Analysis of language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts of preparatory school students

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Abstract

This study identifies the usage of language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts on foreign languages regarding gender and language marks. It is designed in both correlation model and descriptive comparative model. The research sample is composed of 184 preparatory school students studying at a state university. Two questionnaires are used in the collection of data: Oxford's Language Learning Strategies Scale (1990) and Ünal's (2015) Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Language Scale. The findings show that the use of language learning strategies is moderate and metacognitive strategies are the most widely used ones. The strategies that are used more are indirect ones while cognitive strategies are the least frequently employed ones. Additionally, while female students use indirect strategies more than males, the use of direct strategies does not differ significantly according to gender. Also, in terms of foreign language scores, it is found out that students with higher marks tend to use indirect strategies more. The findings also indicate that stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages are moderate. The highest mean scores are indicated by regret and collectivity when compared to the other categories. In terms of gender, the stereotypical thoughts of students differ significantly in favor of female students in categories as regret and collectivity. Regarding language scores, the level of stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language is high for unsuccessful students while successful ones tend to have less stereotypical thoughts. Finally, there is a mild and inverse relationship between the use of language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts towards languages.

Keywords: Language learning strategies; stereotypical thoughts; meta-cognitive strategies; preparatory school students; foreign language teaching

1. Introduction

Recently, an emphasis has been placed on learning foreign languages in research studies, with a focus on language learning strategies (Oxford, 2016). Various studies have confirmed that these strategies help students become more effective learners and encourage efficient postgraduate masters (Wong & Nunan, 2011). However, the structure and relation between LLS and stereotyped thoughts on foreign languages are not known.

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Different studies focused on the use of LLS and aimed at identifying the strategies that students use most often (Alhaysony, 2017; Dawadi, 2017; Charoento, 2016; Al-Qahtani, 2013) some other studies focusing on school-aged students have dealt with the implementation of LLS (Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017; Chen, 2014; Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014). To investigate LLS, studies often address the use of LLS in language learning to foster learning and improve language skills (Rao, 2016; Charoento, 2016; Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014; Al-Qahtani, 2013; Chen, 2009). Some researchers have highlighted that the use of strategy is mainly determined by mastery. More competent LLS students employed a wider spectrum of strategies than less successful ones (Rao, 2016; Wu, 2008). Some studies analyzed the impact of LLS on language skills and it has been pointed out that LLS affects the use of language and plays an important role in assessing perceived language output (Kantaridou, 2014). The study of strategy usage related to affective variables such as attitudes and motivation is another significant aspect of research (Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014; Shang, 2010; Özcan, 2015). Most of the studies showed that LLS is used more often by learners with positive attitudes than by those with negative attitudes.

In recent decades, LLS has been extensively researched and most of the research studies have shown that the LLS cannot be analyzed separately; some more variables such as stereotypical thoughts and competencies should be considered (Griffiths & Incecay, 2016). Nevertheless, few researchers studied their relationship. This study, it is aimed to examine the relation between LLS and stereotypical thoughts of foreign language students to address this void.

1.1. Literature review

Recent studies have shown that English language learner has employed a huge number of strategies and there are different strategic categorization patterns of LLS. Oxford (1990) established the most common taxonomy and classified LLS in two groups as direct strategies, consisting of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies consisting of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Good language students know the strategies they use and are mindful of why they use them (Green & Oxford, 1995). These strategies that are preferred by students, help them learn foreign languages in the fastest and most permanent way in the language learning process. However, since each individual has different characteristics (gender, age, motivation, readiness, etc.), differences in preferences and uses of language learning strategies are inevitable. Therefore, determining the preference of the language learning strategy of students is of great importance.

