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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Listening and Speaking Instruction, Assessment and Technologies in the Saudi EFL Context: A Systematic Self-Review**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study sought to conduct a systematic review (SR) of the author's studies on listening and speaking published between 2005-2023. The author's 31 studies were categorized into 4 clusters: listening and speaking teaching approaches, combining listening and/or speaking with other skills, technologies used in listening and speaking enhancement (mobile apps, TED talks, podcasts, online tasks & Zoom, social media, online videos and digital multimedia language labs) and listening and speaking assessment. The corpus offers a comprehensive understanding of how EFL learners develop listening and speaking proficiency in Saudi higher education contexts. Across the clusters, the evidence demonstrates that oral skills development is most successful when instruction integrates meaningful content, explicit strategy instruction, phonological and cognitive support, and autonomous mobile based practice. Studies in Cluster 1 show that instructional models grounded in global themes, multicultural content, participation goals, and task based learning significantly enhance students' engagement, confidence, and communicative fluency. Cluster 2 demonstrates that weaknesses in decoding and auditory processing significantly constrain learners' ability to comprehend spoken input, while strong background knowledge facilitates more accurate and efficient processing of spoken input. Cluster 3 provides strong evidence that self study through audiobooks, MP3 lessons, podcasts, or apps, produces substantial gains in fluency, listening comprehension, and learner autonomy, outperforming textbook only instruction. Finally, Cluster 4 highlights the need for assessment practices that reflect authentic communicative performance rather than narrow, decontextualized tasks. Overall, the findings confirm that successful oral skills development emerges from the integration of pedagogy, cognition, technology, and assessment within a coherent instructional framework. This SR provides a unified perspective on nearly two decades of research and offers a foundation for future work on enhancing EFL listening and speaking proficiency in higher education settings. The listening and speaking aspects covered reflect the full range of themes that previous SRs in the literature have treated separately. By integrating strategies, technologies, pedagogical models, assessment considerations, and affective variables within a single comprehensive review, this SR provides a broader and more coherent understanding of L2 listening and speaking development, an approach not found in existing SRs.

**| KEYWORDS**

Systematic review (SR), Al-Jarf research program, listening and speaking difficulties, listening and speaking strategies, listening and speaking instruction, listening and speaking assessment, listening and speaking technologies, Saudi EFL context, technology-enhanced oral skills, learner autonomy.

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### **1. Introduction**

Listening and speaking skills<sup>1</sup> are interrelated because listening provides the fundamental input that fuels oral production. Consequently, mastering these skills in a second language (L2) requires an integrated approach that balances input consumption with output production. Effective pedagogical techniques should prioritize the following four aspects: (1) Active Listening: Engaging deeply with authentic content—such as listening to podcasts or watching L2 media with L2 subtitles—to build an aural

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<sup>1</sup> <https://contact.teslontario.org/develop-listening-fluency/>

vocabulary and map spoken sounds to written words. (ii) Shadowing: Repeating spoken audio in real-time to mirror the speaker's exact rhythm, intonation, and connected speech. (iii) Voice-to-Text Practice: Utilizing transcription tools (e.g., Google Docs voice typing) as an immediate feedback mechanism for pronunciation; if the tool transcribes the speech accurately, the learner's pronunciation is intelligible. (iv) Input-Before-Output Priority: Focus heavily on comprehension before demanding perfect production, as oral fluency naturally follows strong listening comprehension.

Extensive research in L2 acquisition underscores this profound interconnection. Modern pedagogy emphasizes that communicative competence is built by integrating top-down cognitive strategies (meaning-making) with bottom-up processing skills (decoding and phonological vocabulary) (Chen, 2024). Current L2 speech research prioritizes intelligibility (ease of understanding) and comprehensibility over native-like pronunciation. Recent studies demonstrate that combining strategy-based instruction with direct training in lexical segmentation yields significant improvements, while collaborative activities drastically enhance comprehension scores compared to traditional, isolated instruction.

A major hurdle for L2 learners involves decoding natural, connected speech (e.g., recognizing "Djeetyet?" as "Did you eat yet?"). Targeted instruction on phonological reduction has been shown to improve both listening and decoding and spoken fluency. Furthermore, oral fluency—measured by speech rate, pauses, and natural flow—is a core construct predicting communicative success, prompting researchers to explore how learners transition from controlled, translated speech to spontaneous production. Finally, language production is heavily influenced by psychological barriers, such as foreign language anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and cultural reluctance. To mitigate these disruptors and address the lack of out-of-classroom interaction, modern technology offers vital solutions. Tools providing multimodal feedback, acoustic voice modification, and immediate correction allow learners to effectively bypass traditional environmental constraints (Chen, 2024).

