

## Examining the Persuasive Speech Proficiency of Fourth-Grade Primary School Students<sup>1</sup>

Şeyma ÖZDİL<sup>2</sup>

Uşak University

Erol DURAN<sup>3</sup>

Uşak University

### Abstract

The aim of this research was to identify the persuasive speech skills of fourth-grade primary school students. The study employed a quantitative method and survey design, and the study group consisted of 126 students in the fourth grade of primary school selected using a convenient sampling technique. Data for the first and second sub-problems of the study were collected over a period of five weeks using student video recordings, plan sheets, and a persuasive speech rubric. These recordings and sheets were assessed by two raters. The collected data were presented in the form of themes and descriptive tables. The results of the study indicated that the persuasive speech skills of the students were largely at medium and low levels. In addition, the results showed that female students demonstrated relatively higher levels of success in terms of persuasive speech skills compared to male students. A literature review was also conducted for the third sub-problem of the research, and examples of achievements in relation to persuasive speech skills for fourth-grade students were presented. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that students generally require the development of their speaking skills, with a particular focus on persuasive speech.

**Keywords:** Speaking, Persuasive Speech, Level of Determination

**DOI:** 10.29329/epasr.2023.548.3

**Submitted:** 19 December 2022

**Accepted:** 28 March 2023

**Published:** 01 June 2023

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<sup>1</sup> This study includes part of the first author's PhD thesis supervised by the second author.

<sup>2</sup> PhD student, Uşak University, Uşak, Türkiye, ORCID: (0000-0002-8000-0232)

**Correspondence:** seymazdl@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Uşak University, Uşak, Türkiye, ORCID: (0000-0001-7581-3821),

Email: erol.duran@usak.edu.tr

## Introduction

Speaking is an essential skill for individuals to convey their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Effective and efficient communication is often achieved through speaking, making it a prevalent activity in both daily and academic settings. The content, structure, and contextual factors of a speech contribute to its classification based on its purpose, method, speaker-listener relationship, level of preparation, and form. These categories can include informative and entertaining speeches, free and planned methods, interactive and non-interactive speaker-listener relationships, prepared and unprepared speeches, and questioning, descriptive, and persuasive forms (Örge-Yaşar, 2020).

Persuasive speeches are a type of communication that plays a vital role in everyday life, similar to other types of communication. In the literature, persuasive speeches are commonly referred to as a type of discourse (Altunbay, 2021, p. 60; Kardaş, 2020; Kardaş & Tunagür, 2018, p. 144; MEB, 2009, p. 355; Yalçın, 2018, p. 329), a method of communication (Gündüz & Şimşek, 2014; MEB, 2006, p. 64), a communication strategy (Kurudayıoğlu & Kiraz, 2020; MEB, 2019, p. 47), or a form of communication (Güneş, 2021, p. 125). Due to their rich content, purpose-oriented nature, requirement for preparation, and structured format, persuasive speeches can be considered a type of prepared communication.

In a persuasive speech, the speakers aim to agree with the listener about the view they present and explain to the listener using evidence for this purpose (Demirel & Şahinel, 2006, p. 174; Kardaş & Tunagür, 2018, p. 144). In a persuasive speech, the views presented by the speaker should be acceptable (Güneş, 2021, p. 124); arguments should be appropriate to the cognitive level of the listener, and the message should be presented in an easily accessible structure (Kurudayıoğlu & Gociaoğlu, 2021, p. 315). In addition, speech elements such as body language, the method of vocalising the text, and tone of voice (Akım, 2015) also have an essential place in persuasion. In terms of content, the richness of style, examples, stories, and irony increase the effectiveness of persuasive speech and play a role in the message reaching the audience more easily (İnceoğlu, 2011, p. 226). In addition to these elements, in persuasive speech, the speaker should be polite, use concrete examples, adopt fluent expression, repeat the main idea from time to time, avoid undesirable behaviours in the speech, adopt an expression from simple to complex (Yağmur-Şahin, & Varışoğlu, 2015, 125-126), observe the reactions of the listeners by including different perspectives (MEB, 2009, p. 355), and convey the opinion they put forward to the listeners clearly and concisely (Lucas, 2011, p. 300). In the preparation process of persuasive speech, the content should be prepared by considering the following elements (Karadoğan-Doruk, 2015, 60-63):

- Adopt a common language and style that can be understood by the audience,
- The sociocultural values and beliefs of the audience should be considered,

- By ensuring that the message is repeated from time to time to remarkable elements such as slogans,
- The message should be planned to be bidirectional between the listener and the speaker,
- The argument should be supported by accurate and reliable evidence,
- An appropriate communication environment should be selected, and distractions in the environment should be taken under control,
- In the conclusion part, the action expected from the audience and the main idea should be presented clearly and concisely,
- Negative elements such as fear should be used in moderation,
- Humorous elements related to the subject should be included to attract attention and involve the listener in the subject.

