

An Investigation of the Methods used for Teaching Four Skills in Turkish as A Foreign Language at Primary and Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the methods utilised to teach four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in teaching Turkish as a foreign language at primary and secondary school levels in Turkey. The study was conducted using Phenomenological research design, a qualitative approach. The participants were composed of 20 volunteer teachers who were selected via convenience sampling method. The data were analysed through content analysis. The results have revealed that the teachers apply variety of methods and strategies to teach language skills effectively. It is recommended that in order to teach the language skills more effectively, the teachers should make use of technology-supported materials and interactive methods such as group work and discussion simulations.

Keywords: Turkish as a Foreign Language, language skills, teaching methods, primary and secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

The four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) play a critical role in language learning, and each of them provides students with different grammar and communication skills. Teaching these skills effectively enables students to gain proficiency in the language, making language learning more meaningful and productive. This paper aims to examine the methods used in teaching the four basic language skills. In this context, listening skill is considered a basic skill in language learning because other skills (speaking, reading and writing) require listening.

Teaching Listening Skills

The methods used to develop listening skills usually provide students with the opportunity to practice with real-life materials. These materials include videos, podcasts, songs and radio programs (Lynch, 2009). In teaching listening, carefully selected materials containing natural speech are used so that students can develop their comprehension in depth (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In addition, techniques used to develop listening skills include activities such as “listening and taking notes”, “listening and responding”, and “listening and discussing” (Richards, 2008). These methods allow students not only to understand what they hear but also to process the information and reinforce its meaning.

Teaching listening skills can be approached from various aspects. First, it is important to state that listening skills are a process aimed at understanding, not just hearing. In this process, students use certain strategies to understand the text they listen to. These strategies show that listening is an active process and that the student is not just a passive receiver but an active participant in the process of creating meaning. In

order to develop listening skills, the aim is for students to process what they hear accurately and to be able to create the meaning of the text rather than understanding the sounds and words (Goh, 2008). Listening is generally examined in two main types:

Daily listening: This type of listening involves listening tasks that language learners encounter in real life. For example, understanding a telephone conversation, listening to a direction, or chatting with a friend.

Educational listening: This type of listening involves listening to students in educational settings, especially in lectures and academic settings. It usually involves listening to a teacher explain or a presentation containing information on a particular topic (Vandergrift, 2007).

Methods for Developing Listening Skills

Different methods and techniques are used to teach listening skills. These methods aim to improve students’ understanding

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and skills at various levels and contexts of listening. Listening strategies are techniques that students use to understand the text. These strategies may include:

Making predictions: Students try to understand the text they are listening to better by making predictions about the topic before they start listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Determining the main idea: Students try to determine the main idea or the main message of the text while listening (Goh, 2008).

Taking notes: Taking notes of important information or key words while listening helps them understand what they are listening to better (Vandergrift, 2007).

Inferring meaning from words: Guessing and deducing the meaning of words they do not know in the conversation they are listening to (Goh, 2008).

Inferring meaning from context: Understanding the context of the conversation while listening and figuring out the relationships between words (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Listening and Taking Notes: Listening and taking notes allow students to systematically record the information they listen to. This method is especially used in academic listening and lessons. Students develop their listening skills by recording the important points and main ideas of the conversation. Taking notes helps students process and understand information while listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Targeted Listening: Targeted listening allows students to listen for a specific purpose. For example, students search for specific information while listening to a recording or listen in accordance with a given instruction. This type of listening can be done for different purposes depending on the context of the teaching. Listening skills can be improved with strategies such as targeting a specific grammatical structure or vocabulary (Goh, 2008).

Teaching Speaking Skills

Speaking skills allow language learners to develop their ability to express themselves. One of the most preferred methods in teaching speaking is the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. This approach aims to prepare students for speaking situations that they may encounter in daily life (Littlewood, 2004). Activities and events are organized in the classroom to develop speaking skills. These activities include role-playing, group discussions, discussion clubs, and interactive methods such as simulations (Thornbury, 2005). These methods, which encourage students to speak naturally, accelerate the development of language skills. In addition, methods that encourage making mistakes and provide students with opportunities to correct themselves enable students to speak more confidently (Ur, 2012).

Methods for Developing Speaking Skills

Role-games

Role games allow students to simulate situations they will encounter in real life. By taking on a specific role, students practice the language skills required for that role. This method helps language learners gain self-confidence and understand the use of language in various contexts (Skehan, 1998).

