

# Developing a System of Exercises to Train and Enhance Conversational Competence for First-Grade Students

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**Abstract**— *First grade is a crucial stage in the formation and development of students' language abilities. However, while the focus is often placed on learning fundamental language skills, the development of conversational competence—the ability to communicate flexibly, naturally, and effectively—has not been given due attention in many current educational programs. Strong communication skills, however, help students integrate more easily with peers and teachers while also fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. Therefore, developing a system of exercises to train and enhance first-grade students' conversational competence is not only a solution to meet immediate learning needs but also a long-term strategic approach. This exercise system will not only familiarize students with real-life communication situations but also provide opportunities for them to practice, experience, and develop essential soft skills such as listening, understanding, and responding appropriately in different communicative contexts. With this approach, students will not only learn how to speak but also how to listen, share, and interact with those around them, thereby comprehensively developing their communication skills—a key factor in becoming responsible and successful citizens in the future.*

**Keywords**— *Exercises, conversational competence, first-grade students, speaking and listening skills.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's society, where globalization and technology are rapidly advancing, language and communication skills have become crucial factors determining an individual's success and integration within the community. Language is not only a tool for communication but also a key to self-expression, understanding, and connecting with others while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and essential social skills. Particularly for primary school children, developing conversational competence from an early age is of great importance. It helps students not only improve their ability to express themselves clearly but also build confidence, stimulate independent thinking, and nurture creativity.

First grade is a critical stage in the process of language acquisition and development. At this point, students begin to familiarize themselves with the writing system, learn to read and write, and engage in communication within a formal school environment. However, while basic language skills are emphasized, the development of conversational competence—the ability to communicate flexibly, naturally, and

effectively—has not been given adequate attention in many educational programs. Meanwhile, strong communication skills enable students to integrate more easily with their peers and teachers while also enhancing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork abilities.

Therefore, establishing a system of exercises to train and develop conversational competence for first-grade students is not only a solution to meet immediate learning needs but also a long-term strategic approach. This system of exercises will not only familiarize students with real-life communication situations but also provide opportunities for them to practice, experience, and develop essential soft skills such as listening, understanding, and responding appropriately in different conversational contexts. This foundation helps students develop comprehensively, not only in language skills but also in cognitive and emotional aspects, making them more confident in expressing themselves and communicating effectively in various situations. Implementing an effective exercise system for first-grade students is not just an educational measure but also a way to help them build a strong foundation for future learning. Through this approach, students will not only learn how to speak but also how to listen, share, and interact with those around them, thereby developing well-rounded communication skills—an essential factor in becoming responsible and successful citizens in the future.

## II. RESEARCH CONTENT

### 2.1. Conversational Competence

Conversational competence is the ability to communicate flexibly and effectively in social interactions, enabling participants to exchange ideas, discuss, and express their viewpoints clearly and comprehensibly. Particularly in an educational setting, conversational competence plays a crucial role in developing students' language skills, thinking abilities, and social skills. [1]

For first-grade students, conversational competence encompasses not only the ability to speak but also the ability to listen, understand, and respond appropriately during conversations. It serves as a foundation for the development of future communication skills, helping students gain confidence in expressing their ideas and emotions while also learning how to collaborate and work in teams.

Some key components of conversational competence include:

- **Listening and comprehension skills:** Students must learn to listen attentively to others to grasp messages and respond appropriately. This skill helps children develop critical thinking, analyze problems, and absorb essential information.
- **Clear expression skills:** Students should be able to articulate their ideas and stories coherently and understandably, not only in daily conversations but also in academic and group discussion settings.
- **Social interaction skills:** Conversational competence is not just about exchanging information but also about building relationships. Learning to use appropriate language in different contexts and behaving respectfully toward peers and teachers helps students form positive and lasting social relationships.
- **Conflict resolution skills:** Conversations sometimes involve differing opinions. Conversational competence includes the ability to handle disagreements and debates, teaching students how to resolve conflicts peacefully and tactfully.
- **Confidence in communication:** Strong conversational skills help students build confidence in expressing their opinions while also fostering respect for others' viewpoints.

To develop conversational competence in first-grade students, it is essential to design appropriate communication activities and create an open and positive learning environment where students can interact, exchange ideas, learn, and naturally enhance their language abilities.

