

DEVELOPING YOUNG LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH SONGS

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Abstract

Listening skill is regarded as the most important outcome of early language teaching and songs are regarded as one of the best ways for practicing and developing the listening skills of especially young learners. Therefore, any syllabus designed for teaching foreign languages to young learners specifically focuses on the listening skill in general and contains songs as effective listening materials. The purpose of this theoretical study is to present a theoretical structure by reviewing the relevant literature in relation to the importance of the listening skill for young foreign language learners and to discuss the importance, advantages, and teaching procedures of songs as listening activities. Research shows that the necessary time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of modern foreign languages in Turkey and students are unable to reach the targets about listening comprehension mentioned in the curriculum. Therefore it is concluded in this study that the development of listening skills should be given priority in the Turkish context as in many European countries and that the use of songs as listening materials should be promoted.

Key Words: modern foreign language, young learner, listening skill, song

ŞARKILARLA ÇOCUKLARIN DİNLEME BECERİLERİNİN GELİŞTİRİLMESİ

Özet

Dinleme becerisinin erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretiminin en önemli çıktılarının birisi olarak kabul edilir ve bu bağlamda değerlendirildiğinde, şarkıların dinleme becerisinin geliştirilmesi ve pekiştirilmesinde en önemli araçlardan birisi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretimi için hazırlanan öğretim programları özellikle dinleme becerisi üzerine odaklanmakta ve etkin dinleme materyalleri olarak kabul edilen şarkıları içermektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretiminde dinleme becerisinin önemini ortaya koymak ve etkin dinleme etkinlikleri olarak kabul edilen şarkıların önemini, yararlarını ve öğretim yöntemlerini ele almaktır. Yapılan araştırmalar, Türkiye'de dinleme becerisi aktivitelerine yeterince zaman ayrılmadığını ve Yapılan araştırmalar dinleme becerisine yeterince zaman ayrılmadığını ve öğrencilerin öğretim programında belirtildiği şekliyle dinleme becerisi hedeflerine ulaşamadığını göstermektedir. Bu nedenle Türkiye'de de Avrupa ülkelerinde olduğu gibi, dinleme becerisinin geliştirilmesine öncelik verilmeli ve dinleme materyalleri olarak şarkı kullanımı özendirilmelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: yabancı dil, ilköğretim birinci kademe öğrencileri, dinleme becerisi, şarkı

1. Introduction

As pointed out by Demirel (1), in the development of basic language skills in the teaching of modern foreign languages (MFLs), as it is the case in the language acquisition process, the view of following a natural order is quiet common. In other words, a person learning a second or foreign language (FL) will first hear, then talk and then learn how to read and write. So, in teaching MFLs the order of the four language skills should be presented in the following order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening is a receptive skill and receptive skills give way to productive skills (2). Pinter (3) likewise argues that learning English (as a FL) should start with an emphasis on listening and then speaking, just as in mother tongue. These are the two main skills to teach first because children often can not read and write at all yet, or not with much confidence. Young beginners need to start with plenty of listening practice, and opportunities to listen to rich input will naturally lead to speaking tasks. In this way, listening and speaking are truly integrated in the primary English classroom. In a parallel vein, Davies and Pearse (4) also claim that children begin to learn their mother tongue by listening before they speak. Similarly, Cook (5) points out that before babies can comprehend words, they listen to the rhythm and melody of the language and have some awareness of interaction and relationship with a speaker.

As mentioned by Ersöz (6), in designing a syllabus for very young and young learners (YLS) the focus should be on the communicative value of the language and the skills to tackle with the language rather than accuracy. The syllabus should include songs, stories, rhymes and games- all listening focused activities. Similarly, Sharpe (7) also argues that in planning the primary MFLs curriculum attention should be focused on oral and aural ends. Thus, oral and aural learning in primary school MFLs is *par excellence* an inclusive subject and that the limited amount of time devoted for MFLs should be well spent. On this matter, Mirici (8) argues that YLS are different from adult learners and therefore any teaching programme for this age group should specifically be designed. Tierney and Gallastegi (9) also argue that there seems to be a general support for the argument that primary-school-aged children have a particular facility for pronunciation and accent and that an aural-oral approach should dominate in teaching MFLs in primary schools.

