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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF LISTENING SKILLS FOR TURKISH LEARNERS DURING THE LEARNING PERIOD

ÖĞRENME SÜRECİNDE TÜRK ÖĞRENCİLERİN DİNLEME BECERİLERİNDEKİ ZORLUKLARIN AŞILMASINDA BİLİŞÜSTÜ FARKINDALIĞIN ÖNEMİ

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Abstract

Although listening is an important skill in English teaching, it has mostly been a neglected skill in secondary and high schools in Turkey. Turkish learners find learning English challenging because of the difficulties that arise from the pronunciation of English.

The failure of the Turkish learners in English learning period mostly brings about a nagging anxiety to learn English language over the learners. Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Socio-affective strategies can help the learners alleviate their anxiety to learn English.

Less proficient learners prefer bottom-up and cognitive strategies. Nevertheless, proficient learners prefer top-down and metacognitive strategies. Learning English may be a challenging period for EFL (English as a Foreign language) learners in non-natural environment.

Keywords: listening skill, cognitive, metacognitive, social-affective strategies, top-down, bottom-up strategies, anxiety to learn.

Özet

Dinleme İngilizce öğretiminde önemli bir beceri olmasına rağmen, Türkiye’de ki ortaokul ve liselerde çoğunlukla ihmal edilmiş bir beceridir. Türk öğrenciler İngilizcenin telaffuzundan kaynaklanan zorluklardan dolayı İngilizce öğrenimini zor bulurlar. Türk Öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme sürecindeki başarısızlığı çoğunlukla öğrenciler üzerinde devam eden bir endişe oluşturur.

Bilişsel, Bilişüstü ve sosyal-duyuşsal yöntemler İngilizce öğrenmede ki öğrencilerin endişelerini azaltmada yardımcı olabilir. Yeni öğrenen kişiler aşağıdan yukarı ve bilişsel yöntemleri tercih ederken, yabancı dil öğreniminde iyi olanlar yukarıdan- aşağıya ve bilişüstü yöntemleri tercih ederler. İngilizce Öğrenmek doğal olmayan ortamda zorlayıcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dinleme becerisi, bilişsel, bilişüstü, sosya-duygusal yöntemler, yukarıdan aşağıya, yukarıdan aşağıya yöntemler, öğrenme endişesi.

Introduction

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Listening is one of the most important components of the English language training period. This is a receptive skill which is the infrastructure of a foreign language as a productive one. English as a second language learners may not need listening practices in schools, locations and environments where English is generally spoken by all participants and students. However, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are under no circumstances exposed to listening practices to improve their listening skills because the curriculum does not let students do enough practice in state schools. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students use the target language artificially so this process may make them bored. Whenever they have difficulty in understanding and communicating with each other, they fall back upon speaking Turkish as it is common language among them.

Listening has been defined by Chastain (1971) as understanding and comprehending what is told in an acceptable period of time automatically. Hamouda (2013) stated that comprehensible input in terms of acquisition is so significant in listening skill. Wherever learning is available, input is evident. The input is the key factor of listening comprehension because it triggers the communication between individuals. Pourhosein Gilakjani and Mohammadreza Ahmadi (2011) pointed out that the skill which plays a significant role in the process of Communication is absolutely listening itself because it is the most important skill among the other skills. What has made listening significant derives predominantly from the importance of oral communication. According to Richards, John Platt, and Heidi Platt (2000) and Pourhosein Gilakjani and Seyedeh Masoumeh Ahmadi (2001), the only way for us to understand the speech is to become a master in listening comprehension. During this period, Linguistics plays an important role in terms of phonemes, the structures of grammar, and the use of English.

In our modern age in which flow of information has accelerated at an unprecedented pace, teaching English in Turkey has not been able to attain to the desired level in terms of providing oral communication. Two skills, listening and speaking, playing a vital role in English teaching in our education system within the framework of the accepted pronunciation all over the world have been constantly neglected because the Grammar-Translation method is predominantly used to teach English in the state primary, secondary, and high schools instead.

