening comprehension strategies employed by them, 2 questionnaires have been applied.

The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) is the instrument which serves to gather information about the perceptual learning style preferences of students who learn English as a second or foreign language. The questionnaire was developed by Reid (1987) and designed and validated for ESL/EFL learners. As stated by Reid (1987), the validation of the questionnaire was done by the split half method. The questionnaire comprises of 30 statements, every 5 of which are on one level of the six learning style preferences. Correlation analysis of the original set of 60 statements (10 per learning style) determined which 5 statements should remain within each subset.

In the questionnaire a five-point Likert-Type scale has been used to determine the level of agreement or disagreement of the participants on each statement. The participants have responded to each statement by deciding whether they *strongly agree*, *agree*, are *undecided*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree* and afterwards mark the item that they think best describes their preference.

As there is a possibility of misunderstandings while responding to, the Turkish translation of the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire has been administered to the participants. The Turkish version of the questionnaire was previously used in Tabanlıoğlu's study on the pre-intermediate students studying English for academic purposes at the School of Foreign Languages and Informatics at the University of Bahçeşehir (2003). The questionnaire was translated into Turkish by the researcher herself, and a pilot study of the questionnaire for reliability was conducted with 30 students at the same school. The findings of this pilot study have indicated that the correlation of Alpha Reliability Coefficient was .82.

The third instrument used in the current study is the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory, hereafter LCSI, developed by Gerçek (2000). The



inventory has been based on Goh's (1998) study of "*How ESL Learners with Different Listening Abilities Use Comprehension Strategies and Tactics*". Besides, Rost (1990), O'Malley et al. (1985b) and Oxford (1990) were consulted by the researcher while determining the appropriateness of the statements formed for a five-point Likert-type inventory. Finally, 27 statements were formed regarding 13 listening comprehension strategies used by high- and low-ability students in the study of Goh (1998). In order to eliminate the possibility of any comprehension problem, the inventory has been developed in Turkish. The linguistics validity, construct validity and reliability of the inventory have been checked by the researcher through consultations, factor analysis and an internal consistency test. After the revisions made, 7 statements were eliminated. The Revised Edition of the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory consists of 20 statements with a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "*never or almost never used*" to "*always or almost always used*". The lowest possible score is 20 (1 point "*never or almost never used*" X 20 statements) and the highest score is 100 (5 points "*always or almost always used*" X 20 statements).

The internal consistency test of the LCSi has revealed that the inventory is considered to be reliable since the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .72 and item-total correlation for four factors was above .60. Besides, a test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the LCSi. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis indicated that the correlation between test-retest of the inventory was .76.

The last instrument used in the research is a listening comprehension test which is used to estimate the participants' ability to comprehend short questions or statements orally presented. The instrument, Listening Comprehension Test, was developed by English Language Institute- University of Michigan (1983). There are three forms of the Listening Comprehension Test, hereafter LCT, form 4, 5, 6, designed for three levels of proficiency: intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced. As the participants are all intermediate level students, Form 4 is the appropriate test for the sample of the current research. The test is a 45 item, 15 minute tape-recorded listening test. Test takers hear a short question or statement, and then chose the printed answer response that either answers the question or is similar in meaning to the statement. For each test statement, there are three possible choices.

However, the participants are allowed to hear the statements only once; none of the test sentences are repeated.

Since the LCT is used to assess the listening comprehension proficiency of non-native speakers of English who wish to pursue academic work at universities, it is suitable for the purpose of the current research.

The content validity and concurrent validity of the LCT was checked by the test designers as this instrument has been developed to be used by educational institutions and researchers, who purchase the test to assess the listening comprehension proficiency of adult non-native speakers of English.

Concurrent validity of the test was determined via correlations between LCT and some other standardized English proficiency tests. It is then indicated that correlations between those tests and the LCT are moderately high.

### **3.4. Data Collection**

In order to collect data on the issues related to the research questions all four instruments (the personal information form, the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire (PLSQ), the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI), and the Listening Comprehension Test (LCT) were combined into a booklet which were distributed to the participants with a separate answer sheet.

The booklets and the answer sheets were administered to all of the participants in the sample group by the researcher herself in order to provide the participants with the necessary explanations in case they had any question.

The participants were briefly informed of the purpose of the research and its components. They are also asked to answer the questions sincerely as it is extremely important for the credibility of the responses.

The time that was assigned for the participants was determined according to the time limits set previously by the developers of the instruments. Therefore, the participants were required to complete the LCT in 15 minutes, the LCSI in another 15 minutes, and finally respond to the statements in the PLSQ and the personal information form in 20 minutes; a total of 50 minutes were allotted for this process.

Afterwards, the separate answer sheets were collected and the responses of the participants were put on computer for data analysis.

### **3.5. Analysis of Data**

The data collected through the aforementioned instruments have been analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 14.0).

To analyze and describe the data obtained, Frequency, Mean, Percentage and Standard Deviation have been employed. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the rank order of any statement in both the LCSII and the PLSQ from the most preferred/ employed to the least preferred/ employed.

