

Yıldırım, S., Yıldırım, Ö. (2016). The importance of listening in language learning and listening comprehension problems experienced by language learners: A literature review. *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16 (4), 2094-2110.

Geliş Tarihi: 08/06/2016

Kabul Tarihi: 17/11/2016

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts as it is crucial for people to sustain effective communication. In spite of the importance of listening in the development of the communicative and cognitive skills, it did not start to take its place in language teaching curriculum for long years. However, in recent years, with the emphasis given in communication in language teaching, listening started to take its long deserved place in language programs. Although there are different perspectives to teaching listening, the success of each perspective somewhat depends on addressing and minimizing the listening comprehension problems experienced by language learners. This literature review aims to review the basic concepts related to the place and importance of listening skill in learning English as second or foreign language, and, in the light of the related literature, it focuses on listening comprehension problems experienced by second and foreign language learners.

**Key Words:** listening, comprehension problems, EFL, ESL

## YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENİMİNDE DİNLEME BECERİSİNİN ÖNEMİ VE YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENERİNİN YAŞADIĞI DİNLEME ANLAMA PROBLEMLERİ: BİR ALANYAZIN DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

### ÖZET

Dinleme becerisi hem günlük hayatta hem de akademik ortamlarda oldukça önemli bir yere sahiptir çünkü etkili iletişimin temel taşlarından birisi dinleme becerisidir. Dinleme becerisinin iletişim becerileri ve bilişsel yetilerin gelişmesinde çok önemli bir yeri olmasına rağmen uzun yıllar kadar bu beceri yabancı dil eğitimi programlarında yeteri kadar yer almamıştır. Fakat takip eden yıllarda iletişime dayalı dil öğretiminin gittikçe daha popüler olmasıyla dinleme becerisi de yabancı dil eğitimi programlarında hak ettiği yeri almıştır. Dinleme becerisinin öğretimi ile ilgili farklı yöntemler bulunmaktadır fakat her bir yöntemin başarısı biraz da öğrencilerin yaşadığı dinleme anlama problemlerinin göz önünde bulundurulmasına bağlıdır. Bu alanyazın değerlendirmesinin amacı hem dinleme becerisi ile ilgili temel kavramlar ışığında bu becerinin yabancı dil öğretimindeki önemini vurgulamak hem de yabancı dil öğrencileri tarafından yaşanan dinleme problemlerini ilgili literatür ışığında tartışmaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** dinleme becerisi, dinleme anlama problemleri, yabancı dil öğrenimi

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although the centrality of listening in second and foreign language learning is well established today and an appropriate listening comprehension instruction is essential for target language competence (Morley, 2001), listening was one of the most neglected skills in second and foreign language classrooms especially until late 1960s. Both researchers and language teachers paid more attention to reading and grammar, and teaching listening was not accepted as a significant feature of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Field (2008) states that “in the early days of English Language Teaching (ELT), listening chiefly served as a means of introducing new grammar through model dialogues” (p. 13).

When we look at the history of language teaching from the methods perspective, we see that each method dealt with language learning in various ways and the place of listening was different in each of them. For example, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) viewed language learning as learning sets of rules and it aimed to help students read and understand the literary works in a foreign language. In GTM, teaching listening was never a primary concern and the teachers did not have any training in teaching listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Flowerdew and Miller (2005) state that in GTM the only listening that students would have to do would be to listen to a description of the rules of the target language.

After GTM, the Direct Method (DM), which was also referred as the ‘natural’ method, became popular as an alternative to GTM. The DM proposed the idea that the best way to learn a foreign language was the natural development of that language, an aural/oral system of teaching was the most suitable, and teachers and students were expected to use L2 in the classroom. The DM concentrated on the development of listening skill before the other language skills; however, although the target language was used in the classroom, there was no effort to develop listening strategies or to teach listening apart from other language skills (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

These two methods were followed by many other teaching methods which proposed different perspectives to teaching foreign languages by generally emphasizing the best way to enable students to communicate in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Especially the second International Association of Applied Linguistics Conference in 1969 was influential in terms of changing the trends in second and foreign language teaching by emphasizing individual learners and individuality of learning, listening and reading as nonpassive and very complex receptive processes, listening comprehension as a fundamental skill, and real language use for real communication in the classroom (Morley, 2001).

