

The Effect of a Listening Education Course on the Listening Behaviors of Prospective Turkish Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of a listening education course on the listening behaviors of prospective Turkish teachers. The participants of the study are 45 prospective teachers who are studying at a state university in Istanbul and taking a listening education course. The study is an experimental study in the model of 'one group pre-test - post-test'. The "Listening Skills Scale" course developed by Cihangir Cankaya (2012) was applied to the prospective teachers before taking the course as a pre-test and after taking it as a post-test. According to pre-test results, the "Listening Skills Scale" pre-test average of the prospective teachers was identified as 50.73. Their post-test average was 64.51. The Listening Education course has created an awareness in prospective Turkish teachers of listening types and has increased their levels of sensitivity in using body language. These prospective teachers also now showed a tendency towards avoiding the negative listening behaviors.

Keywords: Turkish teachers, Listening course, Listening behaviors, Experimental study

1. Introduction

Turkish education system aims to develop the basic language skills for all learners. These skills are the sub- skills of comprehension skills which are listening, reading, visual reading; and the sub-skills of narration skills which are presentation, speaking and writing. Listening is the first mother tongue event of a child, s/he learns most of the knowledge during the pre-school period through listening" (Ozdemir, 1987: 166). When considered about the time children spend by listening and the role of listening on language development and learning, the necessity of systematically teaching of listening must be emphasized in all programs, particularly in the primary school curriculum (Cossitt, 1978). In addition, Aytan (2011) argues that considering the fact that the tools such as; radio, television, telephone, etc. brought by technology, the artistic activities such as; drama, movie and music, and the activities for instance; meetings, conferences, panels are utilized by the way of listening; and the exchange of information in everyday life are conducted by listening, the importance of listening skills cannot be denied.

Listening skill is the communication process, according to Johnson (1951) and Hampleman (1958), while it is to distinguish words from recognizing other words. Wolff et al. (1983) define listening skill as a process of understanding that includes hearing and a process of establishing meanings which aims to integrate the old and new information. Rost (1994) describes this skill as a comprehension instrument that we use unconsciously in our daily lives. Jalongo (1995) specifies listening as a mental activity to understand the messages to be delivered, while Ozbay (2005) describes the skill as "an activity to understand verbal messages correctly" (p. 11), and Kecik and Uzun (2004:111) entitle listening as "a process of understanding and interpreting a verbal input". Listening is a complex and multi-stage process in which spoken language is transformed to a meaning in mind (as cited in Akyol, 2010: 1).

Listening (Ciftci, 2001) which is one of the four basic functions of language and an indispensable element of communication between individuals has been offered in a course of undergraduate programs since 2007. According to the Higher Education Institute Education Faculty Teacher Education programs, the Understanding Techniques II (Listening Education) course has the following content: Doing activities which develop listening skill, clarifying the process of productivity and functioning of listening activity benefiting from psychological researches; determining of attention spans; remarking of memory retention and comprehension studies. Listening and understanding universally by using a variety of audio and visual communication tools, sampling of selective

listening- comprehension activities. Demonstrating and introducing various listening-comprehension exercises to the prospective teachers for them to use in primary school Turkish lessons, and giving them opportunities to develop these exercises. Performing a variety of listening exercises in the classroom (The Council of Higher Education, 2007).

The listening education course introduces the aims and attainments of the Turkish curriculum and theoretical and practical studies have been being made through lesson plans. There are 42 attainments in the Turkish Education Program and they are: applying the rules of listening/watching, understanding and analyzing the listened the watched, assessing the listened /the watched, enriching the vocabulary, gaining effective listening/watching habits". Listening course texts should be appropriate to the student level and should have a wide variety of vocabulary in terms of length and vocabulary.

