

## Listening Levels of Turkish Language Teachers to Students

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**ABSTRACT** The aim of this paper is to determine whether Turkish language teachers have listening skills. For this purpose, 32 Turkish language teachers working at the city centre of Trabzon were observed. The observations were conducted by 124 Turkish language pre-service teachers sent to schools within the scope of 'School Experience' course. The pre-service teachers conducted their observations according to the items in the "Observation Form for Listening Skill" form developed by the researcher. Each teacher was observed by 3-4 pre-service teachers. The score was determined by taking the mean of the observation forms filled in for each teacher. Accordingly, it was determined that the majority of Turkish language teachers have listening skill and can reflect it to their students in class. It was also determined that gender and seniority do not have a significant effect on teachers' listening skill.

### INTRODUCTION

All language skills are important for cognitive development of humans. However, among these, one of the most crucial and in most need of development is listening skill because it is commonly believed that humans are blessed with listening skill in mother's womb and there isn't any training for it. Since 2005, activities have been conducted in Turkish primary schools to improve listening skill. This arose from the idea that listening is a skill and it can be given best to individual through education. Cakiroglu (2007) states that knowledge acquisition and use occur through cognitive processes in individuals, the fact that an individual is conscious of what s/he does, how s/he does, how's/he manages the process and what s/he acquired yield awareness in her/his action and form high cognitive thought of this action." It is aimed in Turkish courses to achieve success in students in all areas and to enable them to develop social skills by improving listening skill. The understanding of listening in education process is keeping students under control by applying discipline on them. The fact that students mostly listen to the lesson with a feeling of being under pressure could give even a little idea about the quality of that teacher, especially her/his cognitive aspects" (Karaduz 2010). Language skills involve such complementary elements that developing one requires developing the other. Since word conception network and comprehension capacity of an individual whose reading comprehension has developed will also improve, this will aid devel-

opment of her/his other skills. Today, with rapid advances in communication technologies, the need for listening has been more crucial than ever.

For a teacher to listen to her/his students without interrupting their speaking is indicative of her/his respect to them. For an individual to listen to another who is speaking is the main component of effective communication. Whiter and Acar (1998) state that listening to mentally-handicapped children genuinely and thus showing them that they are cared about individually make them perceive themselves possessing more potential than they think and help them to realize themselves more rapidly. Deffenbacher (1985) points out that to maintain a successful therapy in psychology, counsellors are supposed to make their patients feel that they are cared about and valued. Foster (1996) emphasizes that those in charge of counselling in psychology are supposed to have an advanced level of listening skill because listening is one of the main components of a successful counselling. Listening is one of the basic elements both in daily life and in social relations. With its vital role in all professional institutions, listening also stands out in trade relations. In a research conducted to reveal why customers gave up purchasing from a company, indifferent attitude of employees was found as the reason by 68 percent. Customers ceased purchasing from that company when they couldn't find an authority there to listen to them (Robertson 2004).

Teaching profession depends on communication, a successful communication stems from

the teacher's speaking with her/his students and going through an emotional affinity with them. The major elements in an efficient teacher-student relation are accurate empathy, sincerity, respect and sense of mission.

In her/his relation with her/his students, a teacher should be consistent in terms of behaviours, attitudes and emotions. "Reflection of what a teacher says and feels and how s/he looks to her/his behaviour" shows that s/he is consistent (Hackney and Cormier 2008). Non-verbal behaviours of a teacher have positive or negative effects on her/his students. Students can understand whether their teacher is genuinely concerned about them. While a student is speaking, if a teacher is occupied with other things or looks around and at the same time pretend as if s/he is listening to her/his student, this will have a negative impact on that student and such non-verbal behaviours will cause problems in communication aspect because although verbal communication might be interrupted, non-verbal communication is continuous. When verbal and non-verbal messages are matched, a student takes the non-verbal one into account and believes in it (Gazda et al. 1984). Hacknes and Cormier (2005) state that these non-verbal aspects of listening are comprised of eye contact, body language, tone of voice, speaking speed, physical distance and time. A teacher should take these non-verbal communication criteria and treat her/his students with such encouraging, incentive mimes and gestures as "*Yes, I agree with you*" when appropriate.

Because listening occupies a great place in our daily lives, listening skill should be developed in students. Among listening types, communicative listening enables individuals to understand each other more easily. "Someone listening to another can realise her/his worries and need for support and guidance, tries to understand her/his mood and thus can give the necessary support to her/him" (Kline 1996).

