INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN APPROACH ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF FOURTH-GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS[i]

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Abstract:

This study aims to reveal the effect of the philosophy for children's approach on the listening comprehension of primary school fourth-grade students. A quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group was adopted as a method. The study population was fourth-grade students in 13 primary schools serving officially in Bayburt city center. Convenient sampling was used for the research sample. Thirty-three students from two different fourth-grades in the same school were selected as the study sample. The study's activities were based on the P4C approach in the experimental group's Turkish lessons, which lasted six weeks and twelve class hours. The activities were selected from the teacher's guidebook published by the first author, and stories were based on the guidebook. Listening comprehension achievement tests were used as a data collection tool. When the data obtained from the achievement tests were analyzed, nonparametric tests were used in the data analysis process because they did not meet the normality assumptions. In the data analysis, the Man Whitney U test was used to determine the difference between the experimental and control groups, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to determine the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups. After the analysis, no statistically significant difference was found. Within the groups, it was seen that the pretest and posttest achievement scores created a significant difference in favor of the experimental group. As a result, the philosophy for children approach contributed positively to the listening skills of fourth-grade primary school students.

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1. Introduction

Considering the one-day communication process of human beings, it will be seen that they use listening skills the most. Based on the results compiled from different studies in the literature stated that when the total time spent on communication is taken into consideration, listening has a ratio of 40-50%, speaking 25-30%, reading 11-16%, and writing approximately 9% (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Mendelsohn, 1994). Listening skills, which are very important for human beings, have yet to be given much importance. Since it was thought to be acquired from birth, it was realized much later that it could be developed through education. Buck (2001) attributed the main reason for this situation to the idea that listening is an innate skill. If the child can hear, listening education was ignored with the idea that the child hears and listens anyway, and the emphasis in language skills education was on reading and writing. This neglect regarding the education of listening skills has led to listening being referred to as an 'orphaned language skill' and 'neglected language skill' (Yemenici, 2019). However, listening is one of the two skills used in acquiring information.

Listening is decoding the language codes that start with hearing, making sense of the inputs with existing prior knowledge and schemas, questioning and classifying what is listened to by creating new schemas when necessary, and creating linguistic and non-linguistic feedback. This situation shows that listening is a language skill that requires the realization of many sub-actions and has a high cognitive load (Melanlıoğlu, 2011).

There exist controversies about the nature of listening comprehension. According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), there are two influential views: traditional and alternative. Traditional views regarded the listener as a tape recorder, and the listener took in and stored aural messages in much the same way as a tape recorder. Anderson and Lynch criticized this view as inappropriate and inadequate. This notion is different from a tenable one. The alternative view considered the listener as an active model builder. This kind of listener could combine the new information with his previous knowledge and experience to fully comprehend what had been heard. Anderson and Lynch agreed with this view. It emphasized actively interpreting and integrating incoming information with prior knowledge and experience.

Explanations about listening skills show that listening is a complex process with mental, psychological, physiological, physical, psychological, physiological, etc. qualities such as hearing, hearing, associating, understanding, interpreting, and reacting (Kardaş & Harre, 2015). Sever (2000) states that listening skills and habits are acquired naturally in the pre-school period. However, these acquired skills do not turn students into people who understand, distinguish, and evaluate what they listen to (Aytan, 2011). Therefore, it is important to provide students with the skills and habits that will lead them to understand, separate, criticize, and evaluate what they listen to. Considering that interactive classroom environments positively affect listening skills (Garip & Göçer,

2022), it is thought that the Philosophy for Children approach, which offers a dialogic interactive classroom environment, will contribute to listening skills. In his model of the philosophy of dialogue, Martin Buber also argues that listening involves a kind of active attention to another's words or actions and that it entails attending to them as if they were explicitly directed at us. Gordon's (2011) discussion of dialogue and listening shows that the relationship between speaking and listening is one of reciprocity and interdependence. Listening is essential in initiating many dialogues by creating a space where two people can embrace each other as whole individuals. Gordon's analysis suggests that, in Buber's model, listening involves a kind of active attentiveness to another's words or actions, engaging them as though they are explicitly directed at us. In the philosophy for children approach, the role of listening is precisely as Buber mentions.

