Scientific methodological basis of teaching primary school pupils language by developing speaking activities

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to develop speaking activities for primary school students and to get teachers' opinions on the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching. The participant group of the research consists of 55 primary schoolteachers who are teaching in various primary schools in the city of Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. The research was designed according to the phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research methods. Research data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. As a result of the research, the majority of primary schoolteachers who participated in the research stated that the language skills and speaking skills of the students were partially sufficient. The majority of teachers categorised the methods they applied for the effectiveness of the language education they gave to the students as using different methods, techniques and materials, if there were a problem, giving the students keywords before the speaking activity, enabling the students to

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develop ideas and asking the students to tell the parts that were interesting to them after the listening activity. The suggestions of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research on establishing the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities were mostly categorised as gaining critical speaking skills, providing speaking skills with games, providing speaking skills with different methods and techniques and creating practices that eliminate speaking anxiety in students.

Keywords: Language skills, speaking skills, primary school students, teachers' opinions;

1. Introduction

Language, which enables individuals to express themselves and to be a part of social life, is primarily acquired from the family and close environment. However, since the language acquired from the family and environment will develop in an unplanned and random way, many language problems are acquired in this process. Educational institutions are the places where language is learned in accordance with its rules (Van Hoorn, Maathuis, Peters, & Hadders-Algra, 2010).

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Basic language skills are divided into two groups: comprehension and expression skills. Among these skills, comprehension skills include reading and listening, while narrative skills include speaking and writing. Listening skills, which is one of the comprehension skills, and speaking skills, which is one of the speaking skills, are acquired before other language skills (Doğan, 2009). It is seen that traditional teaching methods and techniques may be insufficient in some cases in terms of developing basic language skills. The rapid increase in technology and digitalisation in the developing world makes it a necessity to develop alternative methods and techniques to the ethics system (Vinter & Chartrel, 2010). In its simplest form, verbal communication of thoughts and feelings to others is called speaking. Speaking is defined as a basic tool that people use to share their thoughts with others, to produce new thoughts in the sharing process and thus to prevent the mind from rusting (Rashid, Mohamed, Rahman, & Shamsuddin, 2017).

Considering the fact that speaking education cannot be separated from other language skills, the necessary sensitivity should be given to speaking education, even if there is no separate lesson time for speaking education. For this, the greatest responsibility falls on the teachers. He should be able to switch between activities with mastery and include his studies for the purposes of speaking education according to the level (Kikas, Männamaa, Kumari, & Ulst, 2008). Developing speaking skills cannot be achieved by memorising certain rules, just like writing skills. Learning-by-doing models such as doing lots of practice, listening to well-spoken speakers and modelling them are the most appropriate exercises to develop this skill. When compared to other skills, speaking skill emerges as a skill that is neglected and limited work has been carried out on it (Aesaert, 2014).

The importance given to the field of reading or writing skill is not given enough to the field of speaking skill, which is thought to be gained spontaneously. The fact that each student has to be given individual attention in speaking education complicates the process. However, effective

education is the basis of good speaking (Yesnazar et al., 2021). Speaking skill is very important for students to cooperate, communicate, make common decisions and produce solutions to the problems they encounter in their daily lives. The teacher has an important task to undertake in the process in order to ensure this acquisition in students correctly and effectively (Huertas-Abril, 2021). The teacher should follow the developments related to his/her profession closely and employ teaching methods and techniques that will make the student as effective as possible in the teaching process. The information transferred to the students without using the method is mixed and meaningless by the students, which significantly reduces the efficiency of teaching activities (Herbein et al., 2018).

1.2. Related research

Torky (2006), in his study, revealed that better speaking skills training should be given to students studying at the second level because speaking skills is a skill that is often overlooked. Breakey (2005) states, in his study, that the majority of people with speaking anxiety have a phobia of speaking in public. Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi. (2017) aimed to examine the effect of communicative games on the speaking skills of secondary school students in their study. The study group of the research consists of 36 students. As a result of the research, it was stated that communicative games have a positive effect on the development of speaking skills, make the educational environment fun and reduce the stress and distress of the learning process.