Intergroup Discussions and Collaborative Work

Group work and discussions encourage students to listen to different perspectives and communicate their own ideas effectively to others. In addition, during collaborative work, students develop their self-expression skills by mentoring each other (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Language Immersion Method

Language immersion is a technique used to ensure that students use the target language continuously in their daily lives. This method provides students with the opportunity to practice speaking in the natural flow of the language. Language immersion allows students to develop their speaking skills quickly (Snow, 2002).

Short Presentations and Speaking Practice

When students are given the opportunity to make a short presentation on a specific topic, they can improve both their grammar and organizational skills. While making a presentation, the student practices speaking within a certain structure, and this process teaches the structural and pragmatic aspects of the language (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment

Self-assessment allows students to review their own speaking performance. Furthermore, peer assessment encourages students to evaluate each other's speaking skills and provide feedback. Such assessment methods help students realize their shortcomings and encourage them to practice speaking more carefully (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Teaching Reading Skills

Reading skills improve language learners' abilities to make sense of texts, analyze them, and acquire information. One of the most effective methods in teaching reading is to use "reading strategies." Students are taught strategies such as inferring meaning, guessing words, taking notes on the text, and finding the main idea while reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Reading activities usually involve different types of texts; for example, a variety of reading materials are used, such as stories, news

articles, academic texts, and internet articles. The principle of “reading-meaningfulness” is important in teaching reading skills because the reading process requires students’ active participation in the meaning of the text (Nuttall, 1996). In addition, techniques such as text analysis and critical reading are also used in developing reading skills, so students discover the main themes and sub-meanings in the texts.

Methods for Developing Reading Skills

Vocabulary: Reading skills are based on students developing their vocabulary. While trying to understand words they do not know, students make inferences based on the context of the text and make these words permanent (Grabe, 2009).

Text Types and Structures: Reading involves understanding different text types and structures. By learning the characteristics of various types of texts, students can understand what kind of information each type of text provides and how it is structured (Anderson, 2003).

Inferring Meaning and Critical Reading: In reading skills, it is important to make in-depth inferences, not just the superficial meaning of the text. Critical reading allows students to understand the intention of the author of the text and to evaluate the text (Snow, 2010)

Reading Exercises

Reading exercises help students read and understand various types of texts. Students learn to make meaningful inferences by answering questions about the text. Reading questions are aimed at understanding the general meaning and main idea of the text. These exercises lay the foundations of reading skills while also strengthening students’ vocabulary (Grabe, 2009).

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension includes strategies that will enable students to understand the text in depth, not just superficially. These strategies enable students to analyze the text and distinguish main ideas, supporting information, and conclusions. Reading comprehension strategies include methods such as determining the main idea, extracting subtexts, and relating the text to their own experiences (Anderson, 2003).

Contextual Clues

While reading, students try to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words by inferring them from context. Context clues help students understand new words through the surrounding words and sentence structures of the text. This allows students to develop their vocabulary and use words correctly while reading (Grabe, 2009).

Technology-enhanced Reading

Technological tools provide a variety of materials that help students develop their reading skills. Interactive reading platforms and digital books allow students to interact with texts and make sense of them. Digital environments stand out as an effective tool, especially in developing students’ reading skills (Snow, 2010).

Teaching Writing Skills

Writing skills help language learners gain the ability to organize their thoughts and express them effectively in writing. Teaching writing usually begins by introducing students to various types of writing. Students develop their written expression by working on different writing tasks such as composition writing, letter writing, article writing, and creative writing (Hyland, 2003). A common approach used in teaching writing is the “writing process” model. In this model, the writing process consists of the stages of planning, writing, revising, and correcting (Raimes, 1983). Another activity used to improve students’ writing skills is to receive “feedback”. Students have the opportunity to improve their written work with the feedback they receive from their teachers and peers (Ferris, 2003). In addition, methods in which students participate more in the writing process and creative writing activities are included make written expression more effective.

Organization of Thoughts

The writing process requires the orderly transfer of thoughts. Before starting to write, students should make a plan, determine their main ideas, and express them in a logical order. Effective writing involves creating a text that is enriched with details and examples that support the main idea, following a certain structure (introduction, body, conclusion). In this context, the writing process focuses on developing the skills of organizing and structuring thoughts (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Grammar and Syntax

Grammar has an important place in writing skills. Students must create meaningful and correct sentences using correct grammatical structures, appropriate word selection and correct punctuation marks. Grammar is a factor that directly affects the quality of writing and increases students’ written expression skills. This is necessary to prevent ambiguities in written expression and to ensure the integrity of the text (Raimes, 1983).

