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The Effect of Peritextual Reading on Listening Skills of Preschool Children

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of peritextual reading on preschool children's listening skills. A quasi-experimental design with a control group was employed, using pre-test and post-test measures. The study included 65 preschool students aged 4 to 6 years, with 35 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. The Listening Skills Assessment Scale for Preschool Children was used to measure listening skills across three sub-dimensions: listening comprehension, cognitive-behavioural responses, and social behaviors. Data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0, applying independent and dependent sample t-tests and non-parametric tests where necessary. Findings indicate that peritextual reading significantly improves preschool children's listening and cognitive-behavioural skills. However, no statistically significant effect was observed on their social behavioural skills. These results suggest that peritextual reading activities can be an effective tool for enhancing listening comprehension and cognitive engagement in preschool education. Peritextual reading contributes to the development of preschool children's listening skills, which are foundational for their overall language development. Educators should incorporate peritextual reading into early childhood education to improve students' listening comprehension and cognitive engagement. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of peritextual reading on various language skills.

Keywords: Early childhood literacy, language comprehension, listening development, interactive reading strategies, cognitive skills in preschoolers, peritextual literacy

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Introduction

Competencies in cognition, social interaction, and emotional regulation acquired during the preschool years significantly influence an individual's well-being across their lifespan (Schoon et al., 2021). Language development serves as a cornerstone supporting cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Within language skills, listening holds paramount importance, as individuals predominantly engage in listening during daily communication (Nas, 1999; Aktaş & Gündüz, 2003; Robertson, 2008; Peterson & Karschnik, 2011; Akyol, 2014; Kardaş & Harre, 2015; Şahin, 2013). This underscores the significance of nurturing listening skills. However, within the realm of language skills, listening remains relatively underexplored in terms of individual development (Tüzel & Keleş, 2013). Consequently, this study centers on the listening skills of preschool children. Its specific aim is to explore the influence of peritextual reading on children's listening abilities, a fundamental aspect of language development, and to examine its implications for cognitive and social competencies across diverse sub-dimensions.

Preschool children undergo a multifaceted and rapid developmental process (Anlıak & Dinçer, 2005). Among these developmental aspects are cognitive skills, which involve systematic changes in an individual's mental structure (Kurtulan, 2015). Cognition encompasses a spectrum of abilities including knowledge, intelligence, memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and linguistic competencies such as reading and writing (Gander and Gardiner, 2001; Küçükkaragöz, 2004; Bayhan-San & Artan, 2007; Kapanadze, 2019). Research indicates that cognitive development commences from an early age (Perels et al., 2009; Roebers et al., 2012; Bryce et al., 2015). Furthermore, cognitive development is impacted by multiple factors, including family socioeconomic status (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Hackman and Farah, 2009), peer relationships (Ogelman et al., 2015), parental involvement (Bornstein & Lansford, 2010; Orr & Caspi, 2022), psychomotor skills (Hernandez & Caçola, 2015), engagement in non-digital play activities (Lai et al., 2018), and access to diverse learning materials and opportunities (Moon & Hofferth, 2016; Taylor et al., 2008).

The listening skill addressed in this study was evaluated in two main dimensions: listening comprehension skills and cognitive-behavioural responses during listening. Listening is considered as a basic language skill for children's comprehension of texts. In this context, children's skills such as following the story, sequencing events, and answering questions about the content are considered as part of listening comprehension skills. In addition, cognitive-behavioural aspects such as children's ability to sustain attention, remain in the listening position, and respond appropriately during the listening process are also considered as part of listening skills.

Listening stands as a critical skill foundational to successful communication and professional advancement (Liubinienė, 2009). However, compared to other areas of language proficiency, there remains a dearth of academic research on listening skills (Doğan & Özçakmak, 2014). Listening skill in children is essential, akin to other fundamental skills such as speaking, reading, and writing, and warrants dedicated development and instruction. Despite being somewhat overshadowed by other language skills today, listening remains an indispensable component of effective language education. To foster effective and efficient listening, adequate time allocation and utilization of appropriate activities, methods, and techniques are imperative. Reviewing the literature reveals various factors influencing the development of listening skills, including the role of the family (Melanlıoğlu, 2012), active learning techniques (Aytan, 2011), digital storytelling (Türe Köse & Bartan, 2021), music instruction (Jesus & Silva, 2019), vocabulary acquisition (Ahmed et al., 2021), multimedia resources (Meskill, 1996), authentic

materials (Miller, 2003), podcast utilization (Kavaliauskienė, 2008), computer-assisted education (Nachoua, 2012), use of YouTube (Pratama et al., 2020), audiovisual media (Pham, 2021), and gamification (Syafii et al., 2020). However, there is a conspicuous lack of research on the influence of peritextual reading on listening skills. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of peritextual reading on the listening skills of preschool students.