Of all the four main language skills, listening was the most influenced one by those changing trends. In 1970s, listening, with more importance it has gained as a skill, started to take place in language teaching programs besides speaking, reading and writing. With the rise of Communicative Language Teaching in the late 1970s, teaching English for communication began to play a significant role all over the world, and the importance of teaching listening increased. In the 1990s, with the increased attention to listening, aural comprehension had a significant place in second and foreign language learning (Morley, 2001; Rivers, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since then, there has been a great

interest in listening among researchers (e.g. Field, 1998; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 1999; Vandergrift, 2007). The purpose of this literature review is twofold: first, it aims to review the basic concepts related to the place and importance of listening skill in learning English as second or foreign language; second, in the light of the related literature, it focuses on listening comprehension problems experienced by English language learners.

## **2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEARING AND LISTENING**

Kline (1996) states that being aware of the difference between hearing and listening is an important feature for learning and teaching listening effectively. He describes the difference as follows: "Hearing is the reception of sound, listening is the attachment of meaning to the sound. Hearing is passive, listening is active" (p. 7). Similarly, Rost (2002) states the difference as follows: "Hearing is a form of perception. Listening is an active and intentional process. Although both hearing and listening involve sound perception, the difference in terms reflects a degree of intention" (p. 8). According to Flowerdew and Miller (2005), all children are born with the ability to hear. Children first listen and then start to speak. They speak before they read, and finally writing comes after reading. That is, among all the other language skills, listening is the first one to appear (Lundsteen, 1979).

Rost (2002) states that over the years listening has been defined in various ways by educators in social sciences depending on their area of expertise. In the 1900s, listening was defined "in terms of reliably recording acoustic signals in the brain" (p. 1). In the 1920s and 1930s, with more information obtained about the human brain, listening was defined as an "unconscious process controlled by hidden cultural schemata" (p. 1). Because of the advances in telecommunications in the 1940s, listening was defined as "successful transmission and recreation of messages" (p. 1). In the 1960s, listening included listeners' own experiences to understand the intention of the speaker. In the 1970s "the cultural significance of speech behavior" was accepted. In the 1980s and 1990s, listening was defined as "parallel processing of input" (p. 1). O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) define listening comprehension as "an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirements" (p. 434). Vandergrift (1999) defines listening as "a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context of the utterance" (p. 168).

To summarize, when all the aforementioned definitions are taken into account, defining listening as a passive skill would be misleading (Anderson & Lynch, 2003; Lindsley & Knight, 2006). If the listener takes part actively in the process of listening linguistically and uses his/her non-linguistic knowledge to follow up the message that the speaker intends in a conversation, if s/he listens, replies, and asks/answers questions, it is active listening (Lindsley & Knight, 2006, Littlewood, 1981). As Anderson and Lynch (2003) state, understanding is not something that happens because of what speaker says, the listener needs to make connections between what s/he hears and what s/he already knows and at the same time he/she tries to comprehend the meaning negotiated by the speaker.

### **3. THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING**

Listening plays an important role in communication in people's daily lives. As Guo and Wills (2006) state "it is the medium through which people gain a large proportion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and human affairs, their ideals, sense of values" (p. 3). According to Mendelson (1994) "of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50 %; speaking 25-30 %; reading 11-16 %; and writing about 9 %" (p. 9). Emphasizing the importance of listening in language learning, Peterson (2001) states that "no other type of language input is easy to process as spoken language, received through listening ... through listening, learners can build an awareness of the interworkings of language systems at various levels and thus establish a base for more fluent productive skills" (p. 87).

Listening has an important role not only in daily life but also in classroom settings. Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that "we only become aware of what remarkable feats of listening we achieve when we are in an unfamiliar listening environment, such as listening to a language in which we have limited proficiency" (p. 3). Most people think that being able to write and speak in a second language means that they know the language; however, if they do not have the efficient listening skills, it is not possible to communicate effectively. That is, listening is the basic skill in language learning and over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening (Nunan, 1998). Rost (1994) explains the importance of listening in language classroom as follows:

1. Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin.
2. Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding. Access to speakers of the language is essential. Moreover, learners' failure to understand the language they hear is an impetus, not an obstacle, to interaction and learning.
3. Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to understand language as native speakers actually use it.
4. Listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners' attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language (p. 141-142).

To summarize, listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts as it is crucial for people to sustain effective communication. Emphasizing the importance of listening, Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that listening skills are as important as speaking skills because people cannot communicate face-to-face unless both types of skills are developed together. Listening skills are also important for learning purposes since through listening students receive information and gain insights (Wallace, Stariha & Walberg, 2004).

