

## **An Overview of Listening Skills of Secondary School Students: Barriers and Suggestions<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the listening skills of students at secondary school. In this context, this study focuses on identifying students' listening problems according to teacher perspectives and examining the causes of these problems. It also aims to find out how teachers address these issues and the types of solutions they propose. In order to meet these objectives, case study with a qualitative research design was conducted. Participants were identified according to the purposive sampling method. Data were collected from ten teachers working at different secondary schools at a variety of levels using a criterion sampling approach. Data were also collected through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The study's findings indicated that the secondary school students struggled to understand listening rules, listen to courses, comprehend what they listen to and increase their motivation during lessons. Additionally, the results indicated the causes of the problems, and of the types of suggestions that could be made to resolve them. Seven themes emerged in the study as a result of teachers' perspectives, consisting of; the family, the environment, readiness, the speaker, the listener, education and listening materials. When the source of the listening problems is examined, the family structure and the lack of emphasis placed on the listening process by families, the lack of appropriate environmental conditions, the inability of students to be drawn to the listening material and the teacher, and the lack of awareness are highlighted. The outcomes of resolving these problems include providing the necessary learning environment and materials for increased listening, improving teacher self-development, creating an environment in which students can learn through doing, cooperating with family, school, environment and teacher and to eliminating the lack of education.

**Keywords:** Listening Skills, Listening Barriers, Suggestions for Listening Problems

**DOI:** 10.29329/epasr.2021.383.3

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\*This study was produced from master thesis which second writer wrote with the consultation of the first writer

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## Introduction

Language is important to individuals as it constitutes the primary means of communication and social order in society. It clarifies situations and enables people to maintain interaction in both their personal and professional lives.

Consequently, good language education is critical for people to be able to interact with one another in society. In this context, providing adequate language education is a crucial component of the goal of basic education in contemporary countries. The primary goal of language education is to develop “understanding and telling” skills (Özbay, 2013). And undoubtedly, this development is carried out within the framework of Turkish teaching. This is parallel to Sever’s (1993) argument that the process of teaching Turkish, which begins in primary school and continues throughout the student’s education life, is based on the interaction of four language skills and their direct and indirect relationships. It is expected that these skills will be supported by various implementations in the process (Sever, 1993). In other words, language skills should not be thought of as distinct skills; rather, they should be viewed as complementary skills that advance one another.

When language skills are examined, it is possible to conclude that while reading, speaking, writing and other skills may be sufficient to improve language proficiency, listening has a greater influence on the maturation process. Furthermore, listening is the first comprehension skill. And hence, listening makes it easy to learn a language through awareness and to improve language skills. Because once a language is understood, it is significantly easier to improve other language skills. All studies, including those on language acquisition skills, have demonstrated that language proficiency is acquired through listening (45%), speaking (30%), reading (15%), and writing (10%) while we communicate. Apart from serving as a primary mode of communication, listening enables learners to appreciate the beauty of the language (Renukadevi, 2014). These rates are significant because they demonstrate the priority and importance of listening during the communication process. For all of these reasons, it can be said that listening serves as the foundation for language learning.

Blewett (1951) defined listening as the process of interpretations of verbal images; Özbay (2013) described it as all of the phones which individuals perceive voluntarily according to their preferences; Martínez-Florand Usó-Juan (2006) depicted it as communicative issue necessary to be taught various communicative abilities to the listeners and let listeners behave according to the specific situation. Briefly, listening is a skill that encompasses comprehension and thinking skills (Kapanadze, 2019). Listening should not be considered a single process. On the contrary, it would be more convenient to think of listening as identifying the sounds produced by speaker, perceiving intonation patterns, and interpreting the level of relation between spoken words (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2013). It should be noted that listening and comprehension are two distinct skills. This is consistent with Hasan’s (2000) findings that listening is necessary to receive the message rather than

interpreting the text during the process is different from comprehension required for meaningful interaction with the text. Consistent with Hayrapetyan, the listener retains the sounds and makes sense of the text by observing signs such as vocabulary knowledge, intonation and ability to express (Hayrapetyan, 2016). In a nutshell, listening and listening comprehension refer to the ability to make sense of external stimuli through a series of mental processes, as well as the state of being able to show reaction based on the interpretation process.

According to this perspective, individuals listen for the purpose of gathering information, sharing, understanding the environment, providing personal development and possessing power (Güneş, 2016). In addition, listening is practiced for the purposes of pleasure, persuasion, perception and comprehension (Hayrapetyan, 2016). Listening is a skill that enables people to demonstrate their existence personally and socially, to transfer the world of the thought and to make sense of human existence. Considering the negative events and potential problems associated with this skill that enables people to connect with the world, the importance of listening becomes clear once more.

The listening skill begins to develop systematically in the scope of the Turkish curriculum. In the Turkish curriculum for 2019, expressing and interpreting concepts, ideas, opinions, feelings, and phenomena in written and oral form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is referred to as communication in the mother tongue, as is engaging in appropriate and creative linguistic interaction in a variety of social and cultural contexts such as education and training, the workplace, home and entertainment (MEB, 2019). The importance of listening is emphasized in this curriculum by stating that students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills should be improved; in addition to taking pleasure in what they read and listen to, and their imaginary world should also be fostered (MEB, 2019). In the same program, listening acquisitions were included at each grade level, and a development process was followed in these acquisitions as the grade level progressed. The learning outcomes are designed to enhance listening skill and to successfully teach listening techniques.

