

DEFINING LISTENERS IN SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) LISTENING: INVESTIGATING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS LISTENERS

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ABSTRACT

Studies in L2 listening, unlike those in other language skills, mostly focus on the product of the skill instead of defining the process itself. Recent studies are far from going beyond basic experimental research designs most of which aim to find out the differences between the two groups in terms of the product of listening. The listening literature is full of such product-oriented experimental studies. However, it is obvious that qualitative research has a key role in understanding and uncovering listening as a cognitive process which is not susceptible to direct observation. More research is needed to find out the relationship between personality traits of effective and ineffective listeners and L2 listening success, a topic of interest for scholars since it was first asserted by the early middle of 20th century. From this point of view, this study is devoted to reach beyond stereotypical listening research. Aiming at investigating and exploring the characteristics of language learners as listeners according to the strategies they use in EFL listening, this study is expected to contribute to the field with its method, procedure, findings and concluding remarks. There are two phases in the study: a) the application of the Oral Communication Strategies Inventory (OCSI), which was developed to measure 'active listening strategies' and 'less active listening strategies' of EFL learners, to 123 freshman students of English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of a state university in Turkey; b) semi-structured interviews with 10 students selected from the participants of the first phase. After the qualitative analyses of OCSI scores, the top-ranking 10 students were included in the second phase of the study and invited as volunteer interviewees. The second phase, the main qualitative part of the study, was conducted with semi-structured interviews. The questions were designed to explore the participants' personality traits in L2 listening. Qualitative data was transcribed verbatim and analysed with a content analysis method. The analysis revealed basic characteristics such as 'being text-dependent, non-interruptive, judgmental, empathic'. In total, 30 characteristics were defined under 5 pre-determined themes and 11 categories. While most of the characteristics defined in the study are consistent with existing literature, there are also some newly explored ones such as 'being respectful, being text-independent, and willingness'. Both the findings and the research design of the study have implications and suggestions for further research as well as L2 listening practice.

Key Words: L2 listening; characteristics of listeners; listening comprehension strategies; big five factors (BFF).