As much as LLS, personality traits as exposure to language, encouragement, self-confidence, anxiety, and attitudes can also influence the learning of the second language (Gass et al., 2013). In other words, the process of language learning involves individual differences in a way that affects language learners' achievement. In this regard, stereotyping is another concept that plays a significant role in the language teaching process. Stereotyping refers to a kind of attitude towards the culture or language concerned (Brown, 2007). The attitudes and behaviors, established after communication turns into conflict, represent the thoughts formed in the minds of individuals. The main reason that causes and feeds these thoughts is the rational and as well as unrealistic stereotypical thoughts that individuals are probably unaware of (Dökmen, 2013). Impressions and thoughts about a person, nation, or culture, that are often constructed in a wrong, simplified and generalized manner, are usually described as stereotypes. Moreover, individuals can have stereotypical thoughts towards a foreign language that they learn since, in the language learning process, the individuals interact not only with family, teachers, and friends but also with everything around them. In this process, unrealistic judgments towards language may arise in individuals that hinder interaction and communication. This influences attitudes and behaviors, learning styles and techniques of learners, and their participation in teaching in the foreign language learning process (Ünal, 2015). Stereotypes that harm efficient

communication, one of the requirements of foreign language learning (Özden, 2018), may lead to a decrease in the interests of the language learned and of the cultural features of the society using that language. In this case, it will be an inevitable reality that some problems will occur by diminishing the effectiveness of the LLS that the learners need in the process of foreign language learning. In this context, it is considered important to explain the stereotypes about foreign languages through language learning strategies against the problems that may arise in foreign language teaching and learning.

Dökmen (1997) categorizes various stereotypes that could influence the learning process and daily life of a person: Polarization, Personalization, Absolutism, Extreme Effort to Change, Extreme Sacrifice, Extreme Regression, and Overgeneralization. The resistance to change and the high probability of being ignored are among the common aspects of these stereotyped thoughts (Dökmen 2008). These stereotyped thoughts can lead to a few obstacles for L2 learners. Consequently, the recognition and removal of these stereotyped thoughts will significantly affect the linguistic process. While stereotypes are studied extensively (Gunaldo et al., 2020; Mollaeva, 2018; MacKenzie, 2018; Nikitina, 2015; Lewandowski, 2014; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2010), not many studies have been designed explicitly to evaluate the stereotypes and language learning strategies. This study aims to make a significant contribution to the relevant literature by identifying learners' stereotypical thoughts about foreign languages, and LLS. Besides, it is assumed that the pattern of relationships between foreign language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages may broaden horizons in terms of guiding researchers and educators in the development of new methods and approaches to be used in the language learning-teaching process. It is thought that this study, which aims to determine whether stereotypical thoughts occur during the foreign language learning process and whether they reduce the level of learning strategies for learners, can bring a new perspective to the problems experienced in the foreign language learning process.

1.2. Research questions

The main objective of this study is to study language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts in terms of their relationship with and among different variables. For this main objective, the research questions are:

1. Which language learning strategies are used by preparatory school students? Do these strategies differ significantly in terms of gender, and foreign language marks?

2. What are preparatory school students' stereotyped thoughts towards foreign languages? Do they differ significantly in terms of gender, and foreign language marks?

3. Is there a correlational relationship between preparatory school students' language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages?

2. Method

This research study is a descriptive one based on quantitative research methods. In this research, the correlational and descriptive model was used. In this study, language learning strategies and stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages are dependent variables, and the gender of the prep grade students and their success in English are independent variables. In this study, an existing situation was tried to be described and the extent of the relationship of variables with each other was tried to be determined.

2.1. Participants

In the fall semester 2019-2020, a total of 184 students studying in the preparatory school of a state university were involved in this study. Table 1 presents the distribution of data regarding the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the study.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of preparatory school students

Variables	Groups	N	%
Gender	Male	96	52.2
	Female	88	47,8
Foreign Language Marks	5	45	24,4
	4	39	21,2
	3	51	27,7
	1-2	49	26,6
	Total	184	100

As shown in Table 1, 52,2% of the prep grade students in the sample are males, while 47,8% of them are females. 26,6% of them are not successful, while 24,4 of them are very successful.

2.2. Instruments

Two questionnaires were used as data collection tools in the study. The Language Learning Strategies Scale was developed by Oxford (1990), and the Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Language Scale was developed by Ünal (2015). To collect personal data, a question about the students' gender, was added to the top of these surveys. The English course success variable of the students was created by categorizing those with a grade point average of 65-100 as successful and those with a grade point average of 0-64 as unsuccessful, considering the success grade evaluation system of the school and acknowledging the fact that the passing grade of prep school is 65.

