

Review

Activity suggestions for improving critical listening skills

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Listening skill is the least researched language skill. Most of the published studies include theoretical information about this skill. The fact that individuals have acquired some theoretical knowledge does not mean that they will use them effectively in their lives. In very few studies, listening activities were suggested and implemented. Moreover, there are no recommendations and practices of activity in the literature related to critical listening. In our age, which is accepted as the age of persuasion and propaganda, the effective and efficient use of critical listening skills has gained great importance. Developing critical listening skills is possible through the use of different methods / techniques and classroom activities. For this reason, it is thought that this study which is prepared by field experts and which includes activity suggestions that can be used to develop students' critical listening skills will contribute to the field of education.

Key words: Education, critical listening, activity, suggestion.

INTRODUCTION

Although listening is the first language skill acquired, it is accepted as a “neglected” (Dixon, 1964; Elin, 1972; Funk and Funk, 1989; Hunsaker, 1991; Kline, 1996; Çifçi, 2001; Melanlıoğlu, 2012; Özbay and Melanlıoğlu, 2012; Sevim and İşcan, 2012; Tüzel and Keleş, 2013; Kurudayıoğlu and Kana, 2013) and “forgotten” (Elin, 1972; Anderson, 1949; as cited in Tabak, 2013; Porat; 1990; Palmer, 2014) language skill in the literature. However, the place and importance of listening skills is enormous in the mother tongue education which affects all areas of our lives. According to Brent and Anderson

(1993), people acquire 80% of what they know through listening; according to Hagevik, people spend 40% of their time listening (as cited in Cihangir, 2004). According to Çifçi (2001), students' being good listeners have a significant role in terms of learning. Kurt (2008) argues that listening is the most important source of information during the course. Therefore, listening skill has an important place in the education life of the individual.

Although listening is an innate skill, the development of this skill requires an educational process (Maden and Durukan, 2011). Listening, as other language skills, can

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be improved by activities using effective methods and techniques (Kardaş and Harre, 2015; Epçaçan, 2013). Not only formal education, but also the relationships established in business and community life are closely related to listening (Özbay, 2014). Listening skill, which has many functions, is considered as the key to success (Doğan, 2016). The development of listening skill is possible through effective listening education (Erdem and Erdem, 2015).

In the literature, it is stated that critical thinking ability is not sufficient and that this ability needs to be developed with suggestions to improve critical thinking. (Dewey, 1930; Facione and Facione, 1992; McPeck, 1990; Norris, 1992; Norris and Ennis, 1989; Paul, 1990; PerkinsJay and Tishman, 1993; Resnick, 1987; Taube, 1995). Critical listening is to determine whether what is being listened to is accurate or not (Özbay, 2005; Yalçın, 2012). Hiner (2016), in his work entitled "Critical Listening: The Key To Effective Communication," describes the characteristics of critical listeners as follows:

- (i) They are active: They seek deliberate understanding and messages when they listen.
- (ii) They are completely meticulous: They do not form an answer until the speaker finishes his / her speech.
- (iii) They think systematically, analytically: They resort to knowledge, claims, and reasoning.
- (iv) They seek clarity: they ask follow-up questions until they reach the conclusion.
- (v) They are sensitive: They interpret the speaker's explanations to show that they understand.
- (vi) They can empathize: They try to understand the needs, assumptions, values, and ideas of the speaker.
- (vii) They collaborate: they seek a common path in the combination of ideas and inputs.

Considering that today's world is developing with a dizzying pace of scientific advances and concordantly human beings are under the bombardment of messages from all sides, we need to say that the effective and efficient use of critical listening skills has gained great importance (Aytan, 2011). Developing critical listening skills is possible through the use of different methods / techniques and classroom activities.

The aim and importance of the study

The aim of this study is to make suggestions for activities that can be used by field experts in order to improve the critical listening skills of secondary school students.

Most of the published studies include theoretical information about this skill. Experimental studies on listening skills are very rare in the literature. The fact that individuals have acquired some theoretical knowledge does not mean that they will use them effectively in their lives. In order for individuals to be able to use the information they have acquired effectively, activities

prepared by field experts and studies on the basis of these skills need to be carried out. In very few studies, listening activities were suggested and implemented. Moreover, there are no recommendations and practices of activity in the literature related to critical listening.

Model of the study

Qualitative research model was used in this study.