Persuasive speech is a type of speech that needs to be taught because of its strong content, the need for preparation, the fact that they consist of many sub-skills, and that they are based on communication and entrepreneurship. Teaching persuasive and argumentative speech types suppresses students' tendency to express themselves by shouting and provides them with the competence to express their views clearly and effectively with a democratic approach (Grugeon, Dawes, Smith, & Hubbard, 2005, p. 87). On the other hand, it supports students in terms of academic and social life by providing awareness and expression power in this genre, which is frequently encountered in daily life. Otherwise, students are prone to be deceived, to be passive recipients and to become impressionists. Because being able to speak effectively and persuasively contributes to individuals' awareness of the tendency to influence and direct massively (Özkan, & Kınay, 2015, p. 1292). In addition, the persuasive speech process involves a mental exchange between the listener and the speaker (Lucas, 2011, p. 303). This communication points to a very productive process for the speaker and the listener.

Given that persuasive elements are ubiquitous in daily life, it is essential to teach students the structure of persuasive speech. However, while the persuasive speech was previously included in the curriculum at the third-grade level (MEB, 2006; MEB, 2009), it is currently only included in a general acquisition of speaking strategies at the eighth-grade level, with a few speech types mentioned (MEB, 2019). This suggests a gap in persuasive speaking skills for primary school students. This study aims to investigate the current state of students' knowledge in this area, with the goal of filling this gap. It is anticipated that the findings of this research will be useful for researchers, teachers, and students in the field.

This study aims to determine primary school fourth-grade students' persuasive speech skill levels. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the level of persuasive speech achievement of fourth-grade primary school students?
2. Do primary school fourth-grade students' persuasive speech achievement levels differ according to gender?
3. Which achievements should be included in order to develop students' persuasive speech?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This research was designed in a survey design, one of the quantitative research approaches. In survey research, the participants' characteristics are measured, or their current situation is determined (Atalmış, 2019, p. 97) and analysed and interpreted (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). Thus, it reflects the situation of a group as it is. In this study, the survey design was preferred since it was aimed to determine the current level of students' persuasive speech.

### **Working Group and Materials**

The study group for this research consists of 126 fourth-grade primary school students from the 2021-2022 academic year. The group is evenly divided between 63 females and 63 males and was selected using a convenient sampling technique.

For the third sub-problem of the research, the elements of persuasion were revealed by conducting a literature review, examined in this direction, and organised and presented as an acquisition proposal suitable for the fourth-grade level. The following materials were utilised in the process of gain formation:

- Turkish teaching programs (MEB, 2006; MEB, 2009; MEB, 2015; MEB, 2019)
- Textbooks and workbooks (Kaftan-Ayan, Arslan, Kul, & Yılmaz, 2021; Karafilik, Bozkır, & Koç, 2020; Uğur-Yalçın, 2019)
- Books and articles (Akım, 2015; Aktaş, 2020; Altunbay, 2021; Bıyık, 2018; Blivens, 2003; Bozkurt, 2017; Demirel, & Şahinel, 2006; Deniz, 2007; Göçer, 2018; Gündüz, 2007; Gürlek, 2015; Gürüz, & Temel-Eğimli, 2013; İnceoğlu, 2011; Karadoğan-Doruk, 2015; Kardaş, & Tunagür, 2018; Konuk, 2017; Kurudayıoğlu, & Yılmaz, 2014; Lucas, 2011; Monroe, 1943; Taşer, 2009; Tutar, & Yılmaz, 2010; Yağmur-Şahin, & Varışoğlu, 2015; Yalçın, 2018; Yangil, & Topçuoğlu, 2019)

### **Data Collection Tools**

The data relating to the first and second sub-problems of the study were collected through the students' speech plan papers, video recordings, and the persuasive speech rubric developed by Özdil and Duran (2023) for primary school fourth-grade students. The persuasive speech rubric is in the form of an analytical rubric consisting of 14 categories, which allows students to be evaluated in terms of quality.