The listening skill is indeed the most basic skill in any language learning process, be it language acquisition or FL learning. In fact, listening skill becomes ever more important in the case of teaching MFLs to YLS, as it will be discussed throughout this article.

However, as Demirel (1) claims the listening skill is the most difficult to develop of all the four language skills and special attention and more time should be devoted for the teaching of the listening skill. Even though this is the case, the necessary time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of MFLs in Turkey (Demirel, op.cit.). In the evaluation of student success, the emphasis is placed on evaluating the grammar and reading comprehension skills of the students and

mostly there is no room for evaluating listening comprehension. The current situation in Turkey is closely related to the *priority* issue as mentioned by Şevik (10).

Şevik (10), in a comparative study about compulsory MFLs in primary schools in European countries, claims that communication in a FL calls for proficiency in a whole set of relevant skills. All official curricula for MFLs express the core aims related to such skills in terms of the four major skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (11). Şevik (10, p.135) concluded that: “where priorities are evident, they are almost always focused on the skills of listening and speaking, especially in primary education”. Out of the 22 European countries, compared in this study; 12 countries officially state that listening and speaking are their priorities in the teaching of MFLs in primary schools; in 7 countries equal priorities are adhered to four language skills; and 3 countries state no priority at all.

Having a close look to the Turkish “Primary School 4th and 5th Class Modern Foreign Language (English) Teaching Curricula” (12) will reveal that listening and speaking skills are not set as priorities in the teaching of MFLs in Turkish primary schools. This may actually be one of the reasons as to why necessary time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of MFLs in Turkey.

An empirical study (about the opinions of primary school English language teachers on the 4th and 5th class English language curriculum in Turkey) carried out by Büyükduman (13), for example, made the case clear that the development of listening skills was not being given enough room and that students were unable to reach the targets about listening comprehension mentioned in the curriculum. Teachers in this study reported that the targets in the 4th and 5th class English curriculum about listening comprehension were unattainable. Among the reasons for this failure, the teachers reported that they were not equipped with the necessary audio-lingual materials. Büyükduman (13, p.63) concluded that all the schools should be provided with audio-lingual materials for the better teaching of English in primary schools, and that books about games and songs should be written for teaching English to YLs.

In a similar study about parent and teacher views on FL teaching to YLs (14, p.25-27), it was concluded that both parents and teachers have positive attitudes towards early language learning and that they both favor a FL teaching through games and songs.

The purpose of this article is to set a theoretical rationale about the importance of the listening skill and using songs in developing YLs' listening skills in the teaching of MFLs. Thus, the theoretical rationale of this article mostly derives from the definition of language as means of communication and the practical rationale from the current problematic situation in Turkey about the teaching of the listening skill. What follows is a discussion about the listening skill and the teaching of the listening skill as it pertains to YLs. Next, a discussion shall follow about songs and the teaching of songs as it pertains to YLs. Finally, conclusions will be provided.

The Listening Skill And Young Learners

As Phillips (15) puts it:

Listening tasks are extremely important in the primary language (foreign language) classroom, providing a rich source of language data from which the children will begin to build up their own idea of how the language works. This knowledge forms a base or resource which they will eventually draw on in order to produce language themselves. (p.15)

When we talk about language learning, we often talk about the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. We can further distinguish the skills by stating that listening and speaking are oral skills while reading and writing are written skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills because the focus is on receiving information from an outside source. Speaking and writing, on the other hand, are productive skills because the focus is on producing information. Some people think that listening is passive because children do not need to produce sounds when they are listening. However, listening is not a passive activity. Learners can and should be actively engaged in listening tasks and activities (16).

