



LISTENING STYLE PREFERENCES OF UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT: EVIDENCE FROM THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE LISTENING STYLE SCALE (FL-LSS)

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Abstract:

This study investigates the foreign language listening style preferences of EFL learners enrolled in a university-level English preparatory program in a higher education context in Türkiye. Data were collected from 114 participants using the Foreign Language Listening Style Scale (FL-LSS) developed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2023). The FL-LSS is a 17-item instrument designed to measure four listening style dimensions- Visual Style, Spatial Style, Auditory Style, and Bottom-Up Style- using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 27.0. The normality of the data distribution was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. An independent sample t-test was used for comparisons. ANOVA and LSD post hoc tests were conducted to address multiple comparisons and determine differences between groups. The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that speaking was the most challenging language skill for these students. Moreover, the Visual Style emerged as the most strongly preferred listening style across all demographic and academic variables, such as gender, age, department, and previous educational institutions. The findings highlight the importance of considering individual listening style preferences when designing listening instruction in higher education EFL contexts.

Keywords: second language listening, listening style preferences, EFL learners, learner differences, higher education

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1. Introduction

In foreign language teaching and learning programs, listening skills are the least researched and prioritized of the four main language skills (Seferoğlu & Uzakgören, 2004). One reason for this is the difficulty of teaching it (Field, 2008). In Türkiye, students accepted into English-medium university programs must pass an English Language Proficiency Exam to demonstrate that they have already mastered the language skills required in their departments. Those who fail the exam attend English language classes at preparatory schools. However, preparatory schools at many universities do not test listening proficiency; consequently, listening does not receive the priority it deserves in preparatory classes, or is tested with minimal emphasis. For example, listening skills account for 10% of the overall final grade at the institution in this study. This attitude then leads to problems when students cannot follow their instructors and take efficient notes during lectures. Consequently, their overall educational achievement suffers (Seferoğlu & Uzakgören, 2004).

Foreign language exams in Türkiye are generally based on reading comprehension, writing, grammar, and vocabulary (Hocaoğlu & Ocak, 2024). A study by Polat (2017) that examined the content of the Foreign Language Proficiency Exam (FLPE) used in Türkiye found that the exam was considered insufficient because it did not include the writing, listening, and speaking components. It put pressure on academics because of its difficulty, and it negatively affected their ability to learn and improve their foreign language skills. The lack of priority for listening skills is supported by the Education First (EF) 2025 report, in which Türkiye ranked 71st out of 123 countries. The listening skills score ranked 478 out of 650, indicating that Türkiye is among countries with "low" proficiency levels (Education First, 2025).

In setting priorities for skills teaching, we also need to take account of learners' perceptions of their needs. Many of them, if asked to rate the relative difficulty of the four language skills, cite listening as the area about which they feel most insecure (Field, 2008:4). This is alarming considering that over 40% of our daily communication time is spent listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Munusamy et al., 2024). Therefore, listening competence has a vital role in the development of communicative ability and overall language proficiency (Rost, 2011; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, listening is one of the main ways learners are exposed to English both inside and outside the classroom.

Previously, listening was seen as something that could just be picked up by learners, just like native language speakers (Nunan, 2002). However, Goh (2008) and Vandergrift (2007) emphasized that listening comprehension is not passive, but an active process of meaning construction. Learners use many cognitive and metacognitive strategies, such as predicting content, identifying keywords, monitoring comprehension, inferring unknown information, selective attention, and evaluating understanding (Goh, 2008; Vandergrift, 2007). Moreover, there are three approaches to explaining the processes of listening: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive (Flowerdew & Miller, 2010).

Successful comprehension depends on learners' ability to integrate bottom-up processing, which consists of decoding linguistic input and combining it into words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Finally, individual sentences combine to create ideas and concepts (Flowerdew & Miller, 2010). Top-down processing refers to the use of prior knowledge in processing text (Rost, 2011). Finally, Interactive Processing refers to combining both bottom-up and top-down processing while simultaneously interacting with and processing information at different levels (Flowerdew & Miller, 2010: 11).