Peritextual Reading

The primary components of books are the written texts through which authors or publishers communicate with readers, conveying their thoughts (Aslan, 2023). However, books encompass more than just written text; they also feature various elements such as covers, titles, author-illustrator names, prefaces, bibliographies, pictures, and drawings (Aslan & Yılar, 2022). According to Genette's (1997) theory, the elements both within a book (peritext) and those outside the book but referenced to it (epitext) collectively constitute paratext, shaping both individual and cultural perceptions of a text. Hence, paratext can be defined as the sum of peritext and epitext (Aslan & Yılar, 2023). The elements outside the textual content of books are commonly referred to as 'peritextual elements' in the literature (Gross et al., 2016; Witte et al., 2019; Ciecierski et al., 2020). While peritextual elements aim to enhance the readability and understanding of the book in a text-centric manner, epitextual elements, which are related to the text, play a more significant role in promoting and marketing the book (Akten, 2013).

According to Martinez et al. (2016), in peritextual reading, educators should primarily read the peritextual elements aloud and encourage students to make predictions about the text based on these clues. On the other hand, Gross and Latham (2017) define peritextual reading as an essential mechanism for readers to access, evaluate, and understand the content of a text by utilizing the surrounding elements (peritexts) of the text body.The peritextual reading activity described in this study involves the teacher reading the peritexts in the book with students, engaging in discussions using the question-answer method, predicting the content of the text, reading the text aloud, and finally comparing students' predictions with the actual content of the text (Aslan & Yılar, 2022).

Peritextual reading has been shown to enhance individuals' reading comprehension skills (Aslan & Yılar, 2022), increase reading motivation (Aslan & Yılar, 2023), and foster positive attitudes towards reading (Aslan & Yılar, 2022). Moreover, peritextual reading has been associated with improvements in reading and writing skills (Thomas et al., 2007), teaches individuals how to evaluate non-textual elements in books (Witte et al., 2019), cultivates interpretation skills (Serafini, 2012), enhances comprehension and learning abilities (Ciecierski & Smith, 2020), fosters critical thinking skills (Gross et al., 2016), facilitates the generation of creative interpretations of texts (Jenkins, 2001), and improves visual reading skills (Witte et al., 2019). Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes apparent that peritextual reading contributes to the comprehensive development of individuals across various domains. While studies have examined the association between peritextual reading and language skills, there is a noticeable dearth of research on its correlation with listening skills, especially within the realm of preschool education. Hence, this study endeavors to address this gap in the literature by investigating the impact of peritextual reading on listening skills. Additionally, it seeks to provide a valuable example of incorporating peritextual reading practices in preschool education, offering insights into its potential benefits for young learners.

Research Aim

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of peritextual reading on the listening skills of preschool children. The study seeks to determine whether engaging with peritextual elements in books enhances children's listening abilities and contributes to their cognitive and social development within the context of early childhood education.

Research questions:

1. Does peritextual reading significantly affect the listening skills of preschool children?

2. Does peritextual reading significantly affect the cognitive behavioural skills of preschool children?

3. Does peritextual reading significantly affect the social behavioural skills of preschool children?

Method

Research Design

In this study, which investigates the impact of peritextual reading on the listening skills of preschool students, a quasi-experimental design incorporating a control group, utilizing pre-test - post-test methodology, was employed. Quasi-experimental designs are utilized in research to explore causal relationships between groups when true experimental controls are impractical. In this model, an independent variable is introduced to the experimental group, and measurements are taken both before and after the experiment to compare pre-test and post-test scores within the group (Karasar, 2000). Experimental and control groups are determined through randomization, ensuring that each participant has an equal chance of being assigned to either group. Quantitative studies typically employ data collection and analysis methods aimed at summarizing and simplifying the subject matter. This design is commonly used in the fields of education and psychology. Table 1 illustrates the experimental design utilized in this research.

