

The Contribution of Interactive Reading Activities to Children's Listening Skills*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Interactive Reading Program (IRP) implemented to improve the listening skills of 60-72-month-old children. In this study conducted with the action research method, one of the qualitative research designs, the data collection process was carried out in three stages (readiness, implementation, and retention). The sample consisted of 11 children (6 girls and 5 boys) attending kindergarten in a public school in Uşak. The "Form for Assessing Listening Skills of 60-72 Month-old Children" developed by the researchers was used as the data collection tool. During the research process, unstructured traditional reading and IRP practices were carried out both at the group and individual levels, and retention data were collected at the 6th week after the practice. The findings showed that children's listening skills improved significantly and systematically, especially with the individual IRP interventions, and remarkable progress was observed in high-level listening skills such as interpretation, prediction, and association. In the retention measurements, it was determined that the gains could be maintained to a large extent; in some children, learning emerged with a delay. However, it was determined that some children still needed support due to individual differences.

Keywords:

Interactive Reading, Preschool Education, Listening Skills, Action Research

Introduction

Listening, which ranks first in the basic communication process, is an active skill that we use until the end of our lives. So much so that in order for a person to understand what is happening around him/her, to sustain life and to express himself/herself correctly, he/she must first have acquired this skill. A person begins to hear while still in the womb. This process, which begins in the womb, is further reinforced in the family environment, and then continues to develop with the influence of both school and social life.

Listening is the first language skill that develops in children (Yazıcı & Dereobalı, 2015). It is known that the fetus begins to hear some sounds in the womb (Myjkowski, 2025). Thanks to this first skill, babies first recognize sounds, then comprehend the differences between sounds and make sense of them. In time, they use the words whose meaning they comprehend in sentences (Bahşi & Sis, 2023).



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The preschool is a critical period for the acquisition of some skills. The skills acquired in this period provide significant support to other stages of life (Vatamaniuk et al., 2024). One of these is listening skills. However, today there is a wrong understanding about the development of listening skills. Listening skill is perceived as a skill that is acquired from birth and develops spontaneously in the natural process. For this reason, it is often not included in a planned education program; it is believed that there is no need to develop this skill (Yazıcı & Dereobalı, 2015). However, listening is a very important skill both in social and academic life. This skill should be taught to children from an early age. One of the most important activities that can be done to support this important skill, which also forms the basis of other language skills (Damar, 2024), is interactive reading carried out within a certain program.

Many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of interactive reading activities in supporting children's language skills, in which the child is actively involved in the process, asking questions and giving answers, and in which there is active communication between the reader and the child (Dowdall et al., 2020). Interactive reading, which was first developed by Whitehurst and others, envisages the active involvement of the child in the reading activity (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Whitehurst et al., 1994a, 1994b).

Interactive Reading Program (IRP) is a reading program that can be carried out with different people such as teacher-child (Yurtbakan, et.al., 2020), parent-child (Grøver, et al., 2024), care staff workers-child (Vally, et al., 2015) and peer-child (Yurtbakan, et.al, 2020). This program, which is implemented with a very comprehensive, systematic and holistic approach and is based on a series of behaviors between the reader and the listener (Vally 2012), is a reading program in which the reader and the listener can change places during the reading action (Whitehurst et al., 1988), the reader frequently asks questions to the child (Walsh & Hodge, 2018), and is quite different from traditional in all these aspects (İlhan, 2019).

Importance of the Research

In the preschool period, when literacy skills have not yet been acquired, there are two important skills that enable the child to communicate with people. One of these is listening and the other is speaking. Listening is the basis of speaking, which is one of the most basic ways of conveying thoughts to the other party. It is undeniable that an individual who lacks listening skills will be deprived of many high-level skills such as understanding, predicting, problem solving, associating events, etc. For this reason, it is important to develop children's listening skills from an early age.

The fact that children can already use listening skills leads to a perception that there is no need to teach and develop this skill (Damar, 2024). For this reason, listening skill is the language skill that has been studied the least on how children should acquire it (Potur,2023). However, children should have acquired listening skills in the most effective way before starting primary school, that is, before the process of learning reading and writing, which are other language skills. Damar (2024) found in his research that the development of listening skills positively affects reading, writing and speaking skills.

Yazıcı and Dereobalı (2015) stated that listening education should be started at a very early age and that this education will be effective with systematic planned activities. One of the activities in the education process is telling stories to children. Many studies have revealed the contribution of interactive reading activities in which there is an active communication between the reader and the child, in which the child is involved in the process, asking questions and giving answers, in supporting children's language skills (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021; Davison et al., 2023; Dowdall et al., 2020; Muhinyi & Rowland, 2023; Whitehurst, et al., 1988; Yıldız Bıçakçı et al., 2018). Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct studies on interactive book applications in early childhood (Pillinger & Vardy, 2022).

In the studies, researchers generally examine the contributions of interactive reading to language acquisition skills and early literacy (Dowdall et al., 2020), expressive (Clemens & Kegel, 2021) and receptive language skills (Akmeşe & Kanmaz, 2021; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). In addition to this, there have been studies conducted on children's writing (Efe & Temel, 2018), alphabet (Er, 2016), and intended to develop their phonological awareness (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2018). In general, studies that used similar techniques (experimental, quasi-experimental) and measurement tools (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Marmara Language Development Scale) (Tetik & Işıkoğlu-Erdoğan, 2017), English Picture Vocabulary Test (Kucirkova et al., 2017), Ankara Developmental Screening Inventory, Denver Developmental Screening Test-II and Brigance Early Development Inventory II (Yıldız-Bıçakçı et al., 2018), Gazi Early Childhood Assessment Tool (Hafizoğlu-Çelik et al., 2020) were identified. The scales used in the studies mentioned are tools that measure basic language skills (receptive language, expressive language). Some are screenings that aimed at determining general developmental characteristics. Apart from these tools, only one scale targeting the listening skills of preschool children has been found in the literature. The 4-point Likert scale developed by Özer Özkan and Coşkun (2015) was developed with 240 children. It consists of 30 items and 2 subscales (cognitive + social).

Studies on listening skills in preschool period are quite rare, especially in Türkiye. The results of Potur's (2023) analysis of thesis studies on listening skills support this finding. The researcher analyzed 134 master's theses and 41 doctoral dissertations on listening skills between 2011 and 2020 and found 13 studies conducted with preschool children. This situation highlights a significant gap in the relevant field. Furthermore, most existing studies address listening skills indirectly, within the framework of comprehension, vocabulary, or early literacy. Taking these limitations into account, this research directly examines the listening skills of children aged 60–72 months and relates them to interactive book reading practices. In this respect, the study is important in that it focuses on a topic that has been relatively neglected in the literature.

In the literature, there are studies addressing topics such as the contribution of digital storytelling to listening skills in the pre-school period (Türe Köse, 2019), the effect of various variables on listening skills (Çetinel, 2016), teacher opinions (Bartan & Türe Köse, 2023), scale development (Özer Özkan & Çoşkun, 2015) and the relationship between listening skills and mathematical ability (Şeker, 2022).

Purpose of the Research

The aim of this study is to determine the contribution of IRP (interactive reading program) to the development of children's listening skills in the Preschool Period (60–72 months). The three sub-objectives determined according to this purpose are as follows.