Mohammadi and Safdari (2015), in their study titled '*Pedagogical values of mobile-assisted task-based activities to increase speaking skill*', selected 90 people between the ages of 13 and 16. Of the two groups, interactive and non-interactive, the students in the interactive group were allowed to communicate among themselves about the textbooks, while there was no interaction between each other in the non-interactive group. As a result of the research, they stated that the speaking skills of the interactive group developed better. Hamad (2013), in his study, focused on the instructor, the student, the curriculum and the textbook, language teaching methods and exercises, and the education and teaching environment. A questionnaire form was distributed to 150 students. According to the results of the survey, it was determined that the trainers did not use the strategies that improve their speaking skills; they used listening skills more than speaking skills. He also states that the numbers in listening and speaking classes should not exceed 30.

In a study conducted by Gedik (2017), the effect of educational games on the permanence and success of secondary school second-grade students in the development of basic language skills was examined. The conclusion reached in this study is that the educational games are more successful than the teaching methods applied in the current system in the permanence of what students learn in the language course and in the development of basic language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

1.3. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to develop speaking activities for primary school students and to get teachers' opinions on the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching. For this purpose, the following sub-objectives have been determined:

1. How do primary schoolteachers evaluate students' language skills?
2. How do primary schoolteachers evaluate students' speaking skills?
3. What are the methods used by primary schoolteachers for effective language teaching?
4. What are the suggestions of primary schoolteachers regarding the establishment of scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities?

2. Method and materials

In this section, information about the data collection tools used in the research, the method of the research, the participant group, the data collection process and the evaluation of the data are given.

2.1. Research method

The research was designed according to the phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research methods. This research is a phenomenological study conducted to analyse the perceptions of university students about their role as geography educators, based on their metaphors. In phenomenological studies, data sources are individuals or groups that experience the phenomenon that the research focuses on and can express or reflect this phenomenon. Phenomenological studies may not yield generalisable results. However, these studies can provide examples, explanations and experiences that provide results that will help a phenomenon to be better recognised and understood. Phenomenological studies focus on the phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of. The purpose of studies using the phenomenology pattern is to describe the different ways in which people use to experience, interpret, understand or conceptualise a certain phenomenon (phenomenon) or a certain aspect of reality. In this way, insights on a particular phenomenon are revealed and these understandings are classified according to conceptual categories (Kocabıyık, 2016). In this direction, by developing speaking activities for primary school students, teachers' views on the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching were evaluated with a phenomenological approach.

2.2. Participants

The participant group of the research consists of primary schoolteachers who teach in various primary schools in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. The study group of the research was determined by simple random sampling method. In random sampling, also called simple random sampling, every possible combination of elements in the universe has an equal probability of being included in the sample. In order to use this method, the information about the problems addressed should be homogeneous according to the universe. In simple random sampling, a sampling frame containing all the elements of the universe should be made first (Mertens, 2014). For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to use the simple random sampling method while

forming the research group. A total of 55 primary schoolteachers participated in the research. 12 of the teachers have 1–6 years of experience, 23 of them have 7–12 years and 20 of them have 13 years or more of experience. Of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research, 22 are female and 33 are male. The process of participation of primary schoolteachers in the research was based on volunteerism.

2.3. Data collection tools

Research data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Expert opinion was sought while developing the semi-structured interview form. The semi-structured interview form, which was prepared by taking the opinions of two experts, was applied to two primary schoolteachers. After the language validity of the interview form was tested, some corrections were made and the form was given its final form. The semi-structured interview form used in the research is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview form

Characteristics of Teachers
Your gender:
Your experience:
Interview Questions
1. How do you evaluate students' language skills?
Very Sufficient (   )   Sufficient (   )   Partially Sufficient (   )   Insufficient (   ) Very Insufficient (   )
Comment:
2. How do you evaluate students' speaking skills?
Very Sufficient (   )   Sufficient (   )   Partially Sufficient (   )   Insufficient (   )   Very Insufficient (   )
Comment:
3. What are the methods you apply for the effectiveness of the language education you give to students?
4. What are your suggestions for establishing the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities?

The semi-structured interview form is shown in Table 1. The form includes two demographic questions to determine teachers' gender and professional experience. There are four open-ended questions about primary schoolteachers' development and evaluation of students' language skills.