## *2.2. Conversational Competence in First-Grade Students*

Conversational competence in first-grade students refers to their ability to communicate, exchange information, ideas, and emotions clearly, coherently, and effectively in social interactions. At this age, conversational competence is not merely about speaking and listening; it also involves understanding and responding appropriately to different contexts. This skill helps children build relationships with peers, teachers, and those around them. Furthermore, conversational competence reflects a student's language development, self-confidence, and social skills. [2]

In modern education, developing conversational competence in first-grade students plays a crucial role in shaping their language and social skills. However, in reality, many first-grade students still face several challenges in communication that need attention. One significant issue is the limited ability to express ideas: many children struggle to articulate their thoughts clearly and coherently. They often lack confidence when speaking, especially in large groups, and may find it difficult to express their needs effectively. Another obstacle is insufficient interaction, which hinders the development of conversational competence. Many first-grade students do not have enough opportunities to engage in real conversations, limiting their interaction with peers and teachers in natural communication settings. As a result, they may not fully develop the ability to communicate and respond flexibly in social situations.

Additionally, listening and comprehension skills remain a challenge. Active listening and understanding information from others are crucial skills, yet many first-grade students struggle to focus and respond appropriately. Lastly, when disagreements arise, students often lack conflict resolution skills, which can lead to unnecessary tension, frustration, or conflicts. These challenges highlight the need to develop and reinforce conversational competence in first-grade students, ensuring they can communicate effectively, confidently, and integrate well into their social environment.

To better understand the factors affecting the conversational competence of first-grade students, we must examine key elements in their living and learning environments. These factors not only directly influence children's communication skills but also play a decisive role in shaping their language and social development. Below are some critical factors affecting first-grade students' conversational competence:

- **Family environment:** The family is the first and most crucial environment influencing a child's language development. If children are given opportunities to communicate and engage in conversations with parents and relatives regularly, their conversational competence will develop more effectively. Conversely, limited communication opportunities or restrictions on interactions may negatively impact this ability.
- **Learning environment:** At school, interaction between students and teachers, as well as among peers, plays a vital role in shaping and developing conversational competence. A learning environment lacking communication activities or overly focused on theoretical instruction may hinder students' practical communication skills.
- **Curriculum and teaching methods:** Traditional teaching methods sometimes do not encourage students to engage in conversations, discussions, or interactive activities. This limitation prevents students from fully developing their communication skills. On the other hand, flexible teaching approaches that promote real-life communication activities help students improve their conversational competence more effectively.
- **Individual development of students:** Each student develops language skills at their own pace and in different ways. Some children may naturally be confident and communicative, while others may struggle due to psychological factors or a lack of self-confidence.

Conversational competence in first-grade students is a fundamental factor in their language and social skill development. Strengthening this ability from an early age helps students gain confidence in communication, enhances their critical thinking, and enables them to express themselves clearly and coherently. However, the current reality shows that many first-grade students have not yet developed adequate conversational competence. This is partly due to a lack of appropriate teaching methods and insufficient opportunities for communication in both school and home environments.

To improve conversational competence in first-grade students, collaboration between families, schools, and the community is essential. Specifically, a diverse and dynamic

learning environment should be created, offering various communication activities that encourage students to engage in discussions, conversations, and personal expression. At the same time, teachers should implement creative and flexible teaching methods that help students not only learn how to speak but also develop listening, sharing, and conflict-resolution skills.

Conversational competence is one of the key factors in students' comprehensive language and social development. Therefore, focusing on its development from the first grade is a necessary step toward building a strong foundation for students' future academic success and life skills.

### 2.3. A System of Exercises for Practicing and Developing Conversational Competence in First-Grade Students

#### 2.3.1. Exercises for Developing Skills in Greeting, Thanking, Apologizing, and Expressing Opinions in Familiar Situations

##### \* Greeting Skills Exercises

Objective: Help students learn how to greet teachers, friends, and adults politely.

Exercise 1: Choose the most appropriate response in the following situations:

Situation 1: When meeting your teacher in the morning, you should say:

- A. "Good morning, teacher!"
- B. "Teacher, can you give me some candy?"
- C. "Teacher, the weather is nice today!"

Situation 2: When visiting a friend's house, you should say:

- A. "I came to visit your house."
- B. "Hello, uncle/aunt!"
- C. "I came to study with my friend."

##### Exercise 2: Role-playing

The teacher divides students into pairs. Each pair role-plays a greeting situation (e.g., meeting a teacher, meeting a new friend, greeting grandparents). Groups perform their role-plays in front of the class.

##### \* Thanking Skills Exercises

Objective: Help students learn how to express gratitude when receiving help.

Role-playing activity with different situations: The teacher presents situations, and students practice role-playing and expressing appropriate gratitude:

Situation 1: A friend helps you sharpen your pencil.

Situation 2: The school security guard helps you open the school gate.

- Situation 3: Your mother helps you put on a warm coat.