Table 1. Experimental model of the research

Group	Pre-Test	Application	Post-Test
Experimental Group	Listening Skills Scale	Peritextual reading was performed.	Listening Skills Scale
Control Group		Normal education resumed.	

Participants

The study was conducted in the 2023-2024 academic year across two distinct kindergartens affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, as well as a kindergarten within a primary school located in the provincial center of Igdir. To ensure methodological rigor and minimize potential biases, the research design incorporated both experimental and control groups, each consisting of two classes. This structure facilitated a quasi-experimental approach, enabling a comparative analysis of the impact of peritextual reading on preschool children's listening skills.

Experimental Group: The experimental group comprised 35 students, distributed across two classes. These children were exposed to peritextual reading activities as part of their regular curriculum. The activities involved engaging with peritextual elements of books, such as covers, titles, and illustrations, before proceeding to the main text. Teachers read aloud these elements, encouraged discussions, and prompted students to make predictions about the content of the books. The gender distribution in the experimental group included 19 girls and 16 boys, providing a balanced representation of both genders. The age range within this group was 4 to 6 years, with the majority being 5 years old.

Control Group: The control group included 30 students, also distributed across two classes. Unlike the experimental group, the control group followed the standard curriculum without the integration of peritextual reading activities. This group served as a baseline to compare the effects of the intervention applied to the experimental group. The control group consisted of 17 girls and 13 boys, mirroring the gender balance observed in the experimental group. The age distribution was similarly aligned, with most students being 5 years old. Across both groups (experimental and control), the majority of participants were 5 years old, ensuring that any observed differences in outcomes could be attributed to the intervention rather than age-related developmental variations. The relatively even split between boys and girls in both groups was intentional, to prevent gender from being a confounding variable in the study. The schools were selected based on their similar socio-economic profiles, ensuring a homogeneous sample in terms of background factors such as family income, parental education levels, and community environment. All schools were public institutions, which further standardized the study conditions, particularly in terms of physical infrastructure, psychosocial atmosphere, and staffing quality. This careful selection process was critical in controlling for external variables that could otherwise influence the study's results.

Data Collection Tools and Collection of Data

In the study, the 'Listening Skills Assessment Scale for Preschool Children,' developed by Özer Özkan and Coşkun (2015). This scale utilizes a four-point Likert-type format, with response options including: (1) Never, (2) Occasionally, (3) Mostly, and (4) Always. Comprising a total of 30 items, the scale encompasses two sub-factors: social behaviours and cognitive behaviours.

In this study, listening skills are considered in two dimensions: listening comprehension and cognitive behavioural skills during listening. The scale used to assess listening skills was designed to cover both students' listening comprehension levels and their behavioural responses during listening. Some sample items in the scale are as follows: 'The student can sequence the events in the story he/she is listening to,' and 'The student can maintain attention during listening.' These items aim to measure both students' comprehension skills and their behaviours during listening.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, as suggested by Suhr (2006), to assess the suitability of the previously developed scale for the current study. According to established criteria, an excellent model fit is indicated when the chi-squared to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) is less than 2.5 (Kline, 2005; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). The obtained χ^2/df value of 3.02 in our study falls within the range considered acceptable by Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger (2003) and indicates a moderate fit as it is below 5, as proposed by Sümer (2000). The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the inter-factor fit of the listening skills scale for preschool children was acceptable (χ^2=2132, df=435, χ^2/df=4.90). Furthermore, the results of the analysis yielded RMSEA=.09, NFI=.97, NNFI=.98, CFI=.98, and p=.00, indicating a sufficient fit for the two-factor structure of the scale (Özer Özkan & Coşkun, 2015).

Throughout the experimental phase, the researcher conducted peritextual reading sessions with the experimental group students once a week for a total duration of four weeks. The books read during these sessions with the experimental group were exclusively utilized for read-aloud activities with the control group, ensuring consistency in the types of books experienced by both groups. Upon the conclusion of the experimental intervention, peritextual reading sessions continued with the experimental group, while read-aloud sessions were conducted with the control group. Simultaneously, classroom teachers administered the listening skills scale to collect post-test data for each student, thereby finalizing the data collection process for the study.