Data collection tools and collection of data

In this study, first of all, a document analysis was conducted. The objectives and attainments in 2018 Turkish Course Curriculum, Turkish textbooks prepared by Ministry of National Education for secondary school students in 2018-2019 academic year, the fifth and sixth level competences of the PISA exam, educational objectives and attainments of the first three countries in reading skills in the PISA exam were examined. Data and suggestions in studies on listening skills and critical thinking have been effective in creating our data collection tools. In the light of the information and suggestions in the literature and the experts' opinions, activity suggestions have been created in order to show students the "characteristics of critical listeners" mentioned in the literature.

Validity and reliability

Activities were viewed by nine field experts. Three of the experts are fifteen-year experienced teachers in the Ministry of National Education, three of them work in an educational institution with doctoral degrees and they have critical thinking education; three of them are academicians and experts in the field of Turkish education.

Activity suggestions

School representative

It is very important for the students who will vote for the country administration in the future to determine the candidate who will represent them in their schools in the best way, both for their successful choices in their lives and for the successful management of the country in which they live.

Implementation of the activity

The followings are the speech texts of three students who are candidates for school representative elections. While the students listen to the speech texts, the activity visuals



Figure 1. Activity visuals.

are shown to the students from the smart board. Speech texts are read to the students. Students will accept their teachers who read the texts as a different school representative candidate for each text and if they wish, they can ask their teachers questions after the texts. The aim is to make the students active listeners and gain self-confidence in critical listening. After listening to the texts, the students will answer the evaluation form containing such questions “Which candidate's speech was more realistic, which persuasion and propaganda methods were used, which candidate would you choose if they were in your school? Why?” and through the activity, students will be tried to think critically” (Figure 1).

Activity visuals

Activity texts

My dear friends,

I am Gülseren Pastutmaz from Class 8 / C. I am a candidate for the presidency and I am very confident in this matter. I have the competence to represent you. I have fulfilled my duties as class president in the 5th grade, vice president in the 6th grade and class representative this year. I'll do my best for being school representative. You know that last year our school representative was a sixth grader and could not represent our school well. This year, the same wrong choice will have similar results. As one of you, I can say that I know the problems of our school very well. I guarantee that I will make this school more attractive. If I'm elected a school representative, I'm going to increase break time to thirty minutes and reduce the lesson time to fifteen minutes. I will organize a school trip every week after being school representative. I'm waiting for your vote to do that. Some of our friends in the lower classes describe the persuasion work of my friends who are studying in eighth

grade and who support me as a pressure. These are informative meetings that will help you make the right decision. It is our duty to inform you about our work and to help you make the right choice. I believe you will choose the best candidate to represent you. Thank you for listening to me.

My dear friends,

My name is Onur Orhan, from Class 7 / B . I'm a candidate to represent our school. A school representative means solving the problems of all friends in the school related to education. If I can become a school representative, I will forward the problems we encounter, the negativities we have experienced and your messages to the school administration in a timely and complete manner. The quick and lasting solution of problems is the key to a happy school. I'm ready to do everything I can for your happiness. I'm not even going to talk about mistakes and impossibilities in the promises of the other candidates. I believe you are aware of them. I am a student of this school and I can predict who can do what and how much. You are precious to me. Therefore, I aim to beautify our school with promises that can be made instead of deceiving you with other candidates' promises that cannot be made. I'm planning to talk to our physical education teacher and school administration about organizing football tournaments for male students and volleyball tournaments for female students. Also, I plan to increase social activities by mediating various travel organizations. But I need your support to do these tasks. So I'm waiting for your vote. Thank you.

My dear brothers and sisters,

I am Hamza Ceylan, from Class 6 / D and I am a candidate for the presidency. Our school may not be a great school, but it is the students inside it that will make it a great school. You are the most valuable elements of

this school and you deserve to be represented in the best way. The school representatives elected in previous years have forgotten their promises immediately after the election, and they have made no contribution to our school. I believe that I am a candidate that can meet all your needs. As our principal said, "The school representative you choose should be someone who can best represent you." Solving your problems related to school is my only goal in being a candidate. I would like to thank our principal for his support. Friends, new school representative will be elected next week. If you don't elect me, you may regret it, I will try to help you as much as I can. My friends in Grade 5 and 6 said they would support me. I expect the votes of my brothers and sisters in 7th and 8th grade.

Activity questions

Answer the following questions based on the speech texts you have listened to.

