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The Effects of Language Exposure, Linguistic Distance, and Demographic Variables on Gagauz Students' Turkish Listening Skills

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Abstract
This quantitative research examined the variables affecting the Turkish listening skills of high school students living in Moldova-Gagauzia. It was evaluated effects of language exposure, linguistic distance, demographic variables (gender, settlement type, mother tongue, and Turkish language level) on participants' Turkish listening skills. 148 participants were students at Süleyman Demirel Moldo-Turkish High School in Kongaz. The data were collected using two instruments: The Turkish language exposure scale and listening tests. The scale was developed by Çobanoğlu Aktan and İnan (2020) to determine Turkish language learners' out-of-school exposure to Turkish. Listening test was developed based on Yunus Emre Institute's "Yedi İklim Türkçe Öğretim Seti". Afterward, the listening test results were analyzed to determine the variables that predicted listening performance. The research results indicated a low level of Turkish exposure among the participants. Females were exposed to Turkish more. There was no relationship between their listening test performance and exposure, mostly including Turkish visual and auditory media. In addition, in the Turkish listening exam, it was seen that the native speakers of Gagauz were more advantageous than Russian. The reason why the A1-2 level participants were more successful in the listening skill test might be the linguistic proximity and similarities of basic vocabulary between Turkish and Gagauz. It was concluded that linguistic distance was a stronger predictor than other variables.

Keywords: Language Exposure, Linguistic Distance, Listening Skills, Turkish as a Foreign Language, Gagauz Learners

1. Introduction

The recent improvements in tools and opportunities for learning a foreign language have offered new ways of learning and teaching and led to the abandonment of traditional foreign language teaching methods characterized by limited classes, repetition, and imitation. A student-centered approach to learning has allowed more space to practice and experience, thanks to out-of-classroom activities. Such an approach to foreign language teaching highlights the importance of the term "acquisition," indicating that students can acquire the target language just as how they learn their native language. In this sense, the Natural Approach to language acquisition emerged from the practices of Terrell (1977) and was developed by Krashen (1987).

According to Krashen and Terrell (1988), the most notable shortcoming of previous approaches and methods was that they ignored the language acquisition process and focused on language structure. Krashen and Terrell (1988) proposed five hypotheses in language acquisition theory: Acquisition-learning distinction, natural order, monitor model, comprehensible input, and affective filter assumption. Comprehensible input has a special place among all assumptions as inputs are the linguistic components necessary for learners to acquire a language. Inputs emerge from many resources such as teachers and students, communication tools, visual materials, and out-of-classroom environment. A person acquires a language thanks to comprehensible and repetitive exposure. Therefore, language exposure is a means of getting input (Bialystok, 1978; Littlewood, 1986; Long, 1980, 1985).

1.1. Foreign Language Exposure

The primary principle of exposure relies on students' receiving linguistic inputs continuously and thus acquiring a language instead of learning a language in limited hours of in-class education. Therefore, out-of-school activities are essential for language exposure in everyday life. Most people do not have the opportunity to spend time in the target language environment or talk to native speakers, which urges students to create an environment that would provide exposure to a target language or materials/inputs. At this point, teachers can play a leading role. Benson (2001) defines out-of-school language exposure as self-learning in a natural order. For example, learners can improve their vocabulary by engaging in a foreign language at leisure (Webb, 2015). In the literature, out-of-school exposure activities are listed as watching movies, TV series/shows, and videos, playing computer games, and listening to songs (e.g., De Wilde, Brysbaert & Eyckmans, 2020; González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz, 2011, 2014; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014). Printed or electronic materials are less preferred for out-of-school language activities (Peters, Noreillie, Heylen, Bulte & Desmet, 2019).

Language skills are acquired by generalizing, transferring, imitating, and simplifying the language structures. In this sense, repetition of the same inputs through the mentioned processes is critical. Re-exposure to a language at regular intervals is beneficial, especially receptive language skills such as listening that help learners receive and use linguistic inputs and develop other language skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Considering the variety of visual and auditory media, today's culture industry presents several listening inputs in a target language.