The best way for a teacher to use in listening training is to provide her/his students opportunities to learn through experience. For the teacher, the most effective application for this purpose is to be a good model (Ozbay 2010). The objective of listening training should be to develop listening culture, the basic of listening training, in the student. The student who has listening skills would be aware of the process during the listening parts. The student would stimulate

his previous knowledge about the topic, would be aware of that which strategies could put a meaning to the text and would be successful at the end of the process (Ozbay and Doso 2014).

Negative attitudes of a teacher in listening to her/his student lead to undesired consequences on that student. Goh and Taib (2006) state that students can easily remain passive during listening process, so teachers have the responsibility to prevent this. Field (2003) suggests conducting a lesson by taking students' listening strategies and attitudes towards listening into account.

In order for teachers to give a good listening education, their own listening skill should be well-developed. Being a model is the key to do away with wrong listening habits in children. Teachers have the duty to be a model by looking into their students' eyes and being genuinely interested in what they say while their students are speaking (Ozbay 2002). When a teacher makes her/his student feel that s/he is listening to her/him by providing appropriate feedbacks, allowing her/him to finish her/his speech and arousing in her/him the feeling that her/his thoughts are valued, accomplishing a developed listening skill in that student will be facilitated.

Listening ranks higher in importance compared with the other skills because the process of listening starts in mother's womb. Reading, speaking and writing develop thanks to listening skill. It is possible to say that communication process starts with listening.

## METHODS

In this research, observation method is used because an existing condition is tried to be described as it is. During observation, an individual's behaviours, attitudes and skills can be determined and recorded (Cepni 2010).

### Research Group

The research group of the paper is composed of 32 Turkish language teachers in the state secondary schools in the city of Trabzon. Table 1 shows the demographical characteristics of Turkish language teachers.

### Data Gathering Tool and Data Analysis

Firstly, literature review was conducted to determine teachers' listening skill competences.

**Table 1: Demographical characteristics of Turkish language teachers**

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	16	50
Male	16	50
<i>Seniority (Year)</i>		
1-5	5	15.6
6-10	16	50
11-20	6	18.8
21 and above	5	15.6

At the same time, aims and achievements belonging to listening skill in 2005 Turkish Language Course Teaching Program and Manual were studied. "Observation Form for Listening Skill" form developed by the researcher was used. The items were finalized thanks to the opinions of two expert academic members in Turkish Language Education. The scale was arranged as "5-Always, 4-Often, 3-Sometimes, 2-Rarely and 1-Never" in 5-point Likert type. The scale was composed of 14 positive and 15 negative, total 19, items. Reliability coefficient of the scale, Cronbach  $\alpha$  value, was computed as 0.86.

The data were gathered by pre-service Turkish language teachers who went to schools for observation within the scope of 'School Experience' course. One hundred twenty-four Pre-service Turkish language teachers filled in the scale, given to them by the researcher, with their observation findings about 32 Turkish language teachers at those schools. Each teacher was observed by 3-4 students and each observer pre-service teacher filled in a separate form for each teacher. Later, the mean of each item in all the forms was computed. The mean values would give the listening skill competences of those Turkish language teachers by interpreting them after analysing them with SPSS 16.00 program.

### FINDINGS

In this section, the findings about listening skill competence of Turkish language teachers and the relation between gender and seniority variables and listening skill competences are presented. Table 2 shows the findings about listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers.

Table 2 shows that Turkish language teachers, in general, have listening skill competences. In terms of listening skill, Turkish language teach-

ers have 'A Turkish language teacher listens to her/his students with respect' competence most. It is seen that Turkish language teachers listen to their students with respect with the following percentages: 59.4 percent *always* do it, 34.4 percent *often* do it and 6.2 percent *sometimes* do it. Similarly, it is determined that in terms of 'A Turkish language teacher shows her/his student that s/he is eager to listen' competence, Turkish language teachers have positive competences. It is seen that Turkish language teachers listen to their students eagerly with the following percentages: 37.5 percent *always* do it eagerly, 50 percent *often* do it eagerly and 12.5 percent *sometimes* do it eagerly. It is also found that in terms of 'A Turkish language teacher focuses her/his attention on the student while s/he is speaking' competence, Turkish language teachers have positive competences. While it is revealed that Turkish language teachers have this competence with the following percentages: 43.8 percent *always*, 46.9 percent *often* and 9.4 percent *sometimes*, it is similarly found that Turkish language teachers have 'A Turkish language teacher listens to her/his students carefully' competence with the following percentages: 50 percent *always* and 50 percent *often*.