Another important issue in listening research concerns individual learner preferences. Kinsella (1995) described perceptual learning style preferences such as visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic tendencies, highlighting the fact that students may respond differently to the same listening tasks. Some learners may rely heavily on visual support, whereas others focus more on auditory cues such as tone of voice, stress, or accent. Likewise, some learners prefer to identify key words and grasp the general meaning, while others tend to focus on details or attempt to understand every word. These tendencies suggest that learners may differ in their listening style preferences. Listening styles are learners' preferred ways of perceiving, processing, and responding to spoken input in listening tasks. Understanding these preferences may help teachers design more learner-centered listening instruction and may enable students to develop greater awareness of their own listening behaviors (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Recently, research has focused on multimodal input (MMI), which is defined as *"input that conveys information through different modes (i.e. written, auditory and visual)"* (Cárdenas-Claros et al., 2023:1). In authentic communication, spoken language is not only through sound, but is also assisted with non-verbal communication, body language, eye contact, hand gestures, posture, and voice. It can be used to express feelings that are difficult to put into words or to support verbal communication. (Youssef, 2023:1) With the growth of technology, classrooms are using video-based listening materials with subtitles and captions, digital and streaming platforms, and mobile applications. Sydorenko (2010) found that captions for beginning learners assisted recognition of written word forms. Audio facilitates recognition of aural word forms, and more word meanings are learned when videos are shown with both audio and captions than with either audio or captions alone (p 61). It can be said that captions can be used as a scaffold with students with lower proficiency levels (Muñoz & Miralpeix, 2024).

Very few studies have focused on listening style preferences in EFL contexts, especially in environments where students are exposed to a wide range of listening input due to recent technological developments. One instrument is the Listening Style Scale developed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2023). The present study aims to investigate the listening style preferences of university-level EFL learners using the Listening Style Scale developed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2023).

The present study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) Which listening style preferences do university EFL learners report as the most and least strongly preferred in listening activities?

- 2) Do listening style preferences differ significantly according to selected demographic and academic variables, including gender, age, academic major, and previous educational background?
- 3) Does the Listening Style Scale demonstrate acceptable reliability with the present sample?

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study are 114 university students (male $n = 57$, 50.0%; female $n = 57$, 50.0%) enrolled in the School of Foreign Languages at a University in Türkiye. Participants were drawn from six departments: Engineering ($n = 38$, 33.3%), English-Medium Medicine ($n = 27$, 23.7%), Economics ($n = 20$, 17.5%), Optional Preparatory English Programme ($n = 14$, 12.3%), English Translation and Interpreting ($n = 9$, 7.9%), and English Language Teaching ($n = 6$, 5.3%). The age distribution is as follows: 17–19 years ($n = 77$, 67.5%), 20–22+ years ($n = 34$, 29.8%), and 23 years and above ($n = 3$, 2.6%).

2.2 Instrument

The data were collected using the Foreign Language Listening Style Scale (FL-LSS) developed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumanoglu (2023). Permission to use the instrument was obtained from the authors prior to data collection. The FL-LSS is a 17-item self-report instrument measuring foreign language listening style preferences on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale consists of four dimensions:

- 1) **Visual (6 items: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q6, Q8, Q11, Q15):** Focusing on identifying whether EFL listeners get help from visual clues while trying to understand what they listen to in English.
- 2) **Auditory (3 items: Q5, Q9, Q12):** Deciphering how EFL listeners get help from only audio channels while trying to understand what they listen to in English.
- 3) **Spatial (4 items: Q4, Q7, Q13, Q17):** Determining if EFL listeners use their imagination while trying to understand what they listen to in English.
- 4) **Bottom-up style (3 items: Q10, Q14, Q16):** these items assess whether EFL listeners approach spoken texts step by step to understand what they hear in English.