The positive effects of television and visual tools on understanding what is heard are still discussed. Larsen-Freeman (2003) pointed out that television would help alleviate the pressure on students. Brinton and Gaskill (1978) also predicted that television and radio news would help improve listening skills. Poon (1992) observed the significant effects of television news on listening skills. In the 2000s, the development of several technological tools and the spread of fast internet connections made it easier for people to access videos, movies, and TV series/shows. Thus, watching television has become a comprehensive resource for active participation in the content of the broadcast, as well as the audio and visual inputs it provides. Recent studies have focused on the way of watching television in the 21st century.

Web (2015) indicates that watching television meets comprehensible input needs in learning foreign languages. Watching shows with subtitles positively affects learners' language development (e.g., Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014). Especially in skill development, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) found that watching movies with subtitles better-predicted students' reading and listening proficiency than many other out-of-school language exposure opportunities. Kuppens (2010) revealed that language exposure through television was more effective on female students than male students. He also concluded that television enhanced vocabulary better than computer games. Peters, Heynen, and Puimege (2016) found that subtitled programs promoted vocabulary learning. Additionally, they emphasized that visual and audio broadcasts in the target language, even without subtitles, contribute to language acquisition.

Some studies show that watching television in the target language improves listening skills (Mehrpour & Rahimi, 2010). Suárez and Gesa (2019) concluded that watching videos helped students retrieve the newly-listened words. Bahrani and Sim (2015) showed that news videos had latent language input and improved intermediate students' comprehension skills. Neuman and Koskinen (1992) indicated that the input from television should activate the cognitive process and draw attention to select and monitor the target content carefully.

In addition to television and audiovisual broadcasts, foreign language learners listen to songs in the target language. Music is acknowledged to have a stimulating and engaging role in improving listening skills (Khaghaninejad & Fahandejsaadi, 2016). Studies on the positive effects of listening to songs on language development yield different results. For example, according to Peters (2018), the effect of listening to songs in the target language- as a source of exposure- is negligible. On the other hand, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) found a positive relationship between listening to songs and students' reading and listening skills. Pavia, Webb, and Faez (2019) also explored the effects of repeatedly listening to a particular song, namely the frequency of exposure, on target vocabulary acquisition and learning outcomes. They found that listening to songs contributed to vocabulary learning, repeated listening positively affected vocabulary acquisition, and frequent exposure to songs in the target language improved listening skills. Nimani and Dagarin (2019) showed that listening to songs in the target language as an extracurricular activity positively affected vocabulary and listening comprehension. However, they could not find a relationship between improved listening skills and non-musical content. Gönülal (2020) found results suggesting that podcasting and vodcasting technology improved listening skills. However, he asserted that improved listening skills could not be explained only by out-of-classroom systematic exposure to a target language.

Electronic devices and online activities also have the potential for out-of-school language exposure the (e.g., De Wilde, Brysbaert & Eyckmans, 2020; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014). Such activities depend on receiving language inputs through social media, computer games, or websites. Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) concluded that inputs from computer games and electronic devices significantly predicted listening proficiency. However, the effects of computer games and electronic devices are less slight than those of watching television and listening to songs. Similarly, Kuppens (2010) found that watching television affected students' vocabulary more than playing computer games. Peters (2018) stressed that language exposure through computer games was inversely proportional to age. Accordingly, high school students received more input from computer games than university students. Sundqvist and Wikström (2015) determined that males played computer games more often than females, which was linked to increased vocabulary knowledge in males. Females, on the other hand, spend more time on social media. Therefore, no relationship was found between computer activities and vocabulary knowledge in females.

There are also contradictory findings regarding students' out-of-school reading habits. Reading is a critical activity to enrich vocabulary and improve comprehension skills. Vocabulary learned through reading also affects listening comprehension. Webb and Chang (2015) determined that comprehensive reading activities have the potential to improve language skills, especially for advanced students. Peters (2018) found that although 16 and 19-year-old students rarely read books and magazines in their target language out of school, there was a positive relationship between reading and language development. Out-of-school reading activity in the target language is less preferred in younger age groups. Therefore, early reading activities provide less input (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012). Therefore, it can be predicted that the reading input would be higher in university-level students.