- (i) By which words did Gülseren Pastutmaz try to convince you in her speech?
- (ii) Do you think Gülseren Pastutmaz's promises are realistic? Why?
- (iii) By which words did Onur Orhan try to convince you in his speech?
- (iv) Do you think Onur Orhan's promises are realistic? Why?
- (v) By which words did Hamza Ceylan try to convince you in his speech?
- (vi) Do you think Hamza Ceylan's promises are realistic? Why?
- (vii) Did you ask questions while listening to the texts? If yes, which questions and for what purpose did you ask? Please explain.
- (viii) Have the visuals of the speakers been effective in evaluating the texts? Why?
- (ix) Which of these candidates would you vote for in the school representative elections? Why?

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Nowadays, media organs can publish biased news for various reasons. For this reason, it is very important for students who have graduated from primary school to listen to the news presented on radio and television critically. According to Nosich (2018), if we are truthful in knowing the truth, or at least knowing the closest to the truth, we must act with the superiority of the evidence before reaching a conclusion.

Implementation of the activity

The following news texts are listened to by the students

in order. They are asked which news text can convince them more and are expected to discuss their reasons with their friends. Before the activity, students are given information about ways to improve thought, and in practice, students are asked to recognize and evaluate them accordingly.

Activity texts

News 1: Global warming can kill 152,000 people in Europe

An international online journal published a research on climate change. According to this research, if the measures for global warming are not taken, the number of deaths due to climate disasters in 2100 will be more than one hundred fifty thousand annually. Two-thirds of the world's population is expected to be affected by changing weather conditions. The research shows that the number of people who died due to weather conditions between the years of 1981-2010 annually was about 3000 and this number will be around one hundred fifty two thousand between the years 2071-2100. Researchers state that heat wave will be the most lethal reason caused by climate. Similarly, there is an average of six deaths a year due to coastal floods, but this figure is expected to rise to 233 per year by the end of the century. One of the co-authors of the research Giovanni Forzieri from European Commission's joint research center in Italy, once again highlighted the importance of the issue, saying global warming was the biggest threat to human health in the 21st century.

News 2: Shocking Claim: Global Warming is a Lie

According to British researchers, global warming, the biggest problem in the world in recent years, is a myth. The researchers also believe that global warming is not caused by humans. Professor Phil Jones from Climate Research Unit (CRU), East Anglia University, made a statement to BBC that global warming is not as important as it is thought. Jones, who also said there had been no significant change in global warming since 1995, surprised everyone with his words. Previously he claimed that 72 scientific articles, including this information, more than a thousand archival documents and current e-mail were stolen from the computer of the research center. He emphasised that this could be a sneaky game being held to get "climate taxes" from the public and businesses in the future. Jones said that "The global warming scandal is the work of those who keep the world under constant alarm and concern," adding the research is the kind of powerful scientific research that will change what we know about global warming. He claims that global climate change is not caused by humans, and that a few degrees

of Earth warming is normal, as the results of scientific research show.

Activity questions

Answer the following questions based on the news texts you have listened to.

- (i) In the first news, what ways did the author use to prove what he wrote?
- (ii) In the second news, what ways did the author use to prove what he wrote?
- (iii) Which of the news you've listened about global warming has convinced you more? Why?
- (iv) What do you think we can do to determine the accuracy of news with different information on the same subject?

IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

Critical thinking is a learning-acting model based on reasoning and problem-solving, based on the process of not accepting the given information as it is and putting it into the process of cause-and-effect relationship (Cihaner, 2007). Critical-thinking individuals reach judgment by passing the information through their mental processes rather than accepting the information they receive as they are presented (Evren, 2012).

Implementation of the activity

The following text is listened to by the students and they are asked to find out what is wrong with the child's life in this text. In the activity text, the diligence and honesty of a young child is explained fluently. However, it is intended that the students question why this young child is employed at the age of eight, while other children go to school.

Activity text

Bagel seller boy

I got up early in the morning. I washed my face and went to the bakery immediately. I could smell Uncle Baker Arif's beautiful bagels from the beginning of the street. I ran to bakery. I came out of the bakery with the bagels I had put on my bagel board and wishes of "Have a nice working day!". I was only eight. I could not stand hunger for long time. I would always be my first customer and sit on the sidewalk and eat a bagel until the end of the street. And I would put first-sold bagel's money in the bag of money to be given to the baker for blessings. I would cover my bagels on cold winter days. They had to stay

Table 1. Activity questions.