It is expected that, just like other language skills, Turkish language teachers also become a model for their students in listening skill and provide them with such activities that will equip them with listening skill. Table 2 shows that Turkish language teachers have competence in "A Turkish language teacher is a model for students in terms of listening skill" with the following percentages: 56.2 percent *always*, 37.5 percent *often* and 6.2 percent *sometimes* where as they have competence in "A Turkish language teacher mentions about the importance of listening in class" with the following percentages: 25 percent *always*, 53.1 percent *often*, 15.6 percent *sometimes* and 6.2 percent *rarely*. It is also determined that Turkish language teachers have competence in "A Turkish language teacher warns her/his students about listening to their friends" with the following percentages: 31.2 percent *always*, 56.2 percent *often*, 9.4 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *rarely*, while they have competence in "A Turkish language teacher provides activities to develop students' listening skill" with the following percentages: 12.5 percent *always*, 75 percent *often*, 9.4 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *rarely*.

One of the major points in listening skill is to give clues to the speaker showing that s/he is being listened to. Table 2 shows that a great majority of the participant Turkish language

**Table 2: Frequency and percentage values of listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers**

Items	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
A Turkish language teacher listens to her/his students with respect.	19	59.4	11	34.4	2	6.2	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher interrupts her/his students' speech.	0	0	0	0	3	9.4	26	81.2	3	9.4
A Turkish language teacher makes her/his students repeat their speech because s/he doesn't understand them.	0	0	1	3.1	18	56.2	11	34.4	2	6.2
A Turkish language teacher shows her/his students that s/he has understood them while they are speaking through appropriate expression (mimes and gestures).	9	28.1	20	62.5	2	6.2	1	3.1	0	0
A Turkish language teacher mentions about the importance of listening in class.	8	25	17	53.1	5	15.6	2	6.2	0	0
A Turkish language teacher warns her/his students about listening to their friends.	10	31.2	18	56.2	3	9.4	1	3.1	0	0
A Turkish language teacher replies to what students say accurately (appropriately).	19	59.4	12	37.5	1	3.1	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher misunderstands what students say.	0	0	1	3.1	2	6.2	10	31.2	19	59.4
A Turkish language teacher concerns herself/himself with other things while students do oral reading.	0	0	0	0	4	12.5	12	37.5	16	50
A Turkish language teacher provides activities to develop students' listening skill.	4	12.5	24	75	3	9.4	1	3.1	0	0
A Turkish language teacher listens to her/his students carefully.	16	50	16	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher forms eye contact with her/his students while listening to them.	18	56.2	13	40.6	0	0	1	3.1	0	0
A Turkish language teacher is a model for students in terms of listening skill.	18	56.2	12	37.5	2	6.2	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher listens to students with empathy.	10	31.2	16	50	4	12.5	1	3.1	1	3.1
A Turkish language teacher conveys the emotional reflections of students' state, words or behaviours in her/him to students.	4	12.5	20	62.5	4	12.5	4	12.5	0	0
A Turkish language teacher focuses her/his attention on the student while s/he is speaking.	14	43.8	15	46.9	3	9.4	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher poses a quizzical attitude while listening to her/his student.	3	9.4	10	31.2	13	40.6	6	18.8	0	0
A Turkish language teacher shows her/his student that s/he is eager to listen.	12	37.5	16	50	4	12.5	0	0	0	0
A Turkish language teacher helps her/his student to feel comfortable psychologically by showing her/him that her/his teacher is listening while s/he is speaking.	17	53.1	12	37.5	2	6.2	1	3.1	0	0

teachers have this competence in listening skill. It is seen that 59.4 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 37.5 percent *often* and 3.1 per-

cent *sometimes* have "A Turkish language teacher replies to what students say accurately (appropriately)" competence in listening skill. It is



also found that 28.1 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 62.5 percent *often*, 6.2 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *rarely* have "A Turkish language teacher shows her/his students that s/he has understood them while they are speaking through appropriate expression (mimes and gestures)" competence in listening skill. As for "A Turkish language teacher helps her/his student to feel comfortable psychologically by showing her/him that her/his teacher is listening while s/he is speaking", it is determined that 53.1 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 37.5 percent *often*, 6.2 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *rarely* have this competence. Turkish language teachers' "A Turkish language teacher conveys the emotional reflections of students' state, words or behaviours in her/him to students" competence is seen to be high with the following percentages: 12.5 percent *always*, 62.5 percent *often*, 12.5 percent *sometimes* and 12.5 percent *rarely*. It is revealed that 56.2 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 40.6 percent *often* and 3.1 percent *rarely* have "A Turkish language teacher forms eye contact with her/his students while listening to them" competence. In terms of "A Turkish language teacher listens to students with empathy" competence, 31.2 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 50 percent *often*, 12.5 percent *sometimes*, 3.1 percent *rarely* and 3.1 percent *never* have this competence.