1.2. Linguistic Distance and Mother Tongue

Languages are similar in genetics, typology, semantics, and lexigraphy. In language teaching, linguistic distance is addressed with the advantages of the similarity between a target language and native language for learners (Corder, 1978). In this sense, those who learn similar languages are expected to be more successful than those who speak languages with less affinity. Ringbom (1987) found that Finnish-Swedish bilingual students primarily benefited from Swedish vocabulary and functions in writing an English text. Similarly, Cenoz (2001) concluded that people who knew Spanish-Basque made a semantic transfer from Spanish while learning English. Beenstock, Chiswick, and Repetto (2001) also indicated that the Jewish immigrants in Israel whose mother tongue was Arabic were more proficient in Hebrew than other immigrant groups, which stemmed from the affinity between Arabic and Hebrew. According to d'Ydewalle and Van de Poel (1999), Dutch students were more successful in the Danish vocabulary exam than French. In their research with students from several European countries, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) examined the effects of linguistic distance and exposure on foreign language comprehension and concluded that linguistic distance was a stronger predictor than exposure.

Çobanoğlu Aktan and İnan (2017) observed that being a native speaker of a Turkic language positively and strongly predicted Turkish proficiency. It similarly predicted the Turkish exam performance of the people living in the Balkans, Middle East, and Central Asian countries. In addition to linguistic distance, cultural proximity is also influential in exposure to a language in this context. Linguistic kinship sometimes supports cultural proximity, characterized by an inclination to prefer content in the target language. It also promotes much exposure to the target language. Turkish TV series/shows have gained popularity in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia due to their geographical and cultural proximity. Arbatlı and Kurar (2015) found that in Kazakhstan, a multinational country, especially Turkic communities watched Turkish TV series/shows and concluded that it contributed to cultural interaction and the spread of Turkish. Arık and Çelik (2019) also determined that Turkish media positively contributed to learning Turkish in Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, Aktürk and Yağbasan (2020) concluded that Turkish TV series contributed to the spread of Turkish in Azerbaijan. In the case of Gagauzia, Kurt (2017) found that individuals who can speak Gagauz and have bonds with Turkey and Turkish culture are competent in Turkish.

1.3. Gagauzia and Gagauz Language

Gagauz is classified within the Oghuz Turkish branch of Turkic languages as Turkish and Azerbaijani (Doerfer, 1959). Because of interactions with Slavic languages for centuries, Gagauz differed from Turkish with some typological features (Johanson, 2020). It has copied the Slavic language forms in terms of syntactic. Lexically, it has many Russian loan words and Bulgarian and Romanian (Menz, 2006). The Gagauz language is spoken in various places in the Balkan peninsula, mainly in Gagauzia ATU (Autonomous Territorial Unit) in the Republic of Moldova. Gagauz language is considered an endangered language by UNESCO (Moseley, 2010). Although the Gagauz language is one of the official languages in Gagauzia, the dominance of Russian language and culture can be observed among the people living in the region.

1.4. Aim and Reseach Questions

Above, we mentioned the importance of exposure to the target language by presenting examples from the relevant literature and exemplified the effects of out-of-school exposure experiences through virtual and social media, audio and visual media, and social communication elements on foreign language development. This study aimed to investigate the effects of age, gender, linguistic distance, and especially language exposure on listening test performance. The research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the participants' Turkish language exposure scores?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the participants' exposure and particular variables (e.g., gender, settlement type, language level, mother tongue)?
3. Is there a relationship between the participants' listening test performance and Turkish language exposure?
4. What is the predictive power of the given variables (e.g., gender, settlement type, language level, mother tongue) in listening test performance?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

It was quantitative research, which examined Turkish language learners' listening performance in terms of language exposure, linguistic distance, and demographic variables, and both singular and relational survey models were employed. Singular survey models are preferred to determine variables separately by type or quantity (Creswell, 2013). Relational survey models show the presence or degree of change between two or more variables. In this sense, we used the relational survey model to reveal the factors behind participants' success in listening tests and the singular survey model to show their exposure to the Turkish language.

2.2. Participants

Participants were 148 individuals living in the Gagauzia Autonomous Region of the Republic of Moldova. All participants were students at Süleyman Demirel Moldo-Turkish High School in the Kongaz village of Gagauzia. It is one of the international high schools in Moldova. The languages of instruction were Turkish, Russian, and English. Each class received a 4-hour Turkish lesson weekly.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

Gender	N	%
Female	94	36.5
Male	54	63.5
Mother Tongue	N	%
Gagauz	87	58.8
Russian	61	41.2
Language Level	N	%
A1	47	31.8
A2	35	23.6
B1	32	21.6
B2	34	23.0
Settlement Type	N	%
City	35	23.6
Village	113	76.4
Total	148	100

