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Using NLP-Based Instructional Activities to Reduce English Speaking Anxiety and Enhance Motivation among 8th Grade Students

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Abstract

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) provides a set of mental strategies that help individuals enhance their communication skills and achieve their learning goals. It has been applied in various fields such as education, psychology, health, business, and marketing. In education, NLP emerges as an innovative instructional approach that enhances students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement in learning. This study examines the systematic use of NLP techniques in teaching English as a foreign language and explores their effects on reducing eighth-grade students' speaking anxiety and improving their motivation. As an action research study with 36 students at a public middle school in Türkiye**,** it integrated NLP-based activities into the *Adventures* unit of the 8th-grade English curriculum. Data was collected through written student feedback, students' verbal statements, classroom observations, and the teacher's reflective journal. The results indicate that students who initially avoided speaking activities became more willing to participate, gained confidence, and experienced reduced anxiety as implementation continued. The findings suggest that NLP has transformative potential for individual learner development, classroom interaction, and motivational dynamics.

Keywords: Neuro-linguistic programming, English language teaching, speaking anxiety, motivation, action research.

INTRODUCTION

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a collection of techniques and strategies to improve individuals' learning and communication skills. Its primary purpose is to maximize potential by strengthening internal processes and interpersonal communication skills (Revell & Norman, 1997; Yemm, 2006). Instead of analyzing the causes of past experiences, NLP focuses on how individuals structure these experiences through mental processes (Linder-Pelz & Hall, 2007). Since these restructuring processes can be transferred to others, they significantly contribute to learning and teaching contexts (Tosey & Mathison, 2008).

NLP has three main components: 'neuro', which refers to sensory perception systems; 'linguistic', which emphasizes the impact of language on thought and communication; and 'programming', which refers to the restructuring of experiences through mental representations (Revell & Norman, 1997). Developed in the 1970s by John Grinder and Richard Bandler, NLP aimed to model highly successful individuals' thought and behavior patterns so that others could learn these strategies (Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Dilts, 1998). With its eclectic nature, NLP draws on cognitive-behavioral approaches, Gestalt therapy, and hypnotherapy, adapting their techniques to instructional contexts (Tosey & Mathison, 2008).

In educational settings, core NLP applications include rapport (building a trust-based interaction between teacher and student), sensory acuity (developing students' awareness of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic cues), anchoring (associating positive emotional experiences with the learning process), and the Swish technique (replacing negative patterns with more positive and functional alternatives) (Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Davis & Davis, 1991). These techniques encourage more active student participation and support sustained motivation. In foreign language teaching, learners' emotional states are strongly associated with learning outcomes (Horwitz, 2001).

Research in Türkiye has demonstrated that NLP-based activities enhance student

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motivation and reduce speaking anxiety. For instance, Özdemir (2018) reported decreased speaking anxiety, Gündüz (2015) observed noticeable improvement in speaking skills, and Erdoğan (2016) found that NLP techniques significantly enhanced students' self-confidence and motivation in speaking classes. Similarly, Kök (2010) emphasized that NLP strengthens cognitive processes and helps lower anxiety in language learning. International studies support these findings: Lashkarian and Sayadian (2015) found that applying NLP techniques increased Iranian EFL learners' motivation, improved classroom engagement, and contributed to teachers' instructional success. Similarly, Matiz et al. (2016) showed that NLP enriches learning processes, and Drinovac Topalović and Vujasinović (2019) highlighted its potential for enhancing communication and emotional well-being in educational contexts.

Speaking anxiety and motivation are critical affective factors in foreign language learning. Highly motivated learners tend to exert greater effort, whereas those with high levels of anxiety may withdraw from learning activities, particularly speaking tasks (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Strategies that reduce anxiety while boosting motivation are therefore essential. Dewaele et al. (2023) found that emotions such as anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom influence performance in foreign language contexts. Liu (2023) also reported that teachers' anxiety-reducing strategies foster classroom dynamics and improve learning. Similarly, online learning studies confirm that motivation, anxiety, and learning strategies directly impact language achievement (Xu et al., 2022). All these findings emphasize the close link between affective factors and language learning outcomes, particularly speaking skills.