Since the program allows a maximum of ten-minute listening time for secondary school students, no long listening texts are allowed. One of the important issues of listening education is listening to different types of texts, of course. When the literature is examined, many different classifications of listening types can be found. Gogus (1978) states that there are three different listening types: careful listening, proper listening, and critical listening. Aytas (1999) divides listening into five types as passive, selective, participative, emotional and critical. Oz (2001) classifies listening as listening to have knowledge, listening to follow conversations, listening what is spoken, listening while students reading aloud, and listening to a drama or a chorus. According to Tompkins (1998), listening types are distinctive listening, aesthetical listening, transferring listening, critical listening and therapeutical listening (quo. Akyol, 2010: 10). Cuceloglu (2009), Umagan (2007) and Cihangir (2004) compile listening under two main headings including effective and ineffective listening, while Gunes (2007: 92-93) mentions listening types as the following: Listening by following the text, inquisitive listening, creative listening, passive listening, participative listening and listening by note taking. To Ozbay (2005), listening types are: voluntary or involuntary listening, motivation based listening, listening with sympathy or antipathy, selective listening, superficial listening, active listening, participative listening, critical listening and passive listening.

Listening education courses focus on the characteristics of the listening texts. Teachers have been trained to prepare the questions towards understanding the listened people. The importance of not only verbal messages but also non-verbal messages are emphasized with regard to the importance of listening in communication. Research shows that people care about how you say instead of what you say in daily life (Dokmen, 1994: 27). "Only 35% of communication between two people is verbally (oral), 65% of it is nonverbal" (Hubler, 2001: 11). In this respect, a listening education course also informs us about non-verbal behaviors such as; eye contact, facial expressions, and sitting and postural manners or body language.

There are not many studies about the listening behaviors of Turkish teachers in the literature. Cihangir (2004) revealed that effective listening courses given to the university students have developed their listening skills positively. In Emiroglu's study(2013) where he tried to determine prospective Turkish teachers' listening problems; these problems often originated from the speakers, and the speaker's way of speaking, her/his knowledge of speaking techniques, and her/his behaviours. In addition, components such as; psychological and physiological factors, topic and environment were underlined as recipient based problems in understanding listening skills.

According to Kurudayioglu and Kana's (2013) research, prospective Turkish teachers find themselves adequate in the matters of; " planning activities for the listening education, preparing a listening activity plan, selecting an appropriate method for listening activities and choosing appropriate supplies for listening activities" (p. xx) , while they feel themselves incompetent in "making students discuss constructively regarding listening texts ", "helping students connect what they listened to with their own experiences", making students comprehend the importance of listening and providing them to listen by taking notes.

Maden and Durukan (2011) concentrated on passive and participative listener styles of prospective Turkish teachers. Likewise, in Tabak (2013)'s research, prospective Turkish teachers was seen to have passive listeners' and participants listeners' attitudes. Temur (2010) confirmed that the effect of the pre-text questions on level of comprehending skills the listened people parts was greater thanthe post-test questions of the text. It was not seen any gender based differences in terms of understanding level of the listened people part. Dogan and Ozcakmak (2014) determined that summarizing skills of prospective teachers what they listened were a bit above average.

Since the listening skills studies have been limited, communication and listening skills of other prospective teachers who were studying in education faculties were also addressed in this study. Yoncalik and Cimen (2006)'s study on the students of physical education and elementary teachers has found that the listening skills of both departments' students were in "medium" level. The results of Durmusoglu, Saltali and Erbay (2013)'s study showed that pre-school

teachers love the children who developed listening, speaking and empath skills most and this has a meaningful descriptor.

In the research conducted by Dilekmen et al. (2008), no significant differences between the first year and fourth year university students were found in terms of development of their communication skills. However, Pehlivan's (2005) study has found a significant difference between first and fourth year students in favor of final year students. In addition, in Yesil's (2009) study, communication skills of teachers were detected as adequate. Development of listening skills which is one of the comprehension skills is important in terms of demonstrating Turkish teachers' professional development and their having effective communication skills. In this context, this study aims to determine the effect of an undergraduate course named Understanding Techniques II: Listening Education on the listening skills of prospective Turkish teachers.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

In this study a descriptive quantitative research was employed. This study is an experimental work in the model of "one group pre-test - post-test". In this model of "one group pre-test -post test model", an independent variable is also applied to a randomly selected group. But this time, there are both before (pre-test) and after (post-test) measurements available (Karasar, 2009: 96). In the study, purposive sampling method was used, convenience sampling was preferred because of its time and place advantages (Buyukozturk, 2010).