The assessment rubric for this study includes 14 categories: "planning," "attracting attention," "expressing the problem situation," "expressing the solution," "visualisation," "directing to action," "supporting and justifying thoughts," "appealing to emotions," "maintaining subject integrity," "starting and ending a conversation," "voice utilisation," "fluency," "body language," and "use of time.". It is designed for primary school fourth-grade students and consists of three levels of proficiency: "high," "medium," and "low.". While the rubric does not assign numerical scores, it aims to reflect the students' levels of achievement in each category.

### **Data Collection Process**

With the necessary permissions obtained for the data related to the first and second sub-problems of the study, the study group was formed based on the voluntary participation of the students. The implementation was conducted in collaboration with the class teachers to minimise disruption to the students' lesson plans. The researcher served as a listener during one-hour application classes. A one-hour acquaintance activity and a two-hour taboo game activity were then organised in all classes in a chat atmosphere with the students. During the game, students were given the opportunity to explain their words on the board in front of the camera to become more comfortable with the camera and the researcher. At the end of the game, a conversation about persuasion was held to introduce the topic. Topics were selected based on the opinions of fourth-grade primary school students and written on the board, and students were asked to choose a topic and prepare a persuasive speech on that topic. Students were provided with paper and told they could use it in any way they saw fit. Since the break between the two lessons coincided with a one-hour lunch break, no additional time was needed (as determined in consultation with the students). Then, the students were asked to prepare their speech in the first lesson and to present their speech in the second lesson. The speeches of the students were recorded.

The data relating to the third sub-problem of the research were collected using the document review technique. Acquisitions related to persuasive speech were formed by examining books, journals, theses, articles and Turkish teaching programmes. Expert opinions were obtained from three Basic Education, two Turkish Education experts and three classroom teachers. In line with the opinions, persuasive speech acquisitions were prepared for fourth-grade primary school students.

## Analysing the Data

In the process of data analysis the video recordings and plan papers of the students were evaluated by two raters using a persuasive speech rubric. Prior to the evaluation, the raters received preliminary training on a persuasive speech from the researcher. The scores were then compared, and a consensus was reached. The data of the study were presented and interpreted using the descriptive analysis technique. In the descriptive analysis technique, it is about revealing the existing qualities of a situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2015).

## Results

### Results Related to the First and Second Sub-Problems

In the first and second sub-problems of the study, the level of students' persuasive speech achievements and whether these levels differed according to gender were examined. Student performances evaluated through the rubric are presented in Figure 1 and explained in categories.