In Türkiye, one of the main barriers in foreign language learning is speaking anxiety, which often leads to reduced motivation (Arslan & Tanrıverdi, 2021 ; Köse & Dinçer, 2020; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). This situation underlines the need for instructional strategies that alleviate students' affective barriers and enhance their motivation. NLP techniques offer an innovative approach to addressing these dual needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques can reduce eighth-grade students' English-speaking anxiety and enhance their motivation to speak English in a Turkish secondary school EFL context. Based on this understanding, this study examines the contribution of NLP techniques in reducing the English-speaking anxiety of 36 eighth-grade students and increasing their desire to learn English.

Research questions

1. How does using NLP-based instructional activities in English lessons reflect on the speaking motivation of eighth-grade students?

2. What are the contributions of NLP-based instructional activities to regulating the speaking anxiety of eighth-grade students?

METHOD

Research design

This study is based on the action research approach first introduced by Kurt Lewin (1946). Lewin's groundbreaking work, which placed social change and the solution of practical problems at the center of research, was later adapted to educational contexts and developed into classroom action research. In particular, the cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection emphasized by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) has enabled teachers to observe and improve their classroom practices systematically. Action research offers teachers a professional development tool allowing them to solve pedagogical problems identified through classroom observations (Mills, 2014). Similarly, Saban (2021) defines action research as a process in which teachers systematically examine their classroom practices to improve instruction and produce scientific knowledge. This study was structured within this framework and aimed to systematically develop pedagogical solutions to affective problems such as speaking anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and low motivation observed by the researcher in the classroom. Throughout the implementation process, students' reflective feedback, interviews, and products were considered, and adjustments were made in the action plans; thus, instructional practices were shaped collaboratively with the students. In this respect, the study is not limited to the teacher's observations and interventions but also aims at achieving the active participation of students. Therefore, it was structured as participatory classroom action research.

Study group

The study group consisted of 36 eighth-grade students (18 girls and 18 boys) attending a public middle school in Istanbul, Türkiye. They had previously participated in the foreign-language-oriented program taught by the researcher during grades 5, 6, and 7, and participated in English support and reinforcement courses outside regular school hours.

Implementation process

The NLP activities were planned within the context of the English unit 'Adventures' and implemented over 12 weeks, with three class hours per week, amounting to 36 class hours in total. The 'Adventures' unit was chosen because it allows for imagination and expression through body movements, aligning with the nature of NLP. The techniques of Anchoring, Swish, Rapport, and Sensory Acuity were applied in sequence during the implementation process. After each technique, students provided written and/or verbal feedback, reflective notes were added to the teacher's journal, and classroom observations of behavioral indicators (participation, eye contact, gestures and facial expressions, peer interaction, etc.) were systematically recorded.

Data collection

Data was collected through written student feedback, students' verbal statements, classroom observations, and the teacher's reflective journal, which included reflective notes written after

each session. From the qualitative research perspective, Creswell (2012) and Merriam (2009) note that student feedback, teacher journals, and classroom observations represent reliable data sources in classroom-based action research.

Having multiple data sources allowed for a comparative analysis of the findings. The data collection approaches are also closely related to Bandler and Grinder's (1979) explanations of how NLP techniques transform students' behavioral and cognitive processes in learning environments. Similarly, Dilts' (1998) work on rapport and sensory acuity supports these practices with findings on strengthening teacher–student communication.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the study were analyzed using descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Descriptive analysis allows the researcher to organize the data according to pre-determined frameworks and support them with direct participant quotations. In this study, the applied NLP techniques were accepted as units of analysis in line with the research structure. Accordingly, the written statements collected from students, the teacher's journal, and classroom observations were classified based on the techniques applied—Anchoring, Swish, Rapport, and Sensory Acuity. Students' reactions, changes in learning processes, and motivational shifts were examined under each technique and linked to the research questions. Direct quotations from student statements and teacher observations were included in reporting the findings to strengthen the descriptive narrative. This method is consistent with approaches recommended to enhance trustworthiness and transparency in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, the data was systematically organized, resulting in a holistic analysis reflecting participant experiences.

Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability were ensured based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in the qualitative research literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To support content validity, two experts in educational sciences reviewed the data collection tools in terms of alignment with the study's aims, and necessary linguistic and structural revisions were made. In addition, the researcher's background in NLP, including a Master Trainer program and multiple certifications, contributed to the validity and consistency of the study by supporting the accurate application of NLP techniques. Data triangulation (written student statements, classroom observations, teacher journal) was employed for credibility, and the findings were comparatively analyzed across these sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data collection and analysis processes, the study context, and implementation flow were described in detail for transferability. Dependability was ensured by clearly reporting the data collection and decision-making steps, while confirmability was achieved by preserving the researcher's notes. Finally, the data was classified and presented in a descriptive framework consistent with the research questions.

Ethical considerations

Official permission was obtained from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education, and approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of Yıldız Technical University. Written informed consent was obtained from parents. Students participated only in classroom activities, and the principle of voluntariness was maintained without imposing any additional obligations. Confidentiality and ethical principles were carefully observed at all stages of the study (Creswell, 2012). Informed consent was obtained from both students and their parents, and it was declared that the data would be used solely for scientific purposes. Student codes (S1, S2, S3 …) were used throughout the text instead of real names to ensure anonymity.

RESULTS

This section presents the NLP-based activities integrated into the existing curriculum, which were designed to enhance students' motivation to speak English. Each action plan is reported with supporting student feedback and teacher observations.

Action plan 1: Implementing the NLP anchoring technique to encourage english speaking:

Anchoring was the first technique applied to help students regulate anxiety. It was used to minimize the impact of affect-based difficulties—such as anxiety or tongue slips—on students' English-speaking performance.

No materials are required for anchoring; what matters first is to establish a positive atmosphere in the group. Students collectively closed their eyes; after a brief breathing exercise, they imagined a moment when they felt pleased and confident. With the teacher's guidance, each student pressed with one hand between two fingers of the other hand while focusing on a feeling that gave them confidence. To reinforce the anchor without disturbing the students, the teacher lightly used a scent associated with spring or freshness throughout the action plans. She explained that during later speaking activities, whenever students felt challenged, excited, or anxious, they could press their fingers in the same way to feel better.

Many students reported improvements in taking or maintaining the floor, recalling a word, and managing the anxiety of speaking in front of others when they used the anchor. Some noted that they began to apply the technique in speaking lessons and other subjects, during mock exams, or when recalling vocabulary. The anchoring technique appeared to provide bodily relaxation and mental re-centering at moments of anxiety. S3 stated:.

> "*When I pressed my hand, some relief came over me. Normally, my voice shakes and words get stuck in my throat when I speak. That day, I could form sentences comfortably for the first time".*

S3 suggests a direct link between bodily sensation and mental blockage: His inner relaxation was reflected positively in speaking performance.

Some students used anchoring not only for English speaking but also to cope with test anxiety in other subjects. S7 exemplified.

> "*"I got very nervous during the math exam. My heart was pounding; my mind went blank when I looked at the questions. Then I remembered what we did in English and pressed my finger—my anxiety seemed to fade. I pulled myself together and started solving faster a few seconds later".*

S7's situation indicates that anchoring can transfer across contexts or subjects and that students develop strategic awareness for stress management. For some, this technique also functioned as a memory cue to retrieve forgotten information. S9 elaborated.

> "*When I forgot English words, I used the anchor. At first, I thought it wouldn't work, but the word suddenly came to mind when I pressed between my fingers. I was really surprised".*

Here, anchoring appears to relate not only to emotional regulation but also to cognitive recall processes.

The anchoring technique did not work initially for a few students, yet it improved with guidance. S14 explained.

> "*At first, my anchor didn't work. I pressed, but felt nothing. Then I did it with my teacher, which worked this time. I felt calmer when I tried it in the exam".*

S14 highlights the decisive role of teacher guidance in effectively internalizing techniques. Similarly, students often reported increases in voluntary participation and self-confidence after anchoring. For instance:

> "*My hands were shaking when I spoke. I used the anchor and my anxiety decreased. For the first time, I volunteered to speak." (S14).*

> "*I was very embarrassed because everyone was looking at me, but pressing my hand made me feel better. I normally never volunteer, but I raised my hand." (S22).*

> "*Without my anchor, I wouldn't have been able to start speaking. When I pressed my hand, I felt as if courage came to me." (S30).*.