Given the significance of listening and speaking in L2 learning, a literature review revealed a substantial body of work—including single empirical studies, systematic reviews (SRs), and meta-analyses (MAs), that address a wide range of issues related to these two skills.

One group of SRs examined diverse issues related to L2 listening instruction. These include work on the importance of listening comprehension (Bingol 2017); listening comprehension problems and the role of listening (Yıldırım & Yıldırım 2016); improvement of listening performance among EFL learners (Liu et al. 2025); and effective teaching practices for listening (Qasserras 2025); using Powtoon to improve students' listening skills (Nissa et al. 2025), as well as research on listening strategies (Ceylan 2025); effective strategies for teaching listening comprehension (Angkasa & Farida 2025); listening strategy research (Guan 2015), the typology of second-language listening constructs (Aryadoust & Luo 2023), metacognitive instruction for listening development (Bozorgian & Shamsi 2025); design principles for decoding training (Jia & Hew 2021). These SRs highlight the complexity of listening as a multidimensional skill. They underscore the centrality of listening comprehension in L2 learning and the wide range of pedagogical and cognitive factors that shape its development.

A smaller number of SRs reviewed studies that integrate listening with other language skills. These include the impact of communicative language teaching on speaking and listening skills (Ghafar et al. 2023); reading–listening integration in primary ELT (Tarihoran et al. 2025); integrating writing with listening in EFL classrooms (Maru et al. 2020); and methods for teaching Arabic listening and speaking skills (Wahyuni et al. 2023). These reviews highlight the growing recognition that listening rarely develops in isolation and is often strengthened through cross-skill instructional approaches.

A substantial body of SRs in the literature was devoted to speaking in L2. Many of these reviews focus on pedagogical approaches for teaching speaking, including the effectiveness of YouTube for speaking instruction (Amal et al. 2025); drama in fostering speaking skills (Astiandani & Mustofa 2021); storytelling strategies for empowering speaking skill (Chicho & Abdulla 2023); and debate pedagogy in speaking skills (Wu 2023); input-based instruction for speaking (Zhang et al. 2025); the shadowing technique (Palacios & Álvarez 2025); task-based language teaching for speaking proficiency (Yu et al. 2024); flipped learning approaches (Ebadi & Salari 2023; Santhanasamy & Yunus 2022); microlearning for speaking (Prasittichok & Smithsarakarn 2024); and project-based learning for speaking (Hastuti & Malihah 2024). Together, these SRs illustrate the wide range of instructional models used to enhance oral proficiency in L2 contexts.

As with listening-focused SRs, some speaking SRs also integrated listening, reflecting the interdependence of the two skills. These include SRs on MALL effects on listening and speaking (Yanan & Shing 2024) and the impact of communicative language teaching on listening and speaking (Ghafar et al. 2023).

Another group of SRs examined the role of technology, digital tools, mobile applications, and AI in developing speaking skills. These include SRs on mobile-assisted language learning and peer feedback (Zhou 2021; Weng et al. 2025); VoiceThread for speaking development (Utami & Santosa 2023); video recording for speaking improvement (Nguyen 2024); digital storytelling (Nair & Yunus 2021); social media integration (John & Yunus 2021); board games for speaking (Wong & Yunus 2021); and ELSA

Speak for pronunciation and speaking practice (Ribhan & Safriyanti 2023). Additional SRs focused specifically on AI-enhanced speaking instruction, including AI in EFL speaking instruction (Bhar 2026); AI-driven tools and their impacts on speaking skills (Noor & Zawawi 2025); AI chatbots for speaking development (Rachmadani et al. 2026); and AI technologies in ESL/EFL speaking skills (Xing & Saeed 2025). These reviews collectively demonstrate the increasing reliance on intelligent technologies to support oral language development.