Different sounds, which are not available in our language, constitute a barrier for Turkish learners to learn the pronunciation easily. Turkish language in terms of sentence structure is different from the English language. It is a member of the Altaic language, sub-group of Ural-Altaic language family. However, English language is a member of Germanic language, sub-group of Hindu-European language family. Different sentence structure, unusual sound, articulation, changing intonations make English language difficult for Turkish learners understand, articulate, and pronounce in terms of both listening and speaking skills. One of the most important problems for Turkish learners lies underneath of insufficient listening practice.

In the beginning, a few reasons can be defined why English language learners have difficulty in listening skill, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign language). The reasons why learners

at beginner, elementary, and pre-intermediate levels have great difficulty because they are not good at recognizing phonemes of a new language. Also, another crucial problem for failure in learning of English listening ability is that language learners have a tendency to translate every word into their mother tongues to understand the meaning of every word uttered in the target language. In spite of the fact that listening ability has been accepted as a springboard in English learning for a long time, it has still remained under the shade of other skills.

According to Morley (2001), listening comprehension is often approved as an important turning point of language learning. Listening is taken into consideration as an active skill which contains a lot of processes. Though listening skill is now well acknowledged that it is a significant stepping stone of language learning, making listening ability active learning requires a set of work which will point out its importance.

Unfortunately, Brown (1987) observed that many schools in many countries, persistently go on display to indicate the fact that listening is currently considered as the less important skill than the other skills in spite of a great number of published materials, books on listening comprehension and classroom activities. Listening is the much-needed skill, however it is given short shrift skill in foreign language learning in EFL (English as a foreign language).

Literature review

The listening strategies, such as cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies, have been largely used by proficient and less proficient listening learners. The main purpose is to learn and strengthen the logic of language learning. Some learners have completed different studies on listening strategies.

According to Vandergrift (1999), cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective and memory strategies are generally used by skilled and less skilled learners. Cognitive and memory strategies are frequently preferred by less productive learners. On the other hand, social strategies are hardly ever used by those learners. New learners and less sufficient learners prefer using cognitive and bottom-up strategies in listening skill. Successful learners do not do the same. The successful learners never avoided applying those strategies. The top-down and metacognitive strategies are preferred by sufficient and productive students (Graham, Santos & Vanderplank, 2008; Shang, 2008). Chulim (2008) conducted a study with the aim to get a satisfactory conclusion for listening strategies that were practiced on the five Mexican universities. Despite all efforts, any significant differences have been observed across the universities in terms of listening strategy use. However, at French high schools, the students, whose levels of languages are different, used metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Vandergrift clarified the situation in 1997. Accordingly, the results have shown that the cognitive strategies were predominantly preferred by students whose proficiency levels are

insufficient. On the other hand, the students, whose proficiency levels are higher than those who used cognitive strategy, preferred metacognitive strategies.

As for gender, metacognitive strategies were also preferred by females. Anderson (1991) clarified that metacognitive strategies have a significant role in improving learners' skills. Goh and Yusnita (2006) and Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, & Al-Shboul (2013) pointed out that the positive effect of listening strategies on the learners' listening outcomes was the reflection of success on listening comprehension. Yang (2009) and Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, & Al-Shboul (2013) clarified that metacognitive strategies are the ones that separate the successful listeners from the unsuccessful ones. Coşkun (2010) and Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, & Al-Shboul (2013) conducted a research to investigate the effect of metacognitive listening strategy training program on listening comprehension.

According to the conclusion, the experimental group displayed a higher accomplishment. A strategy-based approach was practiced on twenty-eight Iranian EFL learners and four listening sessions were realized with the aim to increase the potential of learners' comprehension on the IELTS listening tests. This has proven that metacognitive instruction is important for learners to connect their listening comprehension. The conclusion was hopeful as less-proficient learners displayed remarkable improvement than proficient ones in the IELTS listening tests (Bozorgian, 2012).

Metacognitive strategies enable language listeners to understand and comprehend the important points of language learning and give them an opportunity to regulate the listening comprehension process (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal & Tafaghodtari, 2006).

Materials and Methods

One of the reasons why I have chosen to prepare and to put a questionnaire that include the anxiety relating to four language skills into practice over the Turkish learners who generally are weak in understanding the listening skill is because I would like to be sure which skill is more difficult for learners under the influence of anxiety, and to find some important clues of how I can overcome the barriers that make learners' wish decline.