The Pearson product-moment correlation has been used to reveal whether there are significant relationships between the listening comprehension strategy use and the perceptual learning style preferences or the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants in this research.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this chapter, the findings gathered with the help of statistical analysis performed on the data obtained via methods and instruments explained in the previous chapter, and interpretations based on those findings are presented in the order of which the research question have been introduced.

#### **4.1. The Perceptual Learning Style Preferences of the Students**

The first research question of this study aims to identify the most common perceptual and social preferences of the participants which may affect the receiving, processing and retrieving the new information.

As for the identification of the most common preferences they reported to display, the cumulative scores, which each participant got from the perceptual style preferences Questionnaire, was calculated. After that, the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the scores are calculated. Each statement is listed with regard to its arithmetic mean so as to determine the most and the least common perceptual and social preferences of the participants for receiving, processing and retrieving the new information.

The findings obtained from this process are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. The Arithmetic Means and the Standard Deviations of the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) Scores of the Participants

STATEMENTS	X	sd
Understanding better when the teacher tells the instructions.	4.32	0.88
Remembering the learnt item better with the help of building a model related to it.	4.24	0.83
Learning better when the teacher lectures.	4.15	0.93
Learning by doing something in class	4.03	0.98
Learning better when physically engaged in an activity	4.01	0.93
Learning by doing experiments	3.87	1.14
Learning more with the help of model building	3.84	1.04
Learning better by seeing the item on the board	3.71	1.09
Learning better with the help of oral instruction	3.69	1.04
Completing more tasks while studying with others	3.68	1.07
Making drawings in order to learn better	3.68	1.08
Learning more with the help of group work	3.61	1.16
Recalling things easily after studying individually	3.59	1.15
Recalling instructions better if having read them	3.59	0.95
Comprehending better when the instructions are provided in written form	3.59	1.04
Learning more through participating in a class project	3.54	1.04
Learning best with the help of class activities	3.54	1.11
Comprehending better with the help of role playing activities.	3.52	1.16
Remembering the learnt item better if having studied it in class rather than having studied it individually through reading.	3.47	1.12
Learning better with the help of individual study	3.46	1.13
Working individually on projects	3.39	1.10

Table 4.1. The Arithmetic Means and the Standard Deviations of the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) Scores of the Participants (Continued.)

Studying alone	3.39	1.23
Contributing to class project	3.34	1.16
Working on a task with a few pupil	3.31	1.15
Better learning with the help of group study	3.25	1.16
Better learning through listening to someone in the class	3.19	1.06
Learning better through reading than through listening to someone	3.12	1.12
Studying in pairs or in groups	3.12	1.11
Learning more through reading textbooks than through listening to a lecture	3.07	1.14
Working better individually in class	2.94	1.11

The findings in Table 4.1. reveal that the most common preferences for receiving, processing and retrieving the new information are “understanding better when the teacher tells the instructions” ( $X= 4.32$ ), which signals auditory learning preference, “remembering the learnt item better with the help of building a model related to it” ( $X= 4.24$ ), which signals tactile learning preference and “learning better when the teacher lectures” ( $X= 4.15$ ), which signals auditory learning preference.

On the other hand, the least common preference, as being rated by the participants in this study, is “working better individually in class ( $X= 2.94$ ), which signals individual study preference. Following this, “learning more through reading textbooks than through listening to a lecture” ( $X= 3.07$ ), which signals visual learning preference and “studying in pairs or in groups” ( $X= 3.12$ ), which signals group learning preference, are the two preferences reported to be rarely preferred by the participants.

#### **4.2. The Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS) Employed by the Students**

The second research question of this study serves to identify the most common behaviors, in relation to the things done in order to enhance comprehension, displayed by the participants while listening.

In order to identify the most common behaviors displayed by the participants concerning listening lessons, the scores which they got from the LCS Inventory (Gerçek, 2000) are put together. Afterwards, the arithmetic mean and the Standard Deviation of each statement are calculated. With regard to arithmetic means, the statements of the questionnaire are listed in a descending order.

The findings are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. The Arithmetic Means and the Standard Deviations of the Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use Scores of the Participants

STATEMENTS	X	sd
Asking no question while listening	3.57	1.17
Attending the listening lessons without any preparation	3.55	1.37
Sharing ideas about his/her own comprehension while having a listening exercise	3.50	1.16
Not being able to focus on the listening activity again if once lose concentration	3.48	1.14
Taking a note of what is being listened to	3.26	1.24
Translating what has been heard while listening into Turkish	3.23	1.16
Preparing oneself for the activity before listening to it	3.17	1.27
Evaluating what has been comprehended during the activity after listening	3.04	1.09
Doing no translation in order to comprehend better the message given in English	2.98	1.17
Feeling serious anxiety about not being able to comprehend the message while listening	2.97	1.20
Taking no note of what has been listened to.	2.96	1.22
Taking notice of context	2.75	1.05
Keeping concentrated on listening even if there are unknown vocabulary presented in the activity	2.74	1.08
Evaluating one's own level of listening comprehension and success or failure after the activity	2.65	1.17
Organizing the ideas heard in the activity and establishing linkages between the new ideas and previous knowledge	2.63	1.04
Not being able to give one's full attention to the listening activity if the topic is not relevant to his/ her interests	2.62	0.96
Focusing on the listening activity again after being diverted away	2.42	1.03
Anticipating what the listening activity will be about with the help of the title of the activity, the visual aids, and prepare oneself mentally for the activity.	2.41	1.22
Taking notes of every word heard in the activity	2.27	1.17
Quitting listening in case of any unknown vocabulary during the activity	2.08	0.98