It is now generally agreed that effective listening and reading require as much attention and mental activity as speaking and writing. Speaking and listening are both active uses of language. Listening can be seen primarily as the active use of language to access other people's meanings. Listening is the receptive use of language and in active listening, the goal of the mental work is to make sense and is thus naturally meaning-focused rather than language focused (17).

Sarıçoban (2), for example, argues that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. He claims that this involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously. For learners, listening is how spoken language becomes input, i.e. it is the first stage of learning a new language. In the classroom, this happens through listening to the teacher, listening to a CD or tape or watching a video, and listening to other learners.

As argued by Linse (16), a main reason for the teaching of the listening skill is that, listening may be a foundation for other language skills. The following statements, (16, p.27) help us to understand how other skills are built on the listening ability:

"You need to hear a word before you can say it; you need to say a word before you can read it; you need to read a word before you can write it". Besides as argued by Sharpe (7), the promotion of children's speaking and listening skills lie at the heart of effective learning in all subjects of the primary curriculum. Therefore, the development of pupils' listening skills should be a key aim of primary teaching.

In principle, the objective of listening comprehension practice in the classroom is

that students should learn to function successfully in real-life listening situations (18). If pupils are to get into the rhythm of a language and develop a feeling for it, they need to have plenty of opportunities to listen to longer pieces of texts, to hear a range of speakers of different origins and with different accents; native speakers, audio-recording and to work with a variety of texts, registers and genres; stories, letters, audio and video resources, and advertisements (19).

The main method of exposing students to spoken English (after the teacher) is through the use of taped material which can exemplify a wide range of topics such as advertisements, news broadcasts, poetry reading, plays, songs with lyrics, speeches, telephone conversations and all manner of spoken exchanges. Teachers can imitate these, but good tapes are far more powerful. Listening is a skill and any help we can give students in performing that skill will help them to be better listeners. Teaching listening helps students to acquire language subconsciously even if teachers do not draw attention to its special features. Exposure to language is a fundamental requirement for anyone wanting to learn it. Listening to appropriate tapes provides such exposure and students get vital information not only about grammar and vocabulary but also about pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, pitch and stress (20).

Linse (16), who views the matter from the point of learning, argues that any type of listening activity for YLs should try to present information using all three learning channels. She warns teachers of YLs that they should be familiar with the three main learning channels which are *auditory*, *tactile* and *visual*. In general, auditory learners are better able to learn material when it is presented in an auditory format such as listening to someone read a story aloud. Visual learners often recall visual images or pictures easily. Tactile learners are better able to remember information, language, and content when they have physically manipulated or touched the information. Therefore, listening activities in class should be accompanied with visual images and physical motions. Taken into consideration in this respect, songs when selected carefully and implemented purposefully, readily call for the three learning channels.

Songs And Young Learners

As for the mind internal or psycholinguistic bases of listening process, language processing, in this case the processing of oral language, requires the learner to have the ability to discriminate, first, discrete speech sounds, then the combination of these speech sounds that make larger linguistic units in the forms of phonemes and words in the language to be acquired or learned. One of the most important factors in the construction of this ability of discrimination is the exposition of the learner to *necessary* and *sufficient* input. Necessary input is the linguistic structure to be internalized by the learner to upgrade herself/himself to a higher linguistic proficiency level. Sufficient input is the repetitive occurrence of the phonological form of the linguistic unit or structure to be learned by the learner to internalize it as her/his idiosyncratic language. In this case, what can be the relationship between the condition of having *necessary* and *sufficient* input and songs in learning?

When songs are analyzed, it can easily be observed that one of their prominent features is their rhythmic and repetitive nature. The repetitive nature of songs, the joy songs impose to the learning activity and the associative power between the melody and the content of the word reinforce the attainment of the language to be internalized. When an input is assimilated through songs, that input is stored with other co-occurring elements, that is, the melody of the song and the emotional elements germinated by the melody. Multiple clues related to the stored input foster the retrieval processes from the registry web in the semantic and structural schemata. Thus, the use of songs in listening activities will ease both internalization and retrieval processes of the phonologic forms of language.