Improved listening skills benefit people both individually and socially. The importance of listening skills, which enable an individual to communicate with their environment, serve as the foundation of learning, and aid in the development of language skills, are well established and should be given the appropriate weight in the educational process. Listening skill develops as a result of social learning and is reinforced in educational settings through planned and programmed activities. Furthermore, it occupies its own place and maintains its significance as a complement to the educational process. When the studies on listening skills are examined, it can be observed that Renukadevi (2014) discovered the importance of listening in language acquisition, as well as the difficulties associated with acquiring listening skills. In his study focusing on listening comprehension strategies and problems, Hasan (2000) made suggestions for the listening process for the solution of these problems. Imhof, Henning & Kreft (2009) emphasized the effect of external sounds on attention during the listening process and the significance of external sounds in the listening process. Emiroğlu

(2013) interviewed Turkish prospective teachers to determine their problems during their experiences with listening and their views on the solutions of these problems. Başkan and Deniz (2015), on the other hand, worked with high school students to determine their in-class listening difficulties. Keray Dinçel (2018) conducted interviews with secondary school students to determine their listening difficulties and expectations in this area. On the other hand, in his study, Bayram (2019) placed an emphasis on the difficulties faced by Turkish teachers in their classroom listening practices and the solutions of these problems. Bayram (2019) examined listening problems in the context of three stages: pre-listening, during listening and post-listening and conducted interviews with teachers to determine how to solve these problems. In addition, there are studies examining various aspects of listening skills (Sonmez, 2019; Carkit, 2020; Kapanadze, 2019).

As these studies demonstrate, listening skill is critical for language learning. The studies also show that there are problems involving this important skill as well. Studies with students at different education levels are critical for explaining these problems. In addition, it is seen that some these studies have suggested alternative solutions. These suggestions are crucial; however, it is exceedingly difficult to achieve the desired level of awareness and proficiency in listening without first identifying the source of the problems and implementing a fundamental solution to these problems. Therefore, it is important to identify the source of the problems and determine the appropriate course of action. The purpose of this study is to determine the listening problems of secondary school students by utilizing the experiences of Turkish teachers, to get to the source of these problems, to ascertain how teachers address these problems, and to make recommendations for resolving these problems. In a nutshell, the aim of this study is to examine listening skill through emphasizing on its problems and solutions. This study conducted with this point of view, will provide an important perspective for future research and will be a significant step toward minimizing the problems related with listening skills.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine teachers' perceptions of barriers and suggestions for improving secondary school students' listening skills. The current study was conducted in the form of a case study. As Yin (2009) and Creswell (2014) indicate, case studies are particularly useful for describing social phenomena in their its various dimensions within a particular context. In other words, a case study requires a search for everyday concepts in real life. Prior to beginning this study, it was recognized that there were some problems with listening skills as a result of field studies and pre-interviews with Turkish teachers. A case study was conducted in order to determine the problems, trace the sources of the problems, and to determine which alternatives might be used to address the problems that people experienced. Therefore, a case concerning the listening

skills of secondary school students was discovered and analyzed in detail through teachers' perceptions and observations.

### **The participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 10 volunteer teachers from five different public secondary schools in Van's Tusba and İpekyolu provinces. As the goal was to obtain detailed information, experience was a significant factor. Due to the fact that criterion sampling was used, two main criteria were applied. One of them was that the teachers must have at least three years of experience; the other was that the teachers had to teach each grade in secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grades) and observe the students' listening skills.

### **Data collection instrument**

The data for this case study were collected using an interview technique. The researchers collaborated to develop semi-structured qualitative interview forms that focused on teachers' perceptions of secondary school students. To begin, we consulted with a Turkish teacher about listening problems in order to prepare these questions. Secondly, research in literature was examined. The interview questions were developed as a result of pre-interviews and literature research by selecting effective ones from a question repository. Moreover, expert opinions from four academics of the Turkish education department were gathered to ensure the study's quality and intended results. The number of questions were reduced as a result of expert opinions. Four basic questions and sub-questions depending were selected accordingly. Finally, pilot interviews were conducted and as there were no issues in this step, the data collection process continued. Consent was obtained from teachers during the data collection process, and anonymity was ensured. Interviews with the teachers were conducted at the scheduled location and time, and all interview sessions were recorded. The sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Additionally, the ethics committee's approval was obtained, which certifies that the study is ethically appropriate.

### **Data analysis**

Data were analyzed through content analysis. Content analysis is a detailed analysis that aids researchers in their decision-making process when it comes to selecting themes and categories from the data. The process begins with the coding of data, followed by the classification of codes and the creation of themes that best explain the codes, and finally, the organization and interpretation of data using the codes and themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The first stage of data analysis involved two researchers coding interviews with three teachers. Codes were identified for each interview, and a code list was created after discussing the differences and similarities in the researchers' coding. After that, the interview data for two different teachers were coded separately and compared.

Almost all of the codes worked with no issues. A few ambiguous codes were discussed and resolved. The remaining data were coded by one researcher and then double-checked by the other. Following the completion of the data coding process, codes with the same or similar meanings were combined by bringing them together. Thus, the reliability of the data analysis was ensured. After the data was coded, themes and sub-themes emerged, and the findings were presented in a meaningful structure. To ensure the validity of the data collection instrument, the study examined the literature and developed questions in conjunction with teachers during a brainstorming session. Furthermore, expert opinions were consulted regarding the interview form's suitability for the purpose, and the comprehensibility of the questions was confirmed via the pilot interview.

