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İkinci Dilde Anlama Çabasının Araştırılması: Türk İngilizce Konuşucuları ile Öncül Bir Çalışma*

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Exploring Second Language Comprehensibility: A Preliminary Study with Turkish Speakers of English

Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: 25.08.2019 *Accepted*: 08.06.2020 *Online First*: 18.06.2020 *Published*: 31.10.2021	The purpose of this study was to investigate the comprehensibility of Turkish native speakers in spoken English. To this end, 16 preservice English teachers enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) programs of two state universities provided speech stimuli on three speaker tasks: read aloud, picture description and responding to a real-life situation. The recordings collected were presented to eight listeners with various first language backgrounds via a nine-point likert-type scale in order to find out about their perceived degree of ease or difficulty in understanding. Listeners were also requested to explain what made it easy or difficult to understand each task. The findings of the study revealed that listeners experienced considerable difficulty in understanding Turkish speakers of English. As for the factors that impacted their comprehension of the speech samples, five main themes emerged which were understanding speech, speaking rate and fluency, foreign accent, incorrect pronunciation and specific pronunciation errors. In addition to the main themes, three sub-themes were identified for the theme of pronunciation errors, namely vowel and consonant errors, pause, intonation and stress errors, and mispronounced words. The implications of the study are two-fold. Aimed at an increased level of comprehensibility, it could be helpful to provide learners with additional opportunities for spoken production in EFL/ESL classes. In ELT programs, revisions in pronunciation course descriptors and syllabuses with the inclusion of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and foreign accent are highly recommended. **Keywords:** Pronunciation, Comprehensibility, Intelligibility, Foreign Accent, Preservice English Teachers

* This study is based on the author's doctoral dissertation conducted under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sıla Ay.
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1. INTRODUCTION

English is used as a medium of communication in all corners of the world by millions of people. The reflections of this dominance can be observed in the field of foreign language teaching and learning as well. It is possible to encounter models or frameworks proposed to address various aspects of teaching and learning English as a world language. One of these influential models belongs to Kachru (1985) who classified the speakers of English as in three circles which are inner circle (where English is spoken as an L1), outer circle (where English is used as an institutionalized L2) and expanding circle (where English is learned and spoken as a foreign language). One can also come across labels designated to English such as English as an International Language (Davies, 1989; Jenkins, 1998, 2000; McKay, 2002), English as a Global Language (Crystal, 2003) and English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2000; Meierkord, 2013; Patsko, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2011; Walker, 2015). Another framework, Lingua Franca Core (LFC) by Jenkins (2000) was aimed at defining core and non-core speech features for successful communication in English as a lingua franca contexts. Jenkins (2000) mainly focused on segmental features (consonants, vowels, and consonant clusters) along with contrastive stress as essential elements for speakers to be able to communicate successfully with other L2 speakers of English.

In this regard, the goal of learning and teaching the spoken language features and, more specifically, pronunciation has been subjected to pedagogical discussions over the years. In his influential paper, for example, Levis (2005) referred to two contradictory principles that influenced pronunciation research and pedagogy. He stated that, once the dominant paradigm, the *nativeness principle,* placed native-like pronunciation as an achievable and ideal goal for learners, while they simply need to be understood in a given L2 according to the *intelligibility principle*. An intelligible pronunciation is usually considered to be the most desirable and reasonable goal of teaching L2 pronunciation (Brinton, 2018; Brown, 2001; Morley, 1991; Munro, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2011). This common perspective can be realized by learners via potential and practical gains outside the class. Darcy (2018), for example, states that enhanced intelligibility is important for social and professional interactions, job opportunities, and success in higher education. It is worth bearing in mind that some learners might still be willing to aim for a native-like pronunciation (James, 2010) for a variety of other reasons such as personal goals, interests, motivations and expectations as well as their future plans. Celce-Murcia et al. (2017) hold that such a tendency is understandable, while many learners around the world simply wish to communicate successfully with other L2 speakers of English.

At this point, it is important to take a closer look at three critical and related concepts of understanding L2 speech: intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness. 'Intelligibility' can be defined as *"the extent to which listeners' perceptions match speakers' intentions (actual understanding)"* (Munro & Derwing, 2015, p.14). One area that research on intelligibility commonly focuses on is its ties with 'accentedness' or 'foreign accent' which refers to perceived differences in pronunciation that are noticeable when compared with a local variety (Munro & Derwing, 2015). In a number of empirical studies, it was found that a foreign accent did not necessarily lead to the unintelligibility of speakers (Derwing & Munro, 1997, 2009; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 1999). In other words, even a heavily accented speaker might still be fully intelligible and understood easily (Derwing, 2018). A second speech feature which is somewhat linked with intelligibility and accentedness is 'comprehensibility'. It is defined as *"listeners' perceptions of difficulty in understanding particular utterances"* (Munro & Derwing, 1995, p. 291). As is understood from the definition, Munro and Derwing (1995) slightly differentiated this spoken language notion from the concept of intelligibility. Derwing and Munro (2015) provide further explanations on intelligibility and comprehensibility by illustrating some communication scenarios. For instance, a highly intelligible and comprehensible utterance will be easily and fully understood; however, if the comprehensibility is low, but the utterance is still intelligible, this will mean that one can understand the message with a greater effort. In an attempt to compare intelligibility and comprehensibility, Levis (2018) maintains that mismatches between speakers' words and listeners' understanding do not always impair understanding; yet, listeners might avoid contact with such speakers who are not easy to understand.

