Analysis of Preschool Period Children's Listening Skill According to Some Variables

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Received: February 10, 2020 Accepted: May 26, 2020 Online Published: June 16, 2020

doi:10.5430/wje.v10n3p79 URL: https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v10n3p79

Abstract

This research was carried out to determine the listening skill of the children attending pre-school education institutions and to analyze them according to some socio-demographic variables. The research was carried out in the general survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The sample of the study wascomprised of 429 children attending kindergarten and nursery classin the central districts of Eskisehir and Usak. The data collection tool used in the research was "The Scale for the Evaluation of Preschool Children's Listening Skill" developed by Özer Özkan and Coşkun (2015). The listening skill of the children were analyzed according to child's age, gender, birth order, number of siblings, school attendance time, and age, education and employment of the parents. The listening skill scores of the children participating in the research were found to be high. It was found that the scale did not differ significantly according to gender, birth order, school attendance time, education level and employment status of the parents, however, it differed according to the age of the child and the age of the parents.Findings obtained from the research were discussed in line with the related literature and suggestions were submitted.

Keywords: listening skills, preschool, early childhood

1. Introduction

Language uses listening and speaking in the realization of comprehension and reading and writing in the realization of narration (Doğan, 2008: 2). Listening, which is one of the language skills (Yalçın, 2006: 123), is an important skill that develops first and that is essential in the development of other language skills (Çelenk, 2005: 135; Özbay, 2009: 81).The process of structuring sounds and speech in the mind as a result of the hearing, focusing the attention and understanding stages is defined as listening (MONE, 2009: 13). Making sense of the voices heard as a result of mental processes shows that listening is an active and creative action (Cramer, 2004). Therefore, in listening, individuals are not passive recipients, but cognitive, emotional and psychologically active recipients (Karadüz, 2010: 42-43). It is not only the perception of the words or phrases that are heard, but also perceiving the meaning of the listening through the individual's prior knowledge (Vandergrift, 2004: 4; Schraw, 1998: 23). In this context, listening skill is seen as a complex issuehaving very different aspects, an element of interpersonal communication and one of the four basic functions of the language to be learned (Epçapan, 2013: 334).

The language skill that the individual uses the most in daily life is listening.In most studies, it has been revealed that listening is a skill that can be developed rather than being a naturally developing skill (Doğan, 2007; Yıldırım, 2007; Yılmaz, 2007; Aras, 2004, Kaplan, 2004; Koç, 2003; Brown, 1954). Listening skill, which is naturally and spontaneously acquired by the child in the preschool period, should be given through education in order to cover listening comprehension, comprehension and evaluation skills as well (Sever, 2000: 11).

The preschool period is a critical period in language development (Huber, 2007: 15); the use of listening skill (Ergin & Birol, 2000: 115), which consists of the processes of recognizing sounds and speech, focusing the attention on these sounds and making sense of them, is a skill that initiates the learning (Özdemir, 1987: 166). Therefore, listening is the process of using active thinking skills rather than a passive process. In preschool period, children start to develop and learn this skill by listening stories, repeating them, and using remembering strategies (Visu-Petra, Cheie, & Benga,

2008, p. 23). To ensurethe realization of comprehension and learning by using listening skill, voices must be fully heard, the environment should be arranged in a way that does not prevent hearing, the message to be conveyed must be understandable and clear and the level of the language used should be appropriate for the child (Özbay, 2009: 52). The development of listening skill should not be considered as a spontaneous process, and good planning in line with the program should be made for development (Machado, 2010, p.242).

Considering that the children spend most of their time in school by listening to their teachers and friends (Temur, 2001: 62), it can be seen that listening is the key oftheir achievements and learning (Mackay, 1997: 9). Presenting opportunities from the world of sound, such as stories and games (Özer Özkan & Coşkun, 2015: 73; Poole, 1998: 15), improves the listening skill of the children (Poole, 1998: 15), whose sensitivity towards sound starts when they are still in the womb (Healy, 1999: 46). Children should know the purpose of listening before they start listening (Funk & Funk, 1989: 660), and listening skill should be supported with materials and activities (Kingen, 2000: 276). Researches have shown that children whose listening skill are supported through education are more successful in listening skill (Metheson, Moon, & Winiecky, 2000; Kaplan, 2003; Koç, 2003; Owca, Pawlak, & Pronobis, 2003; Doğan, 2007, Yıldırım, 2007; Walter, 2011).