2. Philosophy for Children (P4C)

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a thinking education program proposed by American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) in the 1970s (Muris, 2016). Philosophy for children is an approach in which children exchange ideas respectfully, and each child has the potential to make valuable contributions to the topics addressed (Pritchard, 2014). P4C is a thinking education program that develops children's thinking skills and allows them to focus on how they learn rather than what they learn. The program carries the educational aims of both constructivism and Socratic inquiry (Golding, 2007). In this context, it is applied in more than 50 countries in the world in terms of supporting the development of empathy, collaborative thinking, self-confidence, not being afraid of failure, self-control, academic success, reading and listening comprehension, critical and creative thinking, reasoning and metacognitive skills (Gregory, 2008).

P4C (Philosophy for Children) is an educational method to enhance children's thinking abilities (Lipman, 2003). In this approach, children engage in philosophical inquiry by asking and answering thought-provoking questions under the guidance of an adult. Through discussions about abstract concepts like happiness, justice, equality, and freedom, children explore these ideas based on their life experiences or relatable stories. They define these concepts through reasoned discussion, connecting abstract ideas with their everyday lives (Worley, 2009). P4C encourages the construction of meaning through dialogue, where children reflect on and evaluate ideas from texts, stories, or real-life situations by integrating them with their personal experiences. The teacher facilitates the process by offering different perspectives and supporting children in articulating their views with clear reasoning (Lipman et al., 1980). A review by Trickey and Topping (2004) identified various skills and values fostered through P4C, including logical reasoning, reading comprehension, mathematical skills, self-esteem, listening abilities, self-expression, creativity, and cognitive and emotional intelligence.

In philosophical inquiries, children are in constant dialogue with each other, which requires children to actually listen rather than pretend to listen (Laverty, 2015). Questioning philosophical concepts and engaging in dialogues on these questions reveals

the importance of listening skills. In this respect, the philosophy for children is an approach that can support listening skills.

Children are encouraged to listen to each other during discussions, ask each other questions, and express their opinions about the questions asked (Levis, 2022). Since Philosophy for Children is based on dialogic and interactive classroom communication, it will significantly contribute to children's speaking and listening skills (Boyraz, 2023). Research in the literature indicates that the P4C approach can be effectively applied in various areas, such as values education, moral education, citizenship, media literacy, and democracy education (Bleazby, 2006; Burgh & Yorshansky, 2011; Cam, 2014; Cleary, 2011; Garcia-Moriyon et al., 2020; Garrat & Piper, 2011; Lomaca & Chiado, 2019; Splitter, 2011). There is research on P4C and teacher education (Ahmadi & Egbbali, 2022; Akkocaoğlu-Çayır, 2019; Boyraz & Türkcan, 2021). Both theoretical and experimental studies on listening and P4C have been conducted in the literature (Boyraz, 2019; Ide, 2023; Laverty, 2015; Karaboğa, 2023). Boyraz (2019) stated in his study that the structure of the philosophy approach with children includes discussing, defending, and objecting to ideas and that while doing all these, they have to establish healthy communication with the teacher and their friends. In order to reveal their ideas and object to existing ideas, the child has to listen to their friends actively. At the end of the action research, she stated that the philosophy with children's approaches improved children's listening skills. Karaboğa (2023) revealed that doing philosophy with children supports the development of listening skills in pre-school children. While many studies reveal the Philosophy for Children approach's contribution to thinking skills and social, emotional, and cognitive development, there are not enough research results that can reveal the atmosphere suitable for supporting listening skills. In this context, it is aimed to reveal the effect of the Philosophy for Children approach on the listening skills of primary school 4th-grade students.