2.4. Data collection process

Interviews with primary schoolteachers participating in the research were conducted face-to-face. An appropriate interview environment was created by obtaining information about the place, date and time of the interviews from the teachers. During the interview, the teachers were informed about how and with which method the data will be used in the research. Then, primary schoolteachers were asked to fill in a semi-structured interview form. While the teachers were filling out the interview form, they were left alone and no time limit was determined. It was observed that the teachers filled the forms in approximately 40 minutes. It took approximately 1 month to complete the interviews with 55 teachers participating in the research.

2.5. Data collection analysis

The data obtained from the research were analysed with the content analysis method. Content analysis is a type of analysis used to examine the content of any written text or document and to present it numerically or statistically. In this way, concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data can be reached. In content analysis, since the data is subjected to a deep process, it provides the opportunity to reach concepts and themes that cannot be noticed with a descriptive approach. As a matter of fact, with content analysis, it is aimed to define the data and to determine the facts that may be hidden in the data. Data that are similar to each other and through content analysis are brought together around certain concepts and themes and interpreted in a way that the reader can understand (Stemler, 2015). Research data were categorised in accordance with content analysis. Frequency and percentage tables were created. Percentages are given in the tables created by rounding. In addition, teachers' opinions were used in the research without sharing their personal information by making direct quotations.

3. Results

In Table 2, the views of primary schoolteachers participating in the research on the level of students' language skills are evaluated.

Table 2. Opinions of primary schoolteachers about the level of students' language skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
Very Sufficient	I think students have cognitive skills. Has excellent speaking, understanding, reading and writing skills	3	5.4
	I think that the language skills of the students are very advanced. They are pretty good at expressing themselves.		
Sufficient	I find it sufficient. However, it can be improved. The more language skills are developed in primary school age, the more advantageous it will be for students in the following education periods.	7	12.7
	I find the language skills of the students sufficient. However, speaking and listening skills can be improved.		
Partially Sufficient	When we consider language skills in 4 dimensions, I think that some dimensions develop more slowly than others.	31	56.3
	I think students' writing and listening skills are better than their comprehension and speaking skills. However, I still think that all skills are partially sufficient.		
Insufficient	I think it's insufficient. With more activities and activities, students' language skills need to be further developed.	9	16.3
	I find it insufficient. Of course, it varies from student to student, but in general, it is insufficient.		
Very Insufficient	Since students' first learning takes place in the home environment, some of their learning can be haphazard. It takes time to change that. I find it very inadequate.	5	9
	Today's technology opportunities negatively affect the language development of students. Therefore, I can say that it is very inadequate.		

In Table 2, the views of primary schoolteachers participating in the research on the level of students' language skills are evaluated. 5.4% of the teachers participating in the research stated that the language skills of the students were very sufficient, 12.7% as sufficient, 56.3% as partially sufficient, 16.3% as insufficient and 9% very insufficient.

In Table 3, the views of primary schoolteachers participating in the research on the level of students' speaking skills are evaluated.

Table 3. Opinions of primary schoolteachers on the level of students' speaking skills

Categories	Teacher opinions	Sum	
		F	%
Very Sufficient	*I find the students very competent in expressing themselves.* *I think that students' speaking skills are the most developed in terms of language skills.*	2	3.6
Sufficient	*I find it sufficient. In my opinion, speaking skill is the most open to improvement among language skills, and students are open to this.* *I think that students have sufficient speaking skills.*	5	9
Partially Sufficient	*I find it partially sufficient. Students' social environment has a significant impact on the incomplete development of their speaking skills.* *Speaking skills need to be developed. We are making applications for this, but it is not possible for this development to be fast.*	28	50.9
Insufficient	*I find it insufficient. Most of the students are insufficient in expressing themselves.* *Students find it difficult to use correct expressions while speaking. They are hesitant to speak.*	11	20
Very Insufficient	*The students' ability to clearly answer the question asked, express themselves correctly, and explain a situation by analysing it is very weak.* *I find the speaking skills of the students very weak. Often, even if they know about a situation, they are very poor at expressing it.*	9	16.3

In Table 3, primary schoolteachers' views on the level of students' speaking skills are categorised. 3.6% of primary schoolteachers stated that they found students' speaking skills very sufficient, 9% as sufficient, 50.9% as partially sufficient, 20% as insufficient and 16.3% as very insufficient.