Developing children's listening skill through education in preschool period is also very important in terms of developing other language skills, namely speaking, reading and writing skills (Calp, 2005). However, today, children are poor listeners because they do not sufficiently receive listening education in their classrooms and do not make sufficient exercises for the development of listening skill.However, it is necessary to analyze children'slistening skill before starting the process of learning to read and write (Florit, Roch, Altoe, & Levorato, 2009). Although there are difficulties such as quick distraction, it is necessary to determine the level of children'slistening skill in preschool period (Jalongo, 2010). If children'slistening skill do not improve, it is possible for the teacher to provide the necessary support with the activities only by knowing the listening skill level of the children (Robinshaw, 2007).

Parents' inability to interact with their children also has an impact on the lack of development of children's listening skill (Burrows, Guthrie, Peterson, & Rakow-Larson, 1999: 29). The family, which is responsible for raising their children, is seen as the most effective institution of child's education (Günkan, 2007). Parents are important people who support the language development of their children along with other areas of development and bring their mother tongue as a model (Melanlıoğlu, 212: 66). The economic status of the family, education level, relationships with their children, their attitudes towards their children, and the wayof communication are important variables on the development of children (Üstünoğlu, 1991).

The review of the researches revealed that studies onpre-school listening skill are insufficient in our country and the studies on elementary school students are also limited (Kaplan, 2003; Koç, 2003; Aras, 2004; Doğan, 2007, 2008, 2010; Yıldırım, 2007; Yılmaz, 2007; Çelikbaş, 2010). In order to overcome this deficiency in the literature, the subject of the research was set as determining the level of children's listening skill and the variables that affect their listening skill.

1.1 Purpose of the Research

The aim of the research is to determine listening skill of thechildrenattending pre-school education institutionsand the variables that affect these skills. For this purpose, the following questions were addressed:

• What is the level of children's listening skill?

• Do children's listening skill differs significantly according to some socio-demographic variables (*child's age, gender, number of siblings, school attendance time, age of the parents, working status of mother, profession of father, education level of the parents*)?

2. Method

2.1 Research Method

In this study, it was aimed to determine the listening skill of 48-72 months old children attending pre-school education institutions and to analyze their listening skill according to some socio-demographic variables. In line with this purpose, the general survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used in the research. The survey modelaims to describe any situation existing in the past or present as it exists (Karasar, 2008).

2.2 Sample

The universe of the study consisted of the children attending the state kindergartens and nursery classes affiliated to MoNE in Uşak and Eskişehir city centers, in the 2018- 2019 academic year.Within the scope of this research, the answers of a total of 429 children participated in the study, 200 from Uşak and 229 from Eskişehir, were covered. The

sampling method used within the scope of the research was convenient sampling, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, the demographic information of 429 children is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Children

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	48-52 months old	55	12.8
	53-57 months old	27	6.3
	58-62 months old	76	17.7
	63-67 months old	128	29.8
	68-72 months old	143	33.3
Gender	Female	187	43.6
	Male	242	56.4
Birth Order	First child	228	53.1
	Middle child	59	13.8
	Last child	142	33.1
Number of children in the family	One child	140	32.6
	Two children	213	49.7
	3 and more children	76	17.7
School attendance time	0-6 months	243	56.6
	7-12 months	99	23.1
	12-18 months	58	13.5
	19 months and more	29	6.8
Age of the mother	29years oldand under	138	32.2
	30-39years old	255	59.4
	40years old and above	36	8.4
Age of the father	29years oldand under	77	17.9
	30-39years old	261	60.8
	40years old and above	91	21
Education of the mother	Illiterate	5	1.2
	Literate	30	7.0
	Primary and secondary school	109	25.4
	High School	173	40.3
	University and more	112	26
Education of the father	Illiterate	4	.9
	Literate	10	2.3
	Primary and secondary school	94	21.9
	High School	211	49.2
	University and more	110	25.6
Working status of the mother	Housewife	239	55.7
	Employed	190	44.3
Profession of the Father	Government employee	67	15.6
	Worker	153	35.7
	Self-employed	84	19.6
	Other	120	28.0
	Unemployed	5	1.2
Total		429	100