The fostering influence of songs in the learning of a FL doubles, when the learners are YLs. This is because children are keener to rhythm and they have not yet constructed personal barriers as it is stated by Krashen (21). Studies reveal that one of the differences between first language acquisition and FL learning is the barrier that is constructed by adult learners against the target language or the learning activities for various reasons. For these reasons, songs are considered to be *sine qua non* of teaching FLs to YLs. Providing the children with a sufficient amount of input and interaction, embedded in a range of intrinsically interesting cross-curricular activity is important. Therefore, teachers of YLs may make an important contribution to children's early language education by introducing their classes to recorded songs, poems, stories, and etc. (22). As pointed out by Çakır (23), music can be a wonderful medium for natural language learning and songs are wonderful materials in this respect and they provide the occasion of real language use in meaningful situations. They are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life. They are part of our lives and they are around us. So songs are excellent means through which children have fun and at the same time acquire language.

In teaching MFLs to YLs, there is often a transfer of materials and activities from general primary practice because primary practice has some genuinely good techniques and ideas that work well with children. Among the prime examples of this transfer are songs and rhymes (17). Martin (24) also argues that songs, rhymes, story-telling, role-plays and game-like activities with a high language content are strong features of many primary MFL Programmes and pupils are able to memorize texts in songs and stories and should be encouraged to do so. Therefore, any syllabus designed for teaching MFLs to YLs now contain or should contain songs, chants and rhymes (25). Besides, songs are also considered as appropriate for age-related language-learning and hence are referred as good practice and central to early language teaching across Europe (26).

In addition, songs are important teaching tools in creating a safe and natural classroom ethos and therefore may prove to be helpful in overcoming feelings of shyness and hesitation on the part of the learners. Because having a look to the learning characteristics of YLs will reveal that young children need to develop a strong emotional

attachment to their teacher. Their education, including language education, is a process to which they should be encouraged to contribute physically, emotionally and intellectually. Because of their limited attention span, young children need variety of activity. At this age many children are shy and they should join in classroom activities when they feel ready rather than when the teacher demands (27). On this matter, Rumley (28) makes the case clear by arguing that songs help children to learn because they provide a safe, non-threatening context within which to play with language. They provide excellent opportunities for repetition and practice which would otherwise be tedious. This repetition helps learning and this in turn leads to familiarity so that children feel comfortable with a language other than their mother tongue.

Songs are important teaching tools in teaching MFLs because as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in the language classroom. Students often hold strong views about music and students who are usually quiet can become very talkative when discussing it. Thus, the main goal of modern foreign language teaching- communication- can actually take place (29). Singing is definitely one of the most effective language learning strategies reported by most children. Klein (30), for example, who provides a comprehensive account of teaching English to eight- to ten-year-old German pupils at the beginning level, argues that teaching YLs is different from teaching adults. Young children tend to change their mood every other minute, and they find it extremely difficult to sit still. On the other hand, they show a greater motivation than adults to do things that appeal to them. Therefore, the language teacher has to be inventive in selecting interesting activities, and must provide a great variety of them. On this matter Klein, (op. cit.) reports that her experience shows that children respond enthusiastically to songs and welcome them.

Similarly, Shin (31) -who provides ten helpful ideas to incorporate into the teaching of English to YLs' classroom- claims that YLs tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. He claims that one way to capture the attention of YLs and to keep them engaged in activities is to supplement the activities with lots of brightly colored visuals, toys, puppets, or objects to match the ones used in the stories that the teachers tell or songs. In this context, Total Physical Response (32) where children listen and physically respond to a series of instructions from the teacher is a very popular method among teachers of YLs. This popular method can be used as a technique with songs that teach language related to any kind of movement, and the more fun for students, the better they will remember the language learned.