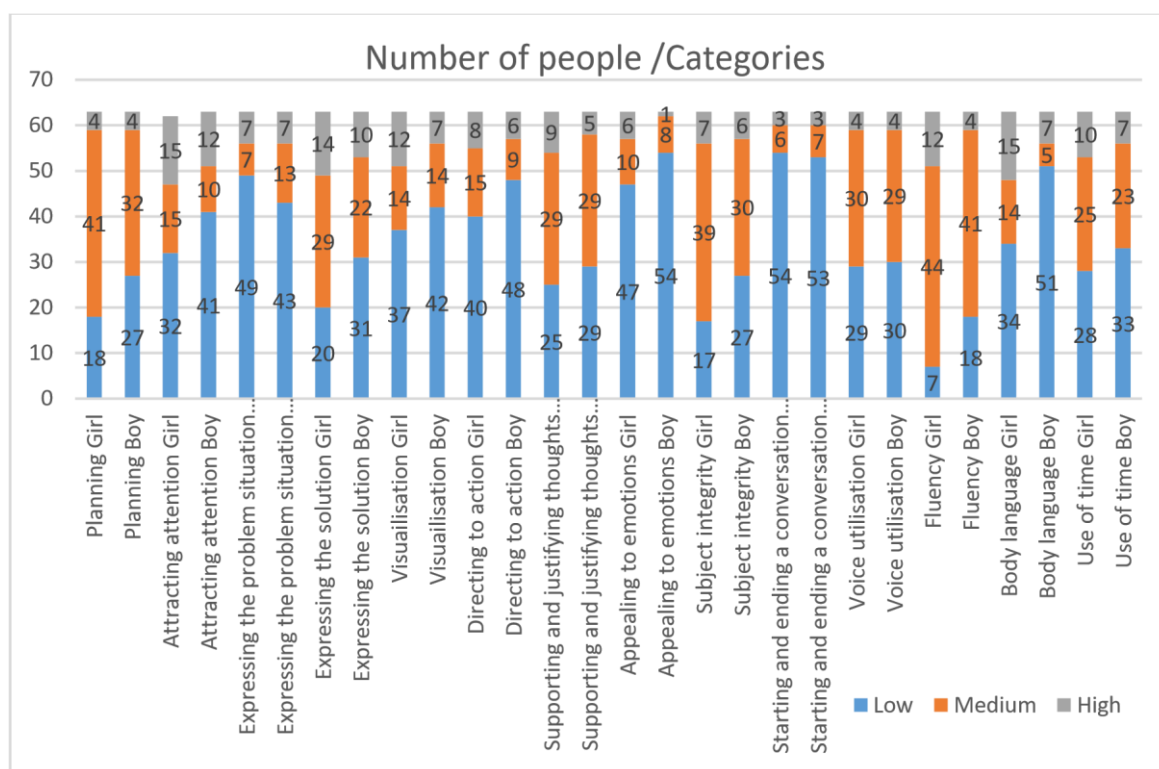


Figure 1. Students' Persuasive Speech Achievement Levels

The planning stage of a persuasive speech involves the creation of a written outline detailing the content and structure of the speech, including verbatim expressions or keywords to be used. In the planning category, 45 students (18 females, 27 males) demonstrated low-level success, 73 (41 females, 32 males) demonstrated medium-level success, and 8 (4 females, 4 males) demonstrated high-level success. The majority of students displayed medium-level success in this category,

characterised by superficial expressions related to the topic and limited content in the speech. Students with high-level success exhibited a more organised and detailed approach to planning, including a sequential structure or concise, well-planned language. On the other hand, some students demonstrated low-level success through the use of various text types, such as writing a few sentences about the topic, writing a story, or composing an informative text. Some students also utilised visual aids, though not all incorporated these aids into their speeches. When evaluated by gender, the number of students with high-level success in this category was equal between males and females, while female students were more prevalent among those with medium-level success.

Attention-grabbing takes place in the introductory part of a speech and plays a vital role in directing the listener to the content. In the category of attracting attention, 73 of the students (32 females, 41 males) showed low, 25 (15 females, 10 males) medium, and 27 (15 females, 12 males) high-level success. It was revealed that the students predominantly showed a low level of success in this category. In other words, the majority of the students did not start their speech by drawing attention. It was revealed that the students with a medium level of success tried to attract the attention of the listener with expressions that were not related to the topic and did not use them in the introduction part of the speech, even if it was included in the plan. On the other hand, it was determined that the students with a high level of achievement made an introduction by using information, asking questions, using pictures and remarkable expressions related to the subject. When the performances of the students were analysed according to gender, it was seen that female students were slightly more prominent than male students.

Expressing the problem situation is an important step that prepares the ground for the necessity of the action to be persuaded in a persuasive speech. In the category of expressing the problem situation, 92 of the students (49 females, 43 males) showed low, 20 (20 females, 13 males) medium, and 14 (7 females, 7 males) high-level success. It was revealed that the students who participated in the study performed predominantly at a low level in the category of expressing the problem situation. These students did not express the problem situation in their speeches. It was revealed that the students with a medium level of achievement expressed the problem situation superficially and did not deepen the subject. On the other hand, it was revealed that the students with a high level of achievement justified the problem situation and explained it by supporting it with examples. When the performances of the students were evaluated according to gender, it was seen that male students came to the fore in this category.

Expressing the solution is the stage in which the action expected from the listener is explained. In the category of expressing the solution, 51 (20 females, 31 males), 51 (29 females, 22 males), 24 (14 females, 10 males) and 24 (14 females, 10 males) students performed at low, medium and high levels of success, respectively. It was revealed that the students participating in the study

predominantly showed low and medium-level achievement. Although the students accepted at the medium level included the solution for the problem situation, they did not explain it sufficiently and expressed it superficially. Students with a low level of achievement did not propose any solution for the problem situation that formed the basis of the content. On the other hand, it was determined that the students with a high level of success clearly expressed the solution and made explanations about the functioning of the solution. When the performances of the students are evaluated according to gender, it is seen that female students come to the forefront.

Visualisation is an element of persuasion in which the listener is presented with a point of view in order to make a decision according to the consequences of the action to be performed. In this category, 79 (37 females, 42 males), 28 (14 females, 14 males), 19 (12 females, 7 males) and 19 (12 females, 7 males) students performed at low, medium and high levels, respectively. It was found that the students performed predominantly at a low level in this category. Low-level students did not use expressions that could correspond to this category in their speeches. It was determined that the students with a medium level of achievement made comparisons about the application of the solution but did not strengthen it, while those with a high level of achievement made comparisons and presented an objective point of view to the audience. When the students' performances were evaluated according to gender, it was found that female students were more successful than male students.