In order to understand that which skill seems more difficult for Turkish Learners than other skills, I gave the students a questionnaire, which includes the anxieties arising from four skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The students on whom I conducted the research on the anxiety of four skills, are Turkish, half of whom are female and their levels are pre-intermediate at a high school in Bursa province.

The school was selected among the state high schools which give importance to English lessons in terms of both the teachers of English and the students. The reason why English teachers give

importance to the curriculum of English lessons is because the weekly English lessons consist of nine hours a week. It is important for every instructor who is going to start a survey to determine the way(s) of teaching a skill effectively to his or her students. This can come into true by means of correctly selected questionnaires. In the light of this explanation, I started my research with the questionnaire including 32 questions in which speaking anxiety, listening anxiety, reading anxiety, and writing anxiety are evident. I gave them to the students who were under my control during the period when I was allocated. The students were given the questionnaire that was translated into Turkish language so that they could give accurate answers to every question. In order to avoid from the mistakenly given answer, this was necessary for every student.

As a second stage, the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), in which 30 questions were evident in listening anxiety, were given to the same students to determine the level of anxiety in listening comprehension. This questionnaire was about determining the level of listening anxiety that the students may have.

Statistical analysis

All analysis was done by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. The Kruskal- Wallis H, Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon tests were used for comparisons. The significance level was chosen as 0.05.

Results

According to the results it was obviously clear that the most presser anxiety was about listening anxiety. Listening is a receptive skill which helps learners attain the speaking skill, which is the productive skill. Unless the listening skill (receptive skill) is completely acquired, it is unfortunately possible for learners of English to produce speaking as a productive skill.

As a result of the second stage, it was clear that the majority of the students suffered from the listening anxiety. The Pre-test and the post-test were put into practice to understand the difference on students' level of anxiety in listening comprehension.

Comprehending the receptive skills such as listening and reading is not so easy as they are thought in EFL classroom because listening in particular does not improve by itself. The environment in which learners are is not natural, so nobody speaks the target language when they come out of the classroom. According to my estimation, I thought that Turkish learners were mostly suffering from the listening anxiety because they could not understand anything else what they heard during the speech.

The table 1 points out that listening is the highest score in anxiety of language

Table 1: Distribution of language skills

	Mean ± Std. Deviation	p-value
Listening	3.144±0.719	0.018
Speaking	3.040±0.392	
Writing	2.976±0.332	
Reading	3.140±0.481	

Kruskal- Wallis H test was used in this analysis. There was a significant difference among the skills (p- value = 0.0018) and the anxiety of listening skill was of the highest score. It means that the biggest barrier that affect students' learning English negatively was the listening skill which is the most important skill in EFL classroom.

Listening anxiety for Turkish learners with the Mean±Std. The deviation of (3.144 ±0.719) has been placed on the top. This numerical explanation is the striking example of how the Turkish learners have been suffering from the listening anxiety in the path of language learning. Listening is the receptive skill, so it should support the speaking skill. If the receptive skill is insufficient, the productive skill is insufficient, too.

Reading anxiety for the EFL learners in Turkey with the Mean± Std. Deviation of (3.140±0.481) has been placed on the second place. Reading is also a receptive skill for writing skill which is the productive skill for the students. Reading skill enables the student to write a composition or an essay with the structures from which the learners have learned.

Speaking, as a productive skill, was on the third place with the Mean ± Std.

Deviation of (3.040±0.392). Unless a productive skill is supported by a receptive skill, it is beyond producing any interaction or speaking or anything else relating to speech and speaking.

Writing, as a productive skill, is the most difficult skill because it is not supported by reading skill because Turkish learners are not happy even with books, magazines, and written materials in Turkish language. This deficiency in reading makes reading comprehension most boring amongst Turkish learners. Undoubtedly, the mean of writing with the Std. Deviation (2.976±0.332) proves that idea. No anxiety means no productivity.

The table 2 shows the distribution of gender.

Table 2: Gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	25	31.6
Female	54	68.4

According to the table 2, the frequency of male students is 25. This number constitutes 31.6 % of the total number. On the other hand, the frequency of female students is 54. This number also constitutes 68.4 % of the total number.