2.2 Participants

This study was conducted in the fall semester of the 2014-2015 academic year, after obtaining the ethics committee permissions. The participants of this study consisted of 45 prospective Turkish teachers who were studying in a state university in Istanbul and taking the "Understanding Techniques II: Listening Education" course. 16 of the prospective teachers were males and 29 of them were females. All of them were applied a pre-test before taking the "Understanding Techniques II: Listening Education" course, when the "Understanding Techniques II: Listening Education" course ended 14 weeks later, a post test was applied to them after taking the course.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, as a data collection tool, a scale "Listening Skills Scale" developed by Cankaya Cihangir (2012) was used. Its confirmatory and explanatory factor analysis had been conducted before. The Scale's 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and 10th articles have contained negative expressions (See Appendix A). In order to compare pre-test and post-test results of these articles, the values of scale were reversed while obtaining the total score. The collected data were analyzed in the SPSS 17:00 program.

3. Results

The data collected from the prospective teachers were subjected to a paired t test. According to pre-test results, the pre-test average of the prospective teachers' "Listening Skills Scale" has been identified as 50.73. The post-test average was obtained as 64.51. The value of significance according to the T test has been found as $p(0.000)$. Since this value is smaller than the value of 0.001, it can be said that there is a statistical difference between pre-test and post-test results (Aydin & Aslan, 2016). Accordingly, the average values of post-test results are approximately 4 points higher than the average values of pre-test results and the difference is statistically significant, as well. The given listening education has made a positive impact on the listening skills of prospective teachers.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical values of pre test- post test

	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Pre- Test	45	50,73	4,67
Post- Test	45	64,51	4,21

The data collected in order to test if there is a difference in the listening skills of prospective teachers on the basis of gender have been subjected to the independent sample t test. Accordingly, the significance level was found as $p(0.08)$. Since p was bigger than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), there was no significant difference on the development of listening skills on the basis of gender. However, when the following chart is viewed, it can be said that although there is no statistically significant difference, male teachers made better progress on listening skills.