Numerous SRs highlighted the importance of learning strategies, motivation, and affective variables in L2 speaking. These include SRs on motivational factors in speaking development (Larasati et al. 2024); self-regulated learning for speaking (Rochmawati et al. 2023); and learning strategies for speaking (Kehing & Yunus 2021). Affective dimensions were also widely examined, including communication anxiety and speaking performance (Cahya & Churnia 2026); causes and factors of speaking anxiety (Paraguas 2025); English speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms (Höl & Kasimi 2022); foreign language speaking anxiety (Akkuş 2021); and self-coping strategies for public speaking anxiety (Tee et al. 2020). These SRs emphasize that psychological and emotional factors play a critical role in shaping learners' oral performance.

Speaking assessment was addressed by a smaller number of SRs, including reviews of speaking assessment practices (Nurkumaila et al. 2026) and components required for designing speaking interventions (Hu & AlSaqqaf 2026). These studies highlight the need for clearer frameworks and more consistent assessment criteria in evaluating L2 speaking proficiency.

Although the above SRs in the literature provide extensive insights into L2 listening and speaking instruction, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, the literature shows far more SRs that have examined speaking-related issues than listening, leaving listening pedagogy comparatively under-synthesized. Even within listening-focused SRs, the emphasis tends to fall on strategies, metacognition, or technology, with limited attention to longitudinal, classroom-based listening development in real EFL contexts.

Second, while many SRs have explored speaking from multiple angles—pedagogical approaches, digital tools, AI-enhanced instruction, affective variables, and assessment—these reviews typically synthesize heterogeneous studies conducted by different researchers across diverse contexts. As a result, they provide breadth but not depth regarding how a single researcher's sustained line of inquiry contributes to the field over time.

Third, only a small number of SRs integrate listening and speaking simultaneously, despite the well-established interdependence of the two skills. Existing integrated SRs (e.g., CLT-based or MALL-based) remain topic-specific and do not offer a comprehensive synthesis of how listening input and speaking output develop together within a unified instructional framework.

Fourth, the existing body of SRs is highly fragmented and single-dimension focus. Most reviews examine only one aspect of listening or speaking at a time—such as strategies, a specific technology, a single pedagogical approach, assessment practices, or affective factors. While these focused SRs provide depth within narrow domains, they do not offer a holistic, multi-dimensional synthesis that captures how listening and speaking develop across pedagogical, cognitive, technological, and affective dimensions simultaneously. As a result, the current literature remains thematically siloed, with each SR illuminating only one piece of a much larger instructional puzzle.

Moreover, none of the SRs in the literature examined a coherent research program conducted by one scholar, nor do they trace how a single body of work evolves across decades, contexts, technologies, and pedagogical shifts. This creates a gap in understanding how sustained, cumulative research can illuminate patterns, innovations, and contributions that are not visible when studies are reviewed in isolation. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap in the literature by conducting a systematic review (SR) of the author's listening and speaking studies published between 2005–2023. The author's 31 studies synthesize multiple dimensions of listening and speaking together, including approaches to listening and speaking pedagogy, combining listening and/or speaking with other skills, technologies used in listening and speaking enhancement (mobile apps, TED talks, podcasts, online tasks & Zoom, social media, online videos and digital multimedia language labs) and listening and speaking assessment.

This SR is significant because the listening and speaking aspects covered reflect the full range of themes that previous SRs have treated separately. By integrating strategies, technologies, pedagogical models, assessment considerations, and affective variables within a single comprehensive review, this study provides a broader and more coherent understanding of L2 listening and speaking development—an approach not found in existing SRs.

Furthermore, this SR is significant because it is part of a broader series of SR/MA projects by the author, that has so far cover the following: *social media in EFL teaching and learning (2008–2025) (Al-Jarf, 2026a)*; *teaching English for art education purposes to Ph.D. students (Al-Jarf, 2026b)*; *EFL reading instruction: Themes, methods, and pedagogical insights (Al-Jarf, 2026c)*; *educational evaluation domains (Al-Jarf, 2026d)*; *students' errors in English–Arabic and Arabic–English translation (Al-Jarf, 2026f)*; *Mobile apps for developing multiple language skills EFL (Al-Jarf, 2026g)*; *adult reading practices, interests, habits and challenges (Al-Jarf, 2026h)*; *pronunciation instruction and practice in L2 (2005–2025) (Al-Jarf, 2026i)*; *teaching reading in Arabic to grades 1–12 (Al-Jarf, 2026j)*;