According to the information in Table 1, 12.8% (n = 55) of the children participating in the study were 48-52 months old, 6.3% (n = 27) were 53-57 months old, 17.7% (n = 76) were 58-62 months old, 29.8% (n = 128) were 63-67 months old, and 33.3% (n = 143) were 68-72 months old.43.6% (n = 187) of the children participating in the study were girls and 56.4% (n = 242) were boys.53.1% (n = 228) of the children were the first child of their family, 13.8% (n = 59) were the middle child and 31.1% (n = 142) were the last child of their family.32.6% (n = 140) of the children participating in the study were an only child, 49.7% (n = 213) have one sibling and 17.7% (n = 76) have two or more siblings.56.6% (n = 243) of preschool children were attending preschool education for 0-6 months, 23.1% (n = 99) for 7-12 months, and

18.1% (n = 78) for 12 months and more.Regarding the mothers of the children,32.2% (n = 138) of them were under the age of 30, 59.4% (n = 255) were 30-39 years old, and 8.4% (n = 36) of the motherswere 40 years old and more. Regarding the fathers, 17.9% (n = 77) of them were found to be under the age of 30, 60.8% (n = 261) were 30-39 years old, and 21.2% (n = 91) of the fatherswere40 years old and more. Regarding the distribution of the children's mothers' education level, 1.2% (n = 5) of them wereilliterate, 7% were literate, 25.4% (n = 109) were primary school graduated, 40.3% (n = 173) were high school graduated, and 26.1% (n = 112) were have university graduated and more. Regarding preschool children's fathers' education, 0.9% (n = 4) of themwere illiterate, 2.3% (n = 10) were literate, 21.9% (n = 94) were primary school graduated, 42% (n = 211) were high school graduated, 25.6% (n = 110) were university graduated and more. The mothers of 55.7% (n = 239) of the childrenparticipating in the study were housewife, not working, whereas 44.3% (n = 190) of them were working. Regarding preschool children's fathers' profession, 15.5% (n = 67) of them were found to be government employees, 35.7% (n = 153) were worker, 19.6% (n = 84) were self-employed, and 28% (n = 120) had other professions and 1.2% (n = 5) were not working.

2.3 Data Collection

The data of children attending pre-school education were collected via Personal Information Form and Listening Skill Evaluation Scale.

Personal Information Form: It was prepared by researchers to determine the gender, age, birth order, school attendance time, number of children in the family, ages, education level and employment of the parents of the child who attends preschool education.The Personal Information Form was filled by the teachers of the children.

Listening skill Evaluation Scale: The scale was developed by Özer Özkan and Coşkun (2015) to evaluate the listening skill of the children. The validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted on 240 children. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were performed. As a result of EFA, a structure consisting of two factors, namely cognitive and social, that explains 70.07% of the total variance was formed. It was retested with CFAand RMSEA value was calculated as 0.09 and CFI value as 0.98 from the fit indices. CFA result confirmed that the two-factor structure determined as cognitive and social was adequate. Cronbach Alpha coefficient indicating the internal consistency and reliability of the scale was calculated as 0.94. Item total test correlation was calculated to determine the differentiation power of the items in the scale, and all items were found to have sufficient discrimination power. In this study, the scale was applied to 429 children of 48-72 months old, attending preschool education institutions. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient, indicating the reliability of the answers obtained from the children, was calculated as 0.94. The reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.93for the social dimension, and0.87 for cognitive dimension. In other words, the reliability of the data obtained from the children participating in the research was high.

The scale is comprised of four Likert-type options (1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = mostly, 4 = always). In order to determine the skill levels of the children, the items in the scale were scored by giving numerical values from 4 to 1 indicating "Always" to "Never". The high scores obtained from the scale show that the listening skill of the children is high, and the low scores indicate that this skill is low. There are 30 items in the scale. The lowest score that can be achieved from the scale is 30, whereas the highest score is 120. The high score obtained from the scale reflects children's listening skill.

2.4 Data Analysis

At the data analysis stage, the data set was checked first. The data of 429 children attending pre-school education were transferred to SPSS 23.0 software and checked for missing/incorrect data entry. Then, total scores were calculated on the basis of dimensions covered in the scale.