### Results

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed seven themes regarding secondary school students' listening problems: family, environment, education, readiness, listeners, speaker and listening materials. At first, results demonstrating students' listening problems were displayed, followed by detailed explanations of the sources of these problems, problem-solving strategies, and alternative suggestions made by teachers for each problem.

Findings regarding listening problems of secondary school students are presented in Table1.

**Table 1.** Listening Problems of Secondary School Students from the Perspective of Teachers

Listening problems	N
Not being aware of listening rules	8
Being bored with listening	7
Not listening to the lesson	7
Not comprehending what one listens to	6
Having low motivation for listening	5
Making an effort to express oneself	5
Not listening to the speaker	4
Ignoring to useless information	4
Not obeying the rules of listening	3
Focusing on speaking rather than listening	3
Appearing to be a listener	3
Thinking that what one listens to at school is unimportant	3
Being unable to adapt to listening in the first and last lessons	3
Not wanting to listen	3
Distracting factors (environmental)	3
Being closed minded towards the course	2
Ignoring what one listens to	2
Reducing the time for listening	2

Lack of attention (personal)	2
Failing to understand the phenomenon of listening	2
Not attending listening activities	1
Putting listening on the back burner	1

From Table 1, it can be seen that *not being aware of listening rules, being bored with listening, not listening to the lesson, not understanding what one listens, having low motivation for listening, making an effort to express oneself, not listening to the speaker, not listening to useless information* are primary issues among listening problems of secondary school students. A few of secondary school teachers explain the problem below:

*“...the child sometimes does not listen during listening activity in the classroom. When we ask why you don't listen, he says he doesn't understand or doesn't know that he should listen, he doesn't understand the phenomenon. This is due to the attitude at home, probably he does not listen at home.”* (T6).

*“We have students who have listening problems. First of all, students have attention deficits. This is because of their individual differences.”* (T4).

After analyzing listening problems, sources of these problems, teachers’ problem-solving approaches and their suggestions were examined and explained under seven themes.

### Theme 1: Family

**Table 2.**Teacher Perspectives on Family Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N	
Source of the problems	General structure	Traditional family structure	6	
		Families’ lack of education	2	
		Families’ lack of cultural development	1	
	Attitude & Behavior		Families not having enough time to practice the essential listening process with the students	8
			Indifference of the family	8
			Families not being the correct role model for the students	4
			The students not being listened to by their families	3
			The students’ ability to express themselves in the family environment being difficult	2
			The families’ disregard of what students say	2
Problem-solving approaches	Awareness	Raising families’ awareness about listening	2	
		Arranging meetings with families	1	
	Collaboration	Cooperation with families	1	

Alternative suggestions	Awareness	Informing parents about the importance of listening to students	4
		Hosting seminars for families on topics including listening by experts of the field	2
	Attitude & Behavior	Families should give listening education to the students from early ages	3
		Families should be a good role-model for the students	1
		Families should create listening environments at home where students rest	1
	Collaboration	School-family cooperation should be established	3
A healthy environment should be created with school-family cooperation		3	

Table 2 illustrates that the majority of the teachers claimed that *traditional family structure* and *families' lack of education* are the most frequently expressed codes among listening problems. Besides, *indifference of the family*, *families not having enough time to practice the essential listening process with students* and *families not being the correct role model for the students* are the other codes that inhibit attention according to the teachers. One of the teachers expressed her opinion as written below:

*"We have a problem with the family. If a democratic environment is not created at home, and if the children do not feel precious themselves, if the children's wishes are not taken into account, then what the child will do is not to listen, namely, he will not be able to have this habit."* (T4).

Teachers carried out some problem-solving approaches to resolve secondary school students' problems related to families. These approaches fell into two main categories: awareness and collaboration. *Informing parents about the importance of listening to students* is the most repeated code among the others.

According to the suggestions, *informing parents about the importance of listening to students*, *providing listening education to the students in the family from early ages* and also *creating a healthy environment based on school-family cooperation* are the most repeated codes in the sub-theme of awareness, in the sub-theme of attitude and behaviors, and in the sub-theme of collaboration respectively. One of the teachers' striking perception is below:

*"If possible, studies related to majority can be conducted in the triangle of family-teacher-student. A situation that may be positive in such a study / studies will also affect the other parties. Raising awareness of the family in these ways, having continuous communication with the school, being motivated of such interactions by the schools, administration and teachers will enable us to make good progress in education process. All stakeholders must take responsibility."* (T10).

## Theme 2: Environment

**Table 3.** Teacher Perspectives on Environment Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N
Source of the problems	Social environment	Lack of environments which students may spend their energy	3
		Negative audience profile	2
		Lack of social environments for students to participate	2
	Educational environment	Noise and mobility in the class	2
		Lack of a listening-appropriate environment (in exams)	2
		Mobility in the class	1
		Crowded classes	1
	Technological environment	Spending a lot of time on technological devices	1
		Gradual loss of patience due to of speeding up the life through internet	1
		Increasing negative examples through technology	1
Problem-solving approaches	Environment	Offering students a wide range of extracurricular activities	1
		Enabling all students to maintain mentally active through technology in the classroom	1
Alternative suggestions	Social and artistic activities	Students should be taken to the theatre	5
		Suitable listening environments should be created for students	4
		Artistic and literary environments should be created for students	2
		Listening environment funded by the government should be provided	2
	Technological environments	Students should be taken to the cinema	2
		Families should limit students' time of using technological devices	2
		Controlled use of internet should be ensured	1
		Lessons should be given students on proper use of media	1

As indicated in Table 3, the environment is one of the reasons of the listening problems of secondary school students. Three sub-themes such as social, educational and technological environment emerged under the theme of environment. When the codes were examined, it could be said that *lack of environments which students may spend their energy*, *noise and mobility in the class* and *gradual loss of patience due to speeding up the life through internet* are the most outstanding codes. Teacher's opinion about this subject is below:

*"... the listener cannot completely focus on listening because of external environmental factors... When there is some noise outside, children immediately focus on this noise."*  
 (T5).