Mental imagery, or the ability to present a perspective that allows the listener to make a decision based on the anticipated outcomes of a proposed action, is a persuasive element. In this category, 79 of the students (37 females, 42 males) demonstrated a low level of proficiency, 28 (14 females, 14 males) demonstrated a medium level, and 19 (12 females, 7 males) demonstrated a high level. It was determined that the majority of students demonstrated a low level of proficiency in this category. Students at the low level did not use appropriate expressions in their speeches to reflect this category. While students at the medium level made comparisons in their proposed solutions, they did not strengthen them. In contrast, students at the high level provided an objective perspective to the listener through comparisons. When the students' performances were evaluated according to gender, it was found that female students were more successful than male students.

Prompting to action is the stage in a persuasive speech where the speaker aims to mobilise the listener and motivates them to take action. In the category of prompting to action, 88 of the students (40 female, 48 male) showed low, 24 (15 females, 9 males) medium, and 14 (8 females, 6 males) high-level success. It was revealed that the students who participated in the research predominantly showed a low level of success in leading to action. These students completed their speeches without using any expression related to mobilising the audience. The students with a medium level of success expressed their opinions superficially and to the extent that they did not directly serve as motivation.



The students with a high level of achievement used techniques such as using slogans, making suggestions, and challenging the audience in addition to expressing their opinions. When the students' performances were evaluated according to gender, it was observed that female students were more successful than male students in this category.

Supporting and justifying ideas are essential in terms of increasing credibility and effectiveness in persuasive speech. In this category, 54 of the students (25 females, 29 males) showed low success, 58 (29 females, 29 males) showed medium success, and 14 (9 females, 5 males) showed high success. It was determined that the students who participated in the research mainly showed moderate success at this stage. Students with moderate success used expressions that supported the ideas they put forward in their speeches, although not at a sufficient level. Students with low levels of success expressed their opinions with limited sentences during the speech without using any expressions that supported and justified their thoughts throughout the speech. On the other hand, students with a high level of achievement utilised techniques such as exemplification, using visuals, using slogans, using idioms and proverbs, making explanations, and making comparisons in their speeches. Two students who participated in the study also used the techniques of using aphorisms and references. When the students' performances were analysed according to gender, it was found that female students were more successful than male students.

Appealing to emotions in persuasive speech is one of the most important elements that play an encouraging role in convincing the listener. In this category, 101 students (47 females, 54 males) showed low, 18 (10 females, 8 males) medium and 7 (six females, 1 male) high-level success. It was found that the students who participated in the study predominantly showed a low level of success in the category of appealing to emotions. These students did not include emotional expressions in their speeches in any way. The students with a medium level of success included emotional expressions, albeit weakly, in terms of reflecting their emotions with gestures and facial expressions in terms of making an impression. Students with a high level of success used emotional expressions in accordance with the content and supported their speeches with gestures and facial expressions. When the students' performances were analysed according to gender, it was found that female students were more successful than male students.

Subject integrity is an indispensable element of a composition. The students who participated in the research showed a moderate level of success in the category of subject coherence. In the category of topic coherence, 44 of the students (17 females, 27 males) showed low-level success, 69 (39 females, 30 males) showed medium-level success, and 13 (7 females, 6 males) showed high-level success. It was observed that the students with moderate success made mistakes in presenting information in a particular order and making interrelated explanations during the speech and therefore presented partially coherent content. It was observed that the students with a low level of success

went off-topic and did not form the content from coherent explanations. On the other hand, students with a high level of achievement delivered their speeches consistently, logically and in a particular order from the beginning to the end. When the students' performances were analysed according to gender, it was found that female students were more successful than male students.

A speech starts with greeting the listeners and ends with expressions such as thanking, etc., signalling the end of the speech. In this category, 107 of the students (54 females, 53 males) showed low, 13 (6 females, 7 males) medium, and 6 (3 females, 3 males) high-level success. It was determined that the students who participated in the study showed a predominantly low level of success in the category of starting and ending a conversation. Students with this level of success started the conversation directly and left the board without using any address or greeting. It was observed that the students with a medium level of achievement used only one of the conversation initiation and termination or used expressions such as "see you later, goodbye". On the other hand, it was observed that the students with a high level of success started their speech with a greeting and address sentence and completed it by thanking the listener or using expressions such as "I am ending my speech here". When the student performances were evaluated according to gender, it was observed that both genders performed equally.