2.3 Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee. Participants were presented with an informed consent statement confirming that participation was voluntary and assuring them that their responses would remain confidential and be used only for academic research purposes. The questionnaire was administered via an online survey on Google Forms during the spring semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. Participants completed the instrument individually, and completion required approximately 10–15 minutes.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 27.0 software. Normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, and all variables were found to be normally distributed. An independent-samples *t*-test was used for pairwise comparisons, while a one-way ANOVA and LSD post hoc tests were conducted for multiple comparisons and to determine intergroup differences. The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05 ($p < .05$).

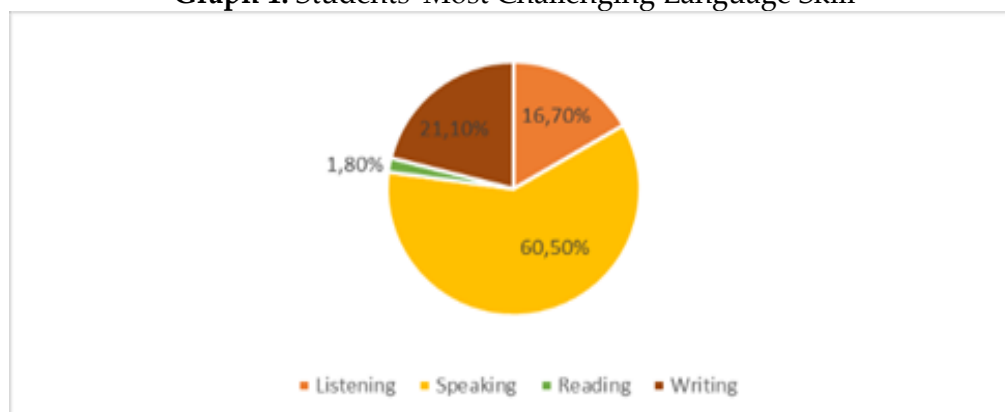
First, the results confirm the scale's applicability to the current sample. The four-factor structure identified in the present study is broadly consistent with the original scale structure, and the overall reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .87$) indicates strong internal consistency. In addition, the KMO value (.867) and the significant Bartlett's test further supported the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Taken together, these findings suggest that the instrument maintains acceptable psychometric properties when applied to university EFL learners in a different instructional context.

3. Results

The present study investigated the listening style preferences of university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners using the Listening Style Scale. The findings provide both psychometric and pedagogical insights into how learners approach listening in higher education contexts. The students who participated in the study were asked which language skill they considered most challenging, and the results are shown in Graph 1.

The majority of students identified their most challenging language skill as Speaking ($n = 69, 60.5\%$), followed by Writing ($n = 24, 21.1\%$), Listening ($n = 19, 16.7\%$), and Reading ($n = 1, 0.8\%$) (Graph 1). This finding is surprising, as listening is seen by students as one of the easier skills to master. More research is needed on speaking skills to make them more accessible to students.

Graph 1: Students' Most Challenging Language Skill



The study also examined whether foreign language listening-style preferences differ according to **gender** among EFL learners, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Comparison of Listening Style Preferences According to Gender

Subscale	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Visual	Male	57	27.30	5.37	-1.93	0.056
	Female	57	29.04	4.17		
Auditory	Male	57	12.18	2.57	-2.31	0.023*
	Female	57	13.07	1.39		
Spatial	Male	57	14.46	3.57	-1.23	0.218
	Female	57	15.25	3.23		
Bottom-up	Male	57	10.11	2.52	-0.26	0.795
	Female	57	10.23	2.51		
Scale total	Male	57	64.03	11.33	-1.86	0.065
	Female	57	67.57	8.83		

Note: N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; t=statistic (the value calculated by the independent-samples t test), p=probability value showing statistical significance. *p<0.05.

According to Table 1, the most preferred listening style for both male and female students is the **Visual listening style** (m = 27.30, f = 29.04). The second most preferred skill is spatial (m = 14.46, f = 15.25). The third preference is Auditory m=12.18, f=13.07). The least preferred listening style is Bottom-up (m = 10.11, f = 10.23).

The total scale scores did not show a statistically significant gender difference, although females scored slightly higher across all listening-style dimensions. The difference was statistically significant only for the Auditory listening style (t = -2.31, p = .023, p < .05), suggesting that female students demonstrated significantly stronger auditory listening preferences than male students. The findings indicate that gender has a limited effect on listening-style preferences among EFL learners, except for auditory orientation.