2.2.1. Language Learning Strategies Scale

The Language Learning Strategy Scale of Oxford (1990) has been used to describe the language learning strategies of the students. There are 50 items on the scale. With 2 major categories and 6 sub-categories, the LLS scale aims to assess language learning strategies. The main categories are divided into two groups as "Direct Strategies" and "Indirect Strategies"; under the main category of direct strategies, there are sub-categories of "memory strategies", "cognitive strategies", and "compensation strategies"; and under indirect strategies, there are sub-categories of "metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies". The scale is a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from "never correct to always correct". As a result of the factor analysis conducted to determine the construct validity of the scale, a 46-item structure consisting of six sub-categories was obtained. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the whole scale is .88. The reliability coefficients for the sub-categories can be listed as follows: "Memory strategies are .87, cognitive strategies are .91, compensation strategies are .83, metacognitive strategies are .96, affective strategies are .87, and social strategies are .85". It has been decided that the scale is reliable based on the Cronbach alpha coefficient scores.

2.2.2. Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Languages Scale

To measure the stereotypical thoughts of prep students towards a foreign language, the Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Language Scale, developed by Ünal (2015), was used. It consists of 42 items and 8 factors. The items in the scale are 5-point Likert type and the options are "strongly disagree, disagree, indecisive, agree, totally agree". According to Ünal (2015), the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the overall scale was calculated as .87. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the whole scale, which was recalculated with the data of this research, was determined as .88. The reliability coefficients of the eight sub-categories in the scale were calculated as follows: Polarization as .88, Personalization as .83, Absolutism as .89, Trying to Change People as .89, Extreme Altruism as .81, Regret as .91, Collectivity as .92, and Overgeneralization as .87. As a result, it can be claimed that the scale is reliable based on the Cronbach alpha coefficient scores.

2.3. Data collection procedure

The data of the research were collected from preparatory school students studying at a state university in the fall semester through two questionnaires. While applying the scales, the purpose of the data collection was explained to the students. It was carefully ensured that participants were volunteered to participate in the study.

2.4. Data analysis

The data of the research were analyzed with the SPSS 20 software. Firstly, whether the normal distribution was achieved in the study was examined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As a result of the analysis, it was concluded that the data provided a normal distribution ($p > .05$).

3. Results

3.1. The Level of Language Learning Strategy Use of Preparatory School Students

To determine the language learning strategies of the prep grade students, findings regarding the scores obtained from the basic categories of "direct strategies" and "indirect strategies", and sub-categories of "memory strategies", "cognitive strategies", "compensation strategies", "metacognitive strategies", "affective strategies" and "social strategies", and the whole of the scale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Strategy Use Results of Preparatory School Students

Strategies	N	x̄	Sd
Language Learning Strategies	184	2.84	0.81
a) Direct Strategies	184	2.63	0.86
Memory Strategies	184	2.83	0.82
Cognitive Strategies	184	2.47	0.73
Compensation Strategies	184	2.61	0.77
b) Indirect Strategies	184	3.06	0.69
Metacognitive Strategies	184	3.23	0.75
Affective Strategies	184	3.01	0.83
Social Strategies	184	2.96	0.85

When Table 2 is examined, the arithmetic mean of the total scores obtained from the language learning strategies scale is calculated as 2.84. The arithmetic mean of the total scores obtained from the sub-categories of the scale is calculated as; 2.63 for the direct strategies; 3,06 for indirect strategies. The mean scores and standard deviations have shown moderate use of LLS, with the highest use of metacognitive strategies. The strategies that are used more are indirect ones while cognitive strategies are the least frequently employed ones.