Numerous studies have focused on comprehensibility from different perspectives. For example, two studies found that learners made progress in terms of comprehensibility when they were trained for suprasegmentals (Gordon & Darcy, 2016; Munro, Derwing, & Wiebe, 1998). As underlined by Munro and Derwing (1995), factors affecting speakers' comprehensibility and intelligibility need to be prioritized if communicative competence is the main goal in L2 teaching. Another study looked at the role of speakers' L1 in terms of comprehensibility. According to Crowther et al. (2015a), various L1-specific patterns of linguistic influences for L2 speakers play a role on comprehensibility. The researchers found individual pronunciation effects for Chinese speakers and lexicogrammar effects for Hindu-Urdu speakers with different L1 backgrounds.

In terms of speakers' L1 backgrounds, researchers have had two approaches to intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness studies. Some researchers preferred to collect stimuli from speakers with a specific L1 background (e.g., Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012; Jin & Liu, 2014; Munro & Derwing, 1994, 1995; Saito, 2014; Saito & Poeteren, 2012; Sewell, 2013) and others worked with speakers from various L1 backgrounds (e.g. Crowther et al., 2015a, 2015b; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Field, 2005; Gallego, 1990; Gordon & Darcy, 2016; Levis, 2011; Munro & Derwing, 2001; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007; Zielinski, 2006). Either way, it is evident that Turkish speakers represent an understudied population with regard to their presence in intelligibility, comprehensibility or accentedness research in English.

This study aims to contribute to bridging this gap by providing empirical evidence as to whether English speakers of various L1 backgrounds experienced any difficulties in understanding Turkish speakers. In this regard, comprehensibility was

selected as the target construct to investigate. According to Kennedy and Trofimovich (2019), comprehensibility judgments offer reliable and practical measures of listener understanding as well as providing valuable information about how listeners understand and respond to L2 speech. Saito, Trofimovich, and Isaacs (2017) also refer to the practical outcomes of researching comprehensibility due to its ties to many real-world applications of intelligibility such as TOEFL, IELTS, and CEFR assessment procedures that utilize scalar judgments while actually targeting comprehensibility.

Due to the nature of comprehensibility, data are typically collected via likert-type scalar judgments, as many other researchers have done in their studies (e.g., Derwing, Munro & Wiebe, 1998; Gordon & Darcy, 2016; Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012; Julkowska & Cebrian, 2015; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 2001; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007). There have also been a number of recent attempts to collect comprehensibility data via computer-assisted data collection instruments (e.g., Crowther et al., 2015b; Nagle, Trofimovich, & Bergeron, 2019); however, scalar judgment still remains as an easy-to-use and reliable option for raters (Munro, 2017). To this end, as a data collection technique, scalar judgment was adopted in this study so as to reach a clear and overall perspective of how Turkish accented speech is perceived by a group of L2 speakers. With a broader aim to analyze preservice English teachers' comprehensibility in English, this study intended to answer the following questions:

1) To what extent are Turkish L2 English speakers comprehensible to listeners with different L1 backgrounds?

2) Based on naive L2 listeners' judgments, what speech features of Turkish speakers affect their L2 comprehensibility?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Speaker and Stimuli

Speakers recruited for the study were third-year Turkish native speaker students (N=16) enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) programs of two state universities in Turkey. According to the demographics, the average age was 21 (*SD*= .63), 13 speakers being female and three of them male. At the time of data collection, the speakers had never been abroad, and none of them reported any speech disorder. Two American English and two British English native speakers were also recruited as distractors. Three distractors were female, one was male, and their average age was 32 (*SD*= 2.16). American English native speakers participated in the study during their one-year visit to Turkey as Fulbright English Teaching Assistants and the British English native speakers were British government officers in Turkey. All the speakers took part in the study voluntarily.

Speech stimuli were collected through three types of tasks: Read aloud, picture description, and responding to a real-life situation. Read aloud tasks were 45-50-word paragraphs excerpted from the reading passages of the Language Leader Upper-Intermediate (B2-C1 according to the Common European Framework) coursebook (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008). The reason for using read aloud in this study was to control the duration of speech stimuli per speaker. Topics of the paragraphs ranged from the internet to globalization, which were thought to be interesting for speakers. The second task type, picture description, was used to enable speakers to produce less-controlled speech samples. Pictures with various topics such as migration and volunteering were collected via a Google search. Responding to a real-life situation, the last task, was developed by the researcher to observe speaker responses in simulated real-life communication scenarios. These tasks were presented as short prompts and speakers were asked to respond to the given situation as a monologue. Topics were mainly dealing with a problematic situation, asking for advice, or making a request.