Students' listening style preferences were examined by age, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Comparison of Listening Style Preferences According to Age

Subscale	Age	N	M	SD	t	p
Visual	17-19	77	28.01	4.91	-0.48	0.629
	20-23	37	28.49	4.82		
Auditory	17-19	77	12.61	2.08	-0.90	0.928
	20-23	37	1.65	2.18		
Spatial	17-19	77	14.40	3.51	-2.05	0.043*
	20-23	37	15.78	3.04		
Bottom-up	17-19	77	9.94	2.50	-1.43	0.155
	20-23	37	10.65	2.47		
Scale total	17-19	77	64.96	10.75	-1,27	0.206
	20-23	37	67.57	9.08		

Note: N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, t=statistic (the value calculated by the independent-samples t test) p=probability value showing statistical significance. *p<0.05.

According to Table 2, listening style dimensions appeared relatively stable across age groups. The most dominant listening style preference for both age groups is the **Visual**

listening style. The mean scores for visual listening style (Ages 17-19=mean 28.01, Ages 20-23=mean 28.49). The second most preferred listening style is spatial (Ages 17-19=mean 14.40, ages 20-23=mean 15.78). The third preference is Auditory (Ages 17-19=mean 12.61, Ages 20-23=mean 12.65) and the least preferred preference is Bottom-up: (Ages 17-19=mean 9.94, Ages 20-23= mean 10.65).

The findings show that there were no statistically significant age-related differences in the Visual, Auditory, Bottom-up Processing, or Total Scale scores ($p > .05$). Students aged 20-23 obtained slightly higher mean scores than those in the 17-19 age group across all listening-style dimensions. However, a significant difference emerged in the Spatial dimension ($p = .043$). This finding suggests that older learners may demonstrate stronger tendencies toward organizational, relational, and spatial processing strategies during listening comprehension activities. Students in the 17-19 age group may need additional support strategies to picture the listening activities in their minds, including pre- and post-listening activities. The results suggest that instructional practices combined with visual materials and auditory support may be particularly effective for students from diverse academic backgrounds. Listening style preferences of the students were examined according to departments, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The Comparison of Listening Style Preferences According to Departments

Subscale	Department	N	M	SD	F/LSD	p
Visual	Engineering(1)	38	27.95	4.66	1.40	0.227
	Economics (2)	20	29.05	5.25		
	Voluntary Eng. prep (3)	14	30.14	2.32		
	Translation (4)	9	29.00	3.50		
	English Language Teaching (5)	6	28.67	3.67		
	Medicine (6)	27	26.41	6.03		
	Total	114	28.17	4.86		
Auditory	Engineering(1)	38	12.63	1.98	2.39 1,2,3,5>6	0.043*
	Economics (2)	20	13.20	1.61		
	Voluntary (3)	14	13.36	1.39		
	Translation (4)	9	12.78	1.20		
	English Language Teaching(5)	6	13.50	1.05		
	Medicine (6)	27	11.56	2.87		
	Total	114	12.62	2.11		
Spatial	Engineering(1)	38	14.68	3.15	1.32	0.260
	Economics (2)	20	15.50	3.15		
	Voluntary (3)	14	16.21	2.39		
	Translation (4)	9	15.22	2.86		
	English Language Teaching(5)	6	15.33	3.01		
	Medicine (6)	27	13.67	4.39		
	Total	114	14.85	3.41		
Bottom-up	Engineering(1)	38	10.00	2.45	1.52	0.191
	Economics (2)	20	10.95	2.72		
	Voluntary(3)	14	10.93	2.27		
	Translation (4)	9	10.22	1.86		

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	English Language Teaching(5)	6	10.83	1.94		
	Medicine(6)	27	9.26	2.67		
	Total	114	10.17	2.50		
Scale total	Engineering(1)	38	65.26	8.58	2.45 2.3>6	0.038*
	Economics (2)	20	68.70	10.64		
	Voluntary(3)	14	70.64	5.71		
	Translation (4)	9	67.22	6.92		
	English Language Teaching (5)	6	68.33	6.22		
	Medicine (6)	27	60.89	13.64		
	Total	114	65.81	10.27		

Note: N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, t=statistic(the value calculated by the independent-samples t test) p=probability value showing statistical significance. *p<0.05

As shown in Table 3, the findings revealed statistically significant differences in the **auditory** dimension and the **total scale** scores, whereas no significant differences were found for the Visual, Spatial, or Bottom-up Processing dimensions when departments were taken into account.