Problem solving approaches which teachers have applied are *offering students a wide range of extracurricular activities, and enabling all students to maintain mentally active through technology in the classroom.*

When teachers' alternative solutions regarding the source of environmental problems were examined, some prominent codes such as *students should be taken to the theatre, suitable listening environments should be created for students, artistic and literary environments should be created for students* in the category of social and artistic activities emerged. In addition, *families should limit students' time of using technological devices* is the other noticeable code in the sub-theme of technological environments. An example of a solution suggestion for the environment is given below:

*“Parents may restrict the use of technological devices for children, such as being busy for 1 hour or 40 minutes in social life, during that time, the children might play game or do their homework, get up and when they get up, they might continue their life completely away from that device. In this way, their time should be restricted. Otherwise, the children cannot listen very well by walking around with the phone in his hand” (T5).*

### Theme 3: Readiness

**Table4.**Teacher Perspectives on Readiness Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N
Source of the problems	Developmental characteristics	Not being able to adapt to the beginning and ending hours of the class	3
		Student naughtiness because of their age (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	2
		Inability to adapt to the transition from primary school to secondary school	1
	Physical needs	No prepared breakfast for students (being hungry)	3
		Not paying attention to students' sleeping time	2
	Course hours	Excessive course hours (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grades)	5
		Beginning of the lessons at early hours	3
Learning	Lack of vocabulary (listening and comprehension)	5	
	Differentiation of given importance to the knowledge according to grade levels (5 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades)	1	
Problem-solving approaches	Preliminary preparation	Motivation for listening	4
		Organization activities suitable for student age	1
		Preparing activities which improve student vocabulary	2
Alternative suggestions	Education	Doing dictionary exercises	1
		Appropriateness of level	Listening activities appropriate for age of the students should be planned
			Listening topics should be arranged according to student age

	Exercises which improve student vocabulary should be done	2
Education	Empathy skills should be developed	2
	Class size should be ideal (not crowded)	2

Table 4 presents that there are different sub-themes under the themes of readiness. *Not being able to adapt to the beginning and ending hours of the class* is the prominent code in the sub- theme of developmental characteristics. *No prepared breakfast for students (being hungry) and not paying attention to students' sleeping time* are striking codes in the sub- theme of physical needs. *Excessive course hours (5th and 6th grades) and beginning of the lessons at early hours* are the most repeated codes in the sub-theme of course hours. *Lack of vocabulary (listening and comprehension)* is an important code in the sub-theme of learning. An example opinion of a teacher is:

*“Apart from that, the lack of vocabulary is a serious problem. It is noticed that while the students who read books have a much better vocabulary, listen to the lesson carefully, focus on the lesson and contribute to the lesson, it is seen that the students who have difficulties in expressing themselves also have difficulties in the lesson, and they get busy with other tasks instead of listening to the lesson.” (T3).*

Preliminary preparations and education are sub-themes emerged under the theme of readiness as teachers' problem-solving approaches. *Preparing activities which improve student vocabulary* is the most repeated code among them.

As alternative suggestions for problems, in the sub-themes of appropriateness of level and education some codes emerged according to the perspectives of teachers. These are listening activities appropriate for age of the students should be planned, listening topics should be arranged according to student age; and exercises which improve student vocabulary should be done, empathy skills should be developed, class size should be ideal (not crowded).The opinion of the teacher on this subject can be given as an example:

*“Students should read good qualified books to improve their vocabulary. Furthermore, one or two idioms can be learned daily. In addition, the use of idioms in sentences is learned and by starting to use it in daily life, so students develop their vocabulary. Hence, they can understand what they listen to and do not get bored of listening.” (T3).*

#### Theme 4: Speaker

**Table5.** Teacher Perspectives on Speaker Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N	
Source of the problems	Voice and body language	Lecturing with a monotonous tone of voice	2	
		Using less or more body language than enough	1	
		Lacking the skill of making powerful and effective speeches	1	
			Not informing students about the benefit of the topic	2
	Content of the topic		Not being interesting of the content for students	1
			Not enriching the topic (speech) with anecdotes, idioms, etc.	1
			Not being familiar with the subject (speaker)	1
	General characteristics of teachers		Teachers' clothing preferences	2
			Good manners of teachers (easygoing)	1
			Unprepared courses for teachers	1
Problem-solving approaches		Speaking empathetically (to support listening)	2	
	Drawing attention	Addressing multiple senses	1	
		Paying attention to stress and intonation	1	
Alternative suggestions	Voice and Body language	Gesture and mimics should be used effectively	3	
		Teachers should give importance what they wear	3	
		Teachers should not speak monotonically	1	
			Teachers should explain the topics according to student level	3
			Anecdotes, idioms, etc. should be used while speaking	2
	Content of the topic		Teachers should come to the lesson with different materials	1
			Appropriate class environment should be created for students	1
			Teachers should be contemporary	1
	Personal development		Teachers should be friendly	1
			They should follow the publications which improve themselves	1