### **4. THE PROCESS OF LISTENING**

As shown above in various definitions of listening, people experience several stages during the listening process. In the related literature, top-down and bottom-up are two

common processes that are usually mentioned related to the process of listening (Berne, 2004; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Mendelshon, 1994; Rost, 2002).

Brown (2006) defines top-down processing as the process of “using our prior knowledge and experiences; we know certain things about certain topics and situations and use that information to understand” (p. 2). In other words, learners use their background knowledge in order to comprehend the meaning by considering previous knowledge and schemata. On the other hand, bottom up processing refers to the process of “using the information we have about sounds, word meanings, and discourse markers like first, then and after that to assemble our understanding of what we read or hear one step at a time” (Brown, 2006, p. 2). During bottom-up processing, learners hear the words, keep them in their short term memory to combine them with each other and interpret the things that they have heard before. According to Tsui and Fullilove (1998), top down processing is more used by skilled listeners while less-skilled listeners use bottom-up processing.

It is important to mention that depending on the purpose for listening, learners may use top-down or bottom-up process more than another (Vandegrift, 2004). In other words, both processes usually happen together in real-life listening. Cahyono and Widiati (2009) state that successful listeners are those who can use both bottom-up and top-down processes by combining the new information and the knowledge that they already know. According to Flowerdew and Miller (2005), advanced listening skills are the results of combining listening process with the cognitive development. In that sense, in order to be effective listeners, students should use both bottom-up and top-down processing in listening. That is, “students must hear some sounds (bottom-up processing), hold them in their working memory long enough (a few seconds) to connect them to each other and then interpret what they’ve just heard before something new comes along. At the same time, listeners are using their background knowledge (top-down processing) to determine meaning with respect to prior knowledge and schemata” (Brown, 2006, p. 3).

Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that effective listening involves a multiplicity of skills and they list four steps that make up the process of listening in face-to-face conversation:

1. The spoken signals have to be identified from the midst of surrounding sounds.
2. The continuous stream of speech has to be segmented into units, which have to be recognized as known words.
3. The syntax of the utterance has to be grasped and the speaker’s intended meaning has to be understood.
4. We also have to apply our linguistic knowledge to formulating a correct and appropriate response to what has been said (p. 4).

Cook (2001) emphasizes the difference between ‘decoding’ and ‘codebreaking’ in the process of listening. Decoding refers to processing language to get the message whereas codebreaking refers to processing language to get the rules. Cook states that “teaching involves both getting students to decode messages from language and to codebreak the language system from what is heard” (p. 102).

## 5. TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

In spite of the importance of listening in the development of the communicative and cognitive skills, it did not start to take its place in language teaching curriculum until 1970s (Rost, 1990). However, in recent years, with the emphasis given in communication in language teaching, listening started to take its long deserved place in language programs (Richards, 2005).

For most second and foreign language learners, being able to communicate in social contexts is one of the most important reasons why they learn a language (Vandergrift, 1997). Through listening, the learners receive input that is essential for language learning to take place (Rost, 1994). Therefore, teaching listening comprehension is important as listening lessons “are a vehicle for teaching elements of grammatical structure and allow new vocabulary items to be contextualized within a body of communicative discourse” (Morley, 2001, p. 70). In addition, since English is being used as an international language for communication by people from non-native English speaking countries lately, teaching listening has gained more importance lately (Cahyono & Widiati, 2009). On the other hand, teaching listening has also been a challenge for language teachers for several reasons.

Mendelson (1994) proposes three reasons for why listening was poorly taught. First of all, listening was not accepted as a separate skill to be taught explicitly for a long time. Supporters of the idea argued that language learners would improve their listening skill on their own while they are listening to the teacher during the day. Secondly, teachers felt insecure about teaching listening. And finally, the traditional materials for language teaching were not efficient enough to teach listening.

Although it is a challenge to teach listening for many foreign language teachers, there have been many improvements in teaching listening over the years (Field 2008; Mendelson, 1994). According to Rubin (1994), when teachers and researchers understand the significance of the listening skill in language learning and its role in communication, they start to pay more attention to teaching this skill in language classrooms. The more teachers are aware of the stages of the listening lesson, the more beneficial they would be to their students in terms of helping them related to their listening comprehension concerns and needs (Field, 2008; Richards, 2005).

Figure 1 and Figure 2 below are adapted from Field (2008) and they summarize the changing format of listening lesson over the years.