The results of descriptive statistics performed to identify the most and the least common behaviors displayed by the participants in listening lessons reveal that the most common behavior is “asking no question while listening” ( $X= 3.57$ ), related to “*asking for clarification*” strategy which is subsumed under the group of cognitive strategies. Following this, “attending the listening lessons without any preparation” ( $X= 3.55$ ), related to “*arranging/ planning for one’s own learning*” strategy (metacognitive strategy), and “sharing ideas about his/her own comprehension while having a listening exercise” ( $X= 3.50$ ), related to “*comprehension monitoring*” strategy (metacognitive strategy), are reported to be among the most common behaviors displayed by the participants.

The findings in Table 4.2. also demonstrate that the least common behaviors displayed in listening lessons are “quitting listening in case of any unknown vocabulary during the activity” ( $X= 2.08$ ), related to “*real time assessment of input*” strategy which is subsumed under the group of metacognitive strategies, “taking notes of every word heard in the activity” ( $X= 2.27$ ), related to “*note taking*” strategy (cognitive strategy) and “anticipating what the listening activity will be about with the help of the title of the activity, the visual aids, and prepare oneself mentally for the activity” ( $X= 2.41$ ), related to “*prediction*” strategy (cognitive strategy).

### **4.3. The Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement of the Students**

The third research question of this study aims to determine the level of listening comprehension of the participants.

Firstly, the test scores of the participants are computed. Then, the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of their test scores are calculated.

The findings gathered from that process are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. The Minimum and Maximum Listening Comprehension Test (LCT) Scores of the Participants, the Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation

N	Min	Max	X	sd
200	15.00	37.00	26.84	3.70

The figures in Table 4.3. indicate that the highest score achieved in the Listening Comprehension test is 37.00 out of 45.00 whereas the lowest is 15.00. The calculation results show that the arithmetic mean of the test scores is 26.84 and the standard deviation is 3.70.

#### **4.4. The Relationship between the Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS) Employed by the Students and Their Perceptual Learning Style Preferences**

The fourth research question serves to find out whether there is any statistically significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategies employed by the participants and their perceptual learning style preferences.

As for the analysis of this problem, the minimum and maximum scores, the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the scores for the strategy use of the participants as well as for the style preferences are calculated.

The findings obtained from this process are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. The Minimum and Maximum Test Scores, the Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use Scores and the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) Scores of the Participants

	N	Min	Max	X	sd.
LCS use	200	38.00	76.00	58.25	7.33
Style	200	47.00	150.00	107.17	12.44

The results of descriptive statistics applied reveal that the minimum score of the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants is 38.00 and the maximum score is 76.00, with an arithmetic mean of 58.25 and a standard deviation of 7.33.

On the other hand, for the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants, the minimum score is 47.00 and the maximum score is 150.00. The arithmetic mean of the scores is found to be 107.17 and the standard deviation is 12.44.

In order to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use and the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants in this study, the Pearson product-moment correlation is computed.

The findings are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Correlation between the Listening Comprehension Strategy Use and the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences of the Participants

	N	r	Sig.	Level of Significance
LCS use – Style	200	-.256(**)	0.000	p< 0.001

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

According to the findings in Table 4.5., there is a significant negative relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use and the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants in this study. In other words, the listening comprehension strategy use is negatively correlated with the perceptual learning style preferences at  $p < 0.001$  significance level, the correlation coefficient being -0.256.

#### **4.5. The Relationship between the Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS) Employed by the Students and Their Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement**

The fifth research question of this study aims to investigate the relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants and their level of listening comprehension achievement and indicate whether any statistically significant relationship between them.

The analysis of descriptive statistics demonstrated the minimum and maximum scores of listening comprehension strategy use and the level of listening comprehension achievement and the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the listening comprehension strategy use and the level of listening comprehension achievement.

Table 4.6. The Minimum and Maximum Test Scores, the Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use Scores and the Listening Comprehension Test Scores of the Participants

	N	Min	Max	X	sd
LCS use	200	38.00	76.00	58.25	7.33
Achievement	200	15.00	37.00	26.84	3.70

The findings reveal that the minimum score of the listening comprehension strategy use is 38.00 and the maximum is 76.00. The findings also show that the arithmetic mean is 58.25 and the standard deviation is 7.33 of the listening comprehension strategy use score of the participants.

The analyses of the test scores, which the participants got in the listening comprehension test, demonstrate that the minimum score is 37.00, with an arithmetic mean of 58.25 and a standard deviation of 7.33.