In Table 5 the findings show that voice and body language, content of the topic, and general characteristics of teachers are the sub-themes which emerged as the source of problems in the theme of speaker. *Lecturing with a monotonous tone of voice, not informing students about the benefit of the topic and teachers' clothing preferences* are the most striking codes among these themes. The opinion of the teacher on this subject is below:

*“The person’s speaking skill is really important, especially for students in the class. If the person in front of you is ready to listen to something, your monotonous speech can bore him and completely removes him from the environment” (T10).*

Teachers mostly mentioned the codes of *speaking empathetically (to support listening), addressing multiple senses and paying attention to stress and intonation as problem-solving approach.*

Alternative suggestions to solve listening problems related to speaker are offered by the teachers. Among these suggestions *gestures and facial expressions should be used effectively and teachers should give importance what they wear* are the most noteworthy ones. On the other hand, *teachers should explain the topics according to student level and anecdotes, idioms, etc.* should be used while speaking are the striking codes in the sub-theme of content of the topic. Furthermore, there are some other codes such as *teachers should be contemporary, teachers should be friendly and be role model for students in the theme of personal development.* Example of teacher opinions are as follows:

“The attitude of the lecturer, his behavior, his manner of speaking, his dressing, briefly everything is so important. It is very effective on the student's attention. The teacher should be interesting from every aspect... The speaker should pay attention to his dress, his tone of voice, and anecdotes he will use in order to make the subject interesting.” (T2)

### Theme 5: Listener

**Table 6.** Teacher Perspectives on Listener Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N
Source of the problems		Not listening to speaker	9
	Listening awareness	Not having listening awareness	8
		Making an effort to show yourself	2
Problem-solving approaches		Making students active while listening	3
	Education	Involving listening activities based on empathy	3
		Finding correct and meaningful examples for students	1
	Awareness	Making students realize the importance of listening	2
		Leading students through listening activities	1
		Dealing with students individually	2
	Concern	Listening students patiently	1
Knowing the students well		1	
Alternative suggestions	Listening awareness	Making students realize the importance of listening	3
		Making students realize the usefulness of knowledge	2
	Having experience	Environments which help students develop empathy should be created.	6
		Drama techniques should be used	5
		Students should feel mutual respect for each other	1

Table 6 shows that the source of problems appears on the bases of listening awareness. Numerous teachers explained the codes of *not listening to speaker and not having listening awareness* in this category. One of the teachers’ mindset about this subject is below:

*“If the students are not conscious, they do not want to listen to the lesson. When they do not listen to the lesson, they can lose their interest to the lesson, and they can be interested in some things outside the lesson.” (T10).*

Problem-solving approaches used by teachers to solve listening problems based on listeners are clarified in the categories of education and awareness. *Making students active while listening and involving listening activities based on empathy; making students realize the importance of listening* are the prominent codes in these sub- themes.

Alternative solutions which teachers emphasized stated that teachers’ attention was focused on the issue of listening awareness and having experience problems. The codes such as *making students realize the importance of listening and making students realize the usefulness of knowledge* are important codes in the sub- theme of listening awareness, and besides *environments which help students develop empathy should be created and drama technique should be used* are the most repeated codes in the sub- theme of having experience. The opinion of one of the teachers can be given as an example in this regard:

*“...When the students do not listen to each other or have negative attitudes towards each other, the teacher can make them think or learn the subject with challenging questions that lead to empathy. By asking some questions such as “How would you feel if you were in such a situation or how does this attitude make your friend feel right now?” ... they can help their friends to express their feelings and solve these kinds of problems with activities such as drama techniques.” (T9).*

### Theme 6: Education

**Table 7.** Teacher Perspectives on Education Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N
Source of the problems	Program	Lack of appropriate activities for active listening	5
		Difficult content of curriculum for student level	3
		Fewer Turkish courses in the curriculum	1
		Intensive grammar topics in the curriculum	1
	Educational environment	Crowded classes	3
		Lack of course materials	2
		Inadequate school facilities	1
	Learning	Inadequate physical conditions of the school	1
		Lack of vocabulary	6
		Not having basic language skills in primary school	2
		Lack of studies about listening skills in primary schools	2

Problem-solving approaches	Learning environment	Using materials which appeal to more than one sense organ	2	
		Creating environment for students to listen to one another	2	
		Organizing listening activities according to students' active listening time	1	
		Benefiting from the activities that make students active in listening activities	1	
	Awareness	Explaining the listening rules before the listening activity	1	
		Helping students comprehend about how to listen effectively	1	
		Creating listening rules	1	
	Alternative suggestions	Student	The activities which make students active should be prepared	3
			Shorter and more attractive activities should be organized	2
			Games should be in activities (5 <sup>th</sup> grades)	2
Duties and responsibilities should be given to the students			2	
Listening activities should be appropriate for student level			1	
Program		Course hours should be lessened (6 hours for secondary schools and 5 hours for primary schools)	1	
		Grammar topics should be excluded from the curriculum (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	1	
		Turkish lesson should be built entirely on reading comprehension	1	
Physical environment		A curriculum should be prepared to increased listening activities	1	
		Turkish classes should be created	2	
		Class size should be reduced	1	
Learning environment		Physical conditions of the school should be appropriate for education	1	
		Methods that maintain students' attention should be used	2	
	Visual materials should be used in order to enable student participation	2		
	Environments for learning by doing should be created	2		
	Activities appropriate for the theory of multiple intelligence should be designed	1		
	Listening rules should be constantly repeated in listening environments	1		
	The teacher should give feedback before, during and after listening activity	1		