3.2.Gender Differences

To see whether there are any gender differences in terms of LLS use, a t-test has been used. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. T-Test Results Regarding Gender Differences in LLS Use

Strategies	Gender	f	x̄	Sd	t	p
a) Direct Strategies	male	96	2.65	0.87		
	female	88	2.61	0.85		
Memory Strategies	male	96	2.81	0.81	0,891	.133
	female	88	2.85	0.83		
Cognitive Strategies	male	96	2.51	0.70	0,431	.241
	female	88	2.43	0.76		
Compensation Strategies	male	96	2.65	0.78	0,812	.127
	female	88	2.57	0.76		
b) Indirect Strategies	male	96	2,88	0.70		
	female	88	3,25	0.68		
Metacognitive Strategies	male	96	3,00	0.74	18,981	.008*
	female	88	3, 46	0.76		
Affective Strategies	male	96	2.72	0.82	13,765	.011*
	female	88	3,30	0.83		
Social Strategies	male	96	2.92	0.85	2,542	.022
	female	88	3,00	0.86		

As can be seen in Table 3, a result of the t-test conducted to test whether the use of LLS varies according to gender, a significant difference was found in favor of female students in using metacognitive strategies [t(184) = 18,981, p <.01] and affective strategies [t(184) = 13,765, p <.01]according to the gender variable. While the mean score of female students' use of metacognitive strategies is 3,46, it is 3,00 for male students. The results indicate that females use indirect strategies more than men. There is no major gender gap in the use of direct strategies.

3.3. Foreign Language Marks

T-test results regarding foreign language grades of the students and use of language learning strategies are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. T-Test Results regarding foreign language mark differences in LLS use

Strategies	Marks	x̄	Sd	t	p
Memory Strategies	5	2.21	0.81		
	4	2.45	0.83	0,241	.131
	3	2.69	0.76		
	1-2	3.97	0.78		
Cognitive Strategies	5	2.12	0.70		
	4	2.21	0.76	0,146	.218
	3	2,32	0.71		
	1-2	3,23	0.75		
Compensation Strategies	5	2.26	0.78		
	4	2.41	0.76	0,849	.112
	3	2.49	0.79		
	1-2	3.28	0.75		
Metacognitive Strategies	5	4.85	0.74		
	4	3,12	0.76	24,781	.001*
	3	2,95	0.73		
	1-2	2,00	0.77		
Affective Strategies	5	4,32	0.82		
	4	3,00	0.83	19,721	.001*
	3	2,75	0.84		
	1-2	1,97	0.81		
Social Strategies	5	3,81	0.85		
	4	3,00	0.86	1,472	.027
	3	2,61	0.88		
	1-2	2,42	0.82		

One of the objectives was to define LLS preferences for students based on their levels of competence. To achieve this objective, the students were grouped regarding their proficiency, based on the foreign language grades. The students, with marks 1 or 2, have shown very low levels of knowledge and a great many problems and misunderstandings in learning foreign languages. The next category consisted of students classified in mark 3. This grade showed an average level of knowledge with gaps. There were fewer major shortcomings for students who were classified with Mark 4.

Students with mark 5 were the best school performers. As can be seen in Table 6, a statistically significant difference in language learning strategies was determined in terms of English lesson exam grades, in favor of students who were successful in their English language lessons. Especially, students with higher grades tended to use indirect strategies than unsuccessful students. Regarding indirect strategies, metacognitive strategies were used by the most successful students.

3.4. *The Level of Preparatory School Students' Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Language*

To determine the stereotypical thoughts of students towards foreign language, findings regarding the scores obtained from the sub-categories of scale as "overgeneralization", "trying to change people", "regret", "polarization", "collectivity", "absolutism", "personalization", "extreme altruism", and the whole of the scale are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Level of Stereotypical Thoughts Towards Foreign Language

Subcategories	N	$\bar{x}$	sd
Stereotypical Thoughts towards Foreign Language	184	2.85	0.66
Overgeneralization	184	2.34	0.94
Trying to Change People	184	2.99	0.95
Regret	184	3.71	0.50
Polarization	184	2.88	0.23
Collectivity	184	3.42	0.82
Absolutism	184	3.18	0.94
Personalization	184	2.33	0.98
Extreme Altruism	184	2,00	0.22

Considering the specified ranges, a moderate level of stereotypical thoughts on foreign languages ($\bar{x}$ =2,85) is found among participants. The highest mean scores ($\bar{x}$ =3,71; $\bar{x}$ =3,42) are indicated by regret and collectivity when compared to the other sub-categories of the scale.