As in all speeches, effective use of voice is essential for a persuasive speech. In this category, 59 of the students (29 females, 30 males) showed low, 59 (30 females, 29 males) medium, and 8 (4 females, 4 males) high-level success. It was observed that the students who participated in the research showed mainly medium and low-level success in the category of effective use of voice. It was observed that the students who were accepted at the medium level used their voices at an audible level but made mistakes in stress and intonation. On the other hand, students with a low level of achievement used their voices at a height that even the students in the middle ranks had difficulty in hearing, spoke without stress and intonation, and failed in speed. On the other hand, students with a high level of achievement used their voices successfully in height, speed, stress and intonation. When the student performances were evaluated according to gender, it was found that the groups were equally successful.

One of the factors that play a role in making a speech comprehensible for the listener is fluency. In the fluency category, 25 of the students (7 females, 18 males) showed low, 85 (44 females, 41 males) medium, and 16 (12 females, 4 males) high-level success. The students who participated in the study predominantly showed medium-level success in the fluency category. It was revealed that the students accepted at this level occasionally made mistakes such as making expression disorders, using unnecessary repetitions, mispronouncing words, and saying sentences and paragraphs without transition. On the other hand, low-level students were found to make mistakes such as making meaningless sentences to disrupt the fluency of the speech, making unnecessary repetitions,

frequently making unnecessary sounds during the speech and speaking without switching between sentences and paragraphs. The students with a high level of achievement completed their speech fluently. It was observed that the students who were accepted at this level of success made acceptable mistakes according to the level. When the performances of the students are analysed according to gender, it is seen that female students come to the forefront.

Body language is an important factor in creating effective and aesthetically pleasing speech. Among the participants in the study, 85 (34 females, 51 males) demonstrated low levels of proficiency in body language, 19 (14 females, 5 males) demonstrated medium levels, and 22 (15 females, 7 males) demonstrated high levels. Overall, the students in the study exhibited low levels of success in the body language category. Those in the low proficiency group tended to exhibit unnatural posture, insufficient use of gestures and facial expressions, and lack of eye contact. While those in the medium proficiency group made these mistakes occasionally, they generally attempted to utilise body language elements. In contrast, those in the high proficiency group demonstrated success in terms of posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Analysis by gender revealed that female students were more successful than male students in this area.

Time management in speaking refers to the amount of time allocated to the speaker. It is crucial for a speaker to adjust the time needed to convey their thoughts effectively. During the study, no time constraints were imposed on the students, and they were allowed to speak until they finished without intervention. Of the participants, 61 (28 females, 33 males) demonstrated low levels of proficiency in time management, 48 (25 females, 23 males) demonstrated medium levels, and 17 (10 females, 7 males) demonstrated high levels. Overall, the students in the study exhibited predominantly low levels of success in this category. At this level, students' speeches were inadequate in terms of achieving their intended purpose. Only one student used unnecessary filler words and extended their sentences and examples, resulting in a longer speech than their peers. Students in the medium proficiency group also made limited speeches that did not adequately address their purpose, leading to short speaking times. In contrast, those in the high proficiency group included persuasive elements in their speeches and effectively used their allotted time to achieve their purpose. Analysis by gender showed that female students outperformed male students in this area.

As a result of the analyses, it was determined that the students had difficulty in preparing a speech plan, presented content without subject integrity, spoke out of the main idea, used independent sentences, made their speeches without ordering them in accordance with the sections, tended to read what they wrote, spoke with poor body language, made unnecessary repetitions during the speech, made unnecessary pauses, and often went off topic during the speech. On the other hand, it was observed that they had problems such as not using time appropriately for its purpose, not using transitions between sentences and sections, not speaking with an audible tone of voice, not using

emphasis and intonation, not using appropriate expressions when starting and ending the speech, not appealing to emotions, not justifying their thoughts, not including expressions that would stimulate the listener, not starting their speech with a remarkable introduction. In addition to the findings obtained through the rubric, it was observed that although students were given enough time to rehearse during the application process, they did not perform a practical preparation process in this regard and only a few students prepared by speaking on their own and tried to stand up and speak. In addition, some students made a speech utterly independent of the content or made an unsuccessful speech by going to the board without any preparation. When student performances were analysed according to gender, it can be said that female students were more successful than male students in the categories of planning, attracting attention, expressing the solution, visualising, directing to action, supporting and justifying thoughts, appealing to emotions, subject integrity, fluency, body language and time. It was observed that both groups were equally successful in the categories of starting and ending the speech and effective use of voice. In the category of expressing the problem situation, males were more successful than females. However, it should be taken into consideration that the differences between male and female students are pretty slight.