Vocabulary Expansion

Another important factor that improves writing skills is vocabulary. Students should create variety in their texts by

using words meaningfully and appropriately. This allows students to have a wider vocabulary and to communicate more effectively. A rich vocabulary adds depth and sophistication to written expression (Nation, 2001).

Written Text Types

Creating different types of written texts improves students' writing skills. These types of writing include narrative, explanation, discussion, letter writing, and storytelling. Each type of writing includes a specific structure and linguistic features. By learning the characteristics of each type of text, students develop their writing skills more comprehensively (Hyland, 2003).

Methods for Developing Writing Skills

Planning and Drafting Studies

The writing process begins with planning and drafting. Before starting to write, students determine their main ideas, create an outline, and then develop the text by writing. In the draft phase, the focus is on the general structure and content of the text. Students review the text they have written, organize it in a logical order, and correct any deficiencies (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Written Feedback

Teacher feedback is very important in the writing process. Students can notice the weak points of their writings with the feedback they receive from their teachers and can make improvements accordingly. Written feedback is an effective tool for improving students' writing skills (Ferris, 2003).

Collaborative Writing

Interactive writing involves students creating written texts in groups. This type of writing process allows students to develop their written expression skills by using each other's ideas. Group work encourages students to add different perspectives to written texts and to collaborate in the writing process (Storch, 2005).

Revision of Written Work

During the writing process, students should review the texts they have written and make the necessary corrections. This process should be aimed at strengthening the meaning of the text, correcting grammatical errors, and improving the overall structure of the text. Reviewing reduces the rate of errors in written expression and helps students make their texts more effective (Hyland, 2003). The methods used in teaching the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are based on student-centered and interactive approaches. To develop listening skills, students

practice with listening materials taken from real life; listening activities such as stories, radio programs, and videos are used. In speaking skills, students actively participate in activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and simulations. In reading skills, techniques such as inferring meaning from texts, reading strategies, and text analysis are used. In writing skills, students are given creative writing tasks, essay writing, letter writing, and diary keeping. All these skills are generally developed with constructivist approaches and student-centered techniques, so that students learn various aspects of the language in context and interactively. Accordingly, the main problem statement developed in this research is "What are the methods used by teachers teaching Turkish at primary and secondary school levels in teaching the four basic language skills?" The sub-problem sentences developed depending on the problem sentence are as follows:

1. What are the methods used by teachers teaching Turkish in the context of primary and secondary school level for reading skills in teaching the four basic language skills?
2. What are the methods used by teachers teaching Turkish in the context of primary and secondary school level for writing skills in teaching the four basic language skills?
3. What are the methods used by teachers teaching Turkish in the context of primary and secondary school level for listening skills in teaching the four basic language skills?
4. What are the methods used by teachers teaching Turkish in the context of primary and secondary school level for speaking skills in teaching the four basic language skills?

Method of the Study

In this study, the framework of the phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research methods was adopted. The phenomenological approach aims to determine and examine in depth the common meanings underlying a phenomenon by focusing on the experiences of individuals (Miller, 2003). In social sciences, the preferred qualitative research method was used to analyze events in depth and gain new perspectives (Leko, Cook & Cook, 2021). In the data collection process, techniques such as observation, interview and document analysis generally come to the fore (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Research Group

In the study, 20 teachers who are experts in their fields and who teach Turkish at primary and secondary school levels were volunteered to participate in the study using the convenience sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The participants' professional experience ranged from 1 to 9 years. There were 6 teachers with 1-2

years of experience, 6 teachers with 3-4 years of experience, 4 teachers with 5-6 years of experience, and 4 teachers with 7 or more years of experience. In addition, the gender distribution of the teachers was equal, and 10 male and 10 female teachers participated in the study. This balance allows for the examination of possible relationships between gender and years of experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data in the study were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. In order to evaluate the validity of the form, 4 academicians who are experts in their fields and have completed their doctoral education and 2 teachers contributed. This form, which initially consisted of 10 questions, was reduced to 7 items as a result of the pilot application conducted on a group of 18 teachers due to the similarity of the questions in terms of meaning and difficulty in understanding. Finally, the semi-structured interview form was sent to the participants via the Google Forms application. The obtained data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013), content analysis is defined as collecting and organizing similar data around certain themes. In order to ensure internal reliability in the study, codes such as "T1, T2, T3..." were given to the teachers. Teacher opinions

were conveyed both directly and indirectly. In order to increase the transparency of the study, the data collection and analysis process was explained in detail. Finally, sample opinions were presented using a table to make the study more understandable.