The books used in collecting and implementing the research data, along with their authors' names, are as follows: 'Squirrel's Secret' by Susie Linn, 'Cinnamon's Vanishing Carrots' by Andreas König, 'Save Finance for Kids!' by Cinders McLeod, 'Monti the Shy Bear' by Duncan Beedie, 'Love Monster and the Last Chocolate' by Rachel Bright, 'Little Acorn' by Melanie Joyce, and 'Ministry of Funny Animal Names' by Kes Gray and Nikki Dyson.

Data Analysis Techniques

Before conducting data analysis, the normality of the data was evaluated utilizing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, as well as examining skewness and kurtosis values. These tests were conducted separately for the entire scale and its sub-dimensions (social behavior and cognitive behavior). Findings revealed that solely the post-test data pertaining to the 'social behaviours' dimension exhibited non-normal distribution. Consequently, with the exception of the 'social behaviours' dimension, within-group analyses were conducted using Dependent Sample t-Tests, while between-group analyses utilized Independent Sample t-Tests. For the 'social behaviours' dimension, intra-group analyses were conducted utilizing the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, while inter-group comparisons were executed employing the Mann Whitney U Test. Data analysis was carried out utilizing SPSS 22.0 software. Additionally, the alpha reliability coefficient was computed for the entire scale and its sub-dimensions, yielding values exceeding .80 in all dimensions. This high level of reliability, as suggested by Cohen et al. (2007), affirmed the scale's robustness.

Ethical Discussion

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of all participants. Prior to the commencement of the research, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Informed consent was secured from the parents or legal guardians of all participating children, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study’s purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. The participants, who were preschool children aged 4 to 6, were treated with respect and care throughout the study. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and they were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. Additionally, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were strictly maintained; no personal identifying information was collected or disclosed, and data were stored securely in accordance with data protection regulations. In conducting the study, special attention was given to minimizing any potential risks to the children. The activities involved in the study were carefully designed to be age-appropriate, non-invasive, and aligned with their regular educational curriculum. Teachers were provided with comprehensive training on how to implement the peritextual reading activities ethically and effectively. The study also ensured that there was no disruption to the children’s normal educational experience, and any potential psychological or emotional impacts were carefully monitored. The findings of this research are intended to contribute to the improvement of early childhood education, particularly in the

development of listening skills, and are disseminated with the utmost consideration for the rights and dignity of all participants involved.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted with a relatively small sample size of 65 students from specific kindergartens in Igdir, Turkey. While the findings provide valuable insights, the limited sample size and geographical scope restrict the generalizability of the results to other contexts, such as different regions or educational systems. Although efforts were made to randomly assign participants to the experimental and control groups, the homogeneity of socio-economic profiles and the specific selection of schools might introduce selection bias. This could limit the applicability of the findings to more diverse populations. The study was conducted in a specific cultural and linguistic context, which may influence the results. The materials used and the listening skills assessed may not be entirely applicable or transferable to children from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Ethics Committee Approval Process

Before initiating the study, approval was obtained from the Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee, as documented by Decision No. 316 dated December 28, 2023. Moreover, necessary approvals were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. Approval was sought and granted by both the school administration and teachers to facilitate the study. Subsequently, parents of the students slated to participate were invited to the school premises, where they were briefed on the study's objectives and procedures, and their consent was duly obtained.

Findings

This section delineates the results concerning the pre-test and post-test data gathered on the listening skills of preschool students. Descriptive statistics for both the pre-test and post-test data of the preschool students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis results of students' listening skills test scores

Test	Factor	Group	n	X	ss	Variance	Min.	Max.
Pre-test	Listening skills	Control	30	2,74	.85	.72	1,20	4,00
		Experiment	35	2,78	.36	.13	1,83	3,50
	Social behaviour	Control	30	2,97	.74	.54	1,44	4,00
		Experiment	35	3,02	.51	.26	2,00	4,00
	Cognitive behaviour	Control	30	2,65	.98	.96	1,10	4,00
		Experiment	35	2,68	.40	.16	1,52	3,62
Post-test	Listening skills	Control	30	2,76	.75	.56	1,03	4,00
		Experiment	35	3,06	.44	.19	2,20	4,00
	Social behaviour	Control	30	3,09	.77	.59	1,11	4,00