In Table 4, the views of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research on the methods they apply for the effectiveness of the language education they give to the students are evaluated.

Table 4. Opinions of primary schoolteachers about the methods they use for the effectiveness of the language education they give to students

Categories	F	%
I use different methods and techniques in the lesson	51	92.7

I use different materials in the lesson	46	83.6
Before the speaking activity, I give the students keywords to help them develop ideas.	41	74.5
After the listening activity, I ask the students to tell about the parts that are interesting to them.	35	63.6
Let's ask students questions that will activate their prior knowledge before listening.	32	58.1
I enable students to develop ideas about the determined topic before the writing activity.	30	54.5
I help students put events and information in order before the speaking activity.	27	49
I help students to explain the events and information they are going to write by putting them in order.	24	43.6
I set an example for students by using the language effectively, reading fluently, writing effectively in accordance with the rules and qualified listening.	22	40
I review whether spelling and punctuation rules are followed, and show the mistakes made.	19	34.5
I guide students in using visuals and emphasising the main idea, supporting idea and supporting details during the talk.	17	30.9
I give students keywords that enable them to guess the content of the text before listening	16	29
I let students guess the content of the text before reading	14	25.4
I do studies for students with written expression deficiency.	11	20
I remind students of the rules of speaking and I make sure that the students follow these rules.	9	16.3
I do separate work for students who are shy and have speech difficulties.	8	14.5
I enable students to make connections between their own knowledge and the information in the reading text.	5	9

In Table 4, the views of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research on the methods they apply for the effectiveness of the language education they give to the students are categorised. 92.7% of the teachers stated that they used different methods and techniques in the lesson, 83.6% of them used different materials in the lesson and 74.5% of them stated that they gave the students keywords before the speaking activity, allowing the students to develop ideas. 63.6% of the teachers stated that after the listening activity, they asked the students to tell about the parts that were interesting to them, and 58.1% of them stated that they asked the students questions that would activate their prior knowledge before listening. 54.5% of the teachers stated that they enabled the students to develop ideas about the determined topic before the writing activity and 49% of them stated that they helped the students to put the events and information in order before the speaking activity. 43.6% of the teachers stated that they helped the students to explain the events and information they were going to write by putting them in order and 40% of them stated that they set an example for the students by using the language effectively, reading fluently, writing effectively in accordance with the rules and qualified listening. 34.5% of the teachers stated that they reviewed the spelling and punctuation rules and showed the mistakes made and 30.9% stated that they guided the students in using the visuals, highlighting the main idea, auxiliary idea and supporting details

during the speech. 29% of the teachers stated that they gave the students keywords to predict the content of the text before listening and 25.4% stated that they allowed the students to predict the content of the text before reading. 20% of the teachers stated that they work for students with written expression inadequacy and 16.3% of them reminded the students about the speaking rules and made them obey these rules. Finally, 14.5% of the teachers stated that they conducted separate studies for shy and speech-difficult students and 9% of them stated that students made a connection between their own knowledge and the information in the reading text.

In Table 5, the suggestions of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research regarding the establishment of scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities are evaluated.

Table 5. Recommendations of primary schoolteachers regarding the establishment of scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities

Categories	F	%
Developing critical speaking skills	49	89
Developing speaking skills	42	76.3
Gaining speaking skills with different methods and techniques	35	63.6
Making applications to eliminate speech anxiety in students	30	54.5
Gaining listening-oriented speaking skills	23	41.8
Gaining public speaking skills	22	40
Gaining speaking skills using different materials	18	32.7
Gaining speaking skills with creative drama activities	14	25.4
Doing group work	11	20
Gaining reading-oriented speaking skills	8	14.5
Conducting student-participated assessment studies	5	9
Gaining writing-oriented speaking skills	4	7.2

In Table 5, the suggestions of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research regarding the establishment of scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities are categorised. 89% of the teachers offered to gain critical speaking skills, 76.3% to gain speaking skills through games and 63.6% to provide speaking skills with different methods and techniques. 54.5% of the teachers suggested making applications to eliminate speaking anxiety in students, 41.8% of them to gain listening-oriented speaking skills and 40% of them to give them the ability to speak in front of a public. 32.7% of the teachers suggested gaining speaking skills by using different materials,25.4% to gain speaking skills through creative drama activities and 20% to do group work. Finally, 14.5% of the teachers suggested teaching reading-oriented speaking skills, 9% of them doing evaluation studies with student participation and 7.2% of them giving writing-oriented speaking skills as suggestions.