##### \* Apologizing Skills Exercises

Objective: Help students learn how to apologize when they make a mistake or accidentally inconvenience others.

Exercise 1: Choose the appropriate apology in the following situations:

Situation 1: You accidentally drop a friend's book. You should say:

- A. "It's not a big deal, no need to apologize!"
- B. "I'm sorry! Let me pick it up for you."
- C. "It wasn't my fault!"

Situation 2: You arrive late to school. You should say to your teacher:

- A. "Teacher, I woke up late this morning."
- B. "Teacher, I didn't eat breakfast, so I was late."
- C. "Teacher, I'm sorry for being late!"

##### Exercise 2: Role-playing

The teacher provides situations and divides students into pairs to practice apologizing politely:

- Situation 1: Spilling water on a friend's desk.
- Situation 2: Accidentally making a friend fall while playing.

##### \* Expressing Opinions Skills Exercises

Objective: Help students learn how to express their thoughts and desires.

Exercise 1: Choose the appropriate response when expressing an opinion:

Situation 1: When you want to play a different game with your friends, you should say:

- A. "I don't like this game. You guys play by yourselves!"
- B. "I think this game is fun, but how about trying another one?"
- C. "This game is boring! Let's play something else!"

##### Exercise 2: Role-playing

The teacher provides situations and divides students into pairs to practice expressing opinions:

Situation 1: Expressing a preference for a type of food.

Situation 2: Expressing feelings when receiving a gift.

Through these exercises, students practice polite communication in daily life, helping them become more confident in expressing their emotions and opinions. They learn how to greet, thank, apologize, and express themselves appropriately in different situations. This fosters their communication skills when interacting with teachers, friends, and adults.

#### 2.3.2. Exercises for Developing Listening and Response Skills

##### \* Game: "Who is the Best Listener?"

Objective: Help students focus on what others are saying.

How to play:

The teacher tells a short story about friendship.

After the story, the teacher asks some comprehension questions, such as:

"What are the names of the two friends in the story?"

"What did the two friends do when they got lost?"

Students listen carefully and answer the questions to check their focus.

##### \* Exercise: "Repeat What Your Friend Said"

Objective: Help students practice responding in conversations.

How to play:

One student says a simple sentence, such as: "I like eating ice cream."

The next student must listen and respond appropriately by repeating or expanding the statement, such as:

"What flavor of ice cream do you like?"

"I like ice cream too!"

##### \* Game: "Guess What Your Friend Wants to Say"

Objective: Encourage students to respond appropriately in conversations.

How to play:

The teacher presents a situation, and students must guess what an appropriate response would be.

Example: Situation: "Mom cooks a delicious meal."

Possible responses: "Thank you, Mom!" or "The meal is delicious! I love it!"

Through these games and exercises, students practice communication creatively. This helps them develop listening skills while encouraging them to respond politely and appropriately in conversations.

### 2.3.3. Exercises for Developing Conversational Competence Through Stories

#### \*. Game: "Role-Playing Characters"

Objective: Help students practice conversations in a story's context.

How to play:

The teacher selects a short story, divides students into small groups, and assigns roles.

Students act out the characters and reenact the story, focusing on dialogue.

Example: When telling the story "*The Disobedient Little Rabbit*," students can practice the conversation between the mother rabbit and the little rabbit.

After role-playing, the teacher asks questions like:

"If you were the little rabbit, what would you say to your mother?"

"How could the little rabbit avoid getting lost?"

#### \*.Exercise: "Continue the Story"

Objective: Train creative thinking and conversational skills.

How to play:

The teacher tells the beginning of a story and stops at an exciting point.

Students work in groups or pairs to continue the story by developing a dialogue between characters.

Example: The teacher starts: "*The little puppy got lost in the forest. It met a squirrel...*" → Students imagine and continue the conversation between the puppy and the squirrel.

These exercises help students practice conversational skills while fostering creativity, confidence, and familiarity with real-life dialogue situations.

### III. CONCLUSION

Developing conversational competence in first-grade students is a crucial factor in helping children form and refine basic communication skills from an early age. Conversational competence not only enhances their confidence in communication but also plays a decisive role in the development of social, cognitive, and emotional skills. Through well-designed practice exercises, students are given the opportunity to communicate naturally, flexibly, and effectively in both academic and social environments.

The system of exercises is designed to comprehensively develop conversational competence, not only improving children's listening and speaking skills but also teaching them how to listen attentively, understand, and handle communication situations in daily life. This provides a strong foundation for students to become confident, creative, and successful in their communication and social integration. Therefore, focusing on and investing in the development of conversational competence for first-grade students is a significant step in building a generation of confident, sociable individuals who are prepared to face future challenges.

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