Validity and Reliability

The positivist paradigm is associated with internal validity in qualitative research. Determining the opinions of the participants and interpreting the behaviors based on these opinions is considered an important element in increasing credibility in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the participant confirmation method was applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. In this process, two separate interviews were conducted with the participants. The first interview was conducted to fill out the semi-structured interview forms, and the second interview was organized to obtain confirmation from the participants that the information in these forms was accurate.

FINDINGS

In this section, the data of the study are organized in a table and presented together. The table shows the methods used by the participants for the four basic language skills. The relevant data is given in Table 1:

Table 1: Data on the methods used by the participants for the four basic language skills

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Methods used for reading skills</i>	<i>Methods used for writing skills</i>	<i>Methods used for listening skills</i>	<i>Methods used for speaking skills</i>
T1	Meaning analysis, reading strategies	Written expression, text analysis	Watching videos, reading aloud, repeating aloud	Discussion, Q&A, role-playing
T2	Speed reading techniques, vocabulary	Article writing, creative writing	Listening comprehension questions, telling stories	Group conversations, debate
T3	Meaning extraction, reading techniques	Paragraph creation, written summarization	Listening texts, listening activities	Daily conversations, interactive chat
T4	Vocabulary development, reading diary	Developing written expression, critical writing	Reading aloud, listening and summarizing	Pair talks, free talk
T5	Text analysis, reading and meaning relationship	Essay writing, story creation	Listening to podcasts, reading aloud	Interactive conversations with other students
T6	Reading aloud, vocabulary development	Creative writing, reporting	Listening to oral presentations, listening exercises	Storytelling, dialogue
T7	Meaning, activities based on reading texts	Composition writing, original writing studies	Listening with visual support, reading aloud	Public speaking, presentations
T8	Reading competitions, text analysis	Student diary, written explanation	Listening to short stories, reading aloud	Discussion groups, speaking practice
T9	Different reading styles, reading report	Open-ended questions, article writing	Listening questions, listening to interactive videos	Social dialogues, in-class conversations

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Methods used for reading skills</i>	<i>Methods used for writing skills</i>	<i>Methods used for listening skills</i>	<i>Methods used for speaking skills</i>
T10	Emotion and thought analysis, text scanning	Written expression studies, short stories	Listening to stories, listening to music	Interactive conversations, group work
T11	Text analysis, including reading-focused studies	Written projects, narrative writing	Listening and answering, listening to audio texts	Chat groups, discussion simulations
T12	Word-focused reading, deep reading	Composition studies, written assignments	Listening exercises, reading aloud	Voice-making exercises, dialogues
T13	Reading comprehension questions, text inferences	Story writing, critical writings	Listening skill development activities	Speaking groups, presentations
T14	Thematic reading, story analysis	Written assignments, explanation writings	Listening activities, listening answers	Role-playing, open-ended conversations
T15	Reading on word and sentence structures	Essay writing, story studies	Listening to narrator, repeating aloud	Mental exercises, free talk
T16	Meaning extraction, literary text reading	Creative writing, guide writings	Listening activities, participation as a listener	Group work, in-class conversations
T17	Reading acceleration, text analysis	Writing short articles, creative texts	Listening tests, reading aloud	Interactive conversations, group talks
T18	Reading analysis, reading types	Written critiques, guided writings	Listening to podcasts and radio, answering with texts	Discussion, one-on-one conversations with students
T19	Reading acceleration, text analysis	Subject analysis writings, writing stories	Listening to stories, listening to music	Meaningful conversations, interactive dialogues
T20	Meaningful reading, literary analysis	Article writing, technical writings	Listening to videos, reading aloud	Pair discussions, problem-solving

Methods Used for Reading Skills

The methods used for reading skills are based on teachers adopting various strategies to improve students' reading comprehension and vocabulary. Among the participants, methods such as text analysis, inference and reading strategies stand out. While some teachers prefer active learning methods such as reading acceleration techniques and reading competitions, others use more comprehensive techniques such as vocabulary development, keeping a reading diary and text analysis. This diversity shows that reading skills are addressed from various perspectives and that each teacher aims to improve students' reading skills with different strategies.

Methods Used for Writing Skills:

Similar diversity is observed in writing skills. Methods such as written expression, text analysis, creative writing and critical writing have been adopted by teachers to varying degrees. In addition, teachers use methods such as written projects, composition writing and written explanations to develop students' written expression skills. These methods aim to increase students' written expression skills and teach them to approach written texts from different perspectives.