- ✓ What are the readiness levels of 60- to 72-month-old children regarding their listening skills prior to IRP?
- ✓ How is the development of the listening skills of 60-72-month-old children during the IRP process?
- ✓ To what extent is the listening development of 60- to 72-month-old children retained after IRP?

Method of the Research

In the following part of the research, information about the model, study group, data collection processes and tools, validity, reliability and data analysis are given.

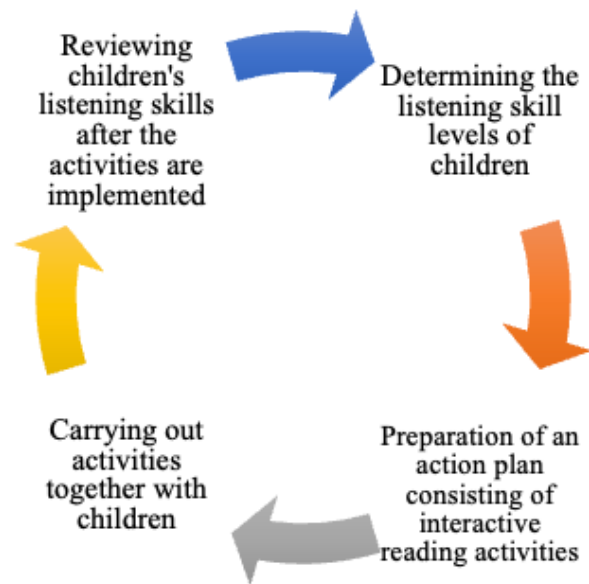
Research Model

In this study, which will be conducted on the effect of the interactive reading program to be implemented in preschool period on children's listening skills, action research design was used. Action research is a type of research that aims at social change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), consists of stages such as planning the action to be put forward in order to make sense of the actions carried out in real environments such as classrooms

and schools and to increase the quality of these actions (Johnson, 2015), or to solve an existing problem (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003), putting the existing plan into action, collecting and analyzing the data, and reflecting the results obtained (Mills, 2003), including practices that need to be realized personally (Gürgür, 2023). The most important element that differentiates action research from other research is that it does not only reveal the current situation, but also carries the principle of taking action to further improve or change the existing situation. The action plan of the implementation process of this research is as follows:

Figure 1

The Action Plan of the Implementation Process



Participants

The study group of the research consisted of 11 children aged 60–72 months who were studying in the kindergarten of a public school in Uşak province in the 2023–2024 academic year. Six of the participants were girls and five were boys. In this study, the participants were determined by easily accessible sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling types (Yıldırım & Şimşek 2021).

Measures

The data collection tools and implementation processes used in the study are presented below.

Development Process of the Form for Assessing Listening Skills of 60–72 Month Old Children

- ✓ Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 preschool teachers on children's listening skills
- ✓ An item pool was created based on the literature.

- ✓ The items to be included in the scale, the type of scale, criteria and levels were determined by six academicians and three preschool teachers who are experts in their fields.
- ✓ Then, this form was sent via e-mail to a total of 30 academics working in the fields of preschool, assessment and evaluation, and interactive book reading. 22 academicians gave feedback.
- ✓ As a result of the feedback received from the academicians, the form was finalized.
- ✓ Then, a pilot study was conducted with 8 children.
- ✓ After the analyses, some items were removed from the form and the wording was changed in some others. In this process, both researchers examined the analysis results and the final corrections of the form were made together.
- ✓ Then the actual implementation started.
- ✓ Throughout the study, students' readiness, progress and retention were determined through the "Form for Assessing Listening Skills of 60-72 Month-old Children".

Interactive Reading Programme (IRP)

The plan to be made for interactive reading activities to achieve its purpose has a great importance. Kim (2020) suggested that the teacher should make a plan for the read-aloud activity to be carried out with the students. This study outlines the steps to be followed before, during, and after reading. An IRP was prepared for all storybooks to be used in the study. The plans were shaped with the opinions and suggestions of 4 experts and 2 preschool teachers who have worked in this field.

Interactive Book Reading Program (IRP); conducted with the participation of various adults such as researchers, parents, and teachers (Yurtbakan, 2020), implemented through a comprehensive, systematic, and holistic approach, based on a series of behaviors between the reader and the listener (Akoğlu, 2019), where the reader and listener switch places during the reading activity (Aslan, 2023), where the child's active participation is involved (İlhan & Canbulat, 2021), where the reader frequently asks the child questions (Dowdall et al., 2020), and in all these aspects, it is a book reading program that is quite different from traditional reading (İlhan, 2019). Unlike traditional reading, interactive book reading involves several steps. Adults are responsible for ensuring the child's active participation in this process, which is achieved through various questions before, during, and after reading (Şimşek & Erdoğan, 2021).

Before reading, the researcher introduced the selected book to draw the children's attention to the topic

and asked questions aimed at activating their prior knowledge. At this stage, short conversations were held to encourage the children to make predictions based on the book's cover, pictures, or title.

During the reading phase, while reading the text aloud, the researcher asked explanatory questions to ensure the children's active participation, guiding them to make predictions about the text, interpret events, and understand the characters' emotions. In addition, the children were encouraged to speak up and express their different opinions.

Post-reading activities focused on reinforcing the main idea of the text, sequencing events, and understanding the characteristics of the characters. These activities included children retelling the story in their own words and producing original work related to the story.

Video Records

A camera was used throughout the studies. In preschool classrooms, which are very dynamic, the presence of a camera in the classroom may reduce the children's ability to focus their attention on the activity. In order to avoid distraction during the process and to make it a natural part of the classroom, the camera to be used by the researchers was introduced to the children during the applications. Children were allowed to make short recordings in the classroom and then these recordings were watched together. Based on this short recording video, the children were told why the camera was needed.

Researcher's Journal

For all stages of the research, the researcher's observation notes and thoughts were transferred to the researcher's journal.

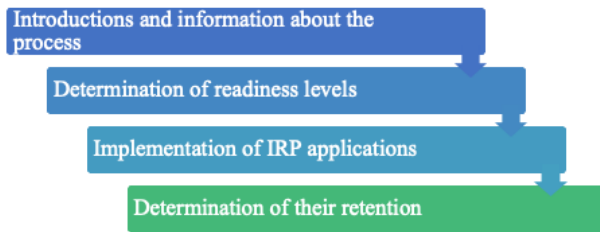
Activities of Children

All activities (painting, dance, games, and artistic activities) carried out by children within the scope of IRP were also included in the data of the study.

Data Collection Process

During the data collection process, the institution was visited 17 times in total, two times in some weeks and three times in others, depending on the availability of the classroom, the program, the students and the teacher. After the introduction and familiarization activities, the readiness levels of the children were first determined and then a research action plan consisting of IRP activities to improve their listening skills was prepared. The implementation phase was carried out as follows:

Figure 2
Application Stages



Introduction and Information about the Process

The researcher attended the class as a listener twice in the weeks before the implementation process, primarily to mingle with the children. Children were introduced. On the first day of the intervention, children were given preliminary information about the intervention.

The Role of the Researcher

All applications were carried out by the researcher. Before starting the process, the researcher selected the books for each application by utilizing relevant literature and expert opinions, and then prepared an interactive book reading plan suitable for the books. During the implementation process, the researcher proceeded according to the plan and ensured that data was collected in an organized manner by recording the entire process.