As it has been mentioned in 4.3. in this chapter, the highest test score is 37.00 whereas the lowest is 15.00. The arithmetic mean of the test scores is 26.84 and the standard deviation of those scores is 3.70.

The Pearson product-moment correlation is computed so as to find out whether a statistically significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants and their level of listening comprehension achievement exists or not.

The findings gathered from that process are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Correlation between the Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use and the Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement of the Participants

	N	r	Sig.	Level of Significance
LCS use- Achievement	200	-.003	.967	p> 0.001

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis on the listening comprehension strategy use scores and the listening comprehension test scores of the participants reveal that the listening comprehension strategy use has no significant relationship with the listening comprehension achievement ( $r= 0.003$ ,  $p> 0.001$ ).

#### **4.6. The Relationship between the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) of the Students and Their Gender**

The sixth research question in this study serves to find out whether the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants indicate significant differences with regard to gender.

As for the analysis of this problem, the perceptual learning style scores of the female and male participants are calculated. Afterwards, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of those scores are computed. Finally, t-test is applied so as to determine whether differences between the arithmetic means of the female and the male participants are statistically significant or not.

The results of that process are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. The Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, t Values, p Values and the Levels of Significance of the Scores of the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) of the Participants with regard to Gender

Gender	N	X	sd	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.	Level of Significance
Female	82	109.68	9.29	1.03	2.410	0.017	p< 0.05
Male	118	105.42	14.0	1.29			

As the Table 4.8. demonstrates the arithmetic mean of scores the female participants got (109.68) are higher than that of the male participants got (105.42). The results also show that the standard deviation of the female participants is 9.29 and that of male participants is 14.00.

The *t*-test analysis show that *t*-value is 2.410 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicates that the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants indicate significant differences with regard to gender. According to the findings, the female participants have significantly higher perceptual learning style scores than their male counterparts.

#### **4.7. The Relationship between the Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS) Employed by the Students and Their Gender**

The seventh research question in this study aims to investigate whether the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants indicates significant differences with regard to gender.

As for the analysis of this problem, the listening scores of the female participants and the male participants are put together. Later, the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of those scores are computed. Lastly, *t*-test is done in

order to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the arithmetic means of the female participants and their male counterparts.

The findings are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. The Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, t Values, p Values and the Levels of Significance of the Scores of the Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use with regard to Gender

Gender	N	X	sd	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.	Level of Significance
Female	82	57.23	7.41	.82	1.64	0.103	p> 0.05
Male	118	58.95	7.22	.67			

The findings indicate that the arithmetic mean of the male participants ( $X=58.95$ ) is higher than that of the female participants ( $X=57.23$ ). Besides, the results also show that the standard deviation of the female participants' scores is 7.41 and that of the male participants' is 7.22.

The calculation results of t-test analysis reveal that t-value is 1.636 ( $p>0.05$ ). Concerning the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants, the t-value indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the listening comprehension strategy use scores of female participants and those of the male participants at the level of 0.05.

#### **4.8. The Relationship between the Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement of the Students and Their Gender**

The eighth research question in this study serves to find out whether the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants indicates differences with regard to gender. As for the analysis of this problem, the listening comprehension test



scores of the female participants and the male participants are computed. Afterwards, the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of those scores are calculated. Finally, *t*-test is applied in order to determine whether differences between the arithmetic means of the two groups of participants are statistically significant or not. The findings of this process are demonstrated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. The Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, *t* Values, *p* Values and the Levels of Significance of the Scores of the Listening Comprehension Test (LCT) of the Participants with regard to Gender

Gender	N	X	sd	Std. Error Mean	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Level of significance
Female	82	26.76	3.52	.39	0.25	0.802	$p > 0.05$
Male	118	26.89	3.83	.35			

The data analysis reveals that the arithmetic means of the test scores of the female participants ( $X = 26.76$ ) and the male participants ( $X = 26.89$ ) are very close to each other.

The results also demonstrate that the standard deviation of the test scores of the male participants is 3.83 whereas that of the female participants is 3.52.

The *t*-test applied on the listening comprehension test scores of both genders reveals that *t*-value is 0.251 ( $p > 0.05$ ).

This value indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the comprehension achievement scores of the female participants and their male counterparts at the level of 0.05 in this listening comprehension test.

**4.9.The Relationship between the Listening Comprehension Strategies (LCS)  
employed by the Students and the Language Medium of Education after  
Preparatory Program**

The ninth research question in this study aims to investigate whether the listening comprehension strategy use of the participants indicate any statistically significant difference with regard to the language medium of education after the preparatory program.

In the analysis of this problem, first, the participants are divided into 2 with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program. Then, the scores of listening comprehension strategy use of each group are calculated. With the help of this calculation, the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the scores of each group is computed. Finally, t-test is applied so as to determine whether differences between the arithmetic means of the two groups of participants are statistically significant or not.