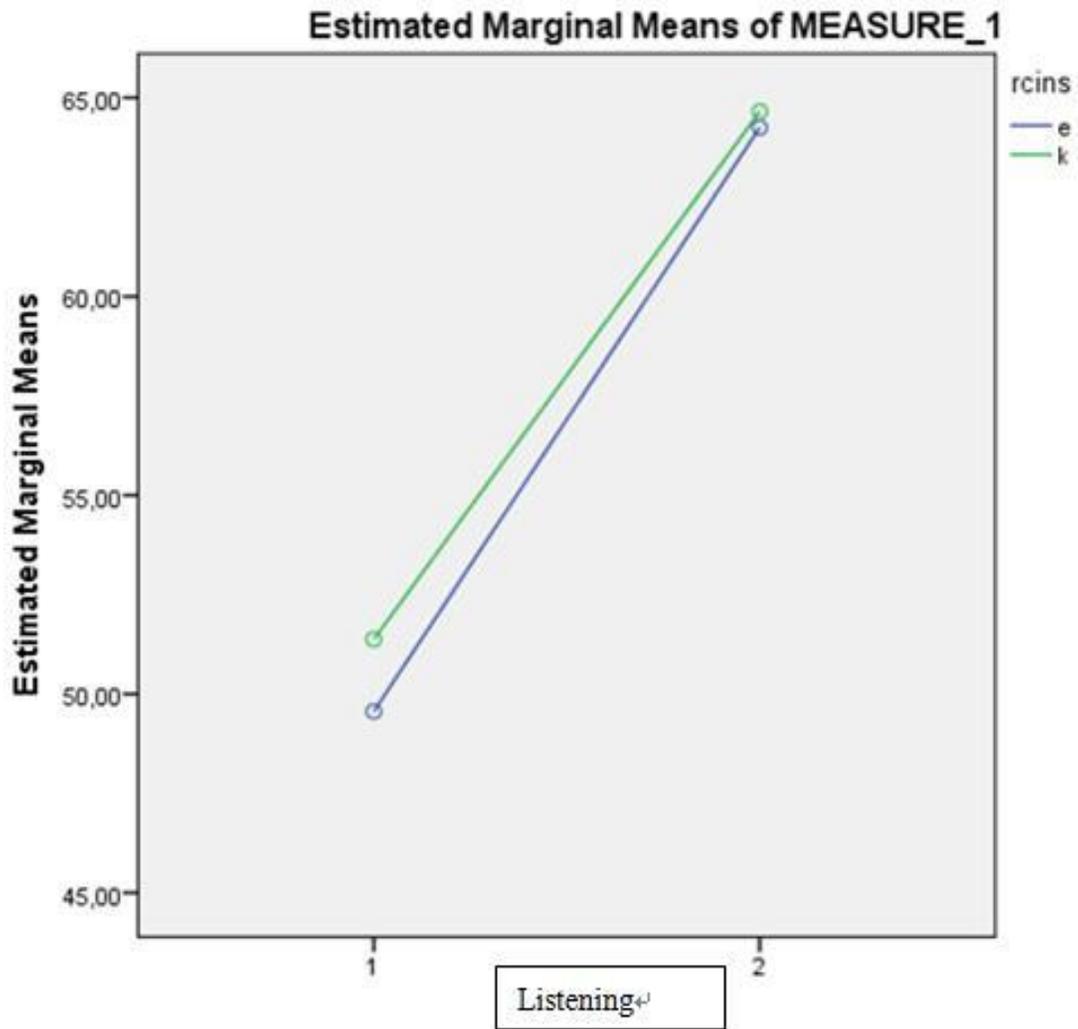


Figure 1.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the means of measure

Means No	N	Average of Pre-test	Standard Deviation	Average of Post-test	Standard Deviation
1	45	2,57	1,01	3,86	,72
2	45	3,97	1,01	4,80	,50
3	45	2,93	1,09	3,55	,81
4	45	2,64	,90	3,62	,61
5	45	4,04	1,12	4,82	,49
6	45	2,82	1,21	3,66	,87
7	45	2,48	,92	3,86	,72
8	45	4,06	,78	4,75	,57
9	45	4,02	,96	4,68	,70
10	45	2,44	,94	3,91	,70
11	45	3,91	,82	4,60	,75
12	45	2,00	1,04	4,04	,97
13	45	4,17	,80	4,73	,68
14	45	4,33	,79	4,75	,57
15	45	4,28	,81	4,82	,49

The pre-test average of the scale's second article which is " I ask questions to understand better the person whom I am talking to" is "3.97" while the post- test average of it rose up to "4.80". Listening types take places in the listening education curriculum. Among these listening types, ideal listening types are "active" or "participative" listening types. In active listening, the listener concentrates on what s/he listens to, and he participates actively in the process of understanding by asking questions and giving feedback. In this regard, students' asking questions in order to develop a better understanding of their interlocutors can be interpreted as they developed an awareness of listening types in the curriculum. However, associated with active listening, the pre-test average of the fifth article of the scale which is " I try to make the person I am talking to feel that I am willing to understand him/her better" was "4.04",but the post-test average of it increased as of "4.82". The pre-test average of the scale's seventh article which is " There are times when I don't listen to someone whom I am talking to" is "2.48" while the post- test average of it is "3.86". As mentioned above, the development of this behavior indicated that student teachers gained sensitivity towards listening types, specific to active listening (Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). "The more teachers master in active listening, the more they are able to apply this skill in various situations at schools, in their family lives and in their relations with all people" (as cited in Ciftci, 2007: p. 235).