On the other hand, analysing the findings about whether Turkish language teachers demonstrate negative behaviours in class in terms of listening skill, it is seen that, although rarely, they still have negative behaviours in class. It is revealed in terms of "A Turkish language teacher interrupts her/his students' speech" that 9.4 percent of Turkish language teachers *never* interrupt students' speech, but 81.2 percent *rarely* and 9.4 percent *sometimes* do it. In terms of "A Turkish language teacher misunderstands what students say", it is seen that 59.4 percent of Turkish language teachers *never* misunderstand what students say, while 31.2 percent *rarely*, 6.2 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *often* misunderstand what students say. Similarly, as for "A Turkish language teacher makes her/his students repeat their speech because s/he doesn't understand them," it is found that 6.2 percent of Turkish language teachers *never* make students repeat what they say, but 34.4 percent *rarely*, 56.2 percent *sometimes* and 3.1 percent *often* make students repeat what haven't understood. In terms of "A Turkish language teacher concerns herself/himself with other things while students do oral

reading", it turns out that 50 percent of Turkish language teachers *never* concern themselves with other things while students do oral reading, but 37.5 percent *rarely* and 12.5 percent *sometimes* do so. Finally, according to "A Turkish language teacher poses a quizzical attitude while listening to her/his student" item, it is seen that 9.4 percent of Turkish language teachers *always*, 31.2 percent *often*, 40.6 percent *sometimes* and 18.8 percent *rarely* pose a quizzical attitude while listening to their students.

Table 3 shows independent groups t-test results about the relation between gender and the fact that Turkish language teachers have competences in listening skill.

**Table 3: Independent groups t-test results about gender variable of listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers**

Gender	n	X	S	sd	t	p
Female	16	79.500	8.89	30	.203	.840
Male	16	78.875	8.50			

p>0.05

As seen in Table 3, score means of listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers are 79.500 for females and 78.875 for males, so there isn't a significant difference between genders in possessing listening skill competences  $t(30) = .203, p > .05$ .

Table 4 shows arithmetic means and standard deviation of listening skill competence scores of Turkish language teachers according to seniority.

**Table 4: Arithmetic means and standard deviation scores of listening skill competence scores of Turkish language teachers according to seniority**

Seniority	N	X	ss
1-5 years	5	73.400	6.985
6-10 years	16	81.187	7.101
11-20 years	6	77.500	11.004
21- years and above	5	80.600	10.691

Table 4 shows that listening skill competence scores of Turkish language teachers working for 6 - 10 years (X=81.187) and for 21 years and more (X=80.600) are higher. While the arithmetic means of competence scores of those working for 11 - 20 years is 77.500, the arithmetic means of competence scores of those working for 1 - 5 years is 73.400. Accordingly, it can be said that listening skill competences of Turkish language

teachers who are new in their career are lower than those of senior teachers.

Table 5 shows the results of one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) conducted to determine whether seniority is effective on listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers.

As seen in Table 5, no significant difference could be found between seniority of Turkish language teachers and their listening skill competence scores ( $F_{3,28}=1.198, p>.05$ ). Despite negligible differences in arithmetic means of listening skill competence scores of Turkish language teachers depending on seniority, the analysis showed that these are not significant.

## DISCUSSION

The core duty in achieving an effective education is upon the teacher. Therefore, various definitions have been put forward for a long time by many academics about how a teacher should be in education. These definitions are presented under “efficient teacher” concept. Looking at the definitions in a general perspective, “efficient teachers” is defined as expert in her/his domain, open to communication, understanding, empathizing, sensitive, impartial, fair, active, intellectual, a good listener and speaker, stable, motivating for her/his students, knowledgeable and respectable (Pozo-Muñoz et al. 2000; Koutrouba2012). It can be said that being a good listener is an important factor for an efficient teacher to gain these personality traits. Therefore, this research focuses on listening skills of Turkish language teachers who are in charge of mother tongue instruction at schools.

Besides, it is seen that studies on listening skills in Turkey generally focus on Turkish language teachers (Asilioglu 2009; Karaduz 2010; Maden and Durukan 2011; Emiroglu 2013; Kurudayi and Kana 2013; Tabak 2013; Ozbay and Doso2014). For this reason, studying teachers in this research is important in revealing their condition in education process at schools.