Kirsch (33) points out that many language teachers have described the benefits of using rhymes, songs and games in foreign language classes as follows:

- Rhymes, poems and songs are very popular with young language learners who tend to be familiar with this type of literacy from school or home. Children do not shy away from poems and songs in foreign languages;
- Teachers are equally familiar with them and thus may find them a good way into

the teaching of foreign languages;

- They promote positive feelings;
- The rhythmical patterns facilitate and accelerate learning;
- They are good means of developing listening, pronunciation and speaking skills. Pupils do not tire of listening to and repeating them over and over again. They join in with the parts they know and acquire more sounds, words and sentences with each successive performance until they gradually master the text;
- These forms of literacy help pupils get into the rhythm of a language and learn to pronounce sounds and words confidently, accurately and with expression;
- Pupils are more likely to remember the new words and structures because they are repetitive, meaningful and presented in predictable patterns and larger chunks. The internalization of sounds, words and sentence patterns brings learners a step closer to using these in other contexts;
- Rhymes, poems and songs can initiate a range of activities: listening, reading, drawing, performing actions, playing and enacting, performing in front of an audience and practicing intonation, pronunciation and structures;
- Poems or songs about typical traditions or cultural artifacts are helpful in developing pupils' cultural awareness and understanding;
- Besides, many teachers take advantage of the popularity and repetitive structure of songs to practice key vocabulary in an enjoyable way. (p.85)

However, as language teachers we should always bear in mind that our main responsibility is to teach the target language. No matter how fun and enjoyable activities songs may be for YLs, we should not be carried away and overdrawn by the music and rhythm of songs. Our main responsibility is not to teach '*singing skills*' but to teach the target language. Therefore, if songs are used ineffectively and in meaningless ways they can easily become mere entertainment and pleasurable interruptions in the school day which, in the long term, results in pupils being bored and losing interest. There should be a clear reason in the language teacher's mind as to why and how to use a song. Songs can only be effective means of developing children's language skills when they are well integrated into a scheme of work.

Kirsch (33), for example, argues that when we are planning listening activities we should choose a meaningful text (e.g. story, song, and poem) that suits the cognitive and linguistic needs of pupils and that repetitive texts facilitate listening and remembering. She further argues that we should choose appropriate and authentic materials whenever possible (e.g. CD, CD-ROM, internet) and we should make sure that the text is comprehensible. As argued by Ersöz (6) we should be careful in choosing songs that:

- Contain simple, easily understood lyrics;
- Link with a topic or vocabulary that you are studying in class;

- Are repetitive;
- Children can easily do actions to (to help emphasize meaning). (p.20)

Phillips (15) points out that one way of presenting songs to YLs in a meaningful way is through incorporating some of the techniques from the Total Physical Response (TPR). She argues that this is an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in primary classes. With TPR the children listen to their teacher telling them what to do, and then do it. Similarly, Sarıçoban and Metin (34) argue that in order to make the songs more meaningful and more enjoyable, motions can be added to the songs which parallel the words of the song. Since most children enjoy singing fun and nonsensical lyrics, using easy children songs will be useful. Furthermore, choosing lively action songs through which learners can dance or act while singing will ensure a lively atmosphere.

According to Linse (35), there are a number of different ways that songs can be presented to children. Often the first step is to introduce any key vocabulary that may be unfamiliar. Props, such as real objects or pictures of objects, can be used to present the key vocabulary for a song. Actions can also help children learn unfamiliar vocabulary. The props and actions not only help children remember the words and meanings of new words but also help children remember the context or situation depicted in the piece of verse. Once the key vocabulary has been presented, teachers find it useful to introduce YLs to pieces of verse one line at a time. The teacher says one line of the song using the props or actions that illustrate it, and then the children repeat the line. This procedure continues until all the lines of the targeted piece of verse have been said and repeated. Next, the learners repeat the entire selection of verse using props or actions to help them remember the words.