The table 3 contains the age distribution of the 79 students, who participated in the questionnaire including the anxiety levels of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The table 3 also includes the frequency and percentage of the ages that the students participated.

Table 3: Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
18	11	13.9
19	17	21.5
20	4	5.1
21	19	24.1
22	15	19.0
23	6	7.6
24	7	8.9
Total	79	100.0

11 students at the age of 18 participated in the questionnaire. The percentage of this number is 13.9 %.

17 students at the age of 19 participated in the questionnaire. The percentage of the number of the students is 21.5 %.

Only 4 students at the age of 20 participated in the questionnaire. The percentage of the number of the students is 5.1 %.

19 students at the age of 21 took part in the questionnaire. The percentage of the students who attended the questionnaire is 24.1%.

15 students at the age of 22 attended the questionnaire. The percentage of the students who joined in the questionnaire is 19.0 %.

Only 6 students at the age of 23 attended the questionnaire. The percentage of the students who participated is 7.6 %.

7 students at the age of 24 participated in the questionnaire. The percentage of the students who joined in the questionnaire is 8.9 %.

The Table 4 As for the listening score between the genders, there has not been observed any remarkable difference in listening score between male and female students. Mann-Whitney U test was used in this analysis.

Table 4: Listening score between genders

Listening score	Mean \pm Std. Deviation	p-value
Male	3.313 \pm 0.686	0.258
Female	3.065 \pm 0.726	

Mann-Whitney U test was used in this analysis. There was not any significant difference in the listening score between males and females (p- value= 0.258).

The mean and the standard deviation is 3.313 \pm 0.686 for male students. However, the mean and STD. Deviation is 3.065 \pm 0.726 for female students. All in all, p-value is (0.258). It means that there is no remarkable difference between genders in listening score.

The table 5 contains the speaking score whether there is any difference between the genders who participated in the questionnaire.

Table 5: Speaking score between genders

Speaking score	Mean \pm Std. Deviation	p-value
Male	3.126 \pm 0.473	0.229
Female	3.000 \pm 0.356	

Mann-Whitney U test was used in this analysis. There was not any significant difference in speaking score in terms of males and females (p- value= 0.229). The mean and the STD. Deviation is 3.126 \pm 0.473 for the male students who attended the questionnaire. However, the mean and the standard deviation is 3.00 \pm 0.356 for the female students (p-value =0.229). It means that there is no remarkable difference between the genders who participated in the questionnaire.

The table 6 displays the analysis of the reading score in terms of genders. It denotes whether there is a remarkable difference between male and female students in terms of reading score. Reading skill is also a receptive skill which supports the writing skill so that students can produce a paragraph or an essay to define what they think.

Table 6: Analysis of the reading score

Reading score	Mean ± Std. Deviation	p-value
Male	3.160±0.408	0.648
Female	3.130±0.515	

The table 7 displays the analysis of the writing score. The analysis has given the important data whether there is any remarkable difference between genders in terms of writing score.

Table 7: Analysis of the writing score

Writing score	Mean ± Std. Deviation	p-value
Male	2.970±0.317	0.226
Female	2.979±0.368	

Mann-Whitney U test was used in this analysis. There was not any significant difference in the writing score between males and females (p- value = 0.226).

The mean and the standard deviation of the writing score is 2.970±0.317 for the male students, but the mean and the standard deviation of the writing score is 2.979±0.368 for the female students.

The mean and the standard deviation of the writing score is 2.970±0.317 for the male students, but the mean and the standard deviation of the writing score is 2.979±0.368 for the female students (p-value=0.226). It states that there is no remarkable difference between the genders who participated in the writing skill.

The reason why the listening anxiety questionnaire was given to the students is because the level of listening anxiety amongst the other skills is predominantly higher than the other skills' anxiety.

In order to evaluate and check the stress level of the students in listening skill who participated in the questionnaire, a questionnaire in which 30 questions are available in listening anxiety was given to the students whose numbers are 79.

In order to observe the results between pre-test and post-test, it is important for a researcher to evaluate the results which arise from the analysis. Before starting the research, we need to have some starting points in anxiety of four skills. I should have understood that from which skill's anxiety the Turkish learners were suffering and which skill's anxiety came first which affected

the learners' desire to learn badly. Because of that need, it was necessary for me to give a pre-test relating to listening anxiety to the students.