Sentences	True	False
The boy is always late for the work.		
He is a hardworking boy.		
He is of primary school age.		
He can stand hunger for long time.		
He's honest enough to pay for the bagel he ate.		
He doesn't like the smell of Uncle Baker Arif's bagels.		

warm, for children going to school in the early hours of the morning, for adults going to work; and most importantly, to keep my dreams warm with their warmth.

Activity questions

Fill in Table 1 based on the text you have listened to.

- (i) Who does the boy sell bagels to?
- (ii) Do you think everything is OK in this text? Please explain.

PERSPECTIVE

Critical thinking, which aims to see different perspectives and develop different perspectives, will also support democratic attitude as it will be conducive for individuals to gain and respect different perspectives (Ofilas, 2009). Children build an unconditional trust in characters who are described as "good" in fairy tales. The aim of this activity is to show the students that when they approach a situation that is always presented to them with the same perspective from different perspectives, their ideas may change and they must approach each situation with different perspectives.

Implementation of the activity

The reason for the selection of "Little Red Riding Hood" tale as the activity text is that the students are more likely to have heard this tale before and the tale is always presented to children with the same perspective. First, the fairy tale is read to the students. The aim is to remind students the fairy tale in detail. In the next text, Little Red Riding Hood tale is narrated by the wolf. Following this text, students are asked questions about the importance of empathy and looking at events from different perspectives. Finally, students are asked to rewrite the tale of "Snow White" which they are very likely to have listened to before from the Queen's narration. At the end of the activity, it is aimed that the students realize that

when they look at the events from different perspectives, they will reach more accurate results.

Activity texts

- (i) Little red riding hood tale (It can be listened to on the Internet or the teacher can read the story to students from a fairy tale book).
- (ii) Let's listen to the tale of Little Red Riding Hood from the narration of the wolf.

They rewrote "Little Red Riding Hood" tale from the wolf's point of view. Let us see how the wolf tells this tale. "I went out to clean the forest like I do every day. The forest is my house; I have to keep it clean. Then suddenly there appeared a girl. She had a very suspicious appearance in her red hood and cape. Who'd think of wearing this strange outfit? She must have been a cunning girl. I pricked up my ears and watched her for a while. Who knows what she was carrying in the covered basket in her hand! When I approached her and asked her, she told me she was going to her grandmother's house, but I didn't believe her. I said "Let me see if she is telling the truth." "Is there really such a grandmother?" The forest is my house. I am both a host and responsible to other dwellers in the forest... Anyway, I checked it and I really found a grandmother. When I asked, she said "Yes, this little girl is my grandchild". I said, " This little girl hasn't learned that she mustn't talk to strangers yet". Grandma and I decided to teach the little girl a lesson. She hid under the bed so I put on her nightgown and laid on her bed. The little girl just walked in. She thought I was her grandmother. "Oh, Grandma, what big ears you have!" said the little girl. What a shame! "All the better to hear you with!" I replied. She also asked why my nose was so big. She was so disrespectful and rude. I had problems with my nose and didn't like this question. I was trying to ignore her but this time she said "What big mouth you have!" I got angry and started to chase her. Suddenly a hunter appeared in front of the door. He exclaimed "You traitor! You ate the grandmother!" I jumped out of the window and escaped. After that day everybody in the forest called me "traitor". I am so unhappy."

- (iii) Snow White tale (It can be listened to on the Internet or the teacher can read the story to students from a fairy tale book).

Activity questions

- (1) Do you think it is important to look at the events from different perspectives? Why?
- (2) When you listen to the Little Red Riding Hood Tale and this tale written from the narration of the wolf, who do you think is right? Why?
- (3) Rewrite Snow White tale from the Queen's narration.

PREJUDICE

Critical thinking is a way of thinking that aims to reach a decision in the end, in which the different aspects and consequences of prejudices, assumptions, and all kinds of information presented are tested, evaluated and discussed (Evren, 2012; Cihaner, 2007; Şentürk, 2009). In order to reduce prejudices, it is necessary to reduce stereotypes and change students' perceptions through education (Sağiroğlu, 2014). According to Sağiroğlu, the most effective way to change perception is to change the perspective and teach empathy. Empathy education was found to be highly effective in reducing prejudices based on variables such as age, gender and race (Plous, 2003).