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants. Accordingly, 94 (63.5%) participants were female, and 54 (36.5%) were male. 87 (58.8%) were Gagauz speakers, and 61 (41.2%) were Russian speakers. In terms of Turkish proficiency, the number of A1 learners was 47 (31.8%), A2 was 35 (23.6%), B1 was 32 (21.6%), and B2 was 34 (23%). Of them, 35 (23.6%) lived in the city, and 113 (76.4%) lived in the village.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using two instruments: The Turkish language exposure scale and listening tests. The scale was developed by Çobanoğlu Aktan and İnan (2020) to determine Turkish language learners' out-of-school exposure to Turkish. The five-point Likert type had 17 items and three factors: “speech and social interaction," “audio and visual media," and “virtual and social media." It explained 51.545% of the total variance. The first factor explained 34.553% of the total variance, the second factor 8.585% of the total variance, and the third factor explained 8.407% of the total variance. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was 0.633, 0.759, and 0.820 for each factor, respectively. The Turkish listening skill test was prepared considering language proficiency levels (e.g., A1, A2, B1). The test comprised three parts and fifteen items at all levels, including multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and sentence completion. The test was developed based on Yunus Emre Institute’s “Yedi İklim Türkçe Öğretim Seti" which was the primary course material for the participants.

2.4. Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS. The scale scores were subjected to descriptive analysis. The kurtosis value of the data was 1.23. Since it was between $-2<x<+2$, the data had a normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Then, parametric tests of t-Test and ANOVA were used to analyze the scale scores according to gender, settlement type, mother tongue, and Turkish language level. Whether the data met the homogeneity of variance assumption for ANOVA was checked by performing the Levene’s Test. Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the correlation between the Turkish Language Exposure Scale scores and listening skill test scores. Regression analysis was conducted to specify the variables that predicted the listening test performance.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings Regarding the Participants' Turkish Language Exposure

The Turkish Language Exposure Scale responses were evaluated to determine the participants' exposure to Turkish. The total scores and the descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Data on Total Scale and Factor Scores

	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd	Min.	Max.
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	148	35.00	10.9	18	81
Speech and social interaction	148	9.36	2.66	4	19
Audio and visual media	148	11.90	4.57	5	25
Virtual and social media	148	13.70	5.56	8	40

As seen in Table 2 that the mean total scores indicated a moderate exposure to the Turkish language ($\underline{X}$=35.00). Since the highest score obtained from the scale was 85, the exposure rate was 41%, suggesting medium and low levels of exposure. The factor with the highest mean score was “virtual and social media” ($\underline{X}$=13.70), followed by “audio and visual media” ($\underline{X}$=11.90) and “speech and social interaction” with the lowest mean score ($\underline{X}$=9.36).
The items with the highest and lowest response rates provide more detailed information about participants’ exposure to Turkish. Descriptive statistics about the items are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Items with the highest and lowest mean scores

Item	Items with the highest mean scores	$\underline{X}$	Median	Sd
3	My classmates speak Turkish.	2.91	3.00	.88
8	I watch Turkish TV series/shows.	2.87	3.00	1.27
7	I listen to Turkish songs.	2.86	3.00	1.13
Item	Items with the lowest mean scores	$\underline{X}$	Median	Sd
14	I read Turkish comics.	1.34	1.00	.72
15	I play computer games in Turkish.	1.44	1.00	.86
16	I use a Turkish computer program.	1.44	1.00	.89

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistical analyzes of the scale items with the highest and lowest mean values. Accordingly, the items with the highest mean score ranged between “rarely” (2) and “sometimes” (3) on the Likert scale. The item “My classmates speak Turkish” had a higher mean than other items ($\underline{X}$=2.91), which was followed by the items "I watch Turkish TV series/shows." ($\underline{X}$=2.87) and “I listen to Turkish songs.” ($\underline{X}$=2.86). The items with the lowest mean value were marked “never” (1) and “sometimes” (2). The item “I read Turkish comics.” had the lowest mean score ($\underline{X}$=1.34), which was followed by the items "I play computer games in Turkish." ($\underline{X}$=1.44) and "I use a Turkish computer program." ($\underline{X}$=1.44). It can be indicated that the exposure sources, albeit at a low level, were daily conversations, TV series/shows, and songs in their immediate environment. However, the input rate of cartoons, computer games, and programs was low.