The findings are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. The Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, t Values, p Values and the Levels of Significance of the Scores of the Listening Comprehension strategy Use Scores of the Participants with regard to the Language Medium of Education After Preparatory Program

The Language Medium of Education After Preparatory Program	N	$\bar{x}$	sd	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.	Level of Significance
English	83	58.76	7.48	.82			
Turkish	117	57.88	7.23	.67	0.835	0.405	p> 0.05

As it can be seen in Table 4.11., the arithmetic mean of the participants who will receive English- medium education after preparatory program is 58.76, and that of the participants who will receive Turkish- medium education after preparatory program is 57.89. The standard deviation of the scores of the former is 7.49 and the latter is 7.23.

The calculation results show that t-value is 0.835 ( $p > 0.05$ ). It reveals that the listening comprehension use of the participants indicate no statistically significant differences with regard to the language medium of education after the preparatory program at the level of 0.05.

#### **4.10. The Relationship between the Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement of the Students and the Language Medium of Education after Preparatory Program**

The last research question aims to find out whether the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants indicates statistically significant differences with regard to the language medium of education after the preparatory program.

First of all, the listening comprehension test scores of the participants who will receive English-medium education after preparatory program and of those who will receive Turkish-medium education after preparatory program are computed. Afterwards, the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of the test scores are calculated for both groups. In order to determine whether the differences between the level of listening comprehension achievement and the language medium of education are statistically significant, t-test is applied.

The findings are demonstrated in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. The Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, t Values, p Values and the Levels of Significance of the Scores of the Listening Comprehension Test Scores of the Participants with regard to the Language Medium of Education After Preparatory Program

The Language Medium of Education After Preparatory Program	N	$\bar{x}$	sd	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.	Level of Significance
English	83	26.67	3.75	.41			
Turkish	117	26.95	3.67	.34	0.516	0.607	p> 0.05

The data analysis reveals that the arithmetic mean of the test scores of the participants who will receive English-medium education after preparatory program is 26.67 and that of who will receive Turkish-medium education after preparatory program is 26.95.

As for the standard deviations demonstrate that the standard deviation of the scores of the former is 3.75 and that of the latter is 3.67.

The calculation results show that t- value is 0.516. This value reveals that the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants indicates no statistically significant differences with regard to the language medium of education after the preparatory program.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this chapter of the study, the conclusions drawn from the findings yielded by the data collecting instruments are highlighted with discussions of these conclusions. Finally, suggestions for both further research and for teaching are presented.

#### 5.1. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first part of this section presents the findings of the Perceptual Learning Questionnaire. The following part of this section deals with the findings of the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory. The last part of this section reveals the results of the Listening Comprehension Test.

##### 5.1.1. Conclusions and Discussions Related to the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP)

According to the findings obtained from the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire, the most common preferences for the physiological and social learning styles were found to be “understanding better when the teacher tells the instructions” ( $X= 4.32$ ), which appears to be a preference for auditory learning, “remembering the learnt item better with the help of building a model related to it” ( $X= 4.24$ ), which appears to be a preference for tactile learning, and finally “learning better when the teacher lectures” ( $X= 4.15$ ), which appears to be a preference for auditory learning again.

On the other hand, “working better individually in class ( $X= 2.94$ ) was found to be the least common preference, which appears to be a preference for individual learning. Following this, “learning more through reading textbooks than through

listening to a lecture” ( $X=3.07$ ), which appears to be a preference for group learning, are the two preferences reported to be rarely preferred by the participants.

The current study also aimed to find out whether there were differences in learning style preference scores of the participants with regard to gender. According to the findings, the female participants had significantly higher perceptual learning style scores than their male counterparts.

These findings partly agree with other studies conducted Turkey and abroad.

For instance, Reid (1987) investigated the perceptual and social learning style preferences of 1388 ESL students from different multicultural groups. The results of the study demonstrated that participants had a minor or negligible preference for group work. It was also found that tactile and visual learning were strongly preferred by the participants; especially the male participants preferred tactile and visual learning more often than the female participants.

Also Park (1997b) conducted a study on the perceptual and social learning style profile of 1283 secondary school students from different cultural backgrounds. It was revealed that the participants appeared to have multiple learning style preferences, exhibiting almost all four perceptual learning style modes. Furthermore, the findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences in auditory, visual, group and individual learning style preferences among high-achievers, middle-achievers and low-achievers. Both high-achievers (18.04) and middle-achievers (18.06) had major preference for auditory learning. Additionally, both high-achievers (17.45) and middle-achievers (16.83) had minor preference for visual learning. All three groups of participants had indicated either a negative or a minor preference for group learning.

Another study conducted by Park (1997a) on the relationship between perceptual learning style preferences of secondary school students and achievement demonstrated that middle and low achievers had a minor preference for group learning whereas high-achievers had a negative preference for group learning, which seems to be compatible with the findings of previous study of the researcher. However, Park’s study (1997a) also pointed out that visual learning was the most preferred learning style by high-achievers, which has been among the least reported learning style preferences ( $X= 3.07$ ) in the current research.

Cheng & Banya (1998) found out that the most preferred perceptual and social learning styles of participants in their study were auditory, tactile and individual learning. The current study appears to concur with the findings of Cheng & Banya's study (1998) about the most preferred learning styles, except for the individual learning, which was reported to be the least preferred learning style of the participants of the current study.