The pre-test average of the scale's eighth article which is " Understanding the person's feelings and thoughts while listening, I can transfer those feelings to him/her by my verbal or non-verbal behaviors" is "4.06" while the post- test average of it rose up to "4.75". The pre-test average of the scale's ninth article which is " When a conflict occurs, I try to listen patiently to the person whom I am talking to understand her/his feelings and thoughts better" is "4.02" while the post- test average of it rose up to "4.68". The pre-test average of the scale's eleventh article which is " While listening to someone, I try to put myself into her/his shoes." is "3.89" while the post- test average of it rose up to "4.60". The pre-test average of the scale's fifteenth article which is "While listening to someone, I try to understand her/his feelings" is "4.28" while the post- test average of it rose up to "4.82". When the scale's eighth, ninth, eleventh and fifteenth articles are examined, it can be seen that the article contents are aimed at empathical

listening. Prospective teachers have increased their interest to empathical listening in the result of listening education. Additionally, the pre-test average of the scale's first article which is "I get bored to listen to the people who don't think like me" is "2.57", while the post-test average of it is "3.86". The pre-test average of the scale's third article which is "I don't like listening to others for a long time" is "2.93", when the post-test average of it is "3.55". The pre-test average of the scale's sixth article which is "I believe that I don't have to listen to others for a long time" is "2.82", when the post-test average of it is "3.66". These data also have importance as it showed empathical behaviors of the students, for instance; even if they did not agree with the people, they were kindly able to listen to them and they improved their tolerance levels while listening. To Pala (2008), empathy levels of prospective teachers came slightly above average. With regard to teaching profession, it is useful to emphasize the importance of empathy skills. According to Yuksel (2004), man needs to establish relationships with others in every period of his life. The success of this relationship depends on his understanding and accepting himself and others. Yuksel also argued that "individuals' learning to be tolerant and respectful each other's views and ideas is very important in order to create a democratic society" (p. 342). The teaching profession is a profession that requires empathy skills (Akbulut and Saglam, 2010). Teachers with effective communication should also develop their empathy, listening and speaking skills (Arabaci, 2012; Erbay, Omeroglu and Cagdas, 2012; Gordon, 1996).

The pre-test average of the scale's thirteenth article which is "While listening to someone, I would make sure that my body faces towards him/her" is "4.17", when the post-test average of it rose up as "4.73". When the pre-test average of the scale's fourteenth article which is "While listening to someone, I care about her/his verbal and non-verbal messages" is "4.33", the post-test average of it rose up as "4.75". While the pre-test average of the scale's twelfth article which is "I have a difficulty to make an eye contact the person whom I am listening to" is "2.00", the post-test average of it became "4.04". An effective listening is directly proportional to using of body language effectively. In particular, the establishment of eye contact between the listener and the interlocutor is important in terms of an effective communication. The increase of sensitivity of the students about the body language is remarkable. According to Schober (2007: 116), having a meaning from the point of non-verbal communication, body language is a set of values consisting of facial expressions, gestures and body postures which are used to be transferred the person's feelings and thoughts. Due to carrying a quality which needs the effective usage of language, the teaching profession is important in terms of the ability of using body language and the fulfilling of successful education that is a communication process (Gokceli, 2013: 545). Teacher should benefit both verbal and body language effectively in order to accomplish in the education process" (Habaci et al.2013: 1344). In Pektas (1998), Caliskan (2003), Yesil's (2006) studies, it has been stated that the teachers were insufficient about using of body language.