The findings clearly indicate that students prefer **visual listening styles** across all departments. No statistically significant departmental differences are found in the Visual dimension ($F = 1.40, p = .227$). Students in the Voluntary English Prep department demonstrate the highest preference for the visual listening style, with a mean score of approximately 30.14. This is followed closely by Economics ($M=29.05$), Translation ($M=29$), and ELT students ($M=28.67$). Engineering students also show a strong preference for visual listening ($M=27.95$), while Medicine students report the lowest visual preference among the departments, although it still remains the most dominant style within that group (26.41). These findings suggest that learners generally favor receiving information through visual input such as images, diagrams, written texts, and visual aids. The **spatial listening style** ranks second in all departments. No statistically significant differences are found in the Spatial dimension ($F = 1.32, p = .260$). Nevertheless, the Voluntary English Preparatory Program students report the highest mean score ($M = 16.21$), while Medicine students demonstrate the lowest mean score ($M = 13.67$).

Audio listening style ranks third among listening style preferences across all departments. A significant difference was observed in the Auditory dimension ($F = 2.39, p = .043$). The analysis indicates that students from Engineering ($M=12.63$), Economics ($M=13.2$), the Voluntary English Preparatory Program ($M=13.36$), and English Language Teaching ($M=13.5$) demonstrated significantly higher auditory listening-style scores than students from the Medicine department ($M=11.56$). This finding may suggest that students enrolled in language-oriented or communication-intensive academic programs are more inclined toward auditory processing and spoken-language engagement than students in medically oriented disciplines.

The bottom-up listening style has the lowest scores across all departments. Voluntary English Prep and ELT students showed marginally higher bottom-up processing tendencies than students of Medicine and Engineering. However, no significant departmental differences are found for Bottom-up Processing ($F = 1.52, p =$

.191). This result suggests that detailed linguistic decoding processes, such as phonological recognition, lexical analysis, and grammatical processing, may be used similarly across academic disciplines.

Total Scale Scores show a statistically significant difference across departments ($F = 2.45, p = .038$). LSD post hoc comparisons reveal that students in the Economics and Voluntary English Preparatory Program groups score significantly higher than those in the Medicine group.

The highest total score is observed among Voluntary English Preparatory Program students ($M = 70.64$), whereas Medicine students have the lowest overall score ($M = 60.89$). The relatively high standard deviation observed in the Medicine group ($SD = 13.64$) suggests greater variability in listening style preferences within that department. Taken together, the results indicate that departmental background has a limited but meaningful influence on listening style preferences. Specifically, auditory listening tendencies and overall listening-style scores appear to vary significantly across departments, whereas visual, spatial, and bottom-up processing styles remain relatively stable. The consistently lower scores observed among medicine students may suggest that students in scientific programs engage differently with listening processes than those in language-related academic programs.

Students' listening style preferences were examined by the type of high school they graduated from, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of Foreign Language Listening Styles Preferences by High School Type

Subscale	High School	N	M	SD	f	p
Visual	Anatolian High School	57	28.19	4.72	1.25	0.297
	Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	10	30.80	2.78		
	Science High School	29	27.41	5.52		
	Other	18	27.83	4.93		
	Total	114	28.17	4.86		
Auditory	Anatolian High School	57	12.88	1.91	1.39	0.251
	Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	10	13.30	0.95		
	Science High School	29	12.10	2.48		
	Other	18	12.28	2.40		
	Total	114	12.62	2.11		
Spatial	Anatolian High School	57	15.12	3.10	0.66	0.579
	Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	10	15.50	3.21		
	Science High School	29	14.14	3.93		
	Other	18	14.78	3.69		
	Total	114	14.85	3.41		
Bottom-up	Anatolian High School	57	10.07	2.62	1.90	0.134
	Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	10	10.50	2.37		
	Science High School	29	9.55	2.34		
	Other	18	11.28	2.24		
	Total	114	10.17	2.50		
Scale total	Anatolian High School	57	66.26	9.65	1.26	0.294
	Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	10	70.10	7.13		