Rossi-Le (1995) investigated the role of perceptual learning style preferences in learning behaviors and the possible relationship between participants' perceptual learning style preference and language learning strategies in her study. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants tended to have tactile and kinesthetic modes as their learning style preferences. Besides, a minor preference for individual learning was reported by the participants. In the current study, the statement concerning the individual learning style was reported to be one of the least preferred style preferences by the participants.

In attempt to find out the relationship between academic achievement of EFL preparatory school students and the level of matching of their preferred learning style preferences and their teachers', Çekiç (1991) conducted a study with 60 students at Anadolu University. One of the notable results of this research is contradictory to the findings of the current research; in that the least preferred learning style mode was auditory whereas the data analysis indicated that auditory mode of learning style preference was the most preferred one in the current research.

Tabalıoğlu (2003), in her MA Thesis, investigated the perceptual learning style preferences and language learning strategies of pre-intermediate participants at the School of Foreign Languages and Informatics at the University of Bahçeşehir. The Turkish translation of the Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire (Reid, 1987) was administered so as to obtain data for perceptual learning style preferences of the participants. According to the findings about the perceptual learning style preferences, auditory and individual learning style preferences were the two major perceptual learning style modes of the participants. In parallel with Reid's (1987) and the current research's findings, the participants of this study reported a negative preference for group learning.

Gorevanova (2000) aimed to find out the relationship between the perceptual learning style preferences, language learning strategies and English vocabulary size of the participants in her study. The results of analyses concerning the perceptual learning style preferences of the participants revealed that most preferred learning style mode was kinesthetic learning, which was followed by visual learning style mode. Auditory and tactile learning style modes were also reported to be favored by 40 out of 47 students participated in this study. Therefore, as highlighted by the researcher herself, most of the participants had multiple major learning style preferences. Being favored by only 24 participants, group learning style preference appeared to be negligible in the study. The findings of the current study comport with the aforementioned studies conducted in Turkey particularly about preferences for auditory and tactile learning style modes, and minor or negligible preferences for group learning.

### **5.1.2. Conclusions and Discussions Related to the Listening Comprehension Strategy (LCS) Use**

According to the results of the Listening Comprehension Strategy Use Inventory, the most common behaviors displayed by the participants concerning listening activities were “asking no question while listening” ( $X=3.57$ ), which is related to *asking for clarification* in the subset of cognitive strategies, “attending the listening lessons without any preparation” ( $X= 3.55$ ), which is related to *arranging/ planning for one’s own learning* in the subset of metacognitive strategies, and “sharing ideas about one’s own comprehension while having a listening exercise” ( $X= 3.50$ ), which is related to *comprehension monitoring* in the subset of metacognitive strategies.

It was also found out that the least common behavior displayed in listening activities was “quitting listening in case of any unknown vocabulary during the activity” ( $X= 2.08$ ), which is related to *real time assessment of input* subsumed into the group of metacognitive strategies. The behaviors of “taking notes of every word heard in the activity” ( $X= 2.27$ ), which is related to *note taking* (cognitive strategy) and “anticipating what the listening activity will be about with the help of the title of the activity, the visual aids, and prepare oneself mentally for the activity” ( $X=2.41$ ),



which is related to *prediction* (cognitive strategy), were reported not to be frequently displayed by the participants in the current research.

O'Malley et al. (1989) conducted a study on the strategies employed by ESL listeners during the perceptual processing, parsing and utilization phases of listening comprehension. As the researchers focused on the strategies employed during the three cognitive processing phases, they were able to draw a more comprehensive picture of the strategy use in listening. Among the cognitive strategies, *grouping*, *inferencing* and *elaborating* were the strategies employed by more skilled participants. On the other hand, *selective attention*, *directed attention* and *self monitoring* were among the metacognitive strategies more skilled participants used.

Vandergrift (1998) analyzed the listening comprehension protocols of successful and less successful listeners compared at 3 different levels of language proficiency. The findings obtained from the analysis of think-aloud protocols of the participants revealed that in the group of metacognitive strategies, *comprehension monitoring* appeared to be a superordinate strategy. The current study indicated a similar result that *comprehension monitoring* was one of the most common behavior displayed by the participants. *Comprehension monitoring* was also considered to be one of the crucial strategies, which differentiated more skilled listeners from the less skilled ones (Vandergrift, 2003b).

Goh (1998b) investigated the cognitive and metacognitive strategies and tactics employed by high ability and low ability listeners through retrospective verbal reports. Along with other results, it was found that low ability group did not report employing *real-time assessment of input* strategy, which involves dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in order to achieve comprehension and noticing problems during listening.

The current study indicated that the participants rarely quit listening in case of unknown vocabulary during the activity.