The pre-test average of the scale's tenth article which is "There are times when I pretend to listen to someone even though I don't listen to him/her" is "2.44", the post-test average of it rose up as "3.91". While the pre-test average of the scale's fourth article which is "My thoughts shift into another field while listening to someone" is "2.64", the post-test average of it became as "3.62". These data indicate that prospective teachers avoided the negative listening behaviors in the result of listening education.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of this study which tried to identify the effect of listening education course on the listening behaviors of prospective teachers, listening education course has created an awareness on the teachers towards listening types. Prospective teachers have made progress in terms of asking questions to the interlocutor for active listening, make him/her feel that they listen, keeping eye contact, and focusing attention in the listening process. However, they showed improvement in gaining the empathy skill which is an important value in human relations (Lafer, 2014), understanding the intricacies of empathical listening, and being more tolerant to others or those who are against them. In addition, prospective teachers have also developed a positive attitude about "pretending as if he/she listens" and "shifting his/her thoughts to other fields while listening to". Finally, teachers have developed a positive attitude displaying the behaviors of "facing the body towards the speaker, establishing eye contact" in terms of a communication element which is called non-verbal behavior or body language. In according to Ozkan's (2011) research, prospective Turkish teachers see the comprehension techniques course which includes listening education and reading education as important and functional in their lives. In addition, they have also found adequate these courses' contents and time zones allocated for theory and practice. Mert (2013), in his study which analyzed the basic language skills' perceptions of prospective Turkish teachers through metaphors, has described 25% of the listening skills of teachers as "a valuable action", while 18% of listening skills of them as "a need", 16% of their skills as "an action through the life" and 15% of them as "an element of communication. When looked at the metaphors produced by the prospective teachers, it was observed that they reviewed listening skills as extremely important actions.

Prospective teachers' taking listening education course seriously is important in terms of the development of their listening behaviors both in their professional lives and in their educational environment. In contrast to Tabak's (2013) research results, prospective Turkish teachers have developed a positive attitude towards listening education course in terms of listening types, positive listening behaviors and body language. Effective communication skills can be facilitating relationships in all kinds of human relations and in all types of professional fields (Korkut, 2005: 143). "Owing to being more self-confident, more sociable and more open to interaction, the attitudes of prospective teachers with communication skills towards the profession were affected in a positive way" (Tunceli, 2013: 56). Finally, the teachers showing effective listening behaviors can be stated naturally that they can improve their students' listening skills as being a role model.

Among basic language skills, listening skill which is the first developed language skill in the language acquisition process is an effective and inexpensive way to learn in the individual's learning experiences. People have knowledge using their listening skills at school, at work and in daily lives. Prospective Turkish teachers' internalising the importance of listening skills, when they started teaching profession after graduating from an undergraduate program has a great importance. Developing sensibility towards listening process, listening types, non-verbal messages during the listening, and positive listening behaviours, prospective Turkish teachers will play a leading role in bringing these skills to students properly. According to the Turkish Education Programme adopting thematic approach, a listening text must be studied in each theme at least. Positive developments on the listening behaviors of prospective Turkish teachers who took the Listening Education course will provide them to apply an effective teaching-learning process to their students through listening texts and listening behaviors.

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Appendix A

LISTENING SKILLS SCALE (LSC)

You will find expressions which measure other people's listening tendencies below. Please mark with (X) the suitable option for yourself considering the behaviors you have shown in the listening process of communication. Thank you for your attention.

		(1) Never	(2) Occasionally	(3) Sometimes	(4) Often	(5) Always
1	I get bored to listen to the people who don't think like me.					
2	I ask questions to understand the person whom I am talking to.					
3	I don't like listening to others for a long time.					
4	My thoughts shift into another field while listening to someone.					
5	I try to make the person I am talking feel that I am willing to understand her/him better.					
6	I believe that I don't have to listen to the others for a long time.					
7	There are times when I don't listen to someone whom I am talking to.					
8	Understanding the person's feelings and thoughts while listening, I can transfer those feelings to him/her by my verbal or non-verbal behaviors.					
9	When a conflict occurs, I try to listen patiently to the person whom I am talking to understand her/his feelings and thoughts.					
10	There are times when I pretend to listen to someone even though I don't listen to him/her.					
11	While listening to someone, I try to put myself into her/his shoes.					
12	I have a difficulty to make an eye contact the person whom I am listening to.					
13	While listening to someone, I would make sure that my body faces towards him/her.					
14	While listening to someone, I care about her/his verbal and non-verbal messages.					
15	While listening to someone, I try to understand her/his feelings.					