These statements suggest that anchoring not only regulates anxiety but also motivates action. This technique promoted an internal sense of relaxation and an outward participation behavior. Teacher observations likewise indicated that students gradually began to use it automatically, which fostered a more positive classroom climate. S7's use of anchoring in another subject during a different form of anxiety also illustrates its multidisciplinary applicability.

Action plan 2: Applying the nlp swish technique to reduce speaking anxiety:

The Swish technique aims to replace students' negative images related to speaking English with positive ones. Students were asked to recall moments when they struggled while speaking English. Those who wished were free to share instances when they made mistakes or felt inadequate. No equipment or printed materials were used at this stage; however, it was important for the teacher and participants to hear each other clearly and remain within easy reach.

To help students confront and transform their internal barriers, the steps of mental imagery and reframing were carefully structured. First, the teacher guided students to face their speaking anxiety as follows.

> "*If you forget words or stutter when speaking English, picture yourself that way. Let this image be your initial picture?".*

This guidance was intended to make the negative experience concrete and sensorially represented, preparing the ground for transformation. Students were then asked to alter this image mentally:

> *"Take a snapshot that empowers you and shows you achieving what you want. While speaking, enlarge the picture of your happy self and brighten its colors".*

In Swish, students first visualize a difficult moment while speaking English and then imagine themselves on stage, successful and confident. In the teacher's instructions, closing the eyes, counting from three, and switching mental images with a soft 'Swish' added a dramatic quality and amplified emotional engagement.

This structure introduces a cognitive strategy and targets students' emotional representations to foster inner change. From a hermeneutic perspective, the negative feeling is turned into an "image," made noticeable, and then reframed mentally; this shifts self-perception toward a more positive definition.

In the second step, the teacher asked students to imagine themselves giving a presentation and to create a positive stage experience accompanied by enthusiastic applause. Their responses showed successful mental imagery and awareness of the technique's emotional effects. For example:

> "*At first, I was agitated and thought of bad things, but when I imagined the sound of applause, a smile appeared on my face." (S1).*

> "*When I saw myself on stage, my heart raced; then I relaxed when I imagined the applause." (S8).*

> "*"I was afraid of making mistakes while presenting. Hearing the applause made me feel as if I could speak better." (S12).*

These accounts show that students first experienced a sense of threat and then transformed it through positive representation. Facial expressions also reflected this transition: some students tightly closed their eyes, pursed their lips, or frowned; upon

shifting to the positive image, a visible relaxation was observed. The teacher's journal echoed this process:

> "*The Swish technique helped students transform their negative self-talk. Those who struggled at first could switch to the positive image more quickly with practice, which made it easier for them to participate willingly in class".*

In short, the Swish technique effectively reduced mental barriers and supported a more positive speaking experience. The participants' reactions indicate gains through imagination and emotional regulation, suggesting that Swish is a powerful tool for constructing new meanings in students' inner worlds.

Action plan 3: Implementing an English-speaking activity based on sensory acuity:

This plan is grounded in the NLP principle of sensory acuity and the visual representational system. Because sensory acuity enhances awareness of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic cues, the activity targeted students' attentional control required for speaking in English. To adapt the technique to the English lesson, the researcher showed students paired images (e.g., people skiing, rafting, ballooning, or surfing) and asked them to express differences between the pictures in English. The teacher modeled the task; students then interpreted new pictures independently.