A total of 60 speaker tasks (20 tasks per task type) were prepared, numbered and printed on thick paper in color. These tasks were then piloted with three English native speakers and ten students enrolled in an intensive teacher training program at a state university in Turkey. Participants of this pilot study responded to the topics randomly and their responses were recorded in order to analyze the durations of responses. At the end of the pilot study, they were requested to share their feedback and observations. A number of revisions were made on the tasks and the procedure based on their responses. Two picture description tasks were replaced with new photographs due to low resolution. Those pictures were not clear enough and lacked sufficient detail for proper description, according to many of the English teachers. Also, based on the researcher's own experience during the piloting process, task instruction cards were prepared with an aim to run more reliable and more standardized recording sessions later.

During the recording sessions, each speaker was first asked to fill out a consent form and a demographic form. Then, the researcher presented a task instruction card before recording the speaker. Speakers were requested to pick a topic randomly, prepare for it silently and respond while their responses were being recorded. Recording sessions were held in quiet office rooms which were available in each location.

2.1. Procedure

2.2.1. Listeners

Listeners (*N*=8) were recruited by the researcher during an academic visit in Austria. The demographics of the participants revealed that seven listeners were female, and one was male. Listeners had no academic background in phonetics, phonology or pronunciation. They did not report any hearing impairment or difficulty. Except for one speaker, who was a native speaker of Singaporean English, all participants were speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL). EFL speakers were selected as a target group in this study with an aim to provide insights into the potential success of communication between Turkish speakers of English and other EFL students. This decision was also motivated by the accessibility of naive listeners meeting the criteria mentioned above. Nationalities of listeners and their L1 backgrounds are listed in Table 1:

Table 1.
Listeners' Countries and L1 Backgrounds

Country of Origin	L1	N
Syria	Arabic	3
Singapore	English	1
Germany	German	2
Latvia	Latvian	1
Japan	Japanese	1
TOTAL		**8**

Two criteria were taken into consideration while screening listeners in terms of English proficiency:

o Studying in / having graduated from a higher education program offering English-medium instruction
o Language exam score obtained in an international exam (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS)

Prospective participants were screened via a demographic form. The related data revealed that five listeners had completed or were still studying in an English-medium instruction program at a university (three at undergraduate and two at graduate level). One of the two remaining listeners got a 92 on the TOEFL IBT and one other listener received a 7.5 on the IELTS Academic within the last two years. These two language exam scores were found sufficient to be able to carry out the tasks required as part of this study.

2.2.2. Listener tasks

Listeners were assigned two main tasks. The first was to listen to all the speakers in a randomized order and judge their performances individually on a likert scale. To this end, 60 recordings were presented to listeners along with a printed form to complete (See Appendix). They were expected to evaluate each recorded task on a 9-point likert type scale (1 being 'very difficult to understand' and 9 'very easy to understand') depending on how much effort they spent in understanding it. Listeners' second task was to explain what made it easy or hard for them to understand what the speaker said.

Recordings were presented to listeners on a computer using Sony MDR-P180 headphones. Listeners were allowed to listen to each recording once. In order to control the effect of fatigue and lack of concentration, two optional breaks were offered to listeners after the 7th and 14th speakers and they were also informed that they would be allowed to take an additional break if necessary. All the listeners used the two optional breaks while none requested an additional break. The recordings were presented to all the listeners in the same order. Sessions lasted 1 hour and 33 minutes on average (*SD*= .06). Listening sessions were conducted in quiet rooms. The listeners were first asked to fill out a consent form and a demographic form. Before moving on to the sessions, three sample tasks accompanied by the same types of activities were provided to listeners as practice material. Once done practicing, actual sessions were initiated. After each session, listeners were asked to fill out a feedback form about the quality of recordings, technical equipment utilized, and other procedures.

2.3. Data Analysis

The listeners' perceptions of Turkish-accented speech samples were explored using qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Comprehensibility scores were analyzed through descriptive statistics (mean scores and percentages). Responses to the open-ended question were processed and coded by the researcher in English[1] and recurring categories were listed. To ensure inter-coder reliability, an experienced qualitative researcher was invited to code the same documents and list categories separately. The percent agreement value between the two coders was found to be 80%.

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[1] The same data had been translated into Turkish and coded by the researcher as part of the original doctoral research. Listener responses were recoded by the researcher in English for this particular study.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Comprehensibility Ratings

The average comprehensibility mean score for three tasks was 5.29 for 16 Turkish native speakers (See Table 2). It was observed that seven Turkish speakers were below the average mean score of 5.29. The most comprehensible Turkish native speaker was speaker 9 with a 6.79 mean score on the three tasks.