	Science High School	29	63.21	11.79		
	Other	18	66.17	10.74		
	Total	114	65.81	10.27		

Note: N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. * $p < 0.05$.

The findings indicate no statistically significant differences among high school types in foreign language listening style preferences ($p > .05$ for all subscales and the scale total). Although mean differences were observed, these variations did not reach statistical significance.

The Visual listening style is the most frequently reported preference among students across all high school categories. Students from Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools showed the highest mean score ($M = 30.80$), whereas Science High School students had the lowest mean score ($M = 27.41$). However, the difference was not statistically significant ($f = 1.25$, $p = .297$).

The spatial listening style was the second-most preferred among students across all high schools. Anatolian Imam Hatip High School students achieved the highest mean score ($M = 15.50$), whereas Science High School students had the lowest score ($M = 14.14$). Nevertheless, the differences were not statistically significant ($f = 0.66$, $p = .579$).

The third most preferred listening style was **auditory listening**. Anatolian Imam Hatip High School students again obtained the highest mean score ($M = 13.30$), while Science High School students had the lowest score ($M = 12.10$). The analysis revealed no significant difference among groups ($f = 1.39$, $p = .251$).

The least preferred was the **bottom-up listening style**; students in the “Other” high school category reported the highest mean score ($M = 11.28$), while Science High School students again demonstrated the lowest mean score ($M = 9.55$). However, the findings do not show statistical significance ($f = 1.90$, $p = .134$).

Finally, the Scale Total scores indicated that Anatolian Imam Hatip High School students had the highest overall listening-style preference score ($M = 70.10$), whereas Science High School students had the lowest ($M = 63.21$). Similar to the subscales, the difference among school types was not statistically significant ($f = 1.26$, $p = .294$). Overall, the results suggest that high school type does not significantly influence students’ preferences for foreign language listening styles.

4. Discussion

The current study contributes to the growing literature on second-language listening by revealing that the visual listening style is the most preferred among Turkish EFL preparatory students, regardless of variables such as gender, age, department, and previous schooling. The finding is in line with recent studies highlighting the increasing importance of multimodal input in modern language learning, particularly for younger learners and those involved in digital environments. The strong preference for visuals noted in this study can be understood in the context of a wider movement toward the use of audio-visual materials in teaching and assessment. These visuals are commonly

perceived as authentic, inspiring, and useful for understanding listening activities (Shin & Lee, 2024; Wandah et al., 2024). Specifically, Wandah et al. (2024) found that visual learners preferred videos and online materials, showing that visual support can improve understanding of spoken content. Similarly, Shin and Lee (2024) found that young English language learners responded positively to all types of videos and that the visual element made the listening tasks more engaging, although it did not necessarily increase scores.

This emphasis on visual style may also indicate how prevalent multimedia-based learning has become. Listening today is not an exclusively auditory experience for learners; they often process spoken language alongside subtitles, visuals, gestures, cues from the speaker, and other visual contexts. That explains the strong preference for visual listening in this study. It likely means that students have become accustomed to learning with visual aids, particularly from online content, streaming media, and educational videos. This is in line with multimedia learning theories, which propose that when visuals are appropriately matched with audio, cognitive load can be reduced, and learners can derive meaning (Shin & Lee, 2024). El Moussaoui and Belhaj (2025) support this idea, noting that learners increasingly use multimodal resources for listening tasks; however, classroom practices may still favor traditional comprehension tasks over integrating visual and auditory inputs.