In the research conducted for this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought:

1) Is there a significant difference between the children's listening skill pretest and posttest scores in the experimental and control groups?
2) Is there a significant difference between the listening skill pretest and posttest scores of the children in the experimental group who participated in the philosophy for children approach activities?
3) Is there a significant difference between the listening skill pretest and posttest scores of the children in the control group who did not participate in the P4C approach activities?

3. Material and Methods

The approach of this research is a quantitative method that has been used to conduct it. A quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group was adopted as the method. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) state that in cases where accurate

experimental models cannot be applied, it is useful to prefer the quasi-experimental model and consider the design "the best possible." In this design, experimental and control groups are randomly selected, pretest and posttest are applied to both groups, and only the experimental group is subjected to the experimental procedure (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.1 Population and Sample

The research population is 4th-grade students studying in 13 primary schools in the central district of Bayburt (Türkiye) province in the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Convenience sampling was used to determine the research sample. This method is the method of turning to the most accessible items that can be reached to create the sample from the target population (Baltacı, 2018). In the study, 33 fourth-grade students in a primary school were determined as the sample in terms of the willingness of teachers and administrators and easy and quick access to the sample. While the 4/A class was the study's experimental group, the 4/B class was the study's control group. The experimental group was determined as 4/A because the teacher was willing and had previously worked with the P4C approach.

The sample school is located within the city center. The school is within the scope of transportation education. It has a medium socio-economic level environment. The school building has three floors and is divided into two parts: the primary school and the secondary school. There are ten classrooms in the primary school section. There are 11 teachers, including eight classroom teachers, one English teacher, and two pre-school teachers. The total number of students is 188. The experimental group class consisted of 17 students, ten boys and seven girls. The students continue their education starting from the first grade with the same classroom teacher. The male classroom teacher is finishing his 16th year in his profession. Since 2016, he has been working at his current school. The control group consisted of 16 students, eight boys and eight girls. They have been studying with the same teacher since the first grade. The male classroom teacher is finishing his 12th year in his profession. As of 2019, he started his duty at the school. These descriptions show that the classes have equivalent characteristics.

3.2 Data Collection Tools

As a data collection tool in the study, a listening comprehension test was applied over the listening text "Smart Pigeon Matuka" for the pretest. As a posttest, a listening comprehension test was applied to the listening text "Çiğköfte sport/Lahmacun sport." The "Smart Pigeon Matuka" listening comprehension test, which was applied as a pretest, was developed by Sekin (2023). The highest score that can be obtained from the test consisting of 15 items is 100. The listening comprehension test applied as a posttest was developed by the researchers. In this test, a listening comprehension test consisting of 13 items was prepared using the listening text "Çiğköfte sport/Lahmacun sport." In terms of content validity, the test was presented to an expert in Turkish education, and feedback

was received. The test was applied after the necessary corrections. The highest score that can be obtained from this test was determined to be 100.

3.3 Experimental Process

The experimental process was carried out between 15.04.2024 and 24.05.2024. The pretest was administered to both groups on 28.03.2024, and the posttest on 29.05.2024. The stimulus for P4C and Philosophy for Children teacher's guide published by Sadık Uygun Publications were used in the experimental process. In the control group, teaching continued with the Turkish curriculum and textbooks. The experimental process was implemented in Turkish lessons for six weeks and two class hours per week. The session plans applied during the experimental process are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Session Plans Used in the Experimaental Process

Implementation Week	Name of the Stimulus	Lesson Hours
Week 1	What If It is Ugly	40+40
Week 2	Doka's Diary	40+40
Week 3	This is My Story	40+40
Week 4	They are done with us	40+40
Week 5	Kıvanç is gone	40+40
Week 6	Kona's Saddlebag	40+40