Table 7 shows the findings related to listening problems based on educational setting. Lack of activities appropriate for active listening and not being appropriate of curriculum for student level are the most repeated codes in the sub- theme of program. While *crowded classes and lack of course materials* are noteworthy codes in the sub- theme of education, *lack of vocabulary* is crucial in the sub-theme of learning. The opinion of T9 on this issue is as follows:

*“Listening activities are obviously not activities that students can actively participate in, but these are not completely excluded from them. We try to add them” (T9).*

Problem-solving approaches of teachers about listening problems based on education are using materials which appeal to more than one sense organ and creating environment for students to listen to one another in the sub- theme of learning environment. Besides, explaining the listening rules before the listening activity, helping students comprehend about how to listen effectively and creating listening rules are the other codes emerged in the sub-theme of awareness.

Alternative solutions of teachers for students’ listening problems are based on some codes such as *the activities which make students active should be prepared; Turkish classes should be created; methods that maintain students’ attention should be used, visual materials should be used in order to enable student participation and environments for learning by doing should be created.* These are the codes which teachers mostly mentioned in the category of student, physical environment and learning environment respectively. In addition to these codes, *course hours should be lessened (6 hours for secondary schools and 5 hours for primary schools), grammar topics should be excluded from the curriculum (5th grade), Turkish lesson should be built entirely on reading comprehension and a curriculum should be prepared to increased listening activities* are the other codes emerged in the sub- theme of program. An example of a teacher's view on this issue is as follows:

*“...In my opinion, schools should have listening rooms. Even, there should be real rooms, there should be lecture rooms, such as Turkish classrooms, mathematics classrooms. The teacher will remain stationary in the classroom and provide student circulation like in a workshop room. Turkish lesson workshop will be organized accordingly” (T6).*

### **Theme 7: Listening materials**

**Table 8.** Teacher Perspectives on Listening Materials Theme

	Sub-theme	Code	N
Source of the problems	Structure of the text	Not being interesting of the content	4
		Not being appropriate of selected texts for student level	2
		Not being interesting of listening text	2
	Activities	Not being related to topic with real life	1
		Having too long texts	1
		Having few listening activities in course books	1
		Not being interesting of the activity	1
		Having many, long, boring activities	1

Problem-solving approaches	Topic	Involving topics which students are interested in	2
		Informing the students about the benefits of the topic that they listen	1
		Using texts including useful information in real life	1
Alternative suggestions	Content	Topics should be related to daily life	3
		Listening text should be interesting	3
		Different activities related to topic should be preferred	2
		Listening texts should be listened to throughout the process	1
		The importance of knowledge should be explained to the students (8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	1
		Lessons should be taught entertainingly (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	1

The findings presented in Table 8 indicate that *not being interesting of the content, not being appropriate of selected texts for student level, not being interesting of listening text* are noteworthy codes in the sub- theme of structure of the text as a source of problems. In addition, *having few listening activities in course books, not being interesting of the activity and having many, long, boring activities* are the codes which teacher focused on in the category of activities. The opinion of the teacher on this subject is below:

“...Some texts are too difficult. I am reading the text, I say “listen to me, I will stop and you will summarize.”. The children could not summarize, they could not listen. Because when there are unknown words in the text, their attention gets distracted. Thus, they don't want to listen. They cannot think of the subject in a context, and consequently I could not get feedback” (T1).

Involving topics which students are interested in, informing the students about the benefits of the topic that they listen and using texts including useful information in real life are the codes which teachers thought as a problem-solving approach in the category of topic.

Alternative suggestions for listening materials are seen really important by teachers. *Listening text should be interesting and different activities relating topic should be preferred* are some of these suggestions in the sub- theme of content. Besides, *listening texts should be listened to throughout the process the importance of knowledge should be explained to the students (8th grade) and lessons should be taught entertainingly (5th grade)* are the other prominent codes in the same category. One of the teachers’ mindset about this subject is below:

“For instance, preparing visual materials related to the topic, preparing games, doing activities related to the subject or explaining the events in daily life can be some of the suggestions.” (T10).

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of this study indicated that secondary school students have a variety of listening problems. The most prominent ones are being unaware of listening rules, being bored with listening, not listening to the lesson, not understanding what one listens to, having low motivation for listening, making an effort to express oneself, not listening to the speaker, not listening to useless information. Emiroğlu (2013) concluded that, these problems primarily stem from speakers in prospective teachers' opinions regarding listening problems. According to listening problem studies, other factors affecting listening include the listener, the topic and the environment. According to Keray Dinçel's (2018) findings, the problems encountered by secondary school students during Turkish lessons are the environment, listening texts, listening activities, Turkish teachers and students. On the other hand, Bayram (2019) discovered that the majority of listening problems occur during the pre-listening stage and can be discussed under the titles of students, teachers, texts, environments, among others. According to Underwood (1989), the main listening problems are inability to control of speaker's speaking rate and repetitive listening, listeners' limited vocabulary, failure to recognize signs correctly, interpretation problems, inability to concentrate, and established learning habits. Parallel to this, Underwood (1989) believed that there is a direct link between these problems and the students' differences in background. Students whose culture and education are centered around story-telling and oral communication are generally more competent at listening comprehension than students whose culture and education are centered around reading and book-based education (as cited in Chen, 2005). According to Hasan's (2000) research, listening comprehension difficulties are related to task and activity, message, speakers, and listeners. Moreover, Renukadevi (2014) stated that despite advancements in technology in the field of education, students continue to struggle with the act of listening. These problems stem from a lack of time spent on improving students' listening skills, as well as from the use of ineffective strategies in the learning environment, listening materials and physical environment.