For both categories, the reference range is "agree". However, the lowest mean values ($\bar{x}$ = 2,00; $\bar{x}$ = 2,33; $\bar{x}$ = 2,34, are obtained for extreme altruism, personalization and overgeneralization. The reference range is "disagree" for all three categories. The reference range for the other sub-categories as absolutism ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18), trying to change people ($\bar{x}$ = 2,99), and polarization ($\bar{x}$ = 2,88) is "undecided". Accordingly, it can be stated that all sub-categories of prep students' stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages are in the average value range.

3.5. *Gender Differences*

To see whether there are any gender differences in terms of the stereotypical thoughts of students towards foreign languages, a t-test has been used. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. T-Test Results Regarding Stereotypical Thoughts of Students Towards Foreign Language in terms of Gender

	Gender	f	x̄	Sd	t	p
Overgeneralization	male	96	2.30	0.94	0,312	.121
	female	88	2.38	0.93		
Trying to Change People	male	96	2.89	0.95	0,893	.133
	female	88	3.09	0.94		
Regret	male	96	3.30	0.22	5,431	.001
	female	88	4.12	0.28		
Polarization	male	96	2.78	0.23	0,819	.127
	female	88	2.99	0.24		
Collectivity	male	96	2,83	0.80	5,398	.001
	female	88	4.01	0.84		
Absolutism	male	96	2.88	0.94	0,983	.212
	female	88	3. 48	0.93		
Personalization	male	96	2.30	0.97	0,665	.312
	female	88	2.36	0.98		
Extreme Altruism	male	96	1.80	0.20	0,142	.193
	female	88	2.20	0.24		

As seen in Table 6, it was determined that the stereotypical thoughts of the prep school students' stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages differed significantly in favor of female students in regret [t(184) = 5,431, p <.05] and collectivity [t(184) = 5,398, p <.05]

3.6. Foreign Language Marks

Independent t-test results regarding foreign language grades of the students and level of stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages are provided in Table 7.

Table 7. T-Test Results Regarding Foreign Language Marks and Stereotypical Thoughts

Strategies	Marks	x̄	Sd	t	p
Overgeneralization	5	2.20	0.92		
	4	2.22	0.93	0,231	.131
	3	2.26	0.95		
	1-2	2.68	0.95		
Trying to Change People	5	2.79	0.94	0,196	.218

	4	2.77	0.94		
	3	2.75	0.95		
	1-2	3.51	0.95		
Regret	5	3.50	0.46		
	4	3.45	0.45	0,813	.112
	3	3.60	0.54		
	1-2	4.29	0.55		
Polarization	5	2.84	0.27		
	4	2.80	0.23	0,281	.432
	3	2.89	0.23		
	1-2	2.99	0.25		
Collectivity	5	3,30	0.82		
	4	3,41	0.83	0,521	.163
	3	3,47	0.84		
	1-2	3,50	0.81		
Absolutism	5	3.13	0.94		
	4	3.13	0.93	0,412	.513
	3	3.20	0.95		
	1-2	3.28	0.95		
Personalization	5	2,26	0.98		
	4	2,27	0.97	0,724	.623
	3	2,35	0.98		
	1-2	2,44	0.98		
Extreme Altruism	5	1.85	0.25		
	4	1.90	0.22	0,921	.312
	3	2.10	0.21		
	1-2	2.15	0.20		

One of the objectives was to define stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages based on their marks. As can be seen in Table 7, the level of stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language was high for unsuccessful students while successful ones tended to have less stereotypical thoughts. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference found between the prep students' stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages in terms of their foreign language marks, $p<.001$.