According to Davies and Pearse (4), a course book or other listening practice can be made more realistic and interesting by following specific stages and using specific techniques. The stages generally recommended are:

Pre-listening: This stage is to prepare the learners for what they are going to hear, just as we are usually prepared in real life. You should not tell the learners to listen and then to start the cassette. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: discussing a relevant picture or experiences, associating ideas or vocabulary with the topic, predicting information about the topic, and writing questions about the topic.

While-listening: this stage is to help the learners understand the text. You should not expect them to try to understand every word. For example, you may ask them to listen for three pieces of information the first time they hear the recording, and to tell you about the attitude of the speakers after the second time they have heard it. In general, you should help your learners understand rather than testing their understanding the whole time. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: identifying the exact topic, or an aspect of it, noting two to four pieces of information, answering questions, completing sentences, tables, maps or pictures.

Post-listening: This stage is to help the learners connect what they have heard with their own ideas and experiences, just as we often do in real life. It also allows you to move easily from listening to another language skill. For example the learners may practice speaking by role-playing interviews similar to one they have heard. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: giving opinions, relating similar experiences, and role-playing, writing a brief report or a similar text, and discussing the topic. (p.77-78)

Likewise, Lindsay and Knight (36) also suggest a three-staged planning of listening activities:

Pre-listening: these activities should help learners by focusing their attention on the topic, activating any knowledge they have about the topic, and making it clear to the learners what they have to do while they listen, for example: helping the learners to develop their vocabulary related to the topic, making sure learners understand what they have to do while they are listening, i.e. do they have to do something, write something, draw something, and so on? Make sure they understand why they are doing the activity, for example to introduce new language, to practice listening to native speakers, etc.

Listening stage: these activities are about the learners finding the answers or doing the task. There are various types of activities, for example: answering questions, completing something, following directions on a map, matching what is being said with the set of pictures, doing something in response to what learners hear, for example, draw something, move in a certain way. Examples of listening activities for this stage are: listen and draw, listen and match, listen and order the pictures or a dialogue, listen and follow a route on a map, listen and complete a form, listen and correct, and listen and physically respond (TPR activities, where learners have to listen and react).

Post-listening stage: these activities often move on from listening practice to practicing other skills. So, for example, after hearing about someone's job or family, learners might be asked to talk to each other about their own family or job, or they could be asked to write something. So, the possible three post-listening activities are: speaking activities, writing activities, and pronunciation activities. (p. 49-55)

2. Conclusion

Under the light of the discussion carried out so far, it is possible to argue that listening is the initial step of language learning and of language acquisition. Hence, the importance of the listening skill seems to have a priority in teaching MFLs to YLs when compared to other language skills of speaking, reading and writing. As a reflection of this fact, listening skill is mostly given priority in most of the primary MFL teaching curricula throughout Europe and the development of pupils' listening skills is a key aim of primary teaching. Even though this is the case, the Turkish "Primary School 4th and 5th Class Modern Foreign Language (English) Teaching Curricula" ad-

There is no special priority to the teaching of the listening skill and as a result the development of the listening skill is not being given enough room in Turkish primary schools and YLs are unable to reach the targets about listening comprehension mentioned in the curriculum.

Listening tasks provide a rich source of comprehensible input for YLs from which they will eventually draw on in order to produce language themselves. Listening skill is generally regarded as a receptive skill but yet it is not a passive activity at all, and YLs should be actively engaged in listening tasks and activities. The main method of exposing students to spoken English (after the teacher) is through the use of taped material and listening to appropriate tapes provides a rich input for anyone wanting to learn a language. Listening activities in class should be accompanied with visual images and physical motions. To this end, songs when selected carefully and implemented purposefully readily provide such opportunities.