There are several prominent results in the family-related aspects of students' listening problems, including "traditional family structure, families' lack of education, families not having enough time to practice the essential listening process with students, indifference of the family, families not being the correct role model for the students, not being listened of the students by their families. The most frequently repeated code among the approaches used by teachers to solve these problems is raising awareness of the families about listening. The most prominent alternative suggestions are; Informing parents about the importance of listening to students, providing listening education to the students in the family from early ages, ensuring school – family cooperation and creating a healthy environment with school-family cooperation. As suggested by Maden (2013), it might be beneficial to provide families with trainings on intra- family communication, raising children and the importance of listening.

Lack of environments in which students can expend their energy, noise and mobility in the class, crowded class, and gradual loss of patience due to speeding up the life through internet are significant codes that stem from listening problems in the theme of environment. Başkan and Deniz (2015) reminded us that physical deficiencies of the classroom and the noise in the classroom environment have a negative effect on students' ability to listen to the course. Consistent with this, Keray Dinçel (2018) reported that noise caused by environment is one of the most serious listening problems. This is parallel to the argument of Emiroğlu (2013) that prospective teachers who participated in the study stated that being hot, stuffy, noisy of the environment and also being lots of stimuli and disorder in the environment where the speech was made caused listening problems. Imhof, Henning & Kreft (2009) asserted that if the external noise became soft or loud in the natural environment, attention and listening performance would be hindered. This study examined the types of problem-solving approaches used by teachers to address the problems arising from the environment. It was discovered that they attempted to tackle problems by offering students a diverse range of extracurricular activities and enabling all students to maintain mentally active through the use of technology in the classroom. In addition, teachers suggested that students be taken to the theatre, that appropriate listening environments be created, and that the appropriate artistic and literary environments be created for the students to solve the problems. Apart from that, limiting students' time spent on technological devices by families, and teaching students how to properly use media are other noteworthy codes that teachers suggested as alternatives.

The most striking and repeated codes in the theme of readiness are not being able to adapt to the beginning and ending hours of the class, no prepared breakfast for students (being hungry), not paying attention to students' sleeping time, excessive course hours (5th and 6th grades), beginning of the lessons at early hours and lack of vocabulary (listening and comprehension). According to Bayram's (2019) study, the result of the students' low level of readiness due to the problems caused by the student prior to the listening activity is viewed as a result that addresses the theme of readiness. Teachers explained that they used various problem-solving approaches such as motivating students for listening and preparing activities which improve student vocabulary. In addition to that, teachers emphasized on the importance of planning listening activities that are appropriate for student age, doing exercises which improve student vocabulary, and ideal class size implementations.

In terms of the speaker, the most striking codes that contribute to secondary school students' listening problems are lecturing in a monotonous tone of voice, not informing students about the benefit of the topic, not informing students about the benefit of the topic and teachers' clothing preferences. This fits with the findings of Başkan and Deniz (2015) that teachers who consistently use the same narrative techniques have a negative effect on students' listening comprehension. Besides, Keray Dinçel (2018) described problems such as teachers speaking in silently and not lecturing Turkish courses fluently. Furthermore, Bayram's (2019) findings pointed out that some problems

stem from teachers, such as not notifying the students about the aims, not being able to motivate the students to listen to the lesson and not making any connection between the topic and the real life in the pre-listening category. Moreover, according to the results of an experimental study conducted by Anderson and Lynch (1998) with Iranian individuals learning English as a second language, the group that listened to the native teachers while reading by changing the intonation in the native language was more successful in terms of making inferences, choosing the correct clue and listening comprehension. This situation positively affected the ability to learn inferring in a second language. This result is parallel to our study's findings, indicating the critical role of tone of voice in listening. Teachers' problem-solving approaches for the resolution of problems that stem from the speaker are viewed as the codes of speaking empathetically (to support listening), addressing multiple senses and paying attention to stress and intonation. When the teacher perspectives on the alternative suggestions for the problems were examined, using gesture and facial expression effectively, giving importance to what teachers wear, explaining the topics according to the student level, using anecdotes, idioms, etc. while speaking, being contemporary and friendly are the codes emphasized as alternative suggestions. These arguments are parallel to findings of Bayram's (2019) study. Turkish teachers who participated to his study suggested that teachers incorporate a variety of activities to keep lessons interesting and enjoyable both for themselves and their colleagues, while also paying attention to individual differences of students and maintaining students' attention. In addition, Çiftçi (2001) emphasized how the teacher's attitudes and behaviors, the methods and techniques he employs, as well as his professional knowledge, skills and abilities are all have an effect on the listeners. Turkish prospective teachers interviewed for Emiroğlu's (2013) study emphasized the importance of paying attention to the speaking style and body language, as well as correctly and appropriately using one's voice, intonation and stress. Keray Dinçel (2018) stated in her study that the students' expectations of Turkish teachers include making the lesson as enjoyable as possible, speaking loudly while teaching, having effective classroom management and using the technology. Similar to Emiroğlu (2013), Marley (2000) discovered that listeners pay attention to not only verbal behavior but also non-verbal elements (body postures, body movements, gestures, eye contact) in the social context in which listening takes place (as cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006).