Table 2.
Comprehensibility Ratings of Turkish Native Speakers

SPEAKER	TASK 1 Read Aloud	SD	TASK 2 Picture Description	SD	TASK 3 Responding to Real-Life Situation	SD	M
1	4.50	1.19	6.75	1.38	6.12	1.88	5.79
3	4.25	.70	6	1.06	5.87	1.24	5.37
4	3.75	1.38	3.25	1.28	4.50	1.85	3.83
5	5.12	.83	6.12	1.12	6.25	.70	5.83
7	2.75	1.03	4.25	.88	4.87	1.24	3.95
8	4.37	1.3	5.62	1.84	5	1.51	4.99
9	7.12	.83	6.25	1.16	7	1.06	6.79
10	5.37	1.40	6.12	1.80	6	1.51	5.83
11	4.62	1.84	5.75	1.48	6	1.51	5.45
13	5.50	1.60	6.25	.88	5	1.30	5.58
14	4.12	1.72	6.50	1.19	5.62	1.59	5.41
15	4.75	1.48	4.75	1.58	5.25	.88	4.91
16	5.25	.88	5.62	1.40	6.37	1.59	5.74
18	3.50	1.41	5.62	1.40	6.62	1.50	5.24
19	3.12	1.24	5.75	.88	4.37	1.84	4.41
20	5.25	1.58	5.62	1.30	5.87	1.45	5.58
M	4.58	1.27	5.63	1.28	5.66	1.41	5.29

Task 1: Read aloud, Task 2: Picture Description, Task 3: Responding to a real-life situation

English native speakers' role in the study was simply that of distractors only; however, their average scores also represented reference points for comparison. Their average mean score for four speakers was 8.65 (See Table 3), which demonstrates that the difference between native speakers and Turkish speakers was over 3 points. English native speakers were more comprehensible to a group of listeners who were mostly speakers of English as an L2, which would not surprise many.

Table 3.
Comprehensibility Ratings of English Native Speakers

SPEAKER	TASK 1 Read Aloud	SD	TASK 2 Picture Description	SD	TASK 3 Responding to Real-Life Situation	SD	M
2	8.12	1.25	9	0	8.50	1.06	8.54
6	8.62	.74	8.5	.75	8.50	.75	8.54
12	8.62	.74	8.75	.46	8.87	.35	8.74
17	8.37	.55	9	0	9	0	8.79
M	8.43	0.82	8.81	0.30	8.71	0.54	8.65

Task 1: Read aloud, Task 2: Picture Description, Task 3: Responding to a real-life situation

The possible relationship between comprehensibility and task types was not a research question; however, the findings still provided clues about this. Read aloud tasks were the most difficult to understand with a mean score of 4.58. This score is around 1 point lower than picture description and responding to a real-life situation. On the other hand, mean scores for picture description and responding to a real-life situation were almost the same for Turkish speakers with a .03 difference. Listeners seemed to perceive these two tasks quite similarly, while read aloud apparently required more effort to understand. In addition, 13 speakers received their lowest comprehensibility scores from read aloud tasks (with one speaker getting equal mean scores for read-aloud and picture description). Read aloud was followed by picture description, with three speakers getting their lowest score in it. Conversely, seven speakers got their highest scores in picture description, and eight speakers got their highest scores in responding to a real-life situation. Only one speaker, who also achieved the highest comprehensibility mean score among the Turkish speakers, received her highest score in read aloud. For English native speakers, on the other hand, mean scores for the three tasks were 8.43, 8.71 and 8.65 consecutively with regard to the tasks.

This shows that read aloud was the least comprehensible of all three tasks for English native speakers as well, however, with a smaller margin this time.

3.2. Listeners' Views on Comprehensibility

According to the analyses conducted on listeners' responses to the open-ended question *"What made it easy or difficult for you to understand what the speaker said?"*, five main themes were reached, which were understanding speech, speaking rate and fluency, foreign accent, incorrect pronunciation and specific pronunciation errors detected.

3.2.1. Understanding speech

Listeners frequently referred to the intelligibility of speech samples. In their responses, instances of 'failure to understand' speakers were more common than being able to actually 'understand' them. Listeners pointed out that they had difficulty understanding a recording 34 times while in 20 other instances, they thought the recording was understandable or more understandable than the previous one. An interesting finding was that speakers expressed their views about understanding speech without really using the words 'intelligibility' or 'unintelligibility'; instead, they shared their views by using the words 'to get', 'to understand' or '(not) understandable'. Only one listener used the word 'incomprehensible' in order to refer to her failure to understand the message in a given recording. This finding demonstrates that listeners did not have the required metalanguage for such a task as they were all naive listeners without an academic background in related fields. Besides, for 12 times, listeners described recordings as 'clear' and in 7 other instances, they thought the recordings were 'not clear'. The following sample views are presented to illustrate this given category:

"I didn't completely understand what she wanted me to do." (Speaker 5, Task 3; Listener 1)
"His pronunciation was not clear so I did not get the idea." (Speaker 8, Task 1; Listener 4)

At times, listeners needed to make a special effort to be able to understand speakers. In 13 responses, they underlined such a necessity:

"… an extra effort was needed to understand her". (Speaker 3, Task 2; Listener 2)