The repetitive nature of songs, the joy songs impose to the learning activity and the associative power between the melody and the content of the word reinforce the attainment of the language to be internalized. If an input is assimilated through songs, that input is stored with other co-occurring elements. So, the use of songs as listening activities will ease both internalization and retrieval processes of the phonological forms of the language. In the case of YLs, the fostering influence of songs doubles as YLs are keener to rhythm. Providing YLs with a sufficient amount of input and interaction, embedded in a range of intrinsically interesting cross-curricular activity is important. So, teachers of YLs may make an important contribution to YLs' early language education by introducing their classes to songs. Songs provide the occasion of real language in meaningful situations and they are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life.

Singing is one of the most effective language learning strategies reported by most children. However, if songs are used ineffectively and in meaningless ways they can easily become mere entertainment and pleasurable interruptions. Hence, there should be a clear reason as to why and how to use a song and songs need to be well integrated into a scheme of work. Meaningful songs should be chosen that suit the cognitive and linguistic needs of pupils. To this end, it is now generally agreed that TPR songs are extremely useful for YLs. Even though there are a number of different ways that songs can be presented to YLs, the most commonly accepted/recommended way is through the three-stages of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening.

Finally, as this article has tried to demonstrate the listening skill is the initial step in any type of language learning process, and songs are considered as the most effective means in developing YLs' listening skills. Hence, listening should be given priority in teaching MFLs to YLs. However, in the Turkish context, no specific priority is adhered to the development of the listening skill. Therefore, it is suggested in this article that the listening skill should be given priority in the Turkish YLs' context as well and that the

use of songs as listening materials in YLs' MFL classrooms should be promoted.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş: Dinleme becerisi edilgen bir beceridir ve edilgen beceriler üretken becerilere yön verir (2). Pinter'de (3), tıpkı birinci dil ediniminde olduğu gibi, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreniminin önce dinleme ve sonra konuşma becerileri üzerine yoğunlaştırılması görüşünü savunmaktadır. Bu iki beceri öncelikle öğretilmesi gereken temel becerilerdir, çünkü yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlayan çocuklar henüz hedef dilde okuma ve yazma bilmezler. Yabancı dil öğrenmeye yeni başlayan çocuklar birçok dinleme alıştırmalarına ihtiyaç duyar ve zengin girdiler dinleme imkânı doğal olarak konuşma becerilerinin gelişmesi ile son bulacaktır. Buna rağmen, İlköğretim 4. ve 5. Sınıf Yabancı Dil (İngilizce Öğretim Programı) incelendiğinde dinleme ve konuşma becerilerine herhangi bir öncelik verilmediği görülecektir (12). Örneğin, Büyükduman (13) yaptığı araştırmada dinleme becerilerine yeterince yer verilmediğini ve öğrencilerin programda belirtilen dinleme hedeflerine ulaşamadıklarını açıkça ortaya

koymaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı dinleme becerisinin önemi ve şarkı-
larla çocukların yabancı dilde dinleme becerilerinin geliştirilmesi konularında teorik
bir dayanak oluşturmaktır.

Dinleme Becerisi ve Çocuklar: Linse'in de (16) öne sürdüğü gibi çocuklara din-
leme becerisinin öğretilmesinin temel nedeni, dinleme becerisinin diğer dil becerileri
için bir temel oluşturduğu görüşüdür: bir kelimeyi telaffuz edebilmeniz için önce duy-
manız gerekir; bir kelimeyi okuyabilmeniz için önce söylemeniz gerekir ve bir keli-
meyi yazabilmeniz için önce okumanız gerekir. Ayrıca, Sharpe'in da (7) dediği gibi
çocukların dinleme ve konuşma becerilerinin geliştirilmesi tüm ilköğretim program-
larının ana hedefidir. Bu nedenle, çocukların dinleme becerilerinin geliştirilmesi il-
köğretimin öncelikli hedefi olmak durumundadır. Çocukların, konuşma İngilizcesine
alıştırılmalarının en temel yöntemi (öğretmen dışında) onlara farklı alan ve konular-
da dinleme etkinlikleri yaptırmaktan geçmektedir. Öğretmen de bunları taklit edebi-
lir, ancak etkili dinleme materyalleri çok daha yararlı olacaktır. Dinleme bir beceridir
ve öğrencilere bu doğrultuda sunacak olduğumuz her türlü dinleme etkinliği onların
daha iyi birer dinleyici olmalarına yardımcı olacaktır. Dinleme becerilerinin öğretil-
mesi hedef dilin bilinçaltı yolla edinilmesini sağlayarak kalıcı kılacaktır (20).