	Experiment	35	3,01	.49	.24	1,78	4,00	
Cognitive behaviour	Control	30	2,63	.81	.65	1,00	4,00	
	Experiment	35	3,08	.48	.23	2,14	4,00	

As seen as Table 2, it is apparent that the mean pre-test scores of the control group students on the listening skills scale (X=2.74) and those of the experimental group students (X=2.78) are notably comparable. In the social behavior dimension, the mean scores of the control group students were X=2.97, whereas those of the experimental group students were marginally higher, with X=3.02. Concerning the pre-test scores of the cognitive behavior dimension, it was noted that the mean scores of the control group students were X=2.65, while those of the experimental group students were M=2.68. In the post-test data, a significant increase in mean scores was observed favouring the experimental group students

The study employed Independent Sample t-Tests to evaluate the difference between the mean scores of the groups in the total listening skills scale and cognitive behavior dimension. The outcomes of the Independent Sample t-Tests for the groups are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Difference between the groups' mean scores on the listening skills scale

Test	Factor	Group	n	X	ss	t	sd	p	d
Pre-test	Listening skills	Control	30	2,74	.85	-.25	63	.80	.06
		Experiment	35	2,78	.36				
	Cognitive behaviours	Control	30	2,65	.98	-.19	63	.85	.09
		Experiment	35	2,68	.40				
Post-test	Listening skills	Control	30	2,76	.75	-1,99	63	.05	.48
		Experiment	35	3,06	.44				
	Cognitive behaviours	Control	30	2,63	.81	-2,82	63	.01	.68
		Experiment	35	3,08	.48				

Upon scrutinizing Table 3, it is evident that, based on the results of the pre-test data, there existed no statistically significant difference between the control group's mean pre-test scores for listening skills (X=2,74) and the experimental group's mean pre-test scores (X=2,78) [$t_{(63)} = -.25$, $p > .05$]. Similarly, no statistically significant difference was observed between the mean pre-test scores for cognitive behaviours of the control group (X=2,65) and those of the experimental group (X=2,68) [$t_{(63)} = -.19$, $p > .05$].

Upon analyzing the post-test data, a statistically significant difference was observed between the mean scores of listening skills for the control group (X=2,76) and the experimental group (X=3,06) [$t_{(63)} = -1,99$, $p \leq .05$]. Upon examination of the mean scores, it is evident that the difference favors the experimental group students. Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of cognitive behaviours for the control group (X=2,63) and

the experimental group (X=3,08) [$t_{(63)} = -2,82$, $p < .05$]. Once again, the mean score difference favored the experimental group students.

Both pre-test and post-test data on the social behaviours dimension of the scale were collected from both groups. The outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U Test applied to the acquired data are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Difference between the groups' mean ranks of social behavior scores

Factor	Test	Group	n	Rank Mean	Row Total	U	Z	p
Social Behaviour	Pre-test	Control	30	32,03	961,0	496,0	-,38	.70
		Experiment	35	33,83	1184,0			
	Post-test	Control	30	34,18	1025,5	489,5	-,47	.64
		Experiment	35	31,99	1119,5			

Upon scrutinizing the data in Table 4, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the pre-test [U= 496,0; $p > .05$] and post-test [U= 489,5; $p > .05$] data of the social behavior dimension of the scale.

In-group data analysis of the listening skills scale and cognitive behavior dimension of the groups was conducted. Table 5 displays the results of the Dependent Sample t-Test for the pre-test and post-test data of the groups.

Table 5. The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the groups

Group	Factor	Test	n	M	ss	t	sd	p	d
Control	Listening skills	Pre-test	30	2,74	.85	-,10	29	.92	.02
		Post-test	30	2,76	.75				
	Cognitive behaviours	Pre- test	30	2,65	.98	.09	29	.93	.02
		Post-test	30	2,63	.81				
Experiment	Listening skills	Pre-test	35	2,78	.36	-3,15	34	.01	.70
		Post-test	35	3,06	.44				
	Cognitive behaviours	Pre-test	35	2,68	.40	-4,22	34	.00	.91
		Post-test	35	3,08	.48				

Upon reviewing Table 5, it is apparent that there is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the listening skills [$t_{(29)} = -0,10$, $p > .05$] and cognitive behaviours [$t_{(29)} = -0,09$, $p > .05$] dimensions of the control group students.