Almost all of the participants who were secondary school students identified not listening to the speaker and a lack of listening awareness codes as the source of the problems in the theme of the listener. According to Başkan and Deniz (2015), students believed that lessons were easy, and that exams could be passed easily and that they did not want to listen to the lessons and were not interested in the lessons when they found them so easy. Apart from listening to the lesson, teachers' attitudes toward students were more effective than the course itself. When teachers' approaches to problem-solving are examined, it is clear that making students active while listening, making students active while listening, involving listening activities based on empathy, making students realize the

importance of listening and dealing with students individually are the most prominent problem-solving approaches. On the other hand, when alternative solutions were evaluated, it is clear that making students realize the importance of listening, making students realize the usefulness of knowledge, creating environments which help students develop empathy and using drama techniques are noteworthy solution suggestions. Parallel to this thinking, Bayram (2019), made some suggestions for students to help them solve their listening problems such as being physically ready for listening training, taking notes while listening, and having eye-contact with the speaker. The suggestions that emerged in Bayram's (2019) study differ from the suggestions made by the teachers in this study. Goh (2000), on the other hand, suggested the following strategies for increasing student awareness about learning to listen: organizing course time for discussions and reports on listening problems and useful strategies, encouraging the students to think aloud after completing the listening task, expanding and the scope and giving opportunities for individual responses by listening to the diaries.

The most frequently cited sources of the secondary school students' listening problems are lack of appropriate activities for active listening, difficult content of curriculum for student level, crowded classes, lack of course materials and insufficient vocabulary of students in the theme of education. According to Aşılıoğlu's (2009) study findings, not creating an environment that enable students to participate to the lesson effectively is one of the main listening obstacles. In addition, the findings such as making loud noise by the friends in the class, having a large number of class size, and being disturbed by the friends are fundamental listening obstacles that are similar to Keray Dinçel's (2018) findings in their study. When the problem-solving approaches for listening problems in the theme of education were examined, using materials which appeal to more than one sense organ, creating environment for students to listen to one another, explaining the listening rules before the listening activity, and helping students comprehend about how to listen effectively are the most prominent approaches posited by teachers. Furthermore, when teachers' suggestions for resolving listening problems were examined, preparing the activities which make students active, organizing shorter and more attractive activities, giving duties and responsibilities to the students in the course, excluding grammar topics from the curriculum, building Turkish lessons entirely on reading comprehension, reducing the class size, methods that keep student attention alive, and creating environments for learning by doing are the significant codes that emerged as alternative suggestions in the theme of education.

In the theme of listening material, not being interesting of the content, not being appropriate of selected texts for student level, not being interesting of listening text, not being interesting of the activity and having many, long, boring activities were emphasized on as the most significant sources of listening problems. Başkan and Deniz (2015) argued that students have difficulty with listening to lessons in which they are uninterested. According to Keray Dinçel's (2018) study, the main listening problems of secondary school students are boring, long and unnecessary listening texts, including

unknown words, and not being much interesting of the texts. Consistent with these findings, Bayram (2019) reminded us that not being short and concise, and not being interesting of the of the texts are the noteworthy sources of listening problems with the findings of his study. Parallel to these findings, Emiroğlu (2013) noted that prospective teachers expressed concern about some issues such as not being dealt with the topic by the listener, not being interesting. The findings of these studies are consistent with the problems identified in the listening materials in this study. When problem-solving approaches regarding listening materials were examined it was seen that involving topics which students are interested in, informing the students about the benefits of the topic that they listen and using texts including useful information in real life are prominent codes. Additionally, teachers' alternative suggestions about this issue are; being related to daily life of the topics, being interesting of listening text and doing different activities related to topic. The Turkish teachers who participated in Bayram's (2019) research suggested that; being interesting of the listening texts, being supported with visual materials and, being short, concise and understandable improved listening comprehension. This is consistent with Keray Dinçel's (2018) findings in terms of some recommendations such as being short of listening texts and being interesting of listening activities while solving the problems. Similarly, Hasan (2000) asserted that uninteresting activities would not improve students' listening comprehension skills. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that engaging students in in-class activities that encourage them to focus on the overall message rather than on individual words will aid in their comprehension of the text.

All in all, the findings of this study indicated that there are a variety of factors that contribute to the listening problems of secondary school students. According to the teachers' views examined through the themes of family, environment, education, readiness, speaker, listener, and listening material, it can be concluded that each variable in the student's life affects the development of listening skill within certain limits. The teachers participating in the study stated that they made concerted efforts within their capabilities and offered suggestions for resolving the problems. As demonstrated in this study, there are numerous variables that contribute to the problems associated with listening skill, and success appears impossible unless the effect of these variables is minimized. Until they start secondary school, students receive education about listening skills in their family, social environment and especially during the primary school period. This situation demonstrates the importance of including listening skill training by teachers at all levels and in each department. Considering that the development in listening skills affects all other skills and lessons, it is necessary to provide necessary training and awareness to all branch teachers in-service training. Moreover, relevant institutions and organizations should implement innovations and changes aimed at resolving family, environment and educational issues. Solving listening problems and achieving positive development in students may be possible by minimizing the negative effects of the variables that

affect listening skill. This process will be accomplished if all stakeholders in education work cooperatively and supportively.

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