By the nature of qualitative research, the researcher's active participation in the process ensures both the reliability of the data collection process and the integrity of the application. In this context, the researcher's role was not limited to being an implementer, but also included planning, executing, and observing the process.

Determination of readiness levels

After the familiarization process, a storybook was read to the children twice at different times using the traditional reading technique. These readings were done collectively. Considering that the children might have been influenced by each other during the collective readings, a different book was re-read individually at different times. At the end of this process, the video recordings were evaluated and the readiness levels were determined, and the necessary markings were made on the items in the Form for the Evaluation of Listening Skills of 60-72 Month Old Children. All video recordings were analyzed twice by the researcher at different times. After this analysis, IRP applications were started.

Implementation of IRP applications

At this stage, the interactive reading program was put into practice. A total of 5 interactive reading programs were prepared. Four of these programs were implemented during the process and one of them was implemented during the assessment of permanence. Two of the four IRP programs were implemented with all children, while the other two were implemented individually.

Determination of their Retention

Six weeks after the end of the interventions, the children came together again and a book at a similar level to the previously read books was read individually. One child could not participate in the retention process due to moving.

Analysis of the Data

The collected data were analyzed using Multidirectional Interaction Analysis. In multidirectional interaction analysis, not only words but also gestures, facial expressions and movements are included (Norris, 2013). In this way, meanings beyond words are analyzed through body posture, gestures, facial expressions and movements. There may be many different modes underneath observable behaviors, and discovering these modes can be realized through a detailed qualitative analysis (Norris, 2013). For this purpose, video and audio recordings, photographs, researcher diaries, and the resulting products were analyzed by the researchers, and the data obtained were meaningfully coded. Findings were reached after all the data suitable for the purpose of the study were coded.

Reliability and Validity (Consistency and Credibility) Studies

Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first pioneers to conceptualize reliability in qualitative research as "reliability and consistency". Reliability in qualitative research can be achieved by ensuring that the data collected have internal consistency and that the resulting data are meaningful for both researchers and readers. In other words, it refers to the stability of the value obtained after independent measurements (Mills, 2003)

Richards (2005, p.143) argues that the validity of good qualitative research depends to a large extent on the researcher's ability to convincingly demonstrate with evidence how he or she arrived at the results at hand and to convince the reader that these results are the most likely to be achieved in such a study. One of the elements that make action research valid is to ensure accurate data collection (Koshy, 2005). There are a

number of strategies that can be used to increase credibility in qualitative research (Meriam, 2018, p. 209). Some strategies were used in this study.

- ✓ While creating the problem situation of the action research, preschool teachers and experts were interviewed, and the interviews continued until they reached the saturation point (until similar answers started to be received frequently).
- ✓ In the form prepared for the evaluation of children, opinions were taken from the literature, experts and teachers. The form was finalized according to the results of the pilot study. After finalizing the form, the opinions of a measurement and evaluation specialist, a preschool specialist and a preschool teacher were taken again.
- ✓ The data collection process was supported by video and audio recordings, photographs, researcher's diaries, children's activities, and the teacher of the class. In addition, a volunteer academician was involved in all data collection processes with the researcher in order to minimize overlooked situations. During the implementation of the activities, certain records and notes were taken in the classroom.
- ✓ In the selection of books suitable for IR and the preparation of IRPs, support and opinions were received from experts (4) and preschool teachers (2) who have worked in this field.
- ✓ The studies with children were carried out collectively and individually at different times. In order to minimize the influence of the children on each other in the classroom environment, individual IRP was also applied to the children.
- ✓ In the process of conducting the analyses, one researcher analyzed twice at different times. The researchers negotiated and discussed in cases where ambiguities arose.
- ✓ Participant consent was sought especially in the interpretation of children's activities.
- ✓ The results obtained from the data were interpreted in relation to each other and the literature.

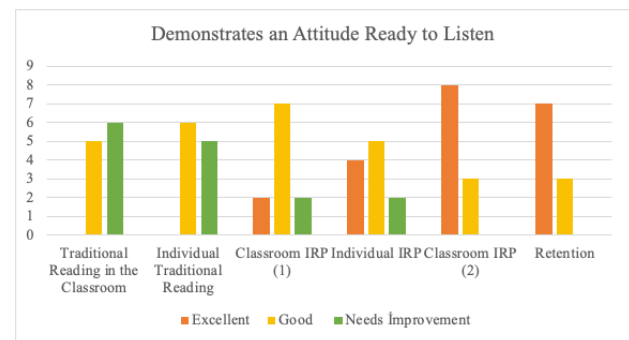
Ethical Aspect of the Research

Prior to commencing the study, ethical approval was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Uşak University (Approval date: 07.03.2024; Approval number: 2024-44). Additionally, permission was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education to conduct research in a kindergarten affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (Approval date: 19.04.2024; Document number: 205727). Informed consent forms were obtained from all parents prior to data collection, and all parents gave written consent for their children's participation.

Findings and Interpretations

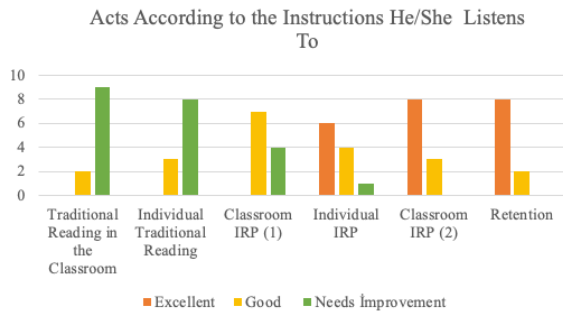
In the following part of the study, the development processes of listening skills of 60-72 month old children were included. This process was monitored by means of the '60-72 Months Children's Listening Skills Assessment Form' developed by the researchers. Data collection was carried out in three stages. In order to determine the readiness of the children, they were read aloud together (to the whole class) two times and read aloud individually two times. In the second stage, IRP was carried out two times together and two times individually. After 6 weeks, one-to-one IRP application was carried out with each child. One child (C10) could not participate in the retention practice due to moving. The findings of the study show at which level (Excellent, good, needs improvement) children accessed the items in the Forum for the Assessment of Listening Skills of 60-72 Month-old Children. The data were analysed on item basis, not on the child basis.

Figure 3
Findings Related to the Item "Demonstrates An Attitude Ready to Listen"



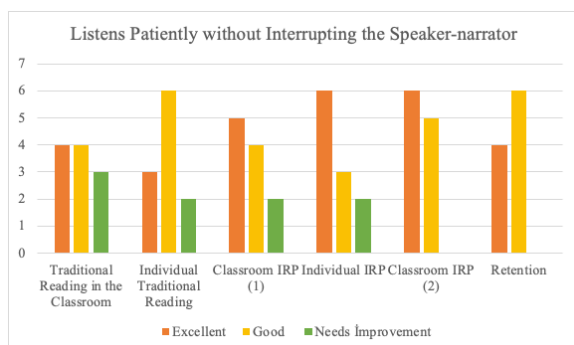
When Figure 3 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the children are at the 'needs improvement' level in the traditional reading process together in classroom. This distribution shows that a significant amount of children may not be able to fully focus on listening at the beginning and their attention span may be limited. The fact that C1 and C8 progressed from 'good' to 'excellent level in the individual IRP application reveals that structured individual activity plans support attention development. In the collective IRP (2) process, the fact that C5, C6, C7 and C11 progressed from 'good' level to 'excellent level reflects the contribution of in-group interactive environments. In the retention measurement, 7 children were at 'excellent' level and 3 children were at 'good' level. This measurement, which was carried out 6 weeks after the end of IRP practices, shows that the gains were largely maintained. However, the decline of Child 6 from 'excellent' to 'good' level indicates that repetition and support are needed for some children in terms of the sustainability of the gains.