Cinemre (1991) conducted a study on the listening comprehension strategies employed by good and poor listeners. With the help of a student interview guide developed by the researcher himself, it was found out that in the use of metacognitive strategies, *self-reinforcement* was the only strategy that indicated significant difference between good and poor listeners. Besides, *asking for clarification* was

identified as one of the cognitive strategies that appeared to distinguish good listeners from the poor ones in the study. The participants in the sample of the current study reported *asking for clarification* as the most common behavior displayed in the listening activities.

Gerçek (2000) carried out a study with 139 freshmen at the ELT Department of Anadolu University. The study aimed to investigate differences in strategy use of the Prep-Group, which consisted of 59 students attended preparatory program, and the Non-prep Group, which consisted of 80 students who did not attend the preparatory program of the university. The results of the study indicated no significant difference between the Prep-Group and Non-prep Group in terms of listening comprehension strategy use. The frequencies of individual strategy use revealed that the participants both in Prep-Group and Non-prep Group were reported giving up listening when they hear any unknown vocabulary ( $X= 4.0$  of Prep-Group and  $X= 4.2$  of Non-prep Group). However, in the current study it was revealed that “quitting listening in case of any unknown vocabulary during the activity” ( $X= 2.08$ ) was the least common behaviour displayed by the participants. Therefore, there is a clear contradiction between these two studies in terms of *real-time assessment of input* strategy. This contradiction is can be due to several factors such as the level of proficiency, motivation and previous experience. As the participants of Gerçek’s study were all ELT department freshmen, they must have been more proficient than the intermediate level participants of the current research. Therefore, the participants of Gerçek’s study had to deal with more challenging listening tasks when compared to the participants in the sample of the current study. This may led the former be more sensitive to the unknown vocabulary encountered in the activity. On the other hand, the latter was a bit more determined to achieve the task. Besides, according to the findings of Gerçek’s study, “asking no question while listening”, “attending the listening lessons without any preparation”, and “sharing ideas about one’s own comprehension while having a listening exercise” were not reported to be displayed as frequently as they were in the current study.

Consequently, there may be several factors, particularly related to characteristics of the samples of the two studies; and those factors may generate differences between the findings of these studies.

Another research question of the current study aimed to find out any difference in listening comprehension strategy use with regard to gender. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference between female and male participants in the use of listening comprehension strategies. This is also concurs with Goh's study (2002b), which pointed out that differences between two genders appeared to be small indicating no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension strategy use.

This study also examined whether there were any differences in listening comprehension strategy use with regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program. This is the only study which has focused on the participants' language medium of education and sought an answer for the difference in the use of listening comprehension strategies regard to the language medium of education after preparatory program. However, the findings indicated no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension strategy use between English-medium participants ( $X= 58.76$ ) and Turkish-medium participants ( $57.89$ ).

The relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use and the perceptual learning style preferences was another research question in the current study. According to the findings of this study, there was a statistically significant negative relationship between the scores of listening comprehension strategy use of the participants and their scores of learning style preferences ( $r= -0.256$   $p<0.001$ ). In other words, the higher the scores of listening comprehension use of the participants, the lower the scores of learning style preferences.

As other studies in the field have either focused on overall strategy use in language learning or deal with any skill area other than listening, the linkage between listening comprehension strategy use and learning style preferences needs to be further explored.

The research interests for the listening comprehension strategy use has led several researchers examine the relationship between language learning strategy use and achievement. A number of the studies conducted in the field (O'Malley et al. 1989; Vandergrift, 1996; Vandergrift, 1998), put forward that there were differences in listening comprehension strategy use between successful and less successful listeners in terms of type and number of the strategies they employ. To the contrary

what was expected, the correlation analysis of the listening comprehension strategy use scores and the listening comprehension test scores of the participants revealed that there was no significant relationship between the listening comprehension strategy use and the comprehension achievement in the current study.

### **5.1.3. Conclusions and Discussions Related to the Level of Listening Comprehension Achievement**

Another research dimension was the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants in the sample group of the current study.

The calculation of results indicated that the highest score achieved in the Listening Comprehension Test (LCT) was 37.00 out of 45.00 whereas the lowest score was 15.00 with an arithmetic mean of 26.84 and standard deviation of 3.70.

In order to find out whether the level of listening comprehension achievement of the participants indicated differences with regard to gender, the test scores of the female and male participants were calculated. The data analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the female participants and their male counterparts.

The last research finding of the current research was that there was no significant difference in listening comprehension test scores with regard to the language medium of education of the participants after preparatory program. However, it was expected that there would be significant difference between the test scores of participants who would be English-medium students after preparatory program and the test scores of those who would be Turkish-medium students after preparatory program since the former would carry out all verbal and written classwork, assignments, and practical work in English.

## 5.2. SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the learning style preferences of undergraduate English preparatory program students of Dokuz Eylül University, the listening comprehension strategies and achievement.

The sample of this study consisted of merely intermediate level undergraduate preparatory program students of the School of Foreign Languages; therefore the findings have validity only for the participants in the sample of this study, in the 2005-2006 academic years. The sample of the research can involve more participants from different preparatory programs of different universities.

In the light of the findings of the current study, certain suggestions can be given.