Based on the importance of unbiased and unprejudiced listening in critical listening, it was decided to include activities related to situations in which the students might be biased in their daily lives among the activities that will be used to develop students' critical listening skills. The activity texts took their final form by taking expert opinions.

Implementation of the activity

The following dialogues are listened to the students and they are asked some questions about prejudice. The aim of this activity is to develop students' listening skills without prejudice. In the activity, it is aimed that the students realize that the important thing in the speech they listen to is the content of the speech, that when they listen to it without prejudice, they will reach more accurate information and solve the problems in a more rational way.

Activity texts

Dialogue 1: Pharmacy Huzur

- (i) I've had a sore throat for a week. My friends recommended this medicine. Do you think that's good for me?
- (ii) Your symptoms indicate infection. You can use it if there is no simultaneous use of clarithromycin or insulin. This medicine is perfect for Pneumonia diseases. You can use it. (talking formally)

Dialogue 1: Pharmacy Özer

- (i) I've had a sore throat for a week. My friends recommended this medicine. Do you think that's good for me?
- (ii) I think you have an infection but you should see a doctor, my little girl. Almost everyday authorities warn people not to use wrong medicine. Health center is right there. (talking informally).

Activity questions

(i) What do you think the pharmacist at Pharmacy Huzur is like? Please explain.

(ii) What do you think the pharmacist at Pharmacy Özer is like? Please explain.

If you were the patient who went to these pharmacies, which pharmacist would you find more accurate? Why?

DISCUSSION

Listening is called “neglected” skill in the literature. Doğan (2016) mentions various factors that play a role in neglecting listening skills. Some of these factors are that teachers think that due to the intense curriculum, there is not enough time for listening skills, that listening skills naturally develop and therefore there is no need to be emphasized, listening cannot be taught and evaluated even if taught. Contrary to these prejudices, it has been demonstrated by various studies in this field that listening can be taught and improved (Graves and Loazia, 1999; Doğan, 2007; Yılmaz, 2007; Boğa, 2010; Kırbaş, 2010; Kocaadam, 2011; Bostancı and Ceran, 2015).

Aytan (2011) carried out a doctoral dissertation on the effect of activities prepared with active learning techniques on the listening skills of the students. In the research conducted on the 6th grade students, active learning techniques were used in the experimental group, while the control group was taught with traditional method. As a result of the research, it was found that the listening skills of the students in the experimental group were more developed than the students in the control group. This study also supports the idea that listening is a skill that can be improved.

Doğan (2010) stated the following sentences in the conclusion part of his study “Utilizing Activities in Developing Listening Skills”: “*Like any skill, listening skill can be improved through education. Researches on listening skill confirms this claim. (...) In order to improve listening skills continuously, thinking about the subjects of all courses and examples from daily life and preparing activities based on them should be considered as the most effective and efficient applications in this process.*”

In Doğan (2016) book “Listening Education”, listening skill has been examined in all its details and examples of activities have been given as well as theoretical information for the listening skill in education. Some of the activities in the book have been used in the Turkish textbook prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2018) for the 6th grade students in the 2018-2019 academic year and found successful by the educators. These studies are the products of the need for listening skill activities and the successful results of teaching with activities.

According to the researches, the most common teaching material in Turkey is textbooks (Güleç and

Demirtaş, 2012). Textbooks, which are very easy to reach and use and are the most important tool after teachers (Küçük, 1996), can be called as the main source of education (Alkan, 1992; Yalçın 2012; Halis, 2002). These tools, which enable students to have learning attainments, are an indispensable element of teaching (Binbaşıoğlu, 1995; Topçuoğlu, 2010). Therefore, it is very important to increase the quality of the activities to be used in textbooks. Çifci et al. (2018), in their study examining English and Turkish textbooks, suggested that “*The activities in Turkish textbooks should be able to develop students' critical thinking skills and creativity in connection with the attainments.*” In order to implement these suggestions, there is a need for activities in the field.

CONCLUSION

In this study, activities that can be used by educators in order to improve the critical listening skills of middle school students were prepared. Experts' opinions on critical listening activities were taken and the final form was given to the activities in line with these opinions. It was found that there were limited studies on activities in the literature. Therefore, it is thought that the activity suggestions prepared to increase the number of activities aimed at developing critical listening skills of secondary school students will contribute to critical listening in education.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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