Figure 4
Findings Related to the Item “Acts in According to the Instructions He/She Listens To.”



According to the data in figure 4, only two of the children (C8, C11) performed at the level of ‘good’ and the other nine children performed at the level of ‘needs improvement’ at the Classroom Traditional Reading stage. This shows that at the beginning, children had difficulty in listening to and following verbal instructions. A significant improvement was observed after the IRP interventions. During IRP (1), children such as C1, C3, C6 and C11 reached the ‘good’ level from the ‘needs improvement’ level. This development indicates that structured interactive reading environments positively affect children’s ability to listen to instructions and act accordingly. Especially in the Individual IRP process, six children (C3, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11) reached the ‘excellent’ level and four children (C1, C2, C4, C5) reached the ‘good’ level, while only 1 child (C10) remained at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This result suggests that structured individual interactive reading environments support the child to focus on the instruction and transform auditory information into behaviour. In the IRP (2) process, eight of the children performed ‘excellent’ and three of them (C1, C4, C10) performed ‘good’. This distribution reveals that the outcome was reinforced with repeated group practices. In the retention measurement, eight children performed “excellent” and two children (C1, C4) performed at the level of ‘good’. This finding shows that the development after the intervention was maintained after six weeks.

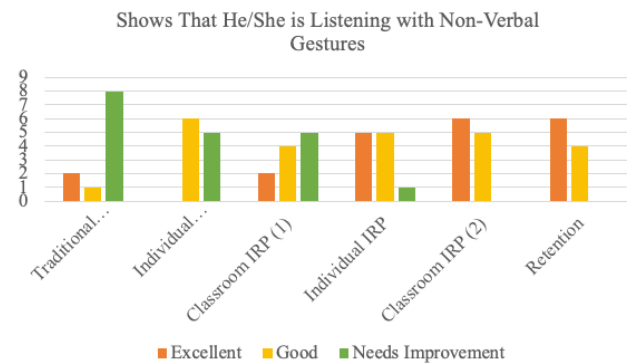
Figure 5
Findings Related to the Item “Listens Patiently Without Interrupting the Speaker-Narrator”



According to the data in Figure 5, it is revealed that children showed improvement in patient listening behavior throughout the implementation process. In the Traditional Reading phase in the classroom, only children C1, C2, C5 and C9 performed at the ‘excellent’ level. This picture was largely maintained in the Individual Traditional Reading phase; however, no significant progress was observed.

In IRP (1), the number of children at the ‘excellent’ level increased, C7 and C8 were included in this group, but C9 regressed to the ‘good’ level. This suggests that momentary fluctuations in the child’s performance or individual variability due to the implementation conditions may be effective. In the individual IRP phase, C3 and C11 also reached the ‘excellent’ level, showing that individual practices were also effective. The high number of children who maintained this level in IRP (2) together revealed that the acquisition was maintained within the group. In the retention data, it was observed that four children maintained their current status, but two children (C7, C8) regressed to the ‘good’ level. This table reveals that the acquisition was not only a temporary progress, but that the behavior was reinforced and became sustainable for certain children.

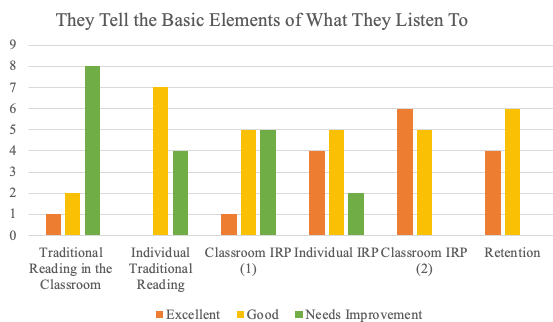
Figure 6
Findings Related to the Item “Shows That He/She is Listening with Non-Verbal Gestures”



The findings related to the Figure 6 show that there were significant improvements in children’s expressive reactions. While only two children (C8, C9) were at the level of ‘excellent’ in the first application, the Traditional Reading in the Classroom process, no child was found at the level of ‘excellent’ in the Individual Traditional Reading. This shows that the behaviours modelled in the group were not sufficiently effective in individual reading. This number remained as two (C7, C8) in the IRP (1) implementation. While the number of children at the ‘excellent’ level increased to six in IRP (2), the fact that C4 joined this group indicates that individual development continued. There were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level at the IRP (2) stage. This situation reveals that children have shown a significant development in the ability to express what they listen

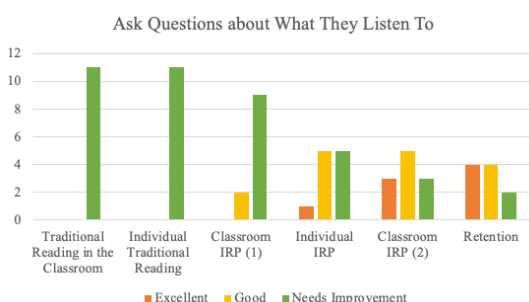
with body language and that this development can be supported by interaction within the group. When the retention data were analysed considering that one child did not participate in the implementation (C10), the number of children at the 'excellent' and 'good' levels was maintained. The fact that there were no children at the 'needs improvement' level can be considered as an important finding that supports the retention of the learning outcomes.

Figure 7
Findings Related to the Item "They Tell the Basic Elements of What They Listen To."



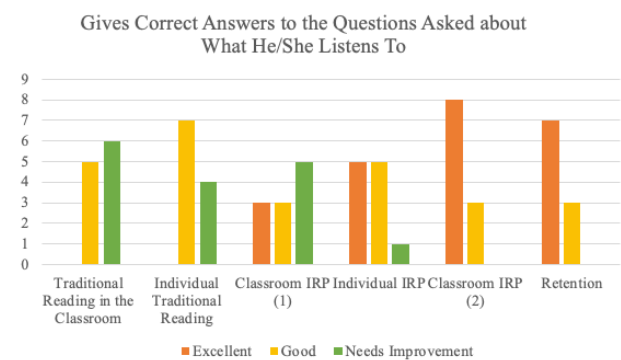
As seen in the Figure 7, children show a significant improvement in their ability to distinguish and convey the basic concepts in the texts they listen to. Only one child (C9) was at the level of 'excellent' in the Traditional Reading in the Classroom and Together IRP (1) interventions, the number of children who reached the level of 'excellent' in the Individual IRP process increased to four (C3, C8, C9, C11). This number increased to six (C3, C4, C7, C8, C9, C11) in the Collective IRP (2) application. This development is especially noteworthy in children like C11, who initially performed at the 'to be developed' level. The findings show that individual and group-based IRP practices contributed to the development of the skills of recognising and conveying basic meaning elements in texts. The fact that the number of children at the 'excellent' level in the retention measurement decreased to four (C1, C2, C5, C11) shows that for some children this skill did not show continuity, but children such as C5 and C11 maintained their high performance. This situation emphasises the importance of long-term supportive practices for the permanence of the gains.