Sample model sentences used by the teacher included:

> "*There is an extra dot on this hat".*

> "*The canoe's color is different".*

> "*Gloves are missing".*

Students took turns viewing the images on the smart board and articulated two to three key differences in English. During the activity, their attention spans increased, their ability to notice small details strengthened, and their expression patterns became more accurate. Some initially struggled to detect differences but rapidly adapted through repeated examples and peer support. For instance:

> "*Before the activity, I couldn't see the small differences in the pictures. Thanks to the teacher's examples and guidance, I learned to look more carefully." (S2)".*

> "*At first, it took time to form English sentences in my mind while examining the pictures, but as we repeated the task, I could form sentences faster and more accurately. This activity increased my confidence when speaking." (S9)".*

Such reflections demonstrate how peer learning was facilitated within the classroom context. For example:

> "*The activity taught me to be attentive and to express myself using the words I had learned. Because it was fun, my fear of making mistakes decreased, and I learned a lot from my friends' sentences." (S10)".*

> "*I used a similar sentence that my friend used when it was my turn, and it was correct—I felt happy." (S14)".*

> "*When my friends found a difference, I tried harder to find one as well; this increased my interest in the lesson." (S28)".*

Teacher observations confirmed that the sensory acuity activity both increased students' attention and made it easier for them to participate in speaking through simple visuals. Notably, some typically reticent students volunteered and expressed the differences, suggesting that the technique improved observational skills and supported students' confidence.

Action plan 4: Adapting the NLP rapport technique to an English-speaking activity:

This action plan was designed to develop both affective and psychomotor skills. In NLP, rapport involves synchronously mirroring the other person's body language, gestures, and facial expressions. The researcher adapted this technique to the classroom using street interview videos on extreme sports, encouraging students to participate by imitating facial expressions and body language. S5 stated:

> "*It was so much fun. For the first time, I felt comfortable in class".*

This statement suggests that S5 relaxed technically and emotionally, experiencing the classroom as a safer space. From a hermeneutic standpoint, the subject–environment relation in language learning is transformed here. For example:

> "*I normally hesitate to speak, but when I did the movements, I felt freer." (S13).*

This example shows that S13 overcame pressure in verbal production through bodily expression. The body's involvement in meaning-making is not just gestural but also a marker of emotional transformation. S16 expressed.

> "*It was the first time I realized how much attention I pay to body language. When I copied the other person's expressions, I felt as if I were in their shoes.".*

S16 emphasized that rapport acquired an empathic dimension: She did not merely imitate but resonated emotionally with the interlocutor, making the learning experience more holistic. S24 further elaborated:

> "*When speaking English, I will now pay attention not only to words but also to how I stand and what my facial expression looks like.".*

S24's reflection suggests that the learner begins internalizing communication as a multi-channel process, caring about "how" something is said. His initial resistance can be followed by ownership through social interaction. Hermeneutically, meaning is reconstructed jointly in a playful context. For example:

> "*At first it felt a bit silly, but then I had fun. We laughed more when I mirrored my friend's movements." (S32)".*

> "*I exaggerated my facial expressions so it would look more like English (laughs).*" *(S35)*".

Although humorous, these statements suggest that while internalizing the language, S32 and S35 also "reconstructed" its visible form; body language became a kind of performative translation.

Teacher observations reflected changes in students' participation patterns over time. Participation became increasingly voluntary; the classroom climate grew more positive; and peer interaction intensified—indicating that rapport can be effective at both cognitive and affective levels. As activities progressed, students' body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions became more synchronized. These observations suggest that the targeted sense of interactional alignment and trust can be fostered within the classroom.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of different NLP techniques—anchoring, Swish, sensory acuity, and rapport—on students' English-speaking anxiety and motivation to learn English in detail. The findings indicate that each technique helped reduce affective barriers and supported more active participation in speaking tasks.

- The anchoring technique emerged as a strong tool for helping students manage anxiety during oral performance or examinations. Many students also began to use it in other classes, suggesting that NLP-based strategies are not limited to foreign language instruction but can function as tools supporting emotion regulation across disciplines.
- The Swish technique was exceptionally functional in transforming negative imagery. With repeated practice, students developed more positive mental representations and became more willing to speak.
- The sensory acuity technique helped students notice environmental cues more carefully and practice observation through English. The fact that students who usually avoided speaking volunteered in this activity suggest the technique can be effective at both cognitive and affective levels.
- The rapport technique fostered a natural sense of communication and trust among students, highlighting the decisive role of imitation and body language in speaking confidence.