3.7. The relation between LLS and stereotypical thoughts

The relationship between preparatory school students' LLS usage and their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language was analyzed using Pearson Correlation analysis. Results of the analysis are provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Correlations between LLS, and Stereotyped Thoughts

	N	r	p
LLS and Stereotypical Thoughts	184	-.46	.000*

In Table 8, a mild, inverse relationship exists between the LLS use of students and their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages (r= -.46; p< .001). Accordingly, it can be stated that when the language learning strategies of prep grade students increase, their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages decrease; and when their language learning strategies decrease, their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages increase.

4. Discussion

In this study, the level of stereotypical thoughts towards language and the use of LLS were analyzed in terms of gender and foreign language marks. Therefore, first, the strategy use preferences of the participants were identified. When the national and international literature was examined, it was found out that there were many studies conducted on language learning strategies (Varışoğlu, 2017; Padem, 2012; Açık, 2012; Açıkel, 2011; Cesur, 2008; Yalçın, 2006; Aydın, 2006; Bekleyen, 2005). In this study, the arithmetic mean scores showed moderate use of language learning strategies, with the highest use of metacognitive strategies. The strategies that were used more were indirect, more precisely, "metacognitive, affective, and social strategies" while "cognitive strategies" were the least frequently employed ones. This result is in line with many studies in the literature (Barut, 2015; Bölükbaş, 2013; Wong, 2011; Riazi, 2007; Bekleyen, 2006; Hiçyılmaz, 2006; Yalçın, 2006).

After identifying the strategy use preferences, LLS use in connection with gender was examined. The results showed that there was a significant difference in favor of female students in using metacognitive and affective strategies (Akdağ et al., 2017; Akar, 2013; Padem, 2012). The findings also showed that female students used indirect strategies more than males. The use of direct strategies did not differ significantly according to gender. Some findings from previous studies were confirmed and also new relations among the variables were developed (Ho, 2016; Ada, 2011; Aslan, 2009; Cesur, 2008). Khalil (2005) and Oflaz (2008) found in their study that women used LLS at a higher level than men. Besides, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that women use LLS more than men in all categories. Nevertheless, it was found that studies were claiming that males used LLS more often than females (Boylu 2015; Tercanlıoğlu, 2004). Wherton (2000) found that LLS differed statistically in a significant manner in favor of men. In the studies conducted by Lim (2013) and Liyanage and Bartlett (2011), it was concluded that language learning strategies differed significantly according to gender, and this difference is in favor of male students. However, some studies in the literature showed opposite findings. In his study, Poole (2005) stated that LLS did not differ significantly regarding gender.

When the use of language learning strategies of the preparatory school students participating in the study is analyzed in terms of foreign language marks, it has been found out that a statistically significant difference in language learning strategies was determined in terms of English lesson exam grades, in favor of students who were successful in their English language courses. Especially, students with higher marks tend to use indirect strategies more than unsuccessful students. Regarding indirect strategies, metacognitive strategies were used by the most successful students. In studies on LLS conducted so far, the high level of language skills and achievement of students has been reported to play a major role in their success by using these learning strategies more frequently (Hamamcı, 2012; Norton & Toohey, 2001). In the study conducted by Altan (2003), it is found that there is a positive relationship between foreign language learning strategies and success scores. Similarly, in line

with this study, Bekekli (2005) examined students' LLS and found a significant difference in favor of students who were successful in terms of lesson success. The result, that the average of language learning strategies is in favor of students with high success scores from the study of Arrivaloğlu (2017), is similar to this study. In this study, it can be stated that the foreign language exam scores variable of preparatory school students is a determinant in the context of LLS. Therefore, as the success level of students increases, the rate of use of these strategies increases as well.