<p><b>Pre-listening</b> Pre-teach vocabulary ‘to ensure maximum understanding’</p> <p><b>Listening</b> Extensive listening followed by general questions on context Intensive listening followed by detailed comprehension questions</p> <p><b>Post-listening</b> Teach any new vocabulary Analyze language (e.g. <i>Why did the speaker use the Present Perfect here?</i>) Paused play. Students listen and repeat</p>
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Figure 1. Early format of listening lesson

<p><b>Pre-listening</b> Establish context Create motivation for listening Pre-teach only critical vocabulary</p> <p><b>Extensive Listening</b> General questions on context and attitude of speakers</p> <p><b>Intensive Listening</b> Pre-set questions Intensive listening Checking answers to questions</p> <p><b>Post-listening</b> Functional language in listening passage Learners infer the meaning of unknown words from the sentences Final play; learners look at transcript</p>
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Figure 2. Current format of listening lesson

As the figures illustrate, there are three parts in a usual listening lesson: pre-listening, (while) listening and post-listening. Pre-listening part, which involves tasks such as activating previous knowledge of the learners and teaching vocabulary, prepares students for the tasks that they are going to do while listening (Richards, 2005). When current format of a listening lesson is compared with the early format of a listening lesson, teaching unknown vocabulary items shows difference. Field (2008) presents several reasons for not teaching all unknown words. Firstly, it is time consuming to teach unknown words. Field argues that the time spent for teaching unknown vocabulary can be used for listening to the text again. Secondly, it is not like real-life listening since students will encounter different words and try to understand them at the time of speaking. Last but not least, by teaching all the words in a text without considering their importance in the text, teachers divert students' attention to form rather than meaning and that is why Field suggests teaching only critical words which are highly important for students in order to understand the listening text.

In the while-listening part of the lesson, learners do activities such as listening for gist, and sequencing that help them to comprehend the text. Although there are no changes in extensive listening, as can be seen in Figure 2, the structure of the activities has been changed by making them more guided in order to help students follow the texts.

The last part of the listening lesson is post-listening, which can be used for practicing the previously learned grammar items. There are many examples of the expressions and language functions in the dialogues that people use in their life such as offering, refusing, apologizing. Since it is difficult to teach these expressions separate from a context, listening passages can be used to draw students' attention to those features during the post-listening part. Also, the post-listening part gives students a chance to state their opinions about a topic.

Morley (2001, p. 71-72) lists four main instructional models of listening and the learner goals related with those models as follows:

- Model 1: Listening and repeating
  - Learner goals: to pattern-match; to listen and imitate; to memorize
- Model 2: Listening and answering comprehension questions
  - Learner goals: to process discrete-point information; to listen and answer comprehension questions
- Model 3: Task listening
  - Learner goals: to process spoken discourse for functional purposes; to listen and do something with the information
- Model 4: Interactive listening
  - Learner goals: to develop aural/oral skills in semiformal interactive academic communication; to develop critical listening, critical thinking, and effective speaking abilities

Although there are different perspectives to teaching listening, the success of each perspective somewhat depends on addressing and minimizing the listening comprehension problems experienced by language learners. The following section focuses on those problems.

## **6. LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS**

Studies conducted on listening in the field of second and foreign language learning revealed that listening is one of the most difficult skills for language learners (Goh, 2000; Guo & Wills, 2006). Because of the overemphasis on grammar, reading and vocabulary, learners who learn English as a foreign language have serious problems in listening comprehension (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Ur (2007) states that students find some features of listening comprehension easier than others. In that sense, some of the main difficulties that the students encounter while listening are: “hearing sounds, understanding intonation and stress, coping with redundancy and noise, predicting, understanding colloquial vocabulary, fatigue, understanding different accents, using visual and aural environmental clues” (Ur, 2007, p. 11-20). Underwood (1989) lists the common obstacles that students experience while listening as speed of delivery, not being able to have words repeated, limited vocabulary, failing to follow signals like transitions, lack of contextual knowledge, being able to concentrate, and habits like trying to understand every word in what they hear.

In answering the question ‘What is successful listening?’, Anderson and Lynch (2003, p. 5-6) emphasize four different ways in which the listener can or cannot process incoming speech: first, the listener may not hear adequately what has been said; second, speech may contain words or phrases that the listener can hear adequately but is unable to understand because of syntactical or semantic problems; third, the listener may perfectly hear and understand the speaker but have switched off consciously or unconsciously; and fourth, the listener attends to the message fully and tries to construct a coherent interpretation from it.

