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The factors that predict the frequency of activities developing students' listening comprehension skills

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Abstract

Listening comprehension plays an important role in one's educational and daily life. This comprehension skill is not adequately developed in the world and this is a fact that is faced in every aspect of our daily lives. Bearing in mind that listening comprehension affects the students' success not only course, but also in other subjects and lessons, the necessity in developing such skills becomes significantly apparent. From this perspective, leading and directing the activities that will develop listening comprehension skills is only possible by determining the factors that affect them.

The aim of this study is to determine the factors that predict frequency of activities developing student's listening comprehension. Participants of this study carried out with 281 elementary 5th grade students. "Listening Comprehension Activities Test" and "Student Information Questionnaire" have been used for collecting data in. According to the results, writing summary about reading texts in classroom, giving homework related with reading texts, giving free reading time to students and the frequency of student' using radio, mp3, Cd player and computer have an importance role on developing of student' listening comprehension.

Keywords: Listening comprehension skills, Developing activities of listening comprehension, Multiple regression;

1. Introduction

Language is one of the most significant factors which provide communication between people. The ability to provide a clear communication requires good language skills. Four essential skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) can be discussed in language skills development. It depends on the development of these four essential skills integrally for the individuals to communicate in an accurate, clear and effective manner. When the language is discussed from the perspective of comprehension and expression which include the four skills, activities related to comprehension are reading and listening; and activities related to expression are speaking and writing (Sever, 1998). Language skills are not independent from each other, although they are explained from different aspects. For instance, reading skills and listening skills have common facets. Both skills contribute to the individual's development in vocabulary, understanding and comprehension skills.

Listening is a significant activity while we give meaning to the facts happening around (Rost, 1994). Listening as a learning instrument is defined as "an active process which involves hearing, understanding, integrating the information and if it is needed, response" (Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey and Nichols, 1983). Özbay (2007) defines listening as "the skill of fully understanding of a person's message which a person wants to convey by speaking or reading aloud." These definitions demonstrate that listening is an active process which involves a comprehension

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skill. Comprehension process involves knowledge, using experience, thinking and learning; therefore, listening comprehension involves a complex whole of intellectual activity.

Listening is an important skill which provides individual to use its communication skills and to interpret listening inputs accurately in both educational and daily life.” (Çiftçi, 2007). Listening is the shortest and the most used way of communicating, understanding people’s feelings and thoughts, comprehending the things happening around us and acquiring information (Yıldırım 2007). Listening habit has an important role in individual’s perception of the environment and the world and adaptation to the social environment, because listening plays a significant role in social life, especially in the transfer of information. As a social being, people always need to communicate with other people and they use their listening skills while doing this. Any situation which affects the usage of this skill negatively causes problems between people.

Accordingly, listening is also a significant skill in school life of the individuals. Classroom learning significantly depends on listening comprehension activities. Therefore listening comprehension skills plays an important role in many courses in the learning process. It is also doubtful for a student to succeed in school life who does not understand what s/he listens, cannot explain his/her feelings and thoughts in written or verbal language accurately, clearly and understandably (Ocak and Beydoğan, 1999); besides, they can have problems in their daily lives. Thompson, Grandgenett and Grandgenett (1999) and Smith (1992) thought in a way which supports this idea. Listening comprehension, which takes place in basic life skills, is an important factor in succeeding in classroom learning. In this sense, developing this skill in schools is considered important. Students spare time to listening in their school lives and daily lives significantly. For instance, Wilt, 1950, (cited in Winn, 1998) points out that student spared 50% of their time in school and 45% of their time out of school by listening; and Göğüş (1978) points out that student spent 2,5 to 4 hours with their teachers and schoolmates by listening.