Figure 8
Findings Related to the Item "Ask Questions about What They Listen To."



When the findings related to the Figure 8 are analysed, it is seen that the children are at a very low level in their ability to generate questions about the text they listen to at the beginning. In the Traditional Reading and Individual Traditional Reading stages in the classroom, 11 children were found to be at the 'needs improvement' level; there were no children at the 'good' or 'excellent' levels. This table shows that children's critical listening and questioning skills based on curiosity were limited in the pre-implementation period. Only two children (C10, C11) reached the 'good' level in the IRP (1) implementation. In IRP (2), the number of children at the 'excellent' level increased slightly to three (C6, C9, C11). The number of children at the 'good' level was determined as five (C2, C3, C4, C8, C10). Although it was the last implementation, three children (C1, C5, C7) still remained at the 'needs improvement' level. In the retention evaluations, four children each remained at the level of 'excellent' and 'good' and two children (C1, C7) remained at the level of 'needs improvement'. This result can be interpreted as that more long-term and intriguing studies should be carried out to improve children's question asking skills.

Figure 9
Findings Related to the Item "Gives Correct Answers to the Questions Asked about What He/She Listens To."



The findings in Figure 9 show that children were able to give limitedly correct answers to the questions asked in the pre-implementation period. Traditional Reading in the Classroom stage, five children were at the 'good' level, six children were at the 'needs improvement' level, and there were no children at the 'excellent' level. At the Individual Traditional Reading stage, no child was observed at the 'excellent' level. A development trend started to be observed in the IRP (1) application together. Three children (C7, C8, C11) were at the 'excellent' level, three children were at the 'good' level, and five children were at the 'needs improvement' level. This distribution shows that the first mobilisation in the ability to produce correct answers started with group interaction. In the individual IRP process, five children were at the 'very good' level, five children were at the 'good' level, and only one child

(C10) was at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This result reveals that the individual interventions more strongly supported the child’s ability to express his/her listening and comprehension skills with the correct response. After the joint IRP (2) intervention, there were no children at the ‘to be improved’ level. In the retention measurement, seven children were at the ‘excellent’ level and three children were at the ‘good’ level. There were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This table shows that the gains were preserved to a great extent in the process after the implementation.

Figure 10
Findings Related to the Item “Ask the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words When They Listen.”

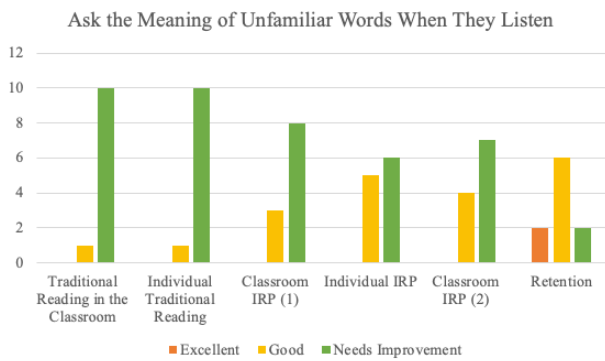
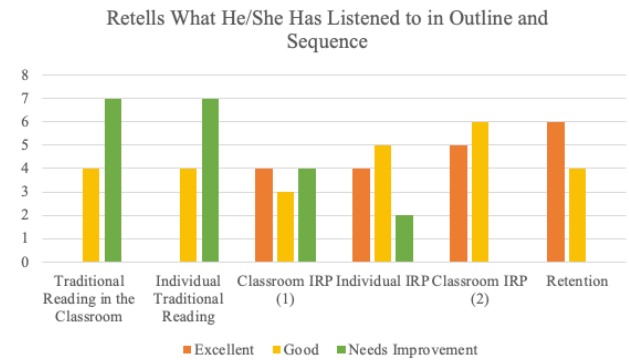


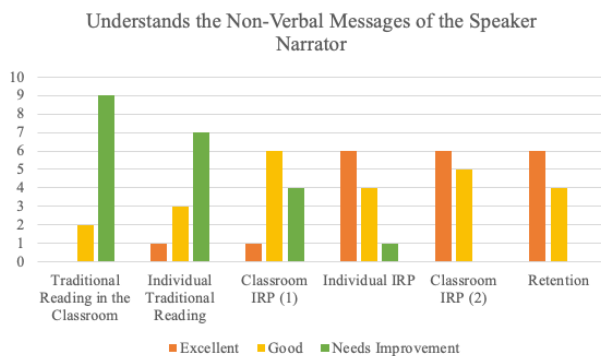
Figure 10 shows that the children initially performed at a very low level in “Ask the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words When They Listen” skill. In the Classroom Traditional Reading and Individual Traditional Reading processes, only one child (C8) reached the ‘good’ level, while all other children remained at the ‘needs improvement’ level. In the practice of IRP (1), there was no child who reached the ‘excellent’ level, but three children (C6, C8, C9) reached the ‘good’ level. This number increased to five (C6, C7, C8, C9, C11) in the individual IRP implementation. A similar trend was also maintained in the collective IRP (2) phase, no child at the ‘excellent’ level was observed, and the number of children at the ‘good’ level increased to six. In the retention measurement, the number of children who reached the ‘excellent’ level was determined as two (C8, C11). Child 1 and Child 5 remained at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This finding shows that in some children, learning may occur with a delay after the intervention and the learning effect matures and becomes visible over time. In addition, factors such as the fact that the text encountered in the retention period attracted the attention of these children or that there were more unknown words in its content may have contributed to the emergence of this behaviour more prominently.

Figure 11
Findings Related to the Item “Retells What He/She Has Listened to in Outline And Sequence.”



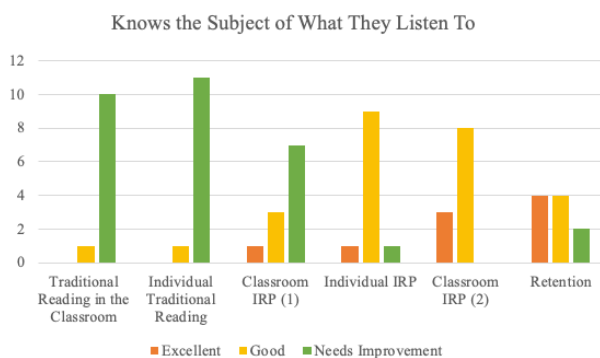
Looking at Figure 11 shows that children had difficulty in demonstrating this skill in the pre-implementation period. Traditional Reading in the Classroom and Individual Traditional Reading stages, four children were at the ‘good’ level and seven children were at the ‘needs improvement’ level; there were no children at the ‘excellent’ level in both stages. This table shows that children’s ability to mentally construct what they listen to and narrate what they listen to in a sequential manner is not sufficiently developed before the implementation. In the classroom IRP (1) application, four children (C7, C8, C9, C11) were at the level of ‘excellent’, three children were at the level of ‘good’, and four children were at the level of ‘needs improvement’. This distribution shows that the interactive group environment supported the first developmental steps in children’s ability to transfer events and information by structuring them during listening. In the individual IRP process, four children were at the level of ‘excellent’, five children were at the level of ‘good’, and two children (C5, C9) were at the level of ‘needs improvement’. This result shows that one-to-one practices further improved the children’s ability to organise what they listened to and to describe it in a sequential manner. At the IRP (2) stage, five children were at the ‘excellent’ level and six children were at the ‘good’ level; there were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level. In the retention measurement, six children were at the ‘excellent’ level and four children were at the ‘good’ level. It is a positive indicator in terms of the permanence of the behaviour that the gains were preserved to a great extent in the six-week period after the implementation; especially the fact that there were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level. In addition, the fact that the number of children at the ‘excellent’ level increased indicates that learning continues to be reinforced in some individuals after the implementation.