One of the main problems that English language learners encounter in listening is that there are unfamiliar sounds that appear in English but not in their native language, and



this leads to comprehension difficulties. For instance, even though Turkish and English have similar consonants, Turkish does not have some of the consonants of English such as /θ/ (thumb) or /ð/ (those), which are produced with the tongue tip between the teeth (Yavuz, 2006). In Turkish, the closest sound for /θ/ is /t/ which may cause confusion for Turkish students when they hear the word 'three'. Since the /θ/ sound does not exist in Turkish, students may understand it as the word 'tree' or vice versa. Similarly, for the sound /ð/, it is highly possible for students to misunderstand since they may think it is /d/, so when the students hear the word 'those' they may think the word that they hear is 'doze'. The use of intonation, stress and rhythm may also prevent learners' understanding of the spoken English.

For a language learner, comprehending the meaning of the spoken language requires more effort when they are compared with native speakers of that language. For instance, outside noise or pronunciation differences affect learners more than the native speakers. Although learners are able to cope with this situation in their own language, Ur (2007) provides several explanations for why foreign language learners do not have the same ability to cope with such problems in the target language. First of all, although language learners recognize the words when they see them in written form or pronounced slowly, they cannot understand them just because of the rapid speech or they just do not know them. Secondly, learners may not be familiar with the sound-combinations, lexis and collocations which help them make guesses to fill the missing parts. Not being familiar with the colloquial vocabulary is also one of the problems by itself that students face with. Finally, language learners have a tendency to believe that for successful comprehension they have to understand everything.

For language learners, it is difficult to make predictions, especially if they are not familiar with the commonly used idioms, proverbs and collocations. Also, various features of spoken language such as stress and intonation have a significant role for certain situations. In addition, trying to interpret unfamiliar lexis and sounds for a long time is very tiring for many language learners. The different accents they are exposed to could also be problematic for many language learners since especially in EFL context students are used to hear L2 from their teachers who speak English as a foreign language. Yet, English is spoken around the world for communication and they should be provided opportunities to familiarize themselves with different accents which may help them to overcome this problem (Ur, 2007; Underwood 1989). According to Ur (2007), another important problem is students' lack of ability to use the environmental clues to grasp the meaning. It is not because students cannot perceive the visual clues, as they can already do it in their L1, but they lack the ability to use these visual clues while listening to the target language, a process in which learners work really hard to understand the native speakers and catch the little details. Ur (2007) states that "their receptive system is overloaded" (p. 21), which as a result, makes them stressed. Since listeners try to catch most of the details in a text while listening in a foreign language, they spend more effort than a native speaker does. That is, since the non-native speakers of the language focus on the actual meaning of the words, they only focus on the literal meaning while having no time to comprehend the conventional aspect of it. Thus, not being able to comprehend the pragmatic meaning of the words/phrases causes listening comprehension problems.

Some of the studies that have been conducted on the difficulties students experience in listening focused on speech rate (Blau, 1990; Conrad, 1989; Derwing & Munro, 2001;

Griffiths, 1990; Khatib & Khodabakhsh, 2010; Mc Bride, 2011; Zhao, 1997), vocabulary (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1980; Kelly, 1991) as well as the effect of phonological features and background knowledge of the listeners (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Henrichsen, 1984; Markham & Latham, 1987; Matter, 1989). However, one of the ways to provide solutions to students' problems is first investigating their perceptions of listening comprehension problems.

There have been many studies conducted on students' listening comprehension problems by taking students' perspective into consideration. In a study which specifically examined learners' perceptions of listening comprehension problems, Goh (2000) approached the issue from a cognitive perspective and identified the three phases of listening process: perception, parsing, and utilization. The participants in the study were a group of Chinese students who were learning English to prepare for undergraduate studies. The data were collected through three different instruments; diaries, semi-structured group interviews, and immediate retrospective verbalization procedures. The study revealed ten problems students experience related to the three listening phases (see Figure 3 below).