In this study, the stereotypical thoughts of preparatory school students towards foreign languages were also examined in terms of gender and exam scores. When the national and international literature is analyzed, there are some studies conducted on stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages (Ünal, 2015; Brooks-Lewis, 2012; Ekşi, 2009; Popovic, 2004). Within the scope of the study, it was determined that the students' stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages were at a moderate level. However, in the study conducted by Dağıstan (2017), it was claimed that middle school students do not have stereotypical thoughts. The most commonly recorded stereotype of learners was "regret" among the 8 categories of stereotyped thoughts. This stresses their regret that they spend little time studying English or that they do not make more efforts. Collectivity was the second most rated category of stereotyped thought among students. Learners with the collective stereotype assume that their achievement in one aspect of a language demonstrates their knowledge level in L2. However, learners' success in a single language is not generally universal in all aspects of L2. However, the least rated categories of stereotyped thoughts were extreme altruism, personalization, and overgeneralization. Firstly, these findings demonstrate that students are not able to give up their foreign language learning for others' sake. In this regard, it is possible to assume that students prefer to adopt optimistic attitudes to foreign language education. This is particularly important because students learn a foreign language more effectively when they have positive attitudes to the second language (Eshghinejad, 2016). When taking into consideration the low values concerning the categories of personification and over-generalization, it may be inferred that learners have no stereotypical, rather a negative perception of the foreign language.

The level of stereotypical thoughts of the preparatory school students in terms of gender was also analyzed and it was determined that the stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages differed significantly in favor of female students in regret and collectivity and female students have more stereotypical thoughts than the male students. It can be assumed that this situation results from the female students being more tend to holistic and labeling thinking. Spencer, Steele, and Cluim (1998) also revealed that females have more stereotypical thoughts. On the other hand, in the study conducted by Karabayev and Tutkun (2001), it was claimed that female students have more positive thoughts compared to male students. However, some studies claimed that stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages do not differ according to gender variables (Dağıstan, 2017). In this study, the fact that stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages showed a significant difference according to gender in general, shows that gender is a factor that significantly affects stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages.

One of the objectives was to define stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language in terms of foreign language scores. Considering the results obtained from this research, it was clear that the level of stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language was high for unsuccessful students while successful ones tended to have less stereotypical thoughts. However, there was no statistically significant difference found between the prep students' stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages in terms of their foreign language grades. The fact that there is no significant difference between the stereotypical thoughts of students who are successful and unsuccessful in English lessons can be explained by the communication barrier of all students and the possible adoption problem between the lesson and the students.

Finally, the relationship between preparatory school students' LLS and stereotypical thoughts towards foreign language was analyzed using correlation analysis. The results showed that there is a moderate, inversely significant relationship between the language learning strategies of prep students and their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages. According to this, it is found that when the use of LLS by prep grade student's increases, their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages decrease; and when their use of LLS decreases, their stereotypical thoughts towards foreign languages increase.

5. Conclusions

This study was conducted to find out the level of LLS use and stereotypical thoughts towards language in terms of gender and exam scores. In this research, students with more active use of LLS have better chances of becoming more competent language learners. More proficient students participate in a broader range of learning strategies and choose learning strategies based on learning tasks. Teachers thus need to introduce various LLS to allow learners to choose the best ones for their personality and learning purposes. Students with low and average foreign language grades must integrate LLS in their studies. Students can get inspired to explore different ways to learn a foreign language and have the chance to read and speak to others. Students that can understand and use various methods to learn new vocabulary and develop their abilities will often discover new avenues and opportunities. It is therefore strongly suggested that LLS can be incorporated consciously into language courses.

Another significant finding is that the students' stereotypes of foreign languages were moderate. It was also emphasized that certain forms of stereotyped thoughts were in a negative relation to the level of competence of the students. Given that outcome, it appears to be a real need for more successful Language learners to eradicate the negative effects of such stereotyped thoughts. Future research should also be performed on how the detrimental impact on foreign language learning by stereotyped learners can be minimized.

More research with a qualitative category can be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of LLS and stereotyped thought results. Also, this research focused only on the use of LLS and stereotypical thought of students. Further research can also involve observation, which will demonstrate how the recorded use of LLS and stereotyped thoughts by students are reflected in learning a foreign language. Finally, future research can include samples in various EFL contexts to verify the findings obtained in this study.

6. Ethics Statement

In this study, participation was voluntary for students. The participating students had consent for the engagement in the research. The data collection and handling were declared to correspond strictly with the usual norms of research ethics accepted by Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University.

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