Figure 12
Findings Related to the Item “Understands the Non-Verbal Messages of the Speaker-Narrator.”



The Figure 12 findings related to the item ‘Understands the non-verbal messages of the speaker-narrator’ reveal that children’s ability to recognise and interpret emotional clues improved significantly with the practices. While only two children (C8, C9) were at the ‘good’ level during the Traditional Reading in the Classroom this number increased to nine during the Individual IRP process, and one child (C11) reached the ‘excellent’ level. Together, the number of children who reached the ‘excellent’ level in IRP (2) increased to six. In the permanence stages, the number of children at the ‘excellent’ level remained constant (C1, C3, C4, C6, C7, C9), indicating that the development was maintained. These children showed a stable success in interpreting facial expressions, gestures and emotional tone throughout the implementation process. In the retention measurements, just like in the IRP(2) there were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level.

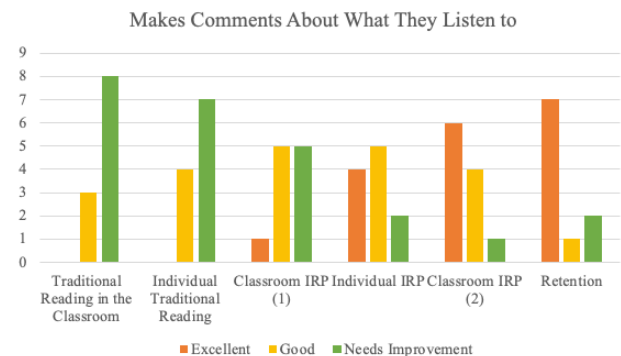
Figure 13
Findings Related to the Item “Knows the Subject of What They Listen To.”



The figure reveals that children’s ability to comprehend the general framework of narratives showed a significant improvement throughout the implementation process. Only one child (C8) was at the ‘good’ level Traditional Reading in the Classroom and Individual Traditional Reading stages, while the other children were at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This situation reveals that children initially had

inadequacies in their ability to distinguish the main idea and focus on the topic. During the IRP (1) process, the number at the ‘good’ level increased from one to three (C1, C6, C11). C8 reached the ‘excellent’ level and maintained this level throughout the entire intervention. While the same children maintained the “good” level in the Individual IRP process, the number of children (C3, C8, C9) who reached the “excellent” level was three in the Collective IRP (2) phase. There were no children at the ‘needs improvement’ level. In the retention measurement, the number of children at the ‘excellent’ level was four (C3, C8, C9, C11) and the number of children at the ‘needs improvement’ level was two (C4, C5). This figure suggests that the gains could be maintained to a significant extent in the process after the implementation; however, the presence of children at the ‘needs improvement’ level suggests that some children may require repetition or support in order for the behaviour to become permanent.

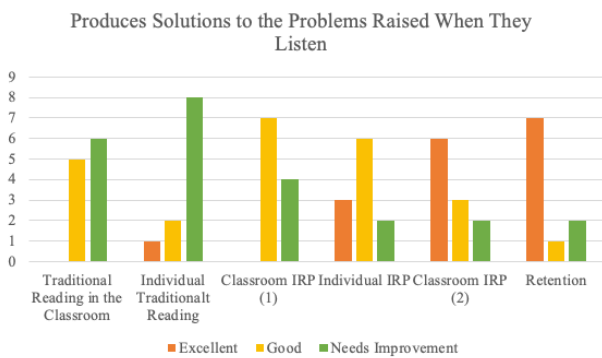
Figure 14
Findings Related to the Item “Makes Comments About What They Listen To”



According to the findings related to Figure 14, it is revealed that children have experienced a significant improvement in their inferring and expressing opinions about the texts. While only three children (C7, C9, C11) were at the ‘good’ level, there were no children at the ‘excellent’ level. In the Individual Traditional Reading practice, four children were at the ‘good’ level and seven children were at the ‘needs improvement’ level. In the IRP (1) stage, one child (C8) was at the level of ‘excellent’, five children were at the level of ‘good’, and five children were at the level of ‘needs improvement’. This shows that the first interactive application in the group started to trigger interpretation skills. The number of children who reached the ‘excellent’ level in the individual IRP application increased to four (C3, C8, C9, C11). This increase was further strengthened in IRP (2) and the number of children who reached the ‘excellent’ level reached six (C2, C3, C6, C8, C9, C11). This figure shows that the group interventions continued to support this skill and the behaviour was carried to a higher level in most of the children. In the retention practice, the number of children at the ‘excellent’

level increased to seven (C1, C2, C3, C6, C8, C9, C11), indicating that children's interpretation skills were further reinforced over time and their permanence was high.

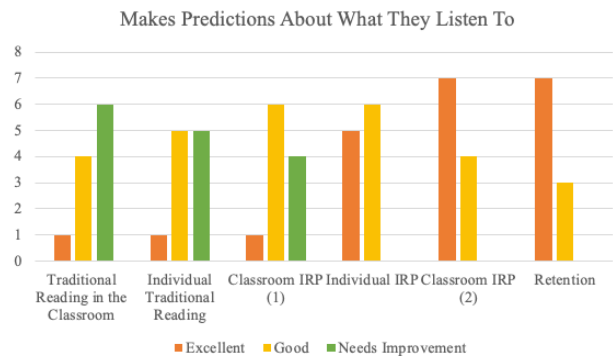
Figure 15
Findings Related to the Item "Produces Solutions to the Problems Raised When They Listen."



The findings in Figure 15 reveal that children show gradual and sustainable progress in their ability to analyze problem situations they encounter during the listening process and develop solutions. Most of the children are at the 'needs improvement' level in the classroom Traditional Reading in the Classroom practice. At the Individual Traditional Reading stage, most of the children (C8) were at the 'need's improvement level, while only one child (C8) was at the 'excellent' level and the other two children (C7, C9) were at the 'good' level. In IRP (1), all children maintained their levels, but C8 declined from 'excellent' to 'good'. This situation can be explained by variables such as the child's difficulty in expressing himself/herself in in-group interaction, his/her attention level during the application, or the fact that the book did not address his/her individual interests sufficiently. The fact that the number of children who reached the 'excellent' level at the IRP (2) stage increased to six (C2, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11) shows that children not only understand what they listen to but also tend to develop creative and logical responses to them.