3.2. An Assessment of Turkish Exposure by Gender, Settlement Type, Mother Tongue, and Language Level

Whether particular variables such as gender, settlement type, mother tongue, and Turkish language levels affected participants’ exposure to the Turkish language was examined in the study. First of all, independent samples t-test a performed to show the effects of gender. The t-test results are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: T-Test Results by Gender

	Group	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd	df	t	p
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	Female	94	36.77	9.73	146	-2.69	.00*
	Male	54	31.83	11.25			
Speech and social interaction	Female	94	8.78	2.31	146	-2.05	.04*
	Male	54	9.70	2.80			
Audio and visual media	Female	94	13.15	3.78	146	-4.66	.00*
	Male	54	9.74	4.54			
Virtual and social media	Female	94	13.31	5.43	146	-.63	.52

	Male	54	13.91	5.65	

*p<0.05

According to the analysis results in Table 4, the Turkish language exposure differed statistically significantly by gender (t=-2.69, p<0.05). Female participants ($\underline{X}$=36.77) were exposed to Turkish more than male participants ($\underline{X}$=31.83). Besides, there was a significant difference in the “speech and social interaction” factor by gender (t=-2.05, p<0.05), suggesting that males ($\underline{X}$=9.70) were exposed to Turkish via virtual and social media more than females ($\underline{X}$=8.78). A similar difference was also observed in the "audio and visual media” actor (t=-4.66, p<0.05), implying that females ($\underline{X}$=13.15) were exposed to the Turkish language via audio and visual media more than males ($\underline{X}$=9.74). “Virtual and social media” factor also differed statistically significantly by gender (t=-0.63, p>0.05). Accordingly, the mean scores of males ($\underline{X}$=13.91) were partly the same as females' ($\underline{X}$=13.31).

Whether the place where the participants live showed a significant difference in exposure level was checked by performing independent samples t-tests on scale and factors. The test results are given in Table 5.

Table 5: T-Test Results by Settlement Type

	Group	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd	df	t	p
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	City	35	36.63	15.14	146	1.02	.30
	Village	113	34.45	9.30			
Speech and social interaction	City	35	9.86	3.29	146	1.25	.21
	Village	113	9.21	2.43			
Audio and visual media	City	35	12.31	5.62	146	.60	.54
	Village	113	11.78	4.22			
Virtual and social media	City	35	14.46	8.19	146	.92	.35
	Village	113	13.46	4.47			

*p<0.05

As understood from Table 5, whether the participants lived in a city or a village did not make a statistically significant difference in their Turkish exposure (t=1.02, p>0.05). However, the participants living in the city ($\underline{X}$=36.63) had a higher mean score than those living in the village ($\underline{X}$=34.45). When we addressed the factors, we found that the “speech and social interaction” factor did not differ statistically significantly by settlement place (t=1.25, p>0.05). The mean scores of city dwellers in this factor ($\underline{X}$=9.86) were partly the same as those in the village ($\underline{X}$=9.21). The “audio and visual media” factor similarly did not differ by settlement type (t=0.60, p>0.05). The mean scores of those living in the city ($\underline{X}$=12.31) were higher than those living in the village ($\underline{X}$=11.78). Lastly, the scores did not significantly differ in the “virtual and social media” factor (t=0.92, p>0.05). Accordingly, the mean scale factor scores of those living in the city ($\underline{X}$=14.46) were higher than those living in the village ($\underline{X}$=13.46).

We performed independent samples t-test to determine whether the mother tongue variable showed a significant difference in exposure. The test results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: T-Test Results by Mother Tongue

	Group	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd	df	t	p
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	Gagauz	87	34.84	10.45	146	-.16	.86
	Russian	61	35.15	11.71			
Speech and social interaction	Gagauz	87	9.25	2.83	146	-.61	.54
	Russian	61	9.52	2.41			
Audio and visual media	Gagauz	87	12.09	4.40	146	.59	.56
	Russian	61	11.64	4.83			
Virtual and social media	Gagauz	87	13.49	5.16	146	-.51	.60
	Russian	61	13.98	6.12			