3.2.2. Speaking rate and fluency

In some listener responses, references to speaking rate and fluency were identified. Listeners did not find speakers fluent in 4 tasks. Findings revealed that listeners usually considered speaking slowly a positive attitude while speaking fast was negative. In 11 instances, they found speakers too fast, which made it harder to understand them. In 9 others, listeners could easily understand speakers because they spoke slowly. Below can be found two sample quotes from listeners:

"It was easier for me because she pronounced words more slowly and clearly." (Speaker 1, Task 2; Listener 6)
"She spoke too fast and didn't pronounce her words." (Speaker 19, Task 1; Listener 5)

3.2.3. Foreign accent

Speaking with a foreign accent was mostly regarded as problematic. In 29 instances, speakers considered accented speech a problem and 15 times, they were able to understand the message in spite of a foreign accent. The extended views related with this category are as follows:

"Hard to understand, strong accent" (Speaker 8, Task 1; Listener 3)
"From the context, I could understand some words which I wouldn't have understood if they were isolated (because of the accent)." (Speaker 5, Task 3; Listener 2)

3.2.4. Incorrect pronunciation

Listeners described speakers' pronunciation as 'incorrect', 'wrong' or 'bad' for a number of times. Such descriptions were encountered in 20 instances, two of which are provided below:

"Because of wrong pronunciation, I didn't get the content." (Speaker 19, Task 2; Listener 7)
"Bad pronunciation and articulation" (Speaker 14, Task 1; Listener 4)

3.2.5. Specific pronunciation errors detected

Three-sub themes (i.e., vowel and consonant errors; pause, intonation and stress errors; mispronounced words) were identified under this main theme. Listeners commonly specified and tried to explain segmental and suprasegmental errors. Without using the words segmental or suprasegmental, they referred to vowel and consonant errors (24 instances) along with

pause, intonation and stress errors (35 instances). Mostly, they did not specify the errors explicitly, and attempted to describe them without using any metalanguage. In 44 other instances, listeners stated that there was a mispronounced word in a given utterance. They sometimes illustrated the erroneous words that they detected while at other times, they did not state the problematic words explicitly.

3.2.5.1. Vowel and consonant errors

Listener judgments revealed that two of the most commonly detected pronunciation errors were the mispronunciations of /θ/ and /w/. In many other cases, listeners noted mispronunciations without an open reference to a specific sound. It is understood that a number of listeners were able to hear a non-standard or incorrect pronunciation; however, it was not easy to detect and describe the error since they lacked the necessary academic background to carry out such a complicated task. Two of the extended comments are provided below:

> " 'think' – 'tink', problem with 'th' " (Speaker 13, Task 2; Listener 6)
> "The pronunciation of 'th' and 'w' is confusing." (Speaker 10, Task 3; Listener 5)

3.2.5.2. Pause, intonation and stress errors

In terms of suprasegmentals, the most common listener comments included references to errors caused by incorrect pausing and intonation. 11 times, listeners detected too many pauses in a number of utterances. This type of pause was only found in picture description and responding to a real-life situation. In some other instances, according to listeners, many speakers did not pause where necessary. Such descriptions were all seen in read aloud tasks. In addition, listeners tended to use words like 'space' or 'break' instead of pause in their descriptions. It can be considered as another example of lacking metalanguage needed for error detection.

In listener responses, the word 'intonation' was found 10 times and in six of them, listeners attempted to describe the good intonation the speaker had. In four other times, they were of the opinion that listeners had problems with their intonation. Stress errors were not as common. Listeners mentioned word stress only in 4 instances. Below can be found sample listener views about suprasegmentals:

> "[Referring to the whole read aloud task] It sounded like one giant word with 35 syllables." (Speaker 7, Task 1; Listener 7)
> "Despite the good reading intonation, it is still a bit hard to follow the speaker because words are not separate." (Speaker 16, Task 3; Listener 5)

3.2.5.3. Mispronounced words

Listeners commonly indicated that they detected mispronounced words. At times, they illustrated such words in their responses:

> "... I couldn't distinguish if she meant 'evolution' or 'evaluation'." (Speaker 3, Task 1; Listener 4)
> "There are some errors in pronunciation such as the word 'laughing'." (Speaker 10, Task 2; Listener 2)

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this preliminary research was to examine the comprehensibility of Turkish native speakers in English. The study also served as the first step of more comprehensive doctoral research that involved expert listener judgments and intelligibility research (Uzun, 2019). The findings obtained through scalar and open-ended judgments provided initial evidence regarding the pronunciation-related issues and the needs of Turkish speakers.

One of the significant findings to emerge from this study was that English listeners from various L1 backgrounds experienced difficulties in understanding Turkish speakers' intended messages. This problem became particularly evident when the comprehensibility ratings were compared with those of English native speakers who participated in the study basically as distractors. The actual pronunciation errors could not be identified reliably because of the nature of this investigation; however, the ratings assigned indicated that the speakers had spoken language issues which could potentially negatively influence their effectiveness in oral communication. The study also verified the necessity of investigating the comprehensibility and intelligibility of Turkish speakers of English more extensively with further studies.