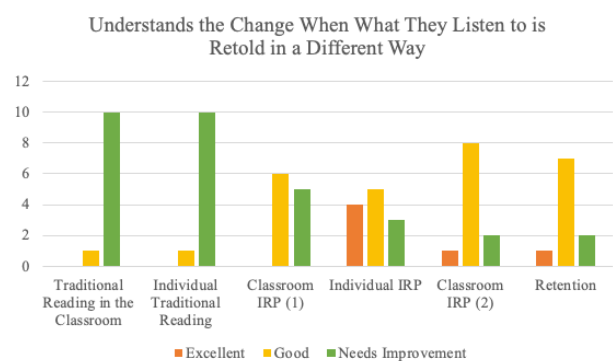
The fact that this tendency was maintained in the Retention measurement suggests that higher order thinking skills can be internalised through structured and interactive environments. However, it is noteworthy that C1 and C5 remained at the 'needs improvement' level throughout all the interventions. This shows that children need longer-term and individualized support for the development of their listening and comprehension skills. This situation reveals that each child's learning process progresses at different speeds and approaches and that more intensive interventions may be required for some individuals.

Figure 16
Findings Related to the Item "Makes Predictions About What They Listen To."



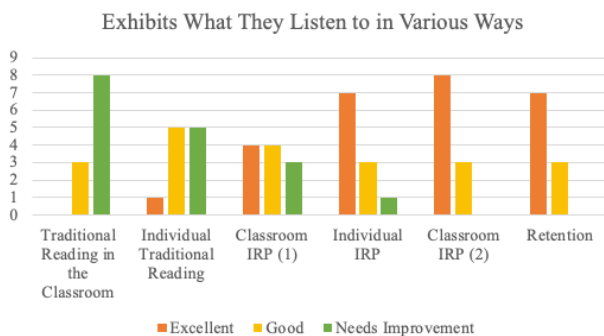
The findings related to Figure 16 reveal that children initially showed limited performance in this skill. While only one child (C11) was at the 'excellent' level, Traditional Reading in the Classroom and Individual Traditional Reading stages, the number of children at the 'good' level was also limited. With the implementation of IRP(1), the number of children who reached the 'good' level increased to six (C3, C4, C7, C9, C10, C11), but only one child (C8) was observed at the 'excellent' level. In the individual IRP process, this picture changed significantly, and the number of children at the "good" level remained constant with five children (C3, C7, C8, C9, C11) reaching the "very good" level. In the IRP (2) together, seven children (C3, C4, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11) reached the "excellent" level, indicating the highest performance. In the retention measurement, seven children (C3, C4, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11) were at the 'excellent' level and three children (C3, C4, C9) were at the 'good' level. In the last three implementations, there were no children at the 'needs improvement' level. This shows that the high levels reached during the implementation process were maintained. In particular, the Individual IRP and Classroom IRP(2) practices significantly supported children's ability to think ahead and make inferences about the text.

Figure 17
Findings Related to the Item "Understands the Change When What They Listen to is Retold in a Different Way."



The findings in Figure 17 reveal that children’s proficiency in this skill was limited in the first application. Only one child (C11) was at the ‘good’ level in the Traditional Reading in the Classroom and Individual Traditional Reading phases; the remaining 10 children were at the ‘needs improvement’ level. The number of children who reached the ‘good’ level in the process of the Classroom IRP(1) increased to six (C4, C7, C8, C9, C10, C11), while the number of children at the ‘needs improvement’ level decreased. In the Individual IRP intervention, four children (C3, C7, C9, C11) reached the ‘excellent’ level and three of these children (C3, C7, C9) could not maintain their level in the Collective IRP (2) phase. This shows that children’s ability to recognize and discriminate meaning change can be maintained to a certain level at the end of the implementation process. In the retention measurement, one child (C11) remained at the ‘excellent’ level, seven children (C1, C3, C4, C6, C7, C8, C9) remained at the ‘good’ level and two children remained at the ‘needs improvement’ level, and all children maintained their current status.

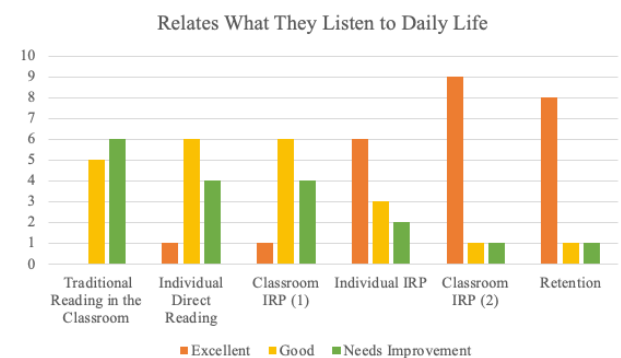
Figure 18
Findings Related to the Item “Exhibits What They Listen to in Various Ways.”



When the findings related to “Expresses what he/she listens to in various ways (drawing, music, drama...)” in Figure 18 are examined, it is seen that only three children (C1, C8, C9) were at the ‘good’ level in the first application, the in-class traditional reading process, while the majority of the children (C8) were at the ‘needs improvement’ level. This distribution shows that children’s ability to express what they listened to in different ways in the pre-implementation process was exhibited at a limited level. In the Individual Traditional Reading process, C8 reached the ‘very good’ level, while five children (C1, C7, C9, C10, C11) reached the ‘good’ level. In the practice of IRP (1) together, 4 children (C7, C8, C9, C11) were at the ‘excellent’ level and 4 children (C1, C3, C5, C11) were at the ‘good’ level. The fact that the number of children at the ‘needs improvement’ level decreased in this period reflects the effect of the structured interactive environment. In the individual IRP implementation, seven children were identified as ‘excellent’, three children (C2,

C5, C6) were identified as ‘good’ and one child (C4) was identified as ‘needs improvement’. In the IRP (2) phase, eight children (C1, C3, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10, C11) reached the ‘excellent’ level; this increase can be explained especially by the effect of group dynamics and repetitions. In the retention measurement, the number of children at the “excellent” level remained as seven and the number of children at the ‘good’ level remained as three (C2, C4 and C5), and the achievement was maintained.

Figure 19
Findings Related to the Item “Relates What They Listen to Daily Life.”



When the findings related to the Figure 19 are analyzed, it is revealed that children showed significant improvements in their ability to associate what they listened to with their daily lives throughout the implementation process. While only five of the children were at the level of ‘good’ and six of them were at the level of ‘needs improvement’ in the first implementation, Traditional Reading in the Classroom, one child (Child 4) was at the level of ‘excellent’, six children were at the level of ‘good’ and four children were at the level of ‘needs improvement’ in the Individual Traditional Reading implementation. This distribution remained constant in the Classroom IRP (1) phase. Significant improvement was observed in the Individual IRP with six children (C4, C6, C8, C9, C10, C11) reaching the ‘excellent’ level. This number increased to 10 in the Classroom IRP (2) intervention, with only one child (C5) at the ‘good’ level and one child (C7) at the ‘needs improvement’ level. When the retention data were analyzed, it was determined that all children maintained their current status. This result shows that the acquisition has become permanent and that the information acquired during listening can be associated with daily life.