*p<0.05

The results regarding the mother tongue variable and exposure level are given in Table 6. Accordingly, the mother tongue variable did not significantly differ in Turkish language exposure (t=-0.16, p>0.05). The mean scores of Gagauz speakers ($\underline{X}$=34.84) were lower than those of Russian ($\underline{X}$=35.15), indicating that Russian speakers were exposed to Turkish more than Gagauz speakers. Besides, the mother tongue variable did not make a significant difference in the “virtual and social media” factor (t=-0.61, p>0.05). The mean scores of the Gagauz speakers in the "speech and social interaction” factor ($\underline{X}$=9.25) were lower than those of Russian speakers ($\underline{X}$=9.52). We similarly did not find a significant difference in the “audio and visual media” factor by language variable (t=-0.56, p>0.05). However, the mean scores of Gagauz speakers in this factor ($\underline{X}$=12.09) were higher than those of Russian speakers ($\underline{X}$=11.64). The mother tongue variable did not significantly differ in the “virtual and social media” factor (t=-0.51, p>0.05). In this sub-dimension, the mean scores of Gagauz ($\underline{X}$=13.49) and Russian speakers ($\underline{X}$=13.98) were partially the same.

Table 7: Levene's Test Results by Language Level

Dimensions	Levene’s Test	
	F	p
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	.16	.92
Speech and social interaction	1.16	.32
Audio and visual media	.49	.68
Virtual and social media	.56	.64

As seen in Table 7, there were homogenous distributions of the variances in the scale (Levene's F=0.16) and the factors of "speech and social interaction” (Levene's F=1.16), “audio and visual media” (Levene's F=0.49), and “virtual and social media” (Levene's F=0.56) (p>0.05). since the homogeneity was ensured, ANOVA, a parametric test, was performed. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: ANOVA Results by Turkish Language Level

	Category	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd	F	p
Turkish Language Exposure Scale	A1	47	36.21	10.97	1.14	.33
	A2	35	36.77	11.49		
	B1	32	33.28	9.31		
	B2	34	32.97	11.67		
Speech and social interaction	A1	47	9.00	2.56	1.48	.22
	A2	35	10.03	2.73		
	B1	32	8.91	2.20		
	B2	34	9.62	3.04		
Audio and visual media	A1	47	12.49	4.34	.53	.65
	A2	35	12.09	4.43		
	B1	32	11.38	4.55		
	B2	34	11.41	5.12		
Virtual and social media	A1	47	14.72	5.75	2.27	.08
	A2	35	14.66	6.12		
	B1	32	13.00	4.73		
	B2	34	11.94	5.07		

*p<0.05

According to Table 8, participants’ Turkish language levels did not make a statistically significant difference in their exposure levels (F=1.14, p>0.05). There was not a statistically significant difference in the factors of "speech and social interaction” (F=1.48, p>0.05), “audio and visual media” (F=0.53, p>0.05), and “virtual and social media” (F=2.27, p>0.05) by their Turkish language level. The total scale mean scores were higher among A1 ($\underline{X}$=36.21) and A2 ($\underline{X}$=36.77) learners than others. In this sense, A1 and A2 level participants were more exposed to the Turkish language than those at B1 and B2 levels. A2 level participants ($\underline{X}$=10.03) were more exposed to

Turkish through speech and social interaction. The participants most exposed to the Turkish language through audio and visual media ($\underline{X}$=12.49) and virtual and social media ($\underline{X}$=14.72) were the A1 level learners.

3.3. The Relationship between Turkish Language Exposure and Listening Skill Test Scores and the Predictive Power of Other Variables

The relationship between Turkish language exposure and listening skill was also dealt with within the scope of the research. The descriptive statistics regarding participants' scores in the Turkish listening test are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Listening Skills Test Scores

Gender	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd
Female	94	12.30	3.01
Male	54	12.00	3.05
Settlement	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd
City	35	11.10	3.79
Village	113	12.50	2.67
Mother Tongue	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd
Gagauz	87	13.00	2.38
Russian	61	11.10	3.47
Level	N	$\underline{X}$	Sd
A1	47	14.04	1.89
A2	35	12.60	1.90
B1	32	9.69	3.57
B2	34	11.65	2.92

Table 9 shows participants' scores in the listening tests. The participants were generally successful in the 15-point listening test. The mean test scores of female ($\underline{X}$=12.30) and male participants ($\underline{X}$=12.00) were almost the same. In terms of settlement type, those living in the village ($\underline{X}$=12.50) had a higher mean score than those in the city ($\underline{X}$=11.10). The mean score of Gagauz speakers ($\underline{X}$=13.00) was higher than Russian speakers ($\underline{X}$=11.10). Lastly, the A1 level learners obtained the highest mean score in the listening test ($\underline{X}$=14.04).