The systematic implementation of NLP-based techniques visibly decreased students' speaking anxiety, increased voluntary participation, and motivated students to engage in lessons. Notably, students who were initially reluctant to participate gradually became more willing to engage in speaking activities and expressed themselves with greater confidence. Teacher observations and student accounts also showed that, besides language learning, these techniques can be applied in other areas of students' academic lives. These results are consistent with recent research highlighting the effectiveness of learner-centered approaches in reducing language anxiety (De Dios Martínez Agudo, 2021; Saghafi & Fatahi-Majd, 2022).

Current qualitative research studies further support the applicability of NLP techniques in educational settings. For example, Riekkinen (2020) emphasized that interventions aimed at transforming students' mental processes can reduce anxiety, particularly among individuals with low perceived competence. Rayati (2021) examined EFL teachers' perceptions of NLP implementation and found that rapport-building and sensory-based techniques increased classroom participation and motivation among learners. In the present study, anchoring and Swish techniques contributed to students' restructuring of inner barriers and helped them develop a more positive mental state during performance moments.

The sensory acuity and rapport techniques enhanced linguistic and socio-affective skills. Walsh et al. (2021) stressed that student engagement relates to cognition and emotional commitment, which can be fostered through safe classroom environments. In line with this, the present study's findings indicate that rapport-based activities strengthened the classroom atmosphere and increased students' willingness to participate.

The integration of NLP into instructional design is also noteworthy. Recent studies have demonstrated that embedding NLP principles into lesson planning promotes attentional focus, emotional regulation, and interactive learning environments. For instance, Daulay (2025) explored the integration of NLP strategies into academic writing instruction and found that communication techniques such as rapport-building and sensory awareness helped students regulate anxiety and sustain motivation during complex writing tasks. Similarly, Mhanna (2024) highlighted that incorporating NLP into instructional frameworks enhanced teachers' methodological flexibility and created more interactive, student-centered classrooms through improved communication, conflict management, and leadership skills. In a quasi-experimental study, Ghanem (2024) reported that NLP-based interventions significantly improved students' academic engagement and social behavior by fostering emotional awareness and reflective self-control. Collectively, these studies indicate that NLP-informed instructional design supports both affective and cognitive dimensions of learning, allowing educators to create flexible, emotionally responsive, and participatory classroom environments.

This study provides a concrete and practical example of how NLP techniques can be systematically structured in educational contexts through an action research approach.

The findings further revealed notable changes in students' participation patterns over time. Learners who were initially reluctant later participated voluntarily, reflecting increased intrinsic motivation and enhanced social interaction skills. This outcome aligns with social learning theory, which posits that modeling, reinforcement, and group dynamics are key factors supporting language use (Saghafi & Fatahi-Majd, 2022; Walsh et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the present research demonstrates that NLP techniques can effectively reduce speaking anxiety while fostering students' social, emotional, and communicative competencies. When combined with constructivist teaching principles, NLP-based classroom activities facilitate more active and meaningful engagement in the learning process. Integrating such techniques into contemporary pedagogy provides teachers with an innovative, evidence-based framework for improving both affective and linguistic outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study proposes the following recommendations:

English teachers should systematically incorporate NLP techniques into their lessons to reduce students' speaking anxiety, increase motivation, and foster more active participation in the learning process. At the curricular level, integrating NLP strategies into the English program can support students' cognitive and affective development while contributing to the sustainable improvement of speaking skills. To strengthen pedagogical competencies, teacher education programs and in-service training should also include NLP principles and classroom applications, thereby offering innovative perspectives for instructional practice. Finally, future research may extend this line of inquiry by examining the effects of NLP on listening, writing, and reading skills, providing further contributions to the literature.

Ethical approval: The study titled "Using NLP-Based Instructional Activities to Reduce English-Speaking Anxiety and Enhance Motivation among Eighth-Grade Students" was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Yıldız Technical University.

Consent to participate: Written informed consent was obtained from the parents of all participating students.

Availability of data: The qualitative data from this study are fully represented in the findings reported in the manuscript.

Competing interests: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the conduct or publication of this research.

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