### Results Related to the Third Sub-Problem

For the third sub-problem of the study, “Which learning outcomes should be included in order to improve students’ persuasive speech?”, the literature was analysed, and learning outcomes for primary school fourth-grade students were formed. The learning acquisitions are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Acquisition Suggestions for Persuasive Speech

Skill Area	Acquisitions	Explanations Regarding the Acquisition
Listening	S/he can distinguish persuasive texts among the types of texts he/she listens to.	<i>Persuasive texts are made felt through videos such as public service announcements.</i>
	In the speeches he/she listens to, s/he can realise how the speaker uses language to persuade the listeners.	<i>It is ensured that the students recognise the elements of persuasion, such as the speaker’s tone of voice, emphasis, and intonation.</i>
	S/he can start his/her speech with a remarkable introduction.	<i>Students are encouraged to use techniques such as asking questions, giving information, telling case studies, and using pictures.</i>
Speaking	S/he can make a persuasive speech in front of the public.	<i>Students are encouraged to make persuasive speeches for different target audiences and subjects.</i>
	During the speech, s/he can deepen the opinion s/he puts forward to convince the listener.	<i>Students are encouraged to deepen the subject by presenting the problem situation, explaining the solution, giving examples, and using references in order to increase the credibility of the subject they want to persuade.</i>

	S/he can conclude the speech with a striking conclusion about the expected change in behaviour or thought.	<i>Students are supported to use techniques such as challenge, visual presentation, and an invitation to action while finishing their speech.</i>
<b>Reading</b>	S/he can distinguish persuasive texts among the types of texts they read.	<i>Students are encouraged to recognise the elements of persuasive texts.</i>
	S/he can recognise persuasive elements in visual elements.	<i>It is ensured that students recognise the elements of persuasion through visuals that aim to persuade, such as posters.</i>
<b>Writing</b>	S/he can write persuasive texts.	<i>Students are encouraged to write persuasive texts for different target audiences and topics.</i>

These acquisitions, which are suggested in terms of persuasive speech at the primary school level, can also be addressed at the secondary school level by repeating and expanding them. While preparing the acquisition proposals, the fourth-grade level was taken into consideration by taking into account the existing acquisitions in the first, second and third grades.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study aimed to determine the level of persuasive speech achievement of primary school fourth-grade students. For this purpose, students' speeches were evaluated. As a result of the evaluation, it was seen that the students preferred reading aloud instead of making a speech. In addition, it was determined that they showed weak and moderate success in terms of persuasive speech elements. This situation can be explained by the fact that fourth-grade students do not encounter prepared speech frequently, and persuasive speech is not included in textbooks and teaching programmes at this level.

In the process of evaluating the students, both raters took into consideration that the errors of the students were at an acceptable level. However, the fact that the students failed in the categories, including the basic speaking outcomes, indicates that there is a gap in the development of speaking skills. Besides, considering that speaking skill is affected by cultural capital (Dölek, & Dolunay, 2022) the findings of the research can be evaluated within the context of the cultural background of students. On the other hand, it was observed that the students were not unfamiliar with the persuasive speech type and enjoyed the application process. This situation is a justification for teaching persuasive speech to students.

Based on the findings, it can be said that students use speaking strategies at a low level in terms of the fourth-grade level. Because it was observed that students showed low success in many categories, such as using their voice effectively, speaking fluently, starting, and ending the speech with an appropriate expression, speaking with correct body language and using time effectively.

However, these skills are gradually included in the Turkish Language Teaching Programme (MEB, 2019) starting from the first grade. This situation indicates that students need support in terms of speaking skills. Because it should not be forgotten that communication in most areas takes place on the basis of speaking, and speaking is the fastest way to include the individual in life (Sağlam, & Doğan, 2013, p. 45).

Since it is one of the types of prepared speeches, the teaching of persuasive speech also includes persuasive writing. Studies have concluded that fifth-grade students (Kan, & Erbaş, 2017; Kaptan, 2015), secondary school students (Leon, 2008), and prospective Turkish teachers (Kurudayıoğlu & Yılmaz, 2013) are weak in persuasive writing. When the persuasive texts written by the students in their speech preparations are considered, the findings of the research are similar to the studies in the literature.