Winn (1988) and Özbay (2005) thought that listening skills does not develop spontaneously, but these skills should develop thorough education. Pre-school children form their emotional and intellectual universe through listening. (Sever 2004). In this period of childhood, the knowledge acquired by listening is necessary for life and environmental factors. Therefore, this skill needs to be developed to a higher level, because systematic and organized knowledge is added to it through learning in school. Efficient use of these basic skills in school requires teaching of these skills starting from the beginning of primary school. In the process of teaching this basic skill, it is important to study the factors that affect the process and to organize the learning environment in the light of these factors. Relevant studies demonstrate that especially reading comprehension skill is related to the listening comprehension skill (Beron and Farkas, 2004; Harlaar, Hayiou-Thomas, Dale and Plomin, 2008; Nation and Snowling, 2004; Ouellette, 2006; Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett and Wolf, 2007; Özbay, 2005). Özbay (2005) indicated that learning activities aiming to develop reading comprehension skills also develop listening comprehension skills. It is likely for the individual who is competent in reading comprehension to be competent in listening comprehension. Therefore, it is possible to formulate that reading skill is a factor which directly affects listening skill.

From this perspective, guiding the activities which develop students’ listening skills can only be possible by identifying the factors effective on these skills. Developing listening comprehension skills depends on identifying the variables which are thought to be effective on this skills and organizing the learning environment according to these variables. In this case, it should be ascertained to what extent reading activities implemented by the teacher in the classroom contribute to the listening comprehension skills of the students. Moreover, it needs to be identified to what extent the frequency of the use of audio-visual materials affects the development of listening comprehension skills. Thus, important clues can be gained about the ways of use of these materials in or out of the school in order to develop listening comprehension skills.

The aim of this study is to identify the variables that predict the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension skills among the 5th grade of primary school students. In the study, frequency of reading activities in school and using of audio-visual materials are considered as the factors that predict the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension.

2. Method

The current study was a correlation study seeking for determining of variables that predict the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension

2.1. Sample

Participants of this study are chosen among elementary 5th grade students in Ankara using the nonrandom sampling method. According to this approach, taking into consideration the accessibility and practicality reasons, the study has been carried out with 258 5th grade students. Of all the participant students, %49 are female, and %51 are male.

2.2. The Instruments

Two different data collection tools have been used in this study. The first one is the “Student Information Questionnaire” was developed by the researchers to determine the variables related to frequency of activities that develop students’ listening comprehension. It contained a total of fourteen questions related with activities in school and out of school and student’s environment.

The second data collection tool used in the study was “Listening Comprehension Activities Scale” was developed by the researchers. It was a Likert type scale with items that were used to measure the frequency of activities that develop student’s listening comprehension skills in school or out of school.

A five point rating scale (always, mostly, sometimes, rarely and never) was used. Positive and negative statements were shuffled in the scale. In order to attain the reliability and validity of the attitude scale, a pilot study was conducted on 279 students. Principal component analysis was used to ensure the construct validity of the scale. As to the reliability, item total correlation was used and Cronbach Alfa Reliability Coefficient was calculated, which provided information with regards to the internal consistency of the scale. Item -total correlation values of the scale ranged between 0.616 and 0.807. These values indicated that the items represented similar behaviors. The Cronbach Alfa Coefficient was found 0.869 which indicates internal consistency. After the reliability and validity analyses were completed, the final form of the scale ended up with a total of 8 items.

2.3. Data Analysis

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was run to seek for determining of variables that predict the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension. The discontinuous predictive variables were coded as “dummy variables”. Before the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was run, the following all assumptions were examined: a) whether there was a linear correlation between the predictor and predicted variables; b) whether the scores that belonged to the predicted variable were normally distributed; and c) whether there were multiple correlations between predictor variables. Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted after these all assumptions were met.

3. Results

According to the determined predicting variables, the results of multiple regression analysis are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Stepwise multiple regression analysis results

Predicting Variable	B	β	t	R	Partial r	p
Summary(rarely)	-6.013	-.297	-5.108	-.223	-.299	.000
Summary(sometimes)	-4.024	-.290	-4.576	-.162	-.270	.000
Computer (mostly)	-3.102	-.206	-3.995	-.200	-.238	.000
Summary(never)	-4.656	-.205	-3.671	-.087	-.220	.000
Homework (mostly)	-2.562	-.180	-3.544	-.178	-.212	.000
Radio (never)	-2.578	-.177	-3.103	-.217	-.187	.002
Radio(rarely)	-2.274	-.157	-2.825	-.153	-.171	.005
CD player. MP3.. (never)	-2.315	-.143	-2.667	-.239	-.161	.008
Reading time (never)	-3.695	-.143	-2.807	-.178	-.170	.005
Computer (sometimes)	-3.066	-.132	-2.579	-.159	-.156	.010
Summary (mostly)	-1.757	-.122	-1.956	.088	-.119	.052
Computer (rarely)	-2.833	-.109	-2.146	-.117	-.130	.033
Constant	37.765		51.153			.000