The findings of the study revealed that the baseline levels of children’s listening skills were generally low, with the vast majority being at the ‘needs improvement’ level. The Interactive Reading Programme (IRP) interventions, especially the individual interventions, led to a systematic and linear improvement in children’s skills; a significant increase

was observed in the performance of many children. In the retention measurements, it was found that the gains were significantly maintained, and some children continued to show improvement even after the intervention. The most remarkable improvements were observed in areas such as making comments, making predictions and relating what was listened to daily life, which are high-level listening skills. However, it is thought that some children still need support and their learning processes progress depending on individual speeds.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the contribution of the interactive book reading program to the listening skills of 60-72-month-old children. The findings will be discussed in terms of implementation phases (traditional reading, interactive reading plans (IRP) and retention).

In the Individual and Classroom traditional Reading (the adult reading the book without any interaction with the child) activities conducted prior to the IRP interventions, it was found that children's readiness levels regarding listening skills were generally at a low level (needs improvement). This result is in line with other studies showing that listening does not develop spontaneously in preschool period and needs to be supported by systematic, planned and educational plans and interventions (Pradana, et al. , 2025; Yazıcı & Dereobalı 2015). Although both joint and individual interventions were carried out, the level of many children remained the same, especially in traditional reading. The findings of Tetik and Işikoğlu-Erdoğan (2017) are similar to the findings of this study. In their study, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the language scores of the children in the experimental group where dialogic reading was applied and the children in the control group where traditional classroom reading was applied. In traditional reading practices, children are superficially involved in the story and therefore remain passive listeners. For this reason, they cannot reach high-level skills. In the quasi-experimental part of the study conducted by Öztürk and Duran (2018), it was determined that children in the control group who were read fairy tales using the traditional method had difficulty understanding some fairy tales.

In the second part of the study, interactive reading plans (IRPs) were prepared and practiced. At this stage, children made significant progress. Significant increases were observed especially in items related to understanding and remembering the content of the story. In their study, Ekiz and Tuncer (2024) found that the active participation of 60-72-month-old children in the story reading process contributed to their ability to internalize the story and to encode and retain the information in the story in the mind.

Lepola et al. (2023) conducted a study to determine children's listening comprehension skills and found that IRP led to a general improvement in children's listening comprehension skills. During the IRP practices, children actively participated in the process and engaged in behaviors such as asking questions, responding, discussing, and interpreting. In this way, their meaning-making processes during listening were strengthened. It was observed that they showed significant improvement especially in sub-dimensions such as making inferences from the text they listened to, understanding cause-effect relationships and following the plot of the story.

In IRP activities, children developed not only listening comprehension skills but also listening skills that require high-level cognitive skills. For example, competencies such as making predictions about the course of the story and understanding the narrator's non-verbal messages (gestures, facial expressions, body posture, etc.) were also tried to be acquired by children. İlhan (2019), in his study investigating the effect of storytelling with sound-based sentences on listening comprehension skills, observed a significant improvement in the application group; he stated that children's ability to understand story elements, sentence repetitions and responding to the content in questions increased measurably. During the activity, children's critical listening and interpretation skills increased after the questions asked, pictures shown, clues, preparation activities (songs, poems, riddles, etc.) and reinforcement activities (art activities, dramatization, playing rond, music, etc.). Van den Broek et al. (2011) showed that questions posed to young children during storytelling significantly supported the comprehension process. Deshmukh et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine the types and frequency of questions used by teachers in early childhood classrooms during shared reading and to analyze how these questions affect children's responses.

Especially the rapid progress observed in individual practices supports the individual development of interactive reading environments. In a study by Lepola et al. (2023) based on shared reading with 4-6 year olds, they found that the teacher's creation of speaking opportunities and the child's active oral participation directly affected individual progress in listening comprehension skills. During the research process, it is seen that the improvements especially in higher level listening skills (such as establishing cause-effect relationships, making predictions, and inferring meaning) were remarkable. This is in line with the positive effects of dialogic reading approaches defined by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) on children's language development. Again, Yurtbakan et. al. (2020) observed children's listening, speaking and comprehension skills after interactive

book reading practices between mother and child. Many of the children who participated in the study showed a significant improvement in skills such as asking meaningful questions about the text content, distinguishing basic elements, and exhibiting behaviors in accordance with verbal instructions.

The data of the interactive reading program conducted 6 weeks after the completion of the IRP interventions provided important data on the extent to which retention was achieved. The retention application shows that the gains obtained in the previous application (IRP 2) were largely preserved.

Some of the items in the evaluation form regarding listening skills of some children dropped from 'excellent' to 'good' in some of them and from 'good' to 'needs improvement' in others. However, this situation did not negatively affect the study data or require a new action plan due to the nature of action research. The absence of regular practices for a certain period of time after the end of the implementation may lead to some decline in some skills. This is also emphasized in the literature; for example, Duran and Öztürk (2018) stated that children's performance may decrease over time in the absence of regular repetitions and supportive activities following listening training interventions. Again, Dowdall et al. (2020) stated that the frequency of intervention significantly affects the language development effect on the child. However, an important point is that the gains made after the IRP implementation were largely preserved. This finding can be accepted as evidence that IRP created a permanent, meaningful and deep listening skill in children. Ekiz and Tuncer (2024) concluded that interactive reading practices help children retain the acquired information more effectively in their minds.

Another noteworthy point in the retention findings is that a few children whose development was not at an advanced level during the intervention showed improvement in some articles later on. This is in line with developmental learning theories, which show that learning is not limited to the moment of application, but emerges by maturing over time (Vygotsky, 1978). Especially when individual differences were taken into account, it was observed that some children responded later to the learning process but still showed positive development.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the existing literature by revealing that interactive reading is effective and permanent in developing listening skills in 60-72 month old children. It was seen that the traditional reading method alone is not sufficient, interaction-based approaches play a critical role in children's acquisition of higher levels of comprehension, recall and thinking skills. Although the findings are generally consistent with existing studies, they provide new data to the literature on

the acquisition and retention of listening skills. In this aspect, the study both has important implications for practice and draws attention to the importance of listening skills in the context of interactive reading for future research.

One of the unique contributions of the study is the analysis of individual development data on children with article-based graphs. This detailed approach allows teachers or researchers to clearly see in which areas children are developing and in which areas they need support. In this aspect, the study can be considered as not only an academic research but also a research with a strong practical aspect.

Interactive reading programs appear to be an evidence-based method that holistically develops the language, listening and early literacy skills of 60-72-month-old children. The common recommendation of these studies is that the interactive reading approach should be adopted and disseminated both by teachers in preschool education and by parents and care staff workers (Efe Kendüzler, 2024). These findings point to the need to include more interactive reading activities in early childhood education for future practices and policies.

It is recommended that preschool teachers and parents be informed about interactive reading and be made aware of the use of the technique. Considering that teachers carry out language activities with large groups in preschool education institutions, it would be useful to emphasize that teachers can read dialogue-based books to children in small groups outside of this activity (Tetik & Işıkoğlu Erdoğan, 2017).

This study has once again demonstrated the importance of practices aimed at supporting listening skills in early childhood in terms of their development. In particular, the positive contribution of interactive and planned reading activities to children's listening, comprehension and expression skills is in line with the findings in the literature. The dissemination of such practices, in which children's linguistic development can be observed in depth in educational processes, is a necessity in terms of strengthening early intervention strategies. In this context, increasing the number of similar holistic and data-based studies on the preschool period will contribute to both shaping educational policies and enabling children to use their potential at the highest level.

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