According to the Turkish Teaching Programme (MEB, 2019), students encounter prepared to speak for the first time in the fourth grade. However, it can be said that this encounter is a delayed situation. So much so that a student studying in the third grade can make a speech about a subject, he/she has researched and written before. In the fourth grade, these studies can be strengthened by dealing with different genres. In addition, the gains related to using transition words and applying speaking strategies, which students encounter for the first time in the fifth grade, can also be carried to early levels. In the study, acquisition suggestions that will serve the persuasive speech skills of primary school fourth-grade students were included. These suggestions are helpful for different types of speeches and improve the teaching of speaking in general and the teaching of persuasive speech in particular. Many studies (Atik, & Aykaç, 2017; Bayburtlu, 2015; Kalaycı, & Yıldırım, 2020) show that Turkish curricula have weakened in terms of quality and quantity from 2009 to 2019. In this case, one of the negatively affected learning areas was speaking, and one of the outcomes was persuasive speech. For this reason, the acquisitions included in the findings of the study can be expanded and handled with a holistic approach in terms of longitudinal learning and can be added to the curricula. In addition, activities can be included in textbooks to support persuasive speech.

Based on the results of the research and the literature review, it can be said that teaching persuasive speech should be emphasised. In this sense, starting from the first level of primary school, students' free and prepared speaking-writing skills should be supported, and different types of speaking skills, such as speaking in general and persuasive and critical speaking in particular, should be developed gradually. Public speaking activities should be included in the lessons, students should be given the opportunity to write informative texts and justify and explain their thoughts while speaking and writing. Practices such as improvisation techniques (Grayson & Naphthine-Hodgkinson, 2020) and storytelling (Doğan & Çifci, 2021) should be addressed to support students' learning of speaking rules. In addition, practical studies should be carried out at different grade levels to improve

students' persuasive speech skills. For this purpose, teaching advertising literacy and argumentation (Locke-Stanley, 2017) should be supported in areas such as critical reading and writing (Erkek, 2022). Because through persuasive texts, directives such as showing witnesses and quotations support students' different learning (Okur, Göçen, & Süğümlü, 2013, p. 195).

Teaching and assessing oral communication skills can be challenging and time-consuming (Dockrell, Lindsay, Roulstone, & Law, 2014; Roberts & Billings, 2009; Walker, 2014). However, given that speaking skills are utilised in every aspect of daily life, it is important to prioritise their development. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' speaking skills, as their own speaking habits and mistakes may be reflected in their students (Yustina, 2012). In a study by Kasa-Ayten and Hatipoğlu (2021), classroom teachers reported that they did not have enough time to dedicate to developing students' speaking skills and that they needed in-service training in this area. Similarly, Erdogan, Uzuner, and Gülay (2018) found that classroom teachers felt inadequate in teaching oral communication skills and reported not incorporating engaging activities or sufficient diversity in their lessons. In a separate study on persuasive writing (Zelzele & Ateş, 2022), classroom teachers indicated that they had a limited understanding of teaching persuasive writing, were hesitant to teach it, and needed training on the subject. Additionally, the lack of sub-skills related to persuasive writing, the curriculum's failure to address this skill, and a lack of resources were identified as barriers to teaching persuasive writing. Based on these findings, it is advisable to prioritise training in persuasive genres, both in writing and speaking, in teacher education programs.

### **Policy Implications**

It is possible to encounter persuasive communication examples in all areas of life. So much so that the teaching process takes place through persuasion (Akkaya, 2020). For this reason, it is important to raise awareness of persuasion to students from the preschool period. This awareness is possible by considering the type of persuasion within the scope of basic language skills. Knowing persuasive language contributes to students in terms of creating an argument and shaping valuable knowledge at school (Thomas, & To, 2016). For this reason, it is very important to teach students reading, listening, speaking, and writing in persuasion communication. This study focused on students' persuasive speaking skills. Students who develop persuasive speech skills become successful in communication, problem-solving, and self-confident individuals in the future (Kurudayıoğlu, & Sevindik, 2020). However, in this study, it was concluded that primary school fourth-grade students need to be developed in terms of oral expression in general and persuasive speaking in particular. Based on this result, acquisitions within the scope of basic language skills for primary school fourth graders have been proposed to be used in the regulation of curriculum. These gains should be expanded and developed gradually in curricula with a holistic approach. In this context, it is

anticipated that the study will shed light on education policies and stakeholders working in the relevant field.

### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest between the authors of the article.

### **Funding Details**

No funding or grant was received from any institution or organization for this research.

### **Credit Author Statement**

This study includes part of the first author's PhD thesis supervised by the second author. In this sense:

Author 1: Investigation, Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing-Original draft preparation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis.

Author 2: Supervision, Investigation, Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing-Original draft preparation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing-Reviewing and Editing.

### **Ethical Statement**

The ethics committee permission for this study was obtained from Uşak University Ethics Committee with the number 2022-114.

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