Following the data distribution analysis, statistical calculations were made in line with the purpose of the research. Descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, average and standard deviation) were calculated for each dimension in order to determine the listening skill of preschool children. Then, the difference statistics were calculated to reveal whether listening skill of the children differed significantly according to their demographic characteristics. In the calculations, parametric and non-parametric tests have been conducted to test the assumptions for each demographic feature. In the interpretation of the tests, the significance value p was taken as 0.05.

3. Results

3.1 Listening Skill of the Children Attending Preschool Education Institution

Descriptive statistics calculated for the answers obtained from the Listening skill Scale consisting of 30 items, applied

to determine the listening skill level 429 children of 48-72-month-old participating in the study, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Children's Listening skill

Dimensions	Number of items	N	Minimum	Maximum	x̄	SD
Social	9	429	1.11	4.00	3.10	0.50
Cognitive	21	429	1.05	4.24	2.90	0.59
Overall	30	429	1.17	4.00	2.95	0.53

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the listening skillof the children participating in the study. The average score of the children's listening skill for the 9-item social dimension (such as, *making eye contact while listening and talking; listening without disturbing others*) was calculated as 3.10. This value shows that children'ssocial listening skill is high.The average score of the children for cognitive dimension (such as, *asks questions about what he/she listen to, he/she re-tells what he/she listened after a while*), which is the second sub-dimension of the listening skill scale, comprised of 21 items, was calculated as 2.90. Children's cognitive listening skillwere also found to be high. The average score of the whole scale was calculated as 2.95. The average total score was found to be 88.5. The range of scores that can be obtained from the scale is between 30 and 120. Scores approaching 120 are interpreted as high. In this case, it was observed that children mostly possessed listening skilland their listening skill is high.

3.2 Do Listening Skill of the Children Attending Pre-school Education Institutions Differ Significantly According to Some Socio-demographic Characteristics?

In the study, the differentiation of the children'slistening skill according to age, gender, number of children in the family, school attendance time, age, education level and employment of the parents was tested by the t-test, whereas ANOVA analysis was used for other variables. It was found that the scores that the children participating in the study achieved from the overall and sub-dimensions of the Listening Skill Scale did not differ significantly according to gender, birth order, number of children in the family, school attendance time, education level and occupation of the parents. It was observed that the age of the child, mother and father created a significant difference on the listening skill of the children.

Scheffe test was performed to determine the direction of the significant differenceson children's listening skill according to age and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Scheffe Test Results for Listening Skill Levels of Children According to Age

(I) Age (Month)	(J) Age (Month)	Average Difference (I-J)	SE	P
48-52 months	53-57 months	-.39479(*)	.12138	.033
	58-62 months	-.14876	.09145	.619
	63-67 months	-.23460	.08328	.096
	68-72 months	-.33436(*)	.08196	.003
53-57 months	48-52 months	.39479(*)	.12138	.033
	58-62 months	.24604	.11573	.342
	63-67 months	.16019	.10939	.709
	68-72 months	.06043	.10839	.989
58-62 months	48-52 months	.14876	.09145	.619
	53-57 months	-.24604	.11573	.342
	63-67 months	-.08584	.07480	.858
	68-72 months	-.18560	.07333	.173
63-67 months	48-52 months	.23460	.08328	.096
	53-57 months	-.16019	.10939	.709
	58-62 months	.08584	.07480	.858
	68-72 months	-.09976	.06285	.641
68-72 months	48-52 months	.33436(*)	.08196	.003
	53-57 months	-.06043	.10839	.989
	58-62 months	.18560	.07333	.173
	63-67 months	.09976	.06285	.641

p<0,05*

Statistically significant differenceswere shownin Table 3. According to the Scheffe test result; A significant difference was found between 53-57 months old& 68-72 months old children and 48-52-month-old group, in favor of older children, at p <.05. The difference between the arithmetic means of other groups was not significant (p> .05).

The results of the Scheffe test performed to determine the direction of the significant difference arising from the age of the child's mother are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Scheffe Test Results for Listening Skill Levels of Children According to Mothers' Age

(I) Age of the Mother	(J) Age of the Mother	Average Difference(I-J)	F	p
Under 29 years old	30-39 years old	.14442(*)	.05538	.034
	40-49 years old	.08820	.09806	.668
30-39 years old	Under 29 years old	-.14442(*)	.05538	.034
	40-49 years old	-.05622	.09329	.834
40-49 years old	Under 29 years old	-.08820	.09806	.668
	30-39 years old	.05622	.09329	.834

p<0,05*

Regarding children's listening skill scores according to the age of their mothers, a significant difference was found between the mothers under 29 years old and 30-39 years oldmothers in favor of the mothers under 29 years old, at p <.05. The difference between the arithmetic means of other groups was not significant (p> .05). In other words, the listening skillscores of the children whose mothers are 40-49 years old are similar to the listening skill scores of the other children.