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<b>Perception</b>	Do not recognize words they know Neglect the next part when thinking about meaning Cannot chunk streams of speech Miss the beginning of texts Concentrate too hard or unable to concentrate
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<b>Parsing</b>	Quickly forget what is heard Unable to form a mental representation from words heard Do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems
<hr/>	
<b>Utilization</b>	Understand words but not the intended message Confused about the key ideas in the message

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*Figure 3. Problems related to different phases of listening comprehension*

In another study which explored Arabic learners' perceptions and beliefs about their listening comprehension problems in English, ineffective usage of listening strategies, the listening text itself, the speaker, the listening tasks and activities, the message, and listeners' attitudes were found to be the sources of their listening comprehension problems. When students were asked to list their listening problems, the most common answers were poor classroom conditions, not having visual aids, unfamiliar vocabulary, unclear pronunciation, speech rate, boring topics and being exposed to longer texts (Hasan, 2000).

Similar to Hasan's (2000) study, Graham (2006) looked at the learners' perspectives of listening comprehension problems. She also investigated learners' views of the reasons behind their success. The participants were a group of high school students who were studying French as a foreign language. The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results of the study revealed that dealing with the delivery of the spoken text, trying to hear and understand the individual words were some of the problems reported by the learners. Most learners stated that their low listening

ability, difficulties of the tasks and the texts, and not being aware of effective listening strategies were the factors that affected their success.

One of the latest studies about students' listening comprehension problems was conducted by Hamouda (2012) with 60 EFL Saudi learners. The results revealed that the students' major listening comprehension problems were pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording.

In another recent study Yıldırım (2013) explored teachers' perceptions of university level students' listening comprehension problems in order to compare them with the students' perceptions, as well as to probe into teachers' reported classroom practices to deal with these listening comprehension problems. With this aim, the study was carried out with 423 B1.2 level EFL learners and 49 teachers in Turkey. The results of the quantitative data analysis revealed that, except for one item, teachers' mean scores were always higher than students' mean scores, which indicates that students do not experience listening comprehension problems as frequently as their teachers think, and teachers may be more aware of listening comprehension problems than their students. The analysis of the interviews revealed that, all of the participating teachers considered listening as a very important skill for their students. In addition, it is found that although teachers have different perceptions among themselves and have different years of experiences, when their reported classroom practices are considered, they perform similarly in the classroom in order to help their students to overcome their listening comprehension problems.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to review the basic concepts related to the place and importance of listening skill in learning English as second or foreign language, and to focus on listening comprehension problems experienced by English language learners. In the light of the aforementioned arguments, it can be stated that listening skills should not be disregarded in the language classrooms and teachers should be aware of and should try to address and minimize listening comprehension problems experienced by the students. The following suggestions from two researchers can be help language teachers design and implement better listening lessons. Peterson (2001, p. 89) suggests the following six principles for teaching listening in the second language classroom: increase the amount of listening time in the second language class, use listening before other activities, include both global and selective listening, activate top-level skills (e.g. giving advance organizers or script activators), work towards automaticity in processing, and develop conscious listening strategies. Brown (2001, p. 258-260) suggests the following principles for designing listening techniques: make sure that you don't overlook the importance of techniques that specifically develop listening comprehension competence, use techniques that are intrinsically motivating, utilize authentic language and contexts, carefully consider the form of listeners' responses, encourage the development of listening strategies, include both bottom-up and top-down listening techniques.

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

### 1. Giriş

Her ne kadar günümüzde dinleme anlama becerilerinin yabancı dil öğretiminde önemli bir yeri olduğu ve dinleme anlama becerileri öğretiminin tüm dil öğretim programları için gerekli olduğu düşünülse de 1960'lı yılların sonuna kadar bu beceriler yabancı dil sınıflarında çok da fazla önemsenmiyordu. Hem araştırmacılar hem de öğretmenler okuma becerilerinin ve gramer bilgisinin geliştirilmesine dinleme becerilerinin geliştirilmesinden çok daha fazla önem vermekteydiler. Dinleme becerisine yönelik bazı aktiviteler de aslında yeni gramer konularının sunumu için tercih edilmekteydi. Fakat 1970'li yılların başından itibaren dinleme becerileri giderek daha fazla artan derecede önem kazanmaya ve yabancı dil öğretimi programlarında önemli bir yer tutmaya başladı. Bu yıllarda giderek daha çok popüler olmaya başlayan 'Communicative Language Teaching' ile birlikte dinleme becerilerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik girişimler gittikçe arttı. Bu bağlamda, bu alanyazın değerlendirmesinin temel amacı hem dinleme becerilerinin dil öğretimindeki yeri ve önemini hem de yabancı dil öğrenenlerinin dinleme becerileri ile ilgili yaşadıkları problemleri ilgili literatür ışığında tartışmaktır.