A statistically significant difference was observed in the experimental group students between the mean scores of listening skills [$t_{(34)} = -3,15$, $p < .05$] and cognitive behaviours [$t_{(34)} = -4,22$, $p < .05$]. Upon examination of the mean scores, it is evident that the difference favours the post-test data.

The pre-test and post-test results of the social behaviours dimension of the scale were analysed within groups. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for the social behaviours dimension are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Wilcoxon signed ranks test results for the social behaviours dimension of the groups

Factor	Group	Test	n	Rank mean	Row total	Z	p
Social behaviour	Control	Negative queues	12	15,42	185,0	-.70	.48
		Positive rows	17	14,71	250,5		
		Equal rows	1				
	Experiment	Negative queues	18	16,31	293,5	-,07	.94
		Positive rows	16	18,84	301.5		
		Equal rows	1				

Upon reviewing Table 6, it is evident that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean ranks of the control group [$Z = -.70$; $p > .05$] and the experimental group [$Z = -.07$; $p > .05$] in terms of social behaviours.

Conclusion, discussion and suggestions

This study demonstrated that peritextual reading has a significant and positive impact on preschool children's listening and cognitive-behavioural skills. The intervention group, exposed to structured peritextual reading sessions, showed notable improvements in following stories, maintaining attention, and engaging cognitively with the listening process compared to their peers. However, no statistically significant difference was found regarding social behaviour skills. These results suggest that while peritextual reading is a powerful tool for enhancing receptive language and cognitive engagement in early childhood, its influence on social skills may depend on additional contextual or developmental factors. The findings provide evidence for integrating peritextual reading as a complementary method in preschool language education.

The findings emphasize the significance of the social environment in children's language skill development, in addition to genetic factors. Environments rich in stimuli for language use play a pivotal role in nurturing these skills. Therefore, it's crucial for parents and teachers to foster strong communication with children, as communication supports language development, while a lack of communication opportunities may hinder language acquisition in preschoolers (Sego, 2009). Peritextual reading activities, involving both student-teacher and student-student interactions, emerged as a valuable tool in promoting language skills among students, as demonstrated by this study.

The prevalence of language learning delays in preschool children is well-documented (Sim et al., 2013), highlighting the critical importance of incorporating language development activities during this developmental period. Among these activities, regular exposure to children's literature stands out as particularly impactful, as it significantly contributes to children's language development (Umek et al., 2003). Peritextual reading, rooted in elements of children's literature, offers a valuable approach in this regard. During peritextual reading sessions, teachers engage students in discussions about the content of the text, fostering interactive exchanges aimed at enhancing language skills. The findings of this study underscore the significance of interactive reading practices in improving language skills among preschool children.

In their study aiming to identify challenges faced by Finnish and Estonian preschool teachers, Ugaste and Niikko (2015) found that children often seek attention from their teachers, experience language difficulties, and present challenges in planning activities for large groups. Similarly, other studies have identified issues such as age disparities among preschool children, inadequate class sizes for effective student engagement, large class sizes, and activities not tailored to children's developmental levels (Başaran, Gökmen, & Akdağ, 2014; Ağgül Yalçın & Yalçın, 2018; Hayber, 2022). These challenges can also contribute to classroom management issues, particularly due to the episodic nature of preschoolers being prone to talk, unless under specific circumstances. From the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, speaking is a skill that fosters preschoolers' sense of initiative. Peritextual reading emerges as a powerful activity for preschool teachers, especially in crowded classrooms, as it encourages every student to participate actively, facilitates attention to the story even in large classes, and promotes critical thinking through the exchange of ideas among students of different age groups.