Since the notion of learner in language learning and teaching has undergone a profound change over the past few decades, research on learner diversity, such as learners' strengths and weaknesses, interests, sense of responsibility, level of motivation and approach to studying has become increasingly important for language education. The characteristics brought by individual into the class signify the uniqueness of the learner; thus, those characteristics must be realized and valued by educators, as well as researchers (Kinsella, 1995:170).

The first dimension of the current study was the learning style preferences and it was tried to identify the perceptual and social learning style preferences of the participants. The preferences of the participants, which were identified with the help of the Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire, have revealed that the participants feel comfortable and claim to understand better when the teacher tells them the instructions before an activity. Therefore, this conclusion suggests that the participants need an oral explanation for starting any activity.

Thus, the language teachers should introduce the topic or aim of the activity orally, which may help those learners with the task at hand.

Besides, the participants were found to learn through listening to a lecture by teacher than through reading textbooks. However, the participants may feel the necessity for "flexing" their style preferences, in that they may have several course instructors possessing different teaching styles. Because of the fact that the

participants mainly preferred to be lectured to read, and that they may also be required to read the material in order to learn the information without any class lecture, these participants may need to accommodate themselves to the course requirements. In other words, students should be encouraged to diversify their style preference. By doing so, students may feel comfortable even in the most style-challenging case in learning.

Moreover, as suggested by Oxford & Anderson (1995:212), teachers should identify their own learning style preferences, as well as their students', and avoid valuing some preferences subconsciously more highly than others due to style matching.

In order to solve this style matching/ mismatching problem, teachers should offer a great variety of activities within a learner-centered approach.

As well as other levels of education, tertiary education requires students to build and develop a strong basis for theoretical knowledge of and practical application for the subject the students will study. It is therefore, developing skills for academic listening and lecture comprehension is of great importance for these students.

However, it should also be taken into consideration that in order to listen to lectures, conversations and discussions so as to understand and store the information for later recall, and use that information in any production skill, students should be cognitively engaged in and metacognitively aware of the listening comprehension process. In addition to this, students should be encouraged to generate their own ways for receiving, storing, and recalling what they have listened to and employ appropriate listening comprehension strategies to improve the task performance.

In order to make consistent use of particular strategies at appropriate points in listening so as to comprehend the input, students should recognize the strategies they use and the strategies they need to use for better comprehension. Thus, students should become aware of various strategies employed in listening comprehension. Awareness-raising activities, implicit or explicit instruction for listening comprehension strategies can enable students realize the importance of the use of appropriate strategies for different types of tasks. As learning strategies are different from learning style preferences particularly in that the former is considered to be

conscious processes, an awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension strategies can facilitate their comprehension improvement. Besides, development of metacognitive strategic awareness and cognitive strategy application and evaluation for listening comprehension may also expedite learning in other skill areas. Furthermore, curriculum developers and material designers should take cognizance of learner needs in terms of listening comprehension and strategy use and supply both teachers and students with new syllabus and tools for highlighting the listening comprehension strategies in listening.

It has been widely acknowledged that research into listening comprehension, and, particularly, listening comprehension strategies is limited in number and scope. Due to several factors, such as the nature of listening process, the deficiency in assessment valid and reliable instruments, physical setting, conducting a study on listening comprehension and strategy use in listening is relatively difficult. Therefore, a multitude of questions as to listening comprehension has demanded pertinent answers. On the other hand, the current study merely investigated a few factors relating to listening comprehension, namely learning style preferences, listening comprehension strategy use, achievement, gender and the language medium in tertiary education.

Further research may focus on identification of listening comprehension strategy use with regard to proficiency levels, which may generate new insights into the strategy use of students who belong to different levels of proficiency in listening.

The listening comprehension strategies employed by secondary school students also deserve to be explored as research findings can indicate the similarities and dissimilarities between the comprehension strategy use in listening activities in secondary education and tertiary education. The findings can prove to be beneficial for remedial teaching which can be designed particularly for false-beginners, who have great difficulty in listening activities in English preparatory programs at university.

Additionally, the relationship between the strategies employed for listening comprehension in mother tongue of students and those in second language can be investigated so as to reveal any transfer of strategies employed for comprehension.

According to the findings of current research, there were no significant relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and achievement. However, research literature on comprehension strategies asserts that there is a linkage between strategy use and achievement in listening comprehension. For this reason the research can be replicated in a similar context, but with a different research procedure. As the current study only conducted with the help of written assessment methods (the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire, the Listening Comprehension Strategy Use Inventory, the Listening Comprehension Test), studies which will further involve other methods, such as think-aloud protocols, retrospective verbal reports, interviews, for identifying listening comprehension strategy use can generate beneficial findings for listening comprehension strategy use of participants.

With the help of all further attempts to flesh out the listening comprehension processes of students and comprehension strategies employed, teachers can incorporate the appropriate comprehension strategies into listening activities and encourage their students to “flex” their learning style preferences depending on the task requirements and therefore, students can capitalize on the comprehension strategies to accomplish the task. Thus, it can be possible for students to be more motivated and to gain control of their learning, which finally stimulate the purpose of language learning: communication.



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