R=0.591 R² =0.35 F(12, 266)=11.886. p=.000

The multiple regression model that was structured in order to determine variables that predict the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension was statistically significant ($F_{(12, 266)} = 11.886$, $p < 0.01$). According to the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis results multiple regression coefficient that showed the relationship between the predictors and predicting variables was $R = 0.591$. These variables explained the 35% of the variance in the frequency of activities that improve listening comprehension. When the standardized regression coefficients (β) were taken into consideration the variables predicting the frequency of activities that develop listening comprehension are as follows in the order of significance:

- Frequency of writing summary based on the passages read in classroom.
- Frequency of student's computer usage.
- Frequency of doing homework based on read passages.
- Frequency of student's radio listening as an out-of-school activity.
- Frequency of student's CDs and mp3s listening as an out-of-school activity.
- Frequency of free reading time in classroom.

As far as this order of significance is concerned, the following results can be drawn from the multiple regression analysis:

Table1 shows that the frequency of summary writing related to the passages read in classroom increases the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension. The fact that the frequency of writing summary is "always" enables students to do the activities to develop listening comprehension skills.

Another predicting variable the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension is the frequency of computer usage. Table1 shows that an increase in the frequency of computer usage also increases the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension.

Frequency of doing homework based on read passages predicts the frequency of doing activities to develop students' listening comprehension skills. Accordingly the frequency of doing listening comprehension activities is lower among the students who "never" do homework based on read passages than among the students who have homework based on read passages more often.

According to the research findings, the frequency of student's using CDs, mp3s and radio, etc. as an out-of-school activity predicts the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension. Table1 shows that the frequency of listening comprehension activities is lower among the students who "never or rarely" use radio, CD players or mp3 players than among the students who use these materials.

Giving time for free reading is a predicting variable the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension. This finding show that the students have free reading time in the classroom are more likely to do

activities to develop their listening comprehension skills than the students who do not have any free reading time in the classroom.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

According to the results of this study, writing summary based on the passages read in classroom, doing homework based on read passages and free reading time increase the frequency of activities developing listening comprehension. This fact refers to a correlation between the reading comprehension and listening comprehension skills. Studies showed that there is a high correlation between reading and listening comprehension (Farkas and Beron, 2004; Harlaar, Hayiou-Thomas, Dale and Plomin, 2008; Nation and Snowling, 2004; Ouellette, 2006; Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett and Wolf, 2008).

The frequency of activities developing listening comprehension changes according to the frequency of student's using materials such as radio, CD player, mp3 player etc. results show that the frequency of activities to develop listening comprehension skills increases among the students who use materials such as computer, radio, CD player and mp3, etc. This finding reveals that audio materials improve listening comprehension. Besides, it should be claimed that because the materials such as computer have also visual elements, these elements may also be effective on listening comprehension. In the empirical study Center, Freeman, Robertson and Outhred (1999) stated that listening comprehension skill is improved by a program that includes the use of visual elements. Additionally, Kutlu and Aslanoğlu (2009) concluded that the frequency of computer use contributes to develop of listening comprehension skills at a rate of %0.4. In the light of these findings, it may be claimed that the abundance of visual elements in computer affects frequency of activities that improve listening comprehension positively.

5. Recommendation

Findings of this research demonstrate that reading activities in classroom plays an important role in development of listening comprehension skills. In view of this fact, teachers can prepare and use activities in common that develop both listening and reading skills. Besides, example activities which are organized to develop both of these skills should be involved in the curriculum and teacher's books. Thus, teachers can be more likely to use this kind of activities in their classrooms.

It is important to students to use audio-visual materials (computer, radio, mp3 player, CD player, etc.) out of school in a way to ensure development of listening comprehension skills. From this perspective, teachers should prepare homework, performance task or project in which student need to use computer, radio, mp3 player, CD player, etc., while they complete them. Thus, these materials can support the development of students' listening comprehension skills. In this point, parents and teacher can be advised to direct students suitably.

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