For teachers, course syllabus generally takes precedence in education. They try to shape the whole education process over this syllabus. However, considering Turkish language syllabuses so far, it is seen that listening skill has been addressed less than the other skills or even ignored. As a matter of fact, this is also the case in other countries. Just as Lewis and Nichols (1965) mentioned that listening was not emphasized in 1965 syllabus, Adams and Cox (2010) stated that this was still the case in 2010.

As if the fact that listening skill isn’t emphasized adequately in syllabuses isn’t enough, because of their busy syllabus, most teachers, for the sake of rushing the syllabus, try to keep certain listening activities short and not to spend much time on certain assessments. They sometimes don’t let their students speak, want them to cut short, interrupt their speech when they think the students is beating around the bush or even hurry them to reply as soon as the question has been asked. These show that teachers do not allow enough time for their students. Rowe (1986) also states that teachers expect their students to answer one second after they are asked a question, leave them in a lurch by adding another question when they have started to answer the first one and so don’t give them an opportunity to think in peace.

Teachers are supposed to be a model for their students in class. Especially in equipping students with listening skill, teachers first demonstrate this skill themselves. After all, a teacher whose listening skill hasn’t developed yet cannot be expected to give this skill to her/his students. It is crucial that teachers should make their students feel that they are being listened with pleasure because such an attitude is a positive message from the teacher to the student and helps the student get prepared to listen to what is said and pay attention (Rane 2011). In this paper, it was observed that a great majority of the teachers (87.5%) gave their students the message that they were willing to listen to them. For a teacher to listen to her/his student is indicative

**Table 5: Results of One-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) of listening skill competences of Turkish language teachers depending on seniority**

<i>Source of variance</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between groups	258.537	3	86.179	1.198	.329
Within groups	2014.338	28	71.941		
Total	2272.875	31			

of the respect s/he has for her/his student. As a matter of fact, showing respect to someone means accepting her/him (Mckay et al. 2010). Listening to a speaking individual not only shows that that person is good at what s/he is doing but also gives confidence to the speaker.

Rane (2011) states that one of the major markers of being a good listener is being able to establish eye-contact with the speaker. After all, if the listener is not looking at the speaker, this is a message that s/he is not interested. Such behaviour can also destroy the speaker's confidence; therefore, it is vital that teachers should give self-confidence to their students and encourage them in especially considering that students are in such a period when personality traits of individuals are shaped. The findings in this paper showed that 96.8 percent of the Turkish language teachers form eye-contact with their students while they are speaking, which means that Turkish language teachers help their students in gaining self-confidence, in expressing themselves and in being entrepreneurs.

One of the key characteristics expected from an efficient teacher is the skill to form empathy. Dokmen (1998) defined empathy as the ability to put one's self into the other's shoes and analyse the events in her/his perspective, to understand and feel that person's thoughts and feelings accurately and to convey all these to that person. Dokmen's definition mentions about understanding the other's thoughts and feelings accurately. In order to do this, an individual is supposed, at the same time, to be a good listener. However, Egan (2000) argues that empathic understanding leads to empathic listening. In this case, it can be argued that both skills are complementary for one another. In this paper, it was determined that a great majority of the Turkish language teachers (81.2%) listen to their students by forming empathy. However, on the other hand, it was also observed that some teachers (40%) pose a quizzical attitude while listening to their students.

### CONCLUSION

This paper was carried out to determine the listening skills of Turkish language teachers who are in charge of mother tongue instruction. The results show to what extent listening skill, one of the four main skills in language education, has been achieved by teachers and how this skill is

used by them in class. The findings reveal that Turkish language teachers have listening skills at a high level and can reflect this to their students through communication with them in class.

Listening skill is the first skill an individual gets but most of the time the most ignored one.

All teachers are supposed to be good listeners. In this paper, it was observed that Turkish language teachers are good listeners in class and hence not so much misunderstanding arises from listening deficiencies.

In the paper, whether there is a relation between listening skills of Turkish language teachers and gender and seniority was analysed but it was found that these variables have no effects on listening skills.

Accordingly, it should be noted that necessary information about the importance and acquisition of listening skill should be given to pre-service teachers especially at education faculties by experts in the domain because all teachers, especially elementary teachers and Turkish language teachers, have great responsibilities in this skill gained in a process starting in the family and continuing at school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Education relies on communication of which listening is the basic element. Success can be achieved where there is healthy communication. Teachers should be a model for their students by listening to them. Listening to students should be regarded as a responsibility not only for Turkish teachers but also for teachers in all branches.

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