According to the result of the pre-test, the anxiety levels of the students in listening skill and comprehension were predominantly high. The anxiety level of the students should be declined within the frame work of the techniques and methods which will make students' confidence enhance. The techniques and methods are based on the dictogloss and the Cornell. These methods are the improved ones of dictation and note-taking during the process of listening. Cornell method's origin is the Cornelius University. It has the effective technique which will improve the listening ability.

After the questionnaire for the anxiety of four skills was given to the learners and the survey was evaluated on a case-by- case basis, another survey, including the anxiety relating to listening skill was given to the students with the aim to check whether there is a notable difference between the pre-test and the post-test. In addition to this, it was necessary for us to what extent note taking methods such as opinion, dictogloss, and Cornell, have been useful to enhance the level of listening comprehension and to reduce the level of anxiety in listening skill.

The difference between the pre-test and the post-test relating to the listening anxiety was displayed in the table 8.

Table 8: Difference between the pre-test and the post-test

Anxiety	Mean ± Std. Deviation	p-value
Pre test	90.911±13.272	<0.001
Post test	71.987±7.896	

Wilcoxon test was used to evaluate and analyses the results of the survey. There was a significant difference between anxiety scores in pre and post-tests. (<0.001) and the pretest got higher value (90.911). According to the pre-test result, the anxiety in listening comprehension was much higher than the post-test result.

P-value in the pre-test result as mean and std. deviation is 90.911±13.272. When we take the statistical data as “<0.001 “into consideration, this obviously displays the remarkable difference between the results.

Post test result as mean and std. deviation is 71.987±7.896. This means that the post-test anxiety level in listening comprehension, after metacognitive supports, is lower than the pre-test anxiety level.

There was a significant difference between the anxiety scores in terms of the pre-test and the post-test. (<0.001) and the pre-test got higher value as (90.911). The Higher value means that the level of anxiety in listening comprehension is negatively high.

The listening anxiety in terms of gender was analyzed whether there is a difference between remarkable scores. It was obviously seen and observed that there was not any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in terms of gender.

Discussion

Teaching English does not mean teaching grammar. The compact grammar teaching hinders non-native speakers from learning and comprehending listening and speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Of course, the presence of grammar cannot be ignored. However, the grammar itself does not mean everything in English teaching classrooms.

Listening and reading are the receptive skills, so those should be understood and comprehended to the learners of English. Listening ability causes to speaking ability as productive skill. On the other hand, reading skill leads to writing skill as productive skill as well. Grammar only can help students write their sentences, paragraphs, and essays on their writing. Grammar teaches students how to use the tenses in their sentences accurately.

Nonnative speaking environment is the big challenge for EFL students to learn listening and speaking abilities without spending much effort. So, we should establish an artificial environment for the learners in such a way as to learn how to listen and how to speak.

First, we should eliminate the presence of anxiety that non-native speakers suffer from in listening skill. Second, metacognitive awareness should be gained to the students through the techniques and the methods which will tackle the barriers of listening ability.

When we make students gain the self confidence in overcoming the problems of listening and speaking, the success will absolutely come to the surface.

Teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing are generally difficult for students whose native languages are agglutinating language which is the Ural-Altaic language family. The syntax of the agglutinating language is more difficult than the syntax of the Hindu-European language in which English, French, German coming ahead take place.

The hamperer factors which make EFL students difficult to learn English might be eliminated by new techniques putting into practice. Becoming willingly is the most important for learners of English.

When we solve the difficulty of listening and speaking skill, we can say that we have solved the problem of learning a foreign language.

NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) technique includes a lot of effective techniques. Likewise, the SWISH method is one of the most effective techniques of all in NLP.

The technique of SWISH consists of seven steps. These steps are;

- 1) Identification of the problem.
- 2) Identification of the disturbing picture in the mind.
- 3) Identification of the target picture in the mind.
- 4) Focusing on the desired picture in the mind.
- 5) Swish + separator. While minimizing the undesired picture, we maximize the desired picture in the mind to make it effective.
- 6) Repetition: it is advisable that you repeat the technique not less than seven times.
- 7) Testing the productivity of the technique.

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