Listeners seemed to experience difficulties in explaining what influenced their comprehensibility judgments. Most open-ended listener responses lacked metalanguage, which might be considered understandable since the participants were all naive listeners with no academic or practical experience in pronunciation or related fields. In relation to that, Levis (2011) mentioned in his study how challenging it was even for expert listeners to do a similar task, as they did not fully agree on the factors that influenced speakers' intelligibility. Also, the variety of themes that emerged from listeners' judgments (understanding speech, speaking rate and fluency, foreign accent, incorrect pronunciation and specific pronunciation errors

detected) demonstrated that nonnative listeners, or L2 listeners, paid attention to a variety of aspects in L2 speech. This tendency of L2 listeners was also addressed in Saito et al.'s (2019) study which found that native listeners' judgments were strongly tied to accuracy in pronunciation while L2 listeners weighed different areas of language such as pronunciation, fluency, and lexicogrammar in their comprehensibility judgments.

In this present study, listeners attempted to identify a number of segmental and suprasegmental errors as well. According to listeners' judgments, most explicitly stated segmental errors stemmed from the non-standard pronunciations of /θ/ and /w/. These two consonant sounds were often listed among the common pronunciation errors in other studies targeting Turkish speakers of English (Arıkan & Yılmaz, 2020; Bekleyen, 2011; Demirezen, 2003). In terms of suprasegmentals, they generally referred to the inappropriate uses of pauses and intonation. The notions of intelligibility, comprehensibility and foreign accent were also observed within listener responses; however, they were mostly implicit, without clear references to the terms, except for foreign accent. Listeners mostly used the term 'accent' in their responses. Also, listeners' common view that they were able to understand some speaker responses despite an accent was found to be in line with a number of previous studies which found that a foreign accent does not have to affect intelligibility negatively (Derwing & Munro, 1997, 2009; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 1999).

In terms of task types, this study demonstrated that the average scores for the read aloud task were lower than picture description and responding to a real-life situation. It is obvious that reading from a text made it harder for speakers to deliver their message successfully compared with less controlled or free speech. Although read aloud was commonly used in such studies (Field, 2005; Munro & Derwing, 1994, 1995), researchers in this field might need to use this type of task more cautiously, since read aloud is not equal to free speech (Levis, 2011; Levis & Barriuso, 2012).

In terms of pedagogical implications, one helpful suggestion could be to provide learners with additional opportunities to express themselves and their views in EFL/ESL classes. Kennedy and Trofimovich (2019) point to the importance of spoken interactions in this regard. According to the researchers, learners should be encouraged to seek out opportunities for extended spoken interactions such as brainstorming sessions, interviews, and workshops to gain confidence and improve comprehensibility.

The second implication of this study concerns preservice English teachers and their training procedures. Preservice English teachers should also be trained effectively to improve their own pronunciation skills by raising their phonological awareness at the same time. Venkatagiri & Levis (2007) found a possible connection between comprehensibility and phonological awareness in that such awareness could be an important factor in predicting an L2 speaker's ease or difficulty in being understood. Besides this, more focused and carefully-planned pronunciation courses targeting enhanced intelligibility and comprehensibility are also needed in ELT programs. Listening and Pronunciation I and II are the only dedicated pronunciation courses offered in these programs in Turkey (See "English Language Teaching Undergraduate Program" n.d.). Course descriptions provided in the above-mentioned program booklet need to be revised with the addition of intelligibility, comprehensibility and foreign accent in order to create awareness of such aspects of oral communication in L2. In addition, this effort could be more meaningful if syllabuses are developed with intelligibility and comprehensibility in mind and are incorporated into teacher training procedures. Also, Levis and Sonsaat (2020) underline that teacher trainees, along with native and nonnative teachers, should be encouraged to use their own variety as the pronunciation teaching model because intelligibility, rather than native-likeness, matters most in pronunciation teaching.

Another important point is that comprehensibility is not only restricted to pronunciation. Factors like the type of speaking tasks or genre, the speaker's use of grammar and vocabulary, the listener's level of anxiety, and attitude toward L2 speech can all be associated with comprehensibility (Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2019). Accuracy in grammar and lexical richness were reported to be effective in comprehensibility by Trofimovich and Isaacs (2012) as well. Therefore, grammatical features and lexical properties of English should not be neglected in both EFL/ESL settings and teacher training procedures.

It is important to mention two main limitations of the study. The first is to do with participants. With regard to sample size, the results could have been more reliable if more listeners had been recruited. However, it was challenging to access naive listeners without previous academic background in pronunciation-related fields and familiarity with Turkish speakers' speech features. Also, listeners were nonnative speakers of English with various L1 backgrounds, which should also be taken into consideration while analyzing the findings. The second limitation relates to speaker tasks in that they were not interactive. Although picture description and responding to real-life situation allowed for creative language use, none of the tasks involved interaction with other speakers. As for task types, read aloud could be considered as another limitation since it did not allow participants to speak creatively.