The results of the Scheffe test performed to determine the direction of the significant difference arising from the age of the child's father are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Scheffe Test Results for Listening Skill Levels of Children According to Fathers' Age

(I) Age of the Father	(J) Age of the Father	Average Difference(I-J)	SE	p
Under 29 years old	30-39 years old	.20645(*)	.06771	.010
	40-49 years old	.21029(*)	.08084	.035
30-39 years old	Under 29 years old	-.20645(*)	.06771	.010
	40-49 years old	.00384	.06356	.998
40-49 years old	Under 29 years old	-.21029(*)	.08084	.035
	30-39 years old	-.00384	.06356	.998

p<0,05*

Regarding Table 5, a significant difference was found between the fathers under 29 years old and the fathers in 30-39-years-oldand 40-49-years-old groups in favor of the fathers under 29 years old, at p <.05. The difference between the arithmetic means of other groups was not significant (p> .05).

4. Discussion

In this research, it was aimed to determine listening skillof the childrenattending pre-school education and analyze them according to some variables. The effects of age, gender, birth order, number of children in the family, school attendance time, age of the parents, education level and occupation of the parents on the listening skill of the children were analyzed. For each of the 429 children participating in the research, "The Scale for the Evaluation of Preschool Children's Listening Skill" was applied by the teachers. As a result of the research, it was found that listening skill did not differ significantly according to gender, birthorder, school attendance time, number of siblings, the education level and professions of the parents. In the study that Çelikbaş (2010) investigated the relationship between the use of listening strategies and listening comprehension, it was concluded that there was no significant difference onlistening comprehension according to the gender of children and the education level of mothers. In contrast, Yıldırım's (2007) study on elementary school children's listening skill reached the conclusion that boys' listening skill were higher, and that the increase in the education level of parents positively affected children's listening skill. It is thought that the effects of these variables, which did not differ significantly in the study, may be different in other education levels and may create differences on children's listening skill.

Significant differences were found according to the age of the children and to the age of their parents. Regarding the children's age variable, it was observed that children older than 53 months had higher listening skill than children aged 48-52 months. In the study conducted by Aras (2004) on the listening skill of elementary school children, it was found that the listening skillof the children increasesas the grade increases. Considering that the age of the children increases as the grade increases, it can be said that there is an increase in listening skill according to the age variable. However, no similar research results have been encountered on preschool children.

Regarding the change in children's listening skill according to the age of the parents, it was observed that the children of mothers aged 29 and under have higher listening skill than the children of mothers aged 30-39, and the children of fathers aged 29 and under have higher listening skill than the children of fathers aged 30-45. The family has a significant effect on the development of the child's listening skill. The listening skill of the children, who have families listening to their children, answering their questions, reading stories and behaving well, are improved more (Melanlıoğlu, 2012). In the research, children of mothers/fathers aged 29 and under have higher listening skill, which makes think that these mothers/fathers are more interested in their children because they are young.

5. Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

This study has expanded the scope of children's listening skill research by discussing preschool children's listening skill in Turkey. However, this research has some conceptual and methodological limitations. Conceptually, the findings were mostly compared with the studies conducted at other educationlevels because there is no work carried out for preschool period in Turkey. It should be kept in mind that children's listening skill may vary according to their learning environment and programs. The other limitation is that the research is the first study evaluating the listening skill of kindergarten children in Turkey. Therefore, similar studies should be conducted to confirm its theoretical contribution. In addition, for each child the scale was filled out by the teacher, thus only 429 kindergarten children could be reached due to the methodology. Although the state kindergartens in Turkey have similar features, the results obtained may not be generalizeddue to variousreasons including educational environment and individual differences. For the verification of the obtained results, it is suggested for future research to work on larger and more diverse samples from different regions of Turkey. Another factor is that there may be errors in the evaluation of children's listening skillbecause they were based on the teachers' observations. For this reason, it is recommended to evaluate listening skill of the children by conducting researches in which the listening skill of the children are also evaluated by practice.

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