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the total Turkish Exposure Scale scores and the listening test scores was calculated to examine the relationship between exposure level and listening test performance. The analysis results indicated a low positive correlation between Turkish language exposure and listening test success (r=0.030). However, it was not statistically significant (p>0.05). Then, the predictive power of the mother tongue in the listening test performance was examined, and Table 10 shows the regression analysis results.

Table 10: Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Listening Test Performance

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Listening Score (Constant)	15.762	1.462	-	10.784	.000
Gender	-.128	.452	-.020	-.283	.778
Settlement	.926	.515	.131	1.800	.074
Level	-1.014	.188	-.388	-5.401	.000*
Language	-1.831	.439	-.299	-4.168	.000*
R=.524	R^2=.254				
F=13.526	p=.000				

*p<0.05

As seen in Table 10, the multiple regression analysis results showed that the participants' mother tongue, together with the Turkish language level variable, significantly predicted the listening test success (R=0.524 and R^2= 0.254) (F=13.526, p<0.05). The given variables explained approximately 25% of the variance in listening test success.

According to the standardized regression coefficients, language level (β=-5.401) was the biggest predictor, followed by mother tongue (β=-4.168). Considering the t-test results regarding the significance of the regression coefficients, language, and mother tongue were significant predictors of listening test success, indicating an inverse relationship between the Turkish language level and listening test performance. Additionally, Gagauz speakers had better test performance than Russian speakers.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

With the development of education and communication technologies in language teaching, the alternatives to access to a target language have increased. It is not likely to speak of foreign language teaching just limited to in-class time and reinforced with homework assignments. Today, anyone with internet access can access target language materials and contents. In this sense, exposure to a foreign language has become easier than in the past. It is possible to develop language skills thanks to meaningful language inputs, including audio, visual, and written sources. Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate students' exposure to foreign languages. This research examined Turkish learners' exposure profiles and their reflections on listening skills.

Within the scope of the research, firstly, participants' Turkish language exposure was determined by administering the Turkish language exposure scale. The participant responses indicated a low level of out-of-school Turkish language exposure. The most basic input source for the participants comprised 4-hours of Turkish classes weekly and communication with the Turkish teacher. Specifically, the low means scores from the "speech and social interaction" factor prove that the participants were not in a Turkish-speaking environment except the school environment. However, some participants stated that they communicated with their classmates in Turkish. Virtual and social media events are also popular input sources for participants. Accordingly, Turkish websites, social media accounts, and Youtube videos are important in terms of providing Turkish input. In this respect, our findings align with the research of De Wilde, Brysbaert & Eyckmans (2020), which emphasizes the significance of online interaction. However, the lowest mean scores were obtained from the items related to computer games and programs, which were not among the leading input sources for the participants. It does not overlap with the findings of Peters (2018), who indicated that high school students received more input from computer games. It might stem from the limited social and economic opportunities the participants living in Gagauzia had. On the contrary, accessing audio and visual media content in Gagauzia is easier. For example, Turkish series/shows, movies, and songs are accessible alternatives for anyone with a television and radio at home. Similarly, Kupens (2010) highlights that media contents are more effective for language exposure than computer games. Even among the scale items, watching Turkish TV series and listening to songs were more popular than other activities, which aligns with the studies emphasizing that exposure to television content was more prevalent than many other out-of-school activities (e.g., Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Nimani & Dagarin, 2019; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014). Additionally, it was concluded that the exposure to the Turkish language through reading activities was low. The items with the lowest mean scores were related to reading activities. Reading in the target language is a less preferred activity (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). In the study, we examined whether gender, settlement type, mother tongue, and Turkish level affected language exposure and found that gender variables affected Turkish exposure. Females were more exposed to Turkish than males. Nevertheless, males were exposed to Turkish more than females in social environments where Turkish was spoken. Females were exposed to Turkish more than males through audio and visual media such as Turkish movies and TV series, which aligns with our findings. Television is a more effective input tool for female students than male students (Kuppens, 2010; Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015). We found that both genders were equally exposed to virtual and social media, which is a different finding. For example, Sundqvist and Wikstrom (2015) concluded that females were more exposed to a target language through social media than males.