At the same time, the finding that speaking was perceived as the most difficult skill adds another dimension to understanding listening-style preferences. Speaking is the hardest for students. They will lean towards receptive input methods that are less daunting and more manageable. Visual listening tasks can provide the extra context that helps learners understand meaning when there is no pressure to speak immediately. This connection between feeling safe with receptive tasks and struggling with productive ones may explain why students prefer visual listening, even though speaking remains a challenge for them. Studies on listening anxiety and metacognitive strategies indicate that when learners lack confidence in their language skills, they tend to seek external cues for support (Al-Khresheh & Alruwaili, 2024). Thus, visual preference could be not only a matter of cognitive style but also a response to confidence issues related to the demands of L2 communication.

The study indicated that while auditory style varied significantly, overall listening style scores did not differ significantly by gender. This is fairly consistent with earlier studies on gender-related listening differences that have produced inconsistent findings. For example, Shin and Lee (2024) found no significant differences in young ELLs' listening performance based on the type of audio-visual input, and Al-Khresheh and Alruwaili observed that there were no significant gender differences in the use of metacognitive strategies, with the exception of problem-solving, where females performed better (Shin & Lee, 2024; Al-Khresheh & Alruwaili, 2024). Furthermore, Nurhanipah & Karmina (2024) also found that gender differences in the use of learning strategies for listening skills among ELE students from 2021 at a public university in East Java were found to be insignificant. On the other hand, other research indicates that, due

to differences in focus, brain activity, or communication styles, males and females may perceive listening content differently; however, these findings remain debated (Trang, 2022). The present results support a more cautious interpretation: whereas gender may affect some aspects of listening behavior, it does not appear to produce consistent, noteworthy variations in listening-style preferences.

Age had little effect on listening style preferences, consistent with a large body of recent studies. Age differences are often too slight to cause major changes in strategic or stylistic preferences in comparatively similar university groups. For example, despite some individual differences, students at various academic levels in Al-Khresheh and Alruwaili's (2024) study displayed similar patterns in general metacognitive approaches. These results really highlight an interesting point: among university-level EFL learners, listening patterns do not seem to be much influenced by age.

An additional noteworthy finding of the study is that auditory listening techniques clearly differ according to academic departments. Compared with their medical counterparts, students from Engineering, Economics, the Voluntary English Preparatory Program, and English Language Teaching typically scored higher in this category. This implies that a student's approach to listening assignments may be influenced by their educational background. One explanation for this could be that students in preparatory programs or in fields like ELT are exposed to more language-focused or communication-intensive work, which may help them feel more comfortable with aural input.

In contrast, students studying engineering and economics are probably accustomed to lecture-based formats that require attentive listening. Students studying medicine, on the other hand, may be more inclined to read extensively and commit terminology to memory, which may reduce their preference for auditory information alone. This is consistent with Furuya's (2021) findings, which show that listening processes differ across task conditions and proficiency levels, indicating that learners' efficacy with auditory versus knowledge-supported input depends on their information processing. Additionally, it supports Wandah et al.'s (2024) claim that students' learning preferences are shaped by the methods they often employ in their respective domains.

However, it is important to be cautious when interpreting these results in relation to academic majors. Rather than fixed traits of listening patterns, the observed discrepancies may stem from variations in teaching methods, departmental cultures, or degrees of exposure to spoken academic discourse. Future studies using bigger and more varied samples from different fields may provide further insight into how background affects listening preferences.

The absence of significant differences across previous educational institutions suggests that students generally come to university with similar listening-style orientations in this context. This may be the result of Turkey's standardized educational system, particularly in English instruction, where students frequently follow similar classroom procedures and complete test-oriented listening exercises. El Moussaoui and Belhaj note that classroom practices typically continue to concentrate on top-down

comprehension exercises, despite teachers' recognition of the importance of bottom-up listening abilities. It makes sense that students from different schools would have comparable listening preferences if they had been taught using similar approaches.

The reliability analyses also confirmed that the FL-LSS is suitable for this sample. The exploratory factor analysis primarily supported the initial four-factor structure proposed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumaoglu (2023), and the total Cronbach's alpha coefficient demonstrated strong internal consistency. These findings pave the way for further research in this field by confirming the FL-LSS's validity as an instrument for examining listening-style preferences among Turkish university EFL students.