The implementation of the Philosophy for Children approach was carried out in 6 stages. These stages were focusing, stimulus presentation, thinking time, questioning, discussion, and general evaluation. A structured approach was preferred in preparing the questions in the activity plans, and the questions were presented to the facilitator. While preparing the questions, care was taken to ensure they were appropriate for Phil Cam's question quadrant. In this quadrant, closed/open-ended questions are text-oriented and will initiate philosophical discussion (Cam, 2003). In this way, reaching the philosophy by starting from the text was tried to be felt step by step. For teachers to use the activities easily, notes were prepared for the teacher on possible answers and questions from the students. These notes guide the relevant philosophical concepts. Since it is important to know approximately how much time should be allocated to each stage, time stimuli were added right next to the stages (Boyraz, 2023).

The experimental group teacher was given the necessary training by a field expert in a previous study on the philosophy for children approach. The teacher was also reminded about the rules and approach before this study. The implementation was to be done for 2 class hours a week, and the course in which the implementation was to be done was determined as a Turkish lesson.

3.4 Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, one student in the experimental group was excluded from the analysis because he was diagnosed with a learning disability. For this reason, a total of 32 students were analyzed. Firstly, whether the data obtained in the study met

the normality assumptions was checked. For this purpose, kurtosis and skewness values of pretest and posttest scores, Shapiro-Wilk test scores, and histogram graphs were checked. The results obtained are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Normality Test Results for Pretest-Posttest Data

Test Type	Kurtosis	Skewness	Shapiro-Wilk (p)	Mean	df
Pretest	-.186	1.046	.017	55.375	32
Posttest	.971	1.033	.010	62.565	32

Looking at Table 2, it is assumed that the test is not normally distributed since the significance value is less than 0.05 in the Shapiro-Wilk test. The curve of the histogram graph also proves this. Since the data obtained did not meet the normality assumptions, nonparametric tests were used in the predictive statistical analysis to examine the research sub-problems. Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the difference between the experimental and control groups, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to determine the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups. The SPSS 24 package program was used to conduct these tests.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive findings regarding the data obtained within the research are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Findings Related to Listening Comprehension

Groups	Pretest (Mean)	Posttest (Mean)	df (Pretest)	df (Posttest)	Access Score
Experiment	51.437	62.625	20.392	18.871	11.188
Control	59.250	62.500	12.772	11.027	3.250

When Table 3 is examined, there is a difference between the mean scores obtained from the listening comprehension achievement tests of the experimental and control groups in favor of the control group in the pretests. No significant difference was detected in the posttests. However, it is noteworthy that there is a difference of 11.188 points in the experimental group and a difference of 3.25 points in the control group in their pretest and posttest achievement scores. In this context, the results of the Man Whitney U test conducted to determine whether the pretest and posttest scores of the groups show a statistically significant difference are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Man Whitney U Test Results of Pretest-Posttest Scores According to Groups

Pretest	n	Rank Mean	Sum of Rank	U	Z	p
Experiment	16	14.50	232.00	96.000	-1.206	.228
Control	16	18.50	296.00			
Posttest	n	**Rank Mean**	**Sum of Rank**	U	Z	p
Experiment	16	16.72	267.50	124.500	-.132	.895
Control	16	16.28	260.50			

As a result of the Mann-Whitney U test, it is seen that there is no statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores between the experimental and control groups, although there is a difference between the mean scores (Z_{pre} = -1.206; p > .05; Z_{post} = -.132; p > .05).

In the second sub-problem of the study, the answer to the question regarding the existence of a statistically significant difference between the students' listening comprehension pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group was sought. In this context, the data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test. The test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test Results of Experimental Group Pretest-Posttest Scores

Pretest – Posttest	n	Rank Mean	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Sequence	4	3.75	15.245	-2.556	.011
Positive Sequence	11	9.55	105.00		
Equal	1				

As a result of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group ($Z_{expr.}$ = -2.556; p<.05). This shows that the activities carried out by adopting the Philosophy for Children approach contributed to students' listening comprehension skills.