Settlements differ in terms of education, social environment, and technical opportunities. Living in cities can sometimes be more advantageous in resource access than living in villages (United Nations Development Program, 2020). Considering this fact, we examined the relationship between participants' exposure to the Turkish language and where they lived but did not find a statistically significant difference between those living in a city and a village. However, the average scores suggest that those living in the city might be luckier to access Turkish language content.

The linguistic kinship between Gagauz and Turkish refers that Gagauz speakers have the opportunity to be exposed to the Turkish language frequently because some studies emphasize that the main motivations of those who follow the Turkish media in Turkic republics are cultural and linguistic proximity (e.g., Arbatlı & Kurar, 2015; Arık & Çelik, 2019; Aktürk & Yağbasan, 2020). However, our findings show that being a Gagauz or Russian speaker does not change Turkish exposure.

No statistically significant difference was found in the effects of Turkish language level on Turkish exposure. The A1 and A2 level participants were more exposed to the Turkish language than the advanced participants. B2 is acknowledged as the highest level of Turkish proficiency, and the group with the lowest exposure rate was the B2 level participants. In this sense, our findings show the opposite.

Language exposure is considered an effective tool for providing meaningful input. Thus, we aimed to describe the relationship between Turkish language exposure and listening skill performance. The participants got an average of 12 points out of a 15-point listening skills test, which suggests high success. The Gagauz speakers and the A1 level participants were more successful than the other groups. However, we could not find a statistically significant relationship between listening test performance and Turkish language exposure. In other words, participants' exposure to Turkish and listening skills did not contribute to test performance. These findings are inconsistent with the literature, indicating that language exposure partially improves language skills. For instance, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) found that language exposure positively predicted reading and listening skills. Similarly, Bahrani and Tam (2015) concluded that videos improved listening comprehension skills. There are also studies underlying the limited effect of exposure on skill development. For example, Nimani and Dagarin (2019) found no significant relationship between non-musical radio broadcasts and language exposure. Gönülal (2020) reported that exposure reinforced listening skills, but it could not explain the whole process.

It can be inferred that the low-level exposure does not provide input for Turkish listening skills. The participants were successful in the Turkish listening test despite insufficient exposure, which cannot be explained only by the effect of exposure. Other factors may have an impact as well. Therefore, we attempted to reveal the factors that might be influential on listening skills except for exposure. The regression analysis results showed that gender or settlement type did not predict listening skill test success. However, mother tongue and Turkish language levels predicted listening skill performance.

According to the findings, a native speaker of Gagauz was more successful than a native speaker of Russian, which results from the linguistic affinity between Gagauz and Turkish. This result aligns with the studies examining the effects of linguistic distance (e.g., Beenstock, Chiswick & Repetto, 2001; Cenoz, 2001; d'Ydewalle & Van de Poel, 1999). Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) found that linguistic affinity was a stronger predictor of listening test performance than factors such as exposure. Gagauz is in the Oghuz group of Turkish and Turkic languages, but it is also influenced by Slavic languages in terms of syntax and vocabulary (Menz, 2006). The linguistic distance between Russian, an Indo-European language, and Turkish is greater than Gagauz.

Findings indicate that the language level negatively predicted listening skills. As participants' Turkish levels increase, they become less proficient in listening. In this sense, the A1 level participants performed better in the listening test than at the B2 level, which parallels Kurt's findings (2017). In their research on the Turkish language skills of Gagauz students, the A1 level learners got higher scores in the listening skill test, which might stem from the similarity in the A1 and A2 level basic vocabulary between Turkish and Gagauz.

Turkish and Gagauz are similar in terms of everyday language vocabulary. The A1 and A2 basic levels of Turkish contain several daily words. As the language level increases, social, scientific, and academic words are added to the vocabulary. However, Turkish and Gagauz differ in terms of vocabulary related to other fields except for everyday life. According to Tekin (1978), it significantly reduces the mutual intelligibility between Gagauz and Turkish. In this sense, it is thought that as the language level increases, Gagauz becomes less advantageous in learning Turkish. It can be said that the students cannot maintain their success in learning Turkish as they improve in language learning.

All these results do not refuse the importance of language exposure as a booster in language learning. However, this paper confirms that other variables apart from language exposure can contribute to listening test scores. Future studies should aim to account for especially linguistic distance in order to explain foreign language achievement.

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