The results have significant educational ramifications as well. Teachers in EFL preparatory programs may want to include more video-based listening exercises, visual aids, subtitles, and speaker cues in their courses because visual style was the most popular choice. This does not, however, imply that teaching should only concentrate on one approach. In light of ongoing debates about the efficacy of rigid learning-style models, a multimodal approach could significantly improve comprehension and engagement among many students. Speaking was shown to be the most difficult skill; combining speaking practice with listening instruction could help students become more comfortable with receptive skills, ultimately improving their productivity.

Even though many students appear to benefit from visual aids, it is important that listening instruction does not only accommodate the dominant preferences. Students must be exposed to a range of listening situations, such as audio-only assignments, real-world interactions, and strategy-based instruction, to develop excellent listening skills. Therefore, rather than serving as a replacement for real listening practice, multimodal resources should be viewed as instruments to improve understanding.

Finally, the study advances our knowledge by demonstrating that preferences for listening styles are determined more by how students engage with different contexts and subjects than by general criteria such as age or education. We should reevaluate the notion that listening is solely about hearing in light of the obvious preference for visual listening. Today's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations, particularly in higher education, have made listening more about understanding different forms of communication. In the future, it would be interesting to see whether people's reported listening preferences correspond with how well they perform in audio-only versus audio-visual environments, as well as how these styles connect to strategy use, listening anxiety, and speaking growth over time.

4.1 Limitations

When examining the results of this study, it is important to note a few limitations.

First of all, only one institution in Türkiye hosted it, and only 114 students from EFL preparatory schools participated. Therefore, we should use caution when generalizing these findings to all EFL students in various educational contexts.

Second, the Foreign Language Listening Style Scale (FL-LSS) was used to collect self-reported data for the study. Self-reports do not often accurately reflect how students

behave during actual listening activities, even though this measure demonstrated respectable validity and reliability in our sample.

Third, rather than the students' performance on listening activities, the emphasis was on their preferred listening styles. Therefore, we cannot presume that students who prefer a particular listening style will inevitably perform better at understanding under such circumstances. Future studies could examine the relationship between preferred listening styles and real listening success.

Lastly, the cross-sectional design provides only a snapshot of students' preferred listening styles at a particular point in time. Longitudinal research may provide a deeper understanding of how these preferences change and grow throughout the language-learning process. Our knowledge of EFL students' listening patterns would be greatly improved by more studies with larger samples across diverse educational settings and organizations.

5. Conclusion

The listening preferences of university-level EFL students enrolled in an English preparatory program at a state university in Türkiye were examined in this study. It examined how several academic and demographic factors, such as gender, age, major, and prior education, affect listening preferences using the Foreign Language Listening Style Scale (FL-LSS), developed by Genç and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2023).

The results showed that participants favored the Visual Style over the Spatial Style. This indicates that students could greatly benefit from learning environments that combine auditory and visual elements, as they frequently rely on visual cues when listening. The considerable inclination toward visual styles demonstrates how crucial multimedia and technology have become to language learning in the modern era. Additionally, listening style preferences appear to be rather consistent across many demographic variables. Only in the Auditory Style did gender disparities show up, with female students outperforming male students. The Spatial Style showed modest age disparities, whereas the Auditory Style and total listening scores showed considerable differences across academic subjects. On the other hand, there were no notable variations according to prior education. The results revealed that the FL-LSS did well in this group in terms of reliability. The measure is helpful for investigating listening-style preferences among Turkish EFL learners because its internal consistency was strong and its factor structure held up.

All things considered, our results highlight the need to understand individual differences in listening preferences and to implement multimodal teaching strategies in EFL classes. Students' prevailing learning styles should not be the primary focus of listening instruction. Students should be exposed to a variety of listening scenarios and exercises that promote comprehension and language development, thereby building strong listening skills. The relationship between listening-style preferences and

performance, strategy use, and other learner characteristics across different EFL settings might be further explored in future research.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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