### 2. Dinleme ile Duyma Arasındaki Farklılıklar

Dinleme ile duyma arasındaki farklılıkları bilmek dinleme becerilerinin öğretimi açısından oldukça önemlidir. Duyma, kulağa gelen sesin algılanması ile ilgilidir, diğer taraftan dinleme ise algılanan ses ile anlamın birleştirilmesidir. Duyma pasif, dinleme ise aktif bir olaydır. Her ne kadar dinleme becerisi zaman içinde değişik şekillerde tanımlanmış olsa da günümüzde yaygın kabul gören tanım dinleme becerilerinin pasif beceriler olmadığı, dinleyicinin duyduğu seslerden anlam çıkarabilmesi için aslında zihinsel olarak aktif bir süreçten geçmesi gerektiği yönündedir.

### 3. Dinleme Becerilerinin Önemi

Dinleme, günlük hayatta iletişimin temel aşamalarından birisidir. Yapılan araştırmalara göre günlük iletişimin yaklaşık yüzde 40-50'lik bir kısmını dinleme oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda dinleme, yabancı dil öğrenilen sınıflarda da şu sebeplerden dolayı önemli bir yere sahiptir: (1) dinleme becerisi öğrencilere ihtiyaçları olan yabancı dil girdisini sunduğu için çok önemlidir, ihtiyaç duyulan girdi olamadan öğrenmenin başlaması da düşünülemez; (2) dinleme aktiviteleri yoluyla öğrenciler iletişim kurma yollarının farkına varırlar; (3) öğrenilen dilin günlük hayattaki kullanımına maruz kalmak öğrenci için motive edici olabilir; (4) dinleme aktiviteleri öğretmenlere öğrencilerin dikkatini yeni yapılarla çekebilmek için güzel bir fırsat oluşturur.

### 4. Dinleme Süreci

Dinleme süreci açıklanırken ilgili literatürde iki temel yaklaşım ön plana çıkmaktadır: yukarıdan aşağıya dinleme süreci ve aşağıdan yukarıya dinleme süreci. Yukarıdan aşağıya dinleme sürecinde dinleyici dinlediği konu ile ilgili zihninde geçmişten bu yana birikmiş olan bilgi ve tecrübeleri kullanarak anlam oluşturmaya çalışmaktadır. Aşağıdan yukarıya dinleme sürecinde ise sesler, kelimelerin anlamları, söylemsel işaretler kullanılarak anlam oluşturulamaya çalışılır. Araştırmacılara göre, dinleme anlama becerileri daha gelişmiş olan kişiler yukarıdan aşağıya dinleme sürecini daha fazla

kullanırken bu becerileri yeni yeni gelişen yabancı dil öğrencileri aşağıdan yukarıya dinleme sürecini daha fazla kullanırlar. Her ne kadar bu iki dinleme süreci birbirinden farklı olarak tanımlanmış olsalar da aslında pek çok araştırmacıya göre günlük hayatta insanlar bu iki süreci genellikle birlikte kullanırlar.

### **5. Dinleme Becerilerinin Öğretimi**

Dinleme becerilerinin öğretiminde yaşanan zorluklar bazı araştırmacılar tarafından şu üç sebeple açıklanmaktadır: (1) uzun yıllar boyunca dinleme becerileri ayrıca öğretilmesi gereken beceriler olarak görülmemişlerdir, öğrencilerin dinleme becerilerinin zaman içinde kendi kendine gelişeceği varsayımı hâkim olmuştur; (2) pek çok öğretmen, özellikle de anadili öğrettikleri dil olmayan yabancı dil öğretmenleri dinleme öğretimi konusunda kendilerini eksik görmüşlerdir; (3) yabancı dil sınıflarında kullanılan materyaller dinleme becerilerinin öğretimi için yeterli derecede iyi tasarlanmamıştır. Tüm bu sebeplerden ötürü dinleme becerileri uzun süre yabancı dil sınıflarında göz ardı edilmiştir. Günümüzde dinleme dersleri genelde üç temel aşamadan oluşmaktadır: ön dinleme, ayrıntılı dinleme ve dinleme sonrası aşamaları. Ön dinleme aşamasında öğrenciler konuya ve konunun geçtiği bağlama aşinalık kazanmaktadırlar. Bu aşama aynı zamanda öğrencileri motive etmek ve dinleme parçasında geçen ve anlama için önemli bulunan bilinmeyen kelimelerin öğretilmesi için kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıntılı dinleme aşamasında öğrencilere dinledikleri parçayı anlamalarını kolaylaştırmak için bazı sorular ve aktiviteler verilmekte ve bu soru ve aktiviteler yardımıyla dinlenen parçanın ayrıntılı bir biçimde anlaşılması kolaylaştırılmaya çalışılmaktadır.