Further research could look more closely at the sources of reduced intelligibility or low comprehensibility for the speakers of English with Turkish L1 background. Practical solutions to offer intelligibility-based pronunciation instruction could also bring new insights into the field. In fact, any effort concentrated on Turkish speakers' intelligibility or comprehensibility in English will clearly be helpful in better understanding and addressing their problems and needs in pronunciation.

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6. EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Etkili bir sözlü iletişim becerisi, anadilinde olduğu kadar ikinci dilde de son derece önemli ve gereklidir. Özellikle İngilizce gibi uluslararası boyutta iletişime olanak sağlayan bir dilde iletişim kuruyor olmak, sözlü iletilerin sağlıklı biçimde

anlaşılabilmesinin ve aktarılabilmesinin önemini artırmaktadır. Bu noktada karşımıza çıkan anlaşılabilirlik olgusu, bir dizi alt alanı kapsayacak ölçüde geniş kapsamlı bir konu niteliğindedir.

Bu çalışma, tamamlanmış bir doktora tez çalışmasının öncül araştırması olarak hayata geçirilmiştir. Bu kapsamda, Türkçe anadili konuşucusu olan ve İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümlerinde öğrenimlerini sürdüren konuşucuların, ikinci dil olarak İngilizce konuşucuları tarafından anlaşılmalarında yaşanan zorluğun boyutları sorgulanmıştır. Türkçede anlama çabası olarak karşılanabilecek bu olgu, dinleyicinin bir konuşucuyu anlamada yaşadığı kolaylık veya zorluğun algılanan derecesi (Derwing & Munro, 2009, 2015; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 2015) olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Türkçe anadili artalanına sahip konuşucular için neredeyse hiç ele alınmamış bu kavramın, aynı anadili artalanına sahip konuşucuların ikinci dil sözlü üretimlerindeki sesletime ilişkin görünümlerinin ve iletişimsel yetkinliklerinin araştırılmasına katkı sağlayabileceği düşünülmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, iki farklı devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümlerinde üçüncü sınıf düzeyinde öğrenim görmekte olan 16 İngilizce öğretmeni adayı konuşucularla, konuşma oturumları gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu oturumlarda konuşuculara sesli okuma, fotoğraf betimleme ve duruma uygun ifade geliştirme görevleri sunulmuş, konuşucu sözlü yanıtları ses kayıt cihazı yardımıyla kaydedilmiştir. İngiliz ve Amerikan İngilizcesi dört anadili konuşucusu da çalışmada çeldirici olarak yer almış, kendilerinden aynı üç görev türüne ait yanıtlar toplanmıştır. Böylelikle toplam 60 ses kaydından oluşan dinleyici havuzu oluşturulmuş, ilgili kayıtlar dinleyici oturumlarının katılımcılarına (N=8) dinletilmiştir.

Dinleyici oturumları Avusturya'da, araştırmacının akademik nitelikli bir ziyareti sırasında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan sekiz dinleyiciden biri Singapur İngilizcesi anadili konuşucusu, diğerleri ise farklı anadili artalanlarına sahip İngilizce D2 konuşucularıdır. Dinleyicilerden, her bir göreve ait ses kaydını bilgisayar ortamında ve kulaklık yardımıyla dinlemeleri ve bu sırada çeşitli görevleri yerine getirmeleri istenmiştir. Bu görevlerden ilkinde dinleyicilerden, her ses kaydını 9'lu likert tipte düzenlenmiş (1= anlaşılması çok zor, 9= anlaşılması çok kolay) ölçekte puanlamaları istenmiştir. Bu uygulamada elde edilen veriler, betimsel istatistikler yardımıyla (aritmetik ortalama) çözümlenmiştir. Dinleyicilerden ayrıca, her kaydı anlamalarını kolaylaştıran veya zorlaştıran etmenleri açık uçlu bir soruyu yanıt vererek aktarmaları beklenmiştir. Bu soruya verilen yanıtlar ise içerik çözümlemesi yoluyla incelenmiştir.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre dinleyicilerin, Türkçe anadili artalanına sahip İngilizce konuşucularını anlamakta belirgin bir güçlük yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Türk konuşucuların sekiz dinleyiciden üç görev için aldıkları ortalama puan 5.29 olurken, görevler özelinde, sesli okuma için 4.58, fotoğraf betimleme için 5.63, duruma uygun ifade geliştirme görevi için ise 5.66 ortalama puanlarına ulaşılmıştır. Her ne kadar çalışmaya çeldirici olarak katılmış olsalar da anadili konuşucularının puan ortalamaları ile Türkçe anadili konuşucularının ortalamaları arasında oluşan yaklaşık üç-dört puanlık fark dikkate değer bulunmuştur. Dinleyicilerin anlamakta en fazla zorlandıkları görev türünün sesli okuma olduğu belirlenmiştir. Türk konuşucular için puan ortalaması 4.58 olarak belirlenen sesli okumanın, fotoğraf betimleme ile duruma uygun ifade geliştirme görevinden yaklaşık 1 puan düşük olduğu gözlenmiştir. Görevler özelindeki bu farkın İngilizce anadili konuşucuları için çok daha düşük olduğu, ancak sesli okumanın yine diğer görevlerin görece altında kaldığı görülmüştür.