*Electronic searching studies (2002–2021) (Al-Jarf, 2026k); EFL vocabulary Teaching, assessment, learning outcomes, and AI translation quality (Al-Jarf, 2026l); Principles and practices of specific-skill assessment studies: (Al-Jarf, 2026m); Arabic–English transliteration of personal names and public signages (Al-Jarf, 2026n); Children’s language acquisition and development in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2026o); Classroom practices, writing enhancement and creativity among EFL struggling students (Al-Jarf, 2026p); Collaborative learning and teaching in digital environments (Al-Jarf, 2026q); Distance learning in the COVID-19 era and beyond (Al-Jarf, 2026r); Effect of mind-mapping on multiple English language skills (Al-Jarf, 2026s); Inadequate staffing and large class sizes in Saudi EFL and translation programs (Al-Jarf, 2026t); Innovative word formation and pluralization processes in Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2026w); Online videos and podcasts for language learning in the Saudi context (2010–2025) (Al-Jarf, 2026x); AI Arabic translation, linguistics and pedagogy (2024–2025) (Al-Jarf, 2026y); ESP innovation across specialized and underexplored domains (Al-Jarf, 2026z); LMS-supported EFL instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026aa); studies on grammar teaching, technologies, and learning outcomes (2000–2025) (Al-Jarf, 2026).*

## 2. Methodology

The corpus for this SR consists of 31 empirical studies conducted by the author over 19 years, covering multiple dimensions of listening and speaking instruction in the Saudi EFL contexts. To enable meaningful synthesis, the studies were organized into four thematic clusters based on their primary pedagogical focus, methodological orientation, and instructional medium.

### 2.1 Study Corpus

#### Cluster 1 — Listening and Speaking Teaching Approaches

This cluster includes studies that examine instructional approaches, classroom strategies, and pedagogical frameworks for developing oral skills. The focus is on TBLT, multicultural content, participation goals, and global themes in EFL instruction and others as follows:

- 1) *Enhancing reading and speaking skills in EFL through multicultural children’s short stories (Al-Jarf 2015c)*
- 2) *Developing students’ global awareness in EFL reading and speaking (Al-Jarf 2022a)*
- 3) *Integrating global themes in EFL speaking instruction (Al-Jarf 2008b)*
- 4) *Integration of participation goals in speaking and writing activities. (Al-Jarf 2010e)*
- 5) *From reticence to fluency: The effect of TBLT on students’ speaking ability (Al-Jarf 2007)*
- 6) *Making connections in listening instruction (Al-Jarf, 2009b).*

#### Cluster 2 — Combining listening and/or speaking with other language skills

Studies in this cluster explore the cognitive and linguistic foundations of oral communication, including background knowledge, auditory comprehension, decoding, and phoneme–grapheme relationships. They highlight the interdependence between listening, speaking, reading, and spelling. Studies included are:

- 7) *Effect of background knowledge on auditory comprehension in interpreting courses (Al-Jarf 2018a)*
- 8) *The relationship among spelling, listening, and decoding skills in EFL freshman students kills (Al-Jarf 2005b)*
- 9) *The effects of listening comprehension and decoding skills on spelling achievement of EFL Freshman Students (Al-Jarf, 2005a)*
- 10) *Correlates of the interpreting skill (Al-Jarf, 2007)*

#### Cluster 3 — Technologies used in Listening & Speaking development

This cluster includes studies that integrate digital tools, mobile applications, online platforms, TED Talks, podcasts, social media, and multimedia labs to support listening and speaking development. These include:

#### Mobile Apps

- 11) *Mobile Audiobooks, Listening Comprehension and EFL College Students (Al-Jarf 2021f)*
- 12) *Mobile technology and student autonomy in oral skill acquisition (Al-Jarf 2012b)*
- 13) *Improving Freshman Students’ Oral English with MP3 Lessons (Al-Jarf 2009a)*
- 14) *Enhancing EFL students’ listening comprehension with mobile audiobooks (Al-Jarf 2015b)*
- 15) *Developing EFL Students Listening and speaking Skills with TalkEnglish (Al-Jarf 2015a)*

### **TED Talks**

- 16) *TED Talks as a Listening Resource in EFL College classrooms (Al-Jarf 2021g)*
- 17) *Integrating TED lectures in EFL college listening practice (Al-Jarf 2020e)*

### **Podcasts**

- 18) *Enhancing Freshman Students' Listening Skills with News Podcasts (Al-Jarf 2010c)*
- 19) *Integrating Cultural Podcasts in EFL College Classrooms (Al-Jarf 2011c)*
- 20) *Grammar podcasts for ESL college students in distance learning (Al-Jarf, 2023e)*