Methods Used for Listening Skills:

The methods used in listening skills are usually supported by various interactive techniques such as reading aloud, listening to podcasts, listening comprehension questions and audio answers. In addition, teachers use visual and audio materials to develop listening skills, and use modern tools such as listening exercises and listening to interactive videos. In developing listening skills, it is seen that teachers mostly focus on activities such as reading aloud and listening activities.

Methods Used for Speaking Skills:

The methods used for speaking skills show that teachers exhibit interactive and group-oriented approaches. Participants prefer activities such as discussion groups, debates, bilateral discussions, role-playing and free speech. These methods aim to develop students' natural speaking skills while also supporting their social and communication skills. In addition, activities such as public speaking and presentation are among the strategies used by some teachers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the methods used by teachers for reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in teaching Turkish

as a foreign language were examined. The findings show that teachers use various innovative and student-centered methods to develop language skills:

Reading Skills Methods

Among the methods used by teachers in teaching reading skills, different applications such as meaning analysis, reading strategies, reading acceleration techniques and text analysis stand out. For example, teachers (T1, T2, T3) prefer methods such as inference, reading techniques and reading strategies. In addition to developing reading skills, this allows students to understand texts more deeply (Küçük, 2015). In addition, it has been observed that the methods used by teachers for reading techniques help students increase their reading speed and process the text they read more effectively (Yavuz, 2018). These studies conducted in teaching reading skills provide a more systematic approach to students' reading processes.

Writing Skills Methods

The methods used by teachers to develop writing skills vary. Teachers (T1, T5, T9) include various applications such as written expression, text analysis, essay writing and creative writing. Such applications allow students to develop their written expressions (Gündüz, 2017). In addition, methods such as critical writing and explanatory writing in order to develop writing skills help students develop their written expression skills (Çiçek, 2016). This strengthens writing skills not only in terms of grammar but also in terms of intellectual and critical thinking skills (Gök, 2019).

Listening Skills Methods

In terms of teaching listening skills, teachers tend to use methods such as reading aloud, listening questions and listening to interactive videos. Teachers (T6, T7, T14) aim to increase students' listening skills with methods such as reading aloud and listening to podcasts. In addition, the use of visual and auditory materials plays an important role in developing students' listening skills (Akbaş, 2015). Such methods enable students to better understand the content they hear (Aydın, 2018). Observing that listening skills are one of the basic elements in students' grammar learning requires increasing listening-focused activities in teaching processes.

Speaking Skills Methods

In developing speaking skills, it is observed that teachers use interactive methods such as role playing, debate, discussion groups and daily conversations (T8, T13, T16). Such methods help students to use grammar rules in practice and increase their self-confidence (Holt, 2014). The fact that the methods used to develop students' speaking skills are interactive and

student-centered increases students' social interactions and allows them to use their language skills in a real-life context (Tuncer, 2017).

Fluency: The ability to express thoughts fluently during speaking is one of the basic indicators of language skills. Fluency gives the student the ability to express in the natural flow of language.

Accuracy: The accuracy of grammar and word use prevents shifts in meaning during speaking and allows students to express themselves more clearly.

Communication Skills: Speaking requires not only grammar rules but also the ability to convey thoughts appropriately to the listener. Students should also use their listening skills to understand the listener and give appropriate responses.

SUGGESTIONS

In line with the findings obtained, some suggestions can be made to make the methods used in teaching language skills more effective:

- As suggested by teachers, the use of technology-supported materials can make students' learning processes more effective. Increasing the use of visual and auditory content can provide students with a more comprehensive language learning experience (Kırmızı, 2016). In particular, the use of digital platforms and interactive materials will enable students to develop their language skills more flexibly (Özdemir & Yalçın, 2020).
- Portfolio studies and gamification applications are effective methods to monitor and motivate students' development (Çiftçi, 2021). Such applications can be useful in providing students with both grammar and creative writing skills. Seeing students' progress concretely will increase their motivation (Sarı, 2022).
- The widespread use of methods such as group work, discussion simulations, and role-playing can enable students to engage in social interaction and actively use their language skills (Erkan & Özdemir, 2020). Interactive and cooperative learning can help students develop both their language skills and critical thinking skills.
- Organizing more activities to develop listening skills will create a strong foundation for students' grammar learning (Çelik, 2017). Diversifying listening activities will enable students to use their language skills more effectively.

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that various methods and techniques are used in teaching language skills

within the scope of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. These findings emphasize that teachers should adopt student-centered, innovative, and effective teaching strategies. Educators are advised to review and continuously update their teaching methods in line with these suggestions.

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