Dinleyicilerin sözlü dil içeriğini anlamalarını kolaylaştıran veya zorlaştıran unsurlara ilişkin sorulan soruya verdikleri açık uçlu yanıtların incelenmesi sonucunda, beş ana temaya ve bir ana temanın altında yer alan üç alt temaya ulaşılmıştır. Bunlar 'konuşmayı anlama', 'konuşma hızı ve akıcılık', 'yabancı aksan', 'hatalı sesletim' ve 'sesletim hataları' (alt temalar 'ünlü ve ünsüz hataları', 'durak, ezgi ve vurgu hataları' ile 'hatalı sesletilen sözcükler') olarak belirlenmiştir. Açık uçlu soruya verilen yanıtların incelenmesiyle ulaşılan sonuçlara göre, dinleyicilerin akademik olarak sesletim artalanına sahip olmamalarından ötürü üstdilden yoksun açıklamalar yaptıkları görülmüştür. Çoğu zaman teknik sözcükler kullanmadan sözlü dile ilişkin yapılan değerlendirmelere veya hata betimlemelerine rastlanmıştır. Anlaşılabilirlik veya anlaşılma güçlüğü gibi sözcüklere yer vermeksizin, sözlü dil içeriğini anlayabilmeye ilişkin saptamalarda bulundukları, birçok kez ise açık olarak konuşucunun aksanına gönderme yaptıkları dikkat çekmiştir. Sıklıkla, aksanlı konuşuyor olmalarına rağmen konuşucuları anlayabildiklerini ifade etmeleri, alanyazında sıkça vurgulanan, aksanın anlaşılabilirliği olumsuz etkilemeyebileceği yönündeki bakış açısını destekler niteliktedir (Derwing & Munro, 1997, 2009; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 1999). Bunlara ek olarak dinleyicilerin zaman zaman, parçalı ve parçalarüstü sesbirimlerin kullanımlarına ilişkin çeşitli hata betimlemeleri yaptıkları görülmüştür. Dinleyicilerin açık uçlu yargılarına göre, sesletimleri en sorunlu bulunan parçalı sesbirimler /θ/ ile /w/ ünsüzleri olmuştur. Ayrıca birçok kez durak, ezgi ve vurgunun hatalı kullanımlarına ilişkin yapılan tespitler dinleyici yargıları arasında yer almıştır.

Çalışma sonucunda, İngilizcenin ikinci/yabancı dil olarak öğretimi alanı ve İngilizce Öğretmenliği programlarına yönelik çeşitli öneriler getirilmiştir. Buna göre İngilizce öğrenicilerine, kendilerini sözlü olarak ifade edebilmeleri için daha fazla fırsat tanınması yararlı olacaktır. İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümleri için ise Dinleme ve Sesletim ders tanımlarının ve öğretim görevlilerince kullanılan ders izlencelerinin anlaşılabilirlik, olgularını da içine alacak biçimde yeniden yapılandırılma gerekliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ayrıca anlaşılabilirlik, anlama çabası ve yabancı aksan olgularının Türkçe anadili artalanı bulunan İngilizce konuşucuları için daha derinlemesine çalışmalarla ele alınması, sözlü dil yeterliğine ilişkin sorunların belirlenmesi ve sağlıklı çözüm önerilerinin getirilmesi bakımından katkı sağlayacaktır.

APPENDIX

A shortened version of the form used in comprehensibility research
Dear participant,
Please listen to each recording and mark speakers' performances on the scale provided. Every speaker speaks on three different tasks:
1.   Read Aloud: Reading a short paragraph about a specific topic
2.   Picture Description: Describing a photograph with a general theme
3.   Responding to a Situation: Speaking on a given situation as if the speaker were in a real-life setting

Once you have listened to each recording, please mark the performance from **1 (Very difficult to understand)** to **9 (Very easy to understand)** on each scale separately. A sample marking is shown below:
Very difficult to understand __ __ __ _X_ __ __ __ __ __ **9.** Very easy to understand
                                                    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Below each scale, please identify the reason(s) for the score you give. Explain briefly what factors played a role while scoring any particular speaker's performance. Thank you for your participation in this study.

YOUR NAME & SURNAME:

SPEAKER 1
1.1. Very difficult to understand __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ **9.** Very easy to understand
                                                         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Explain: What made it easy or difficult for you to understand what the speaker said? (Please explain)
……

1.2 Very difficult to understand __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ **9.** Very easy to understand
                                                       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Explain: What made it easy or difficult for you to understand what the speaker said? (Please explain)
……

1.3 Very difficult to understand __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ **9.** Very easy to understand
                                                       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9
Explain: What made it easy or difficult for you to understand what the speaker said? (Please explain)
……