4. Discussion

The majority of primary schoolteachers participating in the research stated that they found the language skills of the students partially sufficient. The majority of primary schoolteachers who participated in the study stated that they found the speaking skills of the students partially sufficient.

It has been stated by Emiroğlu (2015) that impromptu speaking is the most difficult and demanding type of speech among speech types. In the study, it was stated that the reason for the weak speaking skills of the students was due to their unprepared speaking point of view. The majority of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research categorised the methods they applied for the effectiveness of the language education they gave to the students as using different methods, techniques and materials, if there were a problem, giving the students keywords before the speaking activity, enabling the students to develop ideas and asking the students to tell the parts that were interesting to them after the listening activity. The majority of teachers also stated that they practiced asking the students questions to activate their prior knowledge before listening and enabling the students to develop ideas about the determined topic before the writing activity. In their study, Hwang, Shih, Ma, Shadiev, and Chen (2016) concluded that mobile systems with game-based activities support students in forming meaningful sentences and speaking correctly with self-confidence.

The suggestions of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research on establishing the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities were mostly categorised as gaining critical speaking skills, providing speaking skills with games, providing speaking skills with different methods and techniques and making practices that eliminate speaking anxiety in students. In addition, some of the teachers made suggestions to gain listening-oriented speaking skills, to gain speaking skills in front of the public, to gain speaking skills by using different materials and to gain speaking skills through creative drama activities. Some teachers have developed suggestions to make group work, to gain reading-oriented speaking skills, to conduct evaluation studies with student participation and to gain writing-oriented speaking skills. In their study, Iamsaard and Kerdpol (2015) aimed to examine the effect of drama activities on developing students' speaking skills and to determine students' views on drama activities. As a result of the research, it was observed that drama activities had a positive effect on the speaking skills of 11th-grade students. In the study conducted by Dewi et al. (2017), the effect of communicative games on speaking skills was examined and it was concluded that these games positively affected the fluency of students' speech. Romero (2009) investigated the effect of oral classroom participation on the development of speaking skills. According to the results of these studies, micro-teaching method, visual teaching materials, active teaching methods and techniques, communicative approach, multiple intelligence theory, speaking games, creative drama techniques, constructivist learning approach and listening-supported teaching are effective practices in improving students' speaking skills.

5. Conclusion

Speaking activities are of great importance in the language development of primary school students. Therefore, in this study, teachers' opinions on the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching were taken by developing speaking activities for primary school students. As a result of the research, the majority of primary schoolteachers who participated in the research stated that the language skills and speaking skills of the students were partially sufficient. The majority of the teachers categorised the methods they applied for the effectiveness of the language education they gave to the students as using different methods, techniques and materials if they were a

problem, giving the students keywords before the speaking activity, enabling the students to develop ideas and asking the students to tell the parts that were interesting to them after the listening activity. The suggestions of the primary schoolteachers participating in the research on establishing the scientific methodological foundations of language teaching by developing speaking activities were mostly categorised as gaining critical speaking skills, providing speaking skills with games, providing speaking skills with different methods and techniques and making practices that eliminate speaking anxiety in students.

6. Recommendations

The results of the research revealed that the language and speaking skills of primary school students were not at the desired level, and it was necessary to develop them. In this direction, the following recommendations have been developed:

1. A suitable environment should be created in the school and classroom environment for the development of language and speaking skills of primary school students.
2. In-service training seminars should be organised for primary schoolteachers to improve students' language and speaking skills.
3. Content aimed at improving students' language and speaking skills should be added to teacher training programmes and pedagogical development of teacher candidates should be ensured.

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