Cognition can be understood as the process of perceiving and assimilating external stimuli (Uçak & Güzeldere, 2006). Children's cognitive development is influenced by both genetic factors (Haworth et al., 2010) and their experiences during childhood (Eliassen et al., 2018). According to cognitive-behavioural theory, cognition, emotion, and behavior are interconnected elements (İlgar & İlgar, 2019). Therefore, supporting children's cognitive development entails fostering elements such as interest, motivation, and attitude, which are closely tied to emotional factors. Research has indicated a noteworthy positive correlation between peritextual reading and reading motivation, as well as a positive attitude toward reading (Aslan& Yılar, 2023; Aslan & Yılar, 2022). In this study, the enhancement of students' interest, motivation, and positive attitudes toward listening through peritextual reading can be attributed to the improvement in their listening and cognitive skills. Students with positive attitudes toward listening and heightened motivation may have experienced enhancements in their listening and cognitive abilities.

Social skills encompass a range of behaviours that enable children and young people to adapt functionally to social life (Yukay Yüksel, 2006). These skills are manifested through behaviours exhibited in social situations (Seven, 2007). Early childhood represents a pivotal period during which individuals develop their initial social relationship structures, laying the groundwork for future development (Özabacı, 2006). Individual differences, encompassing variations in children's personality structures, family upbringing, and cultural influences, also wield a significant impact on the acquisition of social behaviours. During peritextual reading, students engage in active listening, maintain eye contact with the narrator, respond to questions, listen to their peers' conversations, and express their thoughts and opinions. Consequently, peritextual reading is expected to foster behaviours such as respect, valuing opinions, self-expression, and allowing others to express their opinions, all of which are essential components of social skills. However, this study observed no significant impact of peritextual reading on preschool children's

social skills. Several factors may contribute to this outcome, but it's possible that the students already possess a high baseline level of social skills, which may mitigate the effect of peritextual reading.

The literature reveals numerous studies aimed at enhancing language skills, including reading aloud and storytelling (Brodin and Renblad), music and movement education (Yazejian & Peisner-Feinberg, 2009), parent-child reading at home (Weigel et al., 2006), utilizing language skills in nature (Novikova et al., 2024), as well as activities such as book reading, language games, and vocabulary training (Hagen, 2018). Peritextual reading encompasses various skills, including interactive reading, reading aloud, visual reading, critical reading, and creative thinking. When implemented in preschool settings, peritextual reading contributes to the multidimensional development of students. The suitability of peritextual reading for preschool education may have been a subject of debate. However, this study demonstrates that peritextual reading activities can indeed be effectively applied in preschool education, offering an alternative approach for preschool teachers to consider.

Suggestions

Integrating peritextual reading activities into early childhood education curricula holds promising potential for enhancing preschoolers' listening skills. However, future research should move beyond establishing efficacy and systematically investigate the longitudinal effects of peritextual reading on multiple dimensions of language development, including listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and oral expression. Specifically, longitudinal and mixed-method studies are needed to uncover how sustained exposure to peritextual reading influences language trajectories over time and across diverse learner populations.

Furthermore, subsequent studies should also examine the mechanisms through which peritextual reading impacts cognitive and socio-emotional development, considering variables such as classroom dynamics, teacher expertise, and family involvement. Research designs that incorporate process-oriented data (e.g., video analyses of reading sessions) could yield deeper insights into interaction patterns and engagement levels during peritextual reading.

From a practical perspective, it is critical to develop and empirically test professional development programs that equip early childhood educators with evidence-based strategies for effectively facilitating peritextual reading and optimizing student outcomes. Simultaneously, exploring parental engagement strategies that support at-home peritextual reading practices can provide a holistic view of children's language environments.

Moreover, emerging educational technologies offer innovative avenues to enrich peritextual reading experiences; future research should explore how digital tools and interactive media can be integrated without compromising the multimodal richness that characterizes peritextual reading.

By addressing these research gaps and practical considerations, the field can move toward a more nuanced understanding of peritextual reading's role in early language development and provide actionable guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers aiming to support preschoolers' listening and broader communicative skills.

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Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

Ethics

Before initiating the study, approval was obtained from the Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee, as documented by Decision No. 316 dated December 28, 2023. Moreover, necessary approvals were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. Approval was sought and granted by both the school administration and teachers to facilitate the study. Subsequently, parents of the students slated to participate were invited to the school premises, where they were briefed on the study's objectives and procedures, and their consent was duly obtained.

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