In the third sub-problem of the study, the answer to the question regarding the existence of a statistically significant difference between the listening comprehension pretest and posttest scores of the students in the control group was sought. In this context, the data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. The test results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test Results of Control Group Pretest-Posttest Scores

Pretest - Posttest	n	Rank Mean	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Sequence	4	7.63	30.550	-1.677	.094
Positive Sequence	11	8.14	89.00		
Equal	1				

As a result of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, there was no statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest of the control group ($Z_{cont.}$ = -1.677; p>.05). This situation can be interpreted as the activities carried out in the control group did not contribute to the student's listening comprehension skills.

6. Conclusion

As a result, P4C activities contribute positively to listening comprehension success at the fourth-grade level of primary school. In parallel with the study's results, Karaboğa (2023) also found that the philosophy for children approach that he applied to pre-school children positively affected listening skills. Karaboğa (2023) conducted his study with 5-year-old children over 21 sessions. In this study, six sessions were conducted with fourth-grade primary school students.

The philosophy for children approach used in the study also reveals the contribution of the interactive classroom environment to listening skills. In their research, Garip & Göçer (2022) investigated the effect of interactive classroom environments on listening skills and stated that the classroom environment where the student is active, student-teacher, and student-student interaction is intense has a positive effect on listening skills. It is thought that the fact that the philosophy for children approach provides an interactive classroom environment is effective in achieving this result. Providing student-student and student-teacher interaction in the philosophy for children approach and the need for students to listen by focusing on the other to oppose each other's reasoning (Boyraz, 2023) brings the approach to the forefront of developing listening skills.

Although few studies in the literature directly investigate the effect of P4C on children's listening skills, many other studies show that it contributes to language skills. For example, Karadağ and Demirtaş (2018) stated that the philosophical inquiry activities they implemented in a 10-week period supported children's language and cognitive skills. Akkocaoğlu-Çayır (2015), in a study conducted with primary school students, explained that children's cognitive, language, and social skills improved. The action research conducted by Boyraz (2019) found that philosophy for children improves listening skills. In the study conducted by Cassidy et al. (2017), the result that communicative interactions and collaborative dialogues of children with social, emotional, and behavioral needs can be improved by using the Philosophy for Children approach supports the research result. Kaźmierczak (2020) concluded that the Philosophy for Children Education Program will help children determine their communicative behaviors in their dialogues, the level of their language and communication skills, and their ability to discuss and interpret in a peer group. The study by Karabatak-Yılmaz (2023) concluded that the philosophy education program for children improved the oral communication skills of seventh-grade students.

Considering the results obtained in the research, the following suggestions can be made:

1) The study concluded that using the Philosophy for Children approach in Turkish lessons improved the listening comprehension skills of fourth-grade primary school students. Based on this result, the Philosophy for Children approach can be utilized to improve students' listening comprehension skills.

2) Philosophy for children sessions to be implemented in Turkish lessons can contribute to developing students' listening skills and increase their success in Turkish lessons.

3) The Philosophy for Children Education Program can be implemented as an activity in all school courses.

4) This study was conducted with fourth-grade primary school students. Other researchers can investigate its effect on students in different grade levels and institutions.

5) For Philosophy for Children research to become widespread in Türkiye, researchers can conduct studies with quantitative and qualitative methods.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Celal Boyraz has graduated from Selçuk University Primary School Teaching undergraduate program. He completed her PhD with her "Philosophy with Children Practices in Primary School: An Action Research" thesis. Dr. Boyraz prepares publications on P4C, thinking education for the primary school level. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses, conferences, and seminars. In his research, he focused on how all subjects in primary school can be conducted with the P4C approach. He writes books on Turkish, mathematics, social studies, life science, and science courses, as well as P4C applications in this context. He continues his academic studies as the Head of the Department of Primary School Education and Head of the Department of Pre-school Education at Bayburt University, Faculty of Education.

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