Bazı araştırmacılar, dinleme derslerindeki bu üç temel aşama dışında dinleme öğretim modelleri ve bu modellerle ilgili öğrenme amaçlarını açıklamışlardır. Buna göre, birinci model dinleme ve tekrar etme modelidir ve bu modelin temel amacı dinlenenin taklit edilerek tekrar edilmesi üzerine kurulmuştur. İkinci model dinleme ve soru cevaplama modelidir ve bu modelde dinlenen parçayla ilgili ayrıntılı bilgilerin anlaşılması amaçlanmakta, bu amaca ulaşmak için de çeşitli soru teknikleri kullanılmaktadır. Üçüncü model görev tabanlı dinleme modelidir ve bu modelde dinlenen parçanın kullanılması ile eğitimsel bir görevin tamamlanması ve bu şekilde de yabancı dilde iletişim becerisinin geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Dördüncü model ise etkileşimsel dinleme modelidir ve bu model ile öğrencilerin dinleme aracılığıyla hem iletişim becerilerinin hem de eleştirel dinleme ve düşünme becerilerinin geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

### **6. Dinleme Anlama Problemleri**

Yabancı dil eğitimi alanında yapılan çalışmalar dinleme becerilerinin öğrencilerin en çok zorlandıkları beceriler arasında olduğunu göstermektedir. Pek çok yabancı dil öğretim programında karşılaşılan gramer ve kelime bilgileri ile okuma becerisinin diğer becerilere göre çok daha fazla vurgulanması durumu dinleme becerilerini öğrenciler için daha da zor duruma getirmektedir. Yabancı dilde dinleme sırasında öğrencilerin karşılaştıkları temel sorunlar şu şekilde özetlenebilir: seslerin anlaşılmasıyla ilgili problemler, vurgunun anlaşılmasıyla ilgili problemler, çevreden gelen diğer seslerin yarattığı problemler, bilinmeyen kelimelerden dolayı yaşanan problemler, farklı aksanlardan dolayı yaşanan problemler, konuşma hızıyla ilgili problemler, anlamayı kolaylaştıracak bilgi birikiminin olmaması ile ilgili problemler ve dinleme sırasında her bir kelimeyi anlamaya çalışırken genel anlamı kaçırma problemleri. Dinleme sürecinde yaşanan temel zorluklarla ilgili



olarak arařtırmacılar řu üç noktaya dikkat çekmektedirler: (1) öğrenci dinleme parçasını duymakta zorluk yaşayabilir; (2) öğrenci dinleme parçasını duyabilir fakat bilmediđi kelimeler ya da öğrenmediđi yapılar sebebiyle anlayamayabilir; (3) öğrenci dinleme parçasını hem duyabilir hem de tüm kelime ve yapıları biliyor olabilir fakat o anda dikkati dağılmıř olabilir.

## 7. Sonu

Bu alanyazın deđerlendirmesinde bahsedilen tüm alıřmalar ışığında řu temel sonuçlara varılabilir: Yabancı dil öğretilen sınıflarda dinleme anlama becerilerinin geliştirilmesi göz ardı edilmemeli, diđer beceriler daha fazla vurgulanmamalı ve öğretmenler hem öğrencilerin karşılařmaları muhtemel olan dinleme anlama problemleri hakkında bilgi sahibi olmalı hem de bu problemlerin özölmesi ya da en az düzeye indirgenmesi için yapılması gerekenleri bilmelidirler. Bu bağlamda yabancı dil öğretmenlerine verilebilecek bazı tavsiyeler řu şekildedir: Sınıflarda dinleme anlama etkinliklerine ayrılan süre arttırılmalıdır, dinleme aktiviteleri diđer becerilerle ilgili aktivitelerden önce kullanılabilir, dinleme paralarının konuları bazen genel konular arasından bazen de öğrencilerin ilgi alanlarına göre daha özel konular arasından seçilmelidir, dinleme sürecinin otomatikleřmesi için gerekli aba gösterilmelidir, dinleme stratejileri öğretilmelidir ve dinleme motivasyonunu arttırmaya yönelik alıřmalar yapılmalıdır.