Şarkılar ve Çocuklar: Şarkılar incelendiğinde en önemli özelliklerinin ritmik ve
tekrarcı yapıları olduğu görülecektir. Şarkıların tekrarcı doğası, öğrenme aktiviteleri-
ne kattıkları neşe ve melodi ile sözcükler arasındaki güçlü uyum hedef dilin içselleşti-
rilmesini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Herhangi bir girdi şarkılar yoluyla edinilirse, o girdi di-
ğer unsurlarla birlikte hafızaya alınır. Erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretimi söz konusu ol-
duğunda ise şarkıların tetikleyici etkisi iki katına çıkmaktadır, çünkü Krashen'in (21)
dediği gibi çocuklar ritme çok duyarlıdırlar ve henüz dile karşı bariyer oluşturmamış-
lardır. Başlıca bu sebeplerden dolayı, şarkılar erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretiminin vaz-
geçilmezi olarak görülmektedir ve sınıflarında şarkı kullanan öğretmenler çocukların
dil gelişimlerine çok önemli katkılar sağlamaktadırlar (22). Çakır'ın da (23) belirtti-
ği gibi, müzik doğal yollarla dil öğrenmek için mükemmel bir araçtır ve bu bağlam-
da ele alındığında şarkılar harika materyallerdir; şarkılar anlaşılabilir, eğlencelidir,
özgündür ve gerçek hayatta ihtiyaç duyacağımız dil içerirler. Linse'e (35) göre, şarkı
öğretiminin çok farklı yol ve yöntemleri bulunmaktadır. En yaygın kabul gören şar-
kı öğretim yöntemi ise üç aşamalı bir öğretimdir. Ana hatlarıyla, şarkı öncesi etkinler,
şarkı esnasında yapılan etkinlikler ve şarkı sonrası etkinlikler. Bu konuda Ersöz (6) ise
öğretilecek olan şarkının seçiminin büyük önem arz ettiği konusunda bir uyarıda bu-
lunmaktadır. Seçecek olduğumuz şarkı basit ve kolay anlaşılır olmalıdır; sınıfta işle-
diğiniz veya işlemekte olduğunuz bir konu ile ilgili olmalıdır; tekrar eden dizeler içere-
melidir; çocukların hareketlerle eşlik etmelerine olanak sağlayacak türde olmalıdır.

Sonuç: Bu çalışmada dinleme becerisinin ister anadil isterse yabancı dil öğrenim
aşamalarında ilk basamak olduğu ve şarkıların çocukların yabancı dilde dinleme be-
cerilerinin geliştirilmesinde en etkili araç olarak kabul edildiği öne sürülmektedir. Bu
nedenle, erken yaşta yabancı dil öğretimi söz konusu olduğunda dinleme becerisinin
geliştirilmesine öncelik verilmelidir. Ancak, gerek konu üzerine yapılan araştırmalar
ve gerekse İlköğretim 4. ve 5. Sınıf Yabancı Dil (İngilizce Öğretim Programı) ince-
lendiğinde dinleme becerisinin geliştirilmesine herhangi bir öncelik verilmediği gö-
rülmektedir. Bu nedenle, öğrenciler programda belirtilen dinleme becerisi hedeflerine
ulaşamamaktadırlar. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, bu çalışmada dinleme becerisinin öğre-
timine öncelik verilmesi gerektiği ve özellikle ilköğretim birinci kademe yabancı dil
öğretiminde etkili dinleme etkinlikleri olarak şarkı öğretiminin özendirilmesi ve arttır-
ılması tavsiye edilmektedir.