### **Online Tasks & Zoom**

- 21) *Engaging and Motivating Students with Online Listening Tasks (Al-Jarf, 2013a)*
- 22) *EFL speaking practice in distance learning during the coronavirus pandemic 2020-2021 (Al-Jarf 2021b)*

### **Social Media**

- 23) *Building cultural bridges through social media (Al-Jarf 2020a)*

### **Online Videos**

- 24) *Enhancing EFL Students' Oral Skills with Online Videos (Al-Jarf 2010d)*
- 25) *YouTube videos as a resource for self-regulated pronunciation practice (Al-Jarf 2022h)*
- 26) *YouTube pronunciation videos in the EFL classroom (Al-Jarf 2013c)*
- 27) *Improving students' pronunciation with online videos (Al-Jarf, 2013b).*

### **Cluster 4 — Listening and Speaking Assessment**

This cluster includes studies addressing assessment practices, learner and instructor preferences, and challenges in evaluating oral skills.

- 28) *EFL female college students and instructors' preferred method of speaking assessment: a perspective from Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2021a)*
- 29) *issues in assessing the speaking skill (Al-Jarf, 2015d)*
- 30) *Creating and sharing listening iRubrics (Al-Jarf, 2010b)*
- 31) *Creating and sharing speaking iRubrics (Al-Jarf, 2011a)*

### **2.2 Eligibility (Inclusion & Exclusion) Criteria**

Some studies were excluded because they addressed all language skills simultaneously rather than focusing specifically on listening and speaking. For example, *Teaching English on Facebook* examined reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and general communication without providing targeted instructional interventions or measurable outcomes in listening or speaking. Since the purpose of this SR is to synthesize research that directly investigates listening and speaking development, studies with broad, multi-skill orientations were excluded to maintain conceptual clarity and methodological consistency. The following are examples:

- **Duplicate Studies** of previously published work and therefore removed from the corpus: *effect of background knowledge on auditory comprehension in interpreting courses (Al-Jarf, 2018b); building cultural bridges through social media networks: a case study (Al-Jarf, 2020b); enhancing reading and speaking through multicultural literature (Al-Jarf, 2016); grammar podcasts for EFL college students (Al-Jarf, 2011b).*
- **Studies where listening or speaking is a partial component:** *Mobile apps in the EFL college classroom (Al-Jarf, 2020f); How EFL, linguistics and translation instructors engage students in distance learning during the Covid-19 second wave (Al-Jarf, 2022c; Al-Jarf, 2021d); Steps in advising translation students to learn English autonomously (Al-Jarf, 2014); multimodal teaching and learning in the EFL college classroom (Al-Jarf, 2024b; Al-Jarf, 2024c); Self-improvement for business, engineering and computer science students (Al-Jarf, 2018c); grade Inflation in language and translation courses at Saudi schools and universities (Al-Jarf,*

2022b); a call for new admission benchmarks at Saudi language schools (Al-Jarf, 2008a); learning English on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2012a); smart phones for smart EFL learning (Al-Jarf, 2010f); assistive technologies for EFL students (Al-Jarf, 2010a); how to learn English autonomously with technology (Al-Jarf, 2020d); issues in using Periscope for live academic lectures during the Covid-19 pandemic (Al-Jarf, 2021e); using social media live video streaming to broadcast lectures to college students (Al-Jarf, 2018d); activities that promote student agency in linguistics in distance learning (Al-Jarf, 2021).

- **Studies that focus on listening and speaking in Arabic (L1):** *Intonational meanings of discourse markers in spoken colloquial Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2024a); Ambiguity in Arabic negative polar questions (Al-Jarf, 2023b); Clipping of borrowings in spoken Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2023c); Clipping in spoken English and Arabic with implications for language learning (Al-Jarf, 2020c).*
- **Studies on AI pronunciation:** *pronunciation errors in AI-narrated Arabic YouTube videos (Al-Jarf 2025c); pronunciation errors in Arabic YouTube videos narrated by AI (Al-Jarf 2025d); and Are Arabic YouTube videos narrated by Artificial Intelligence Suitable for training foreign students in listening skills (Al-Jarf, 2026).*
- **Studies on pronunciation skills:** *absence of vowels in the English spelling of Arabic personal names on social media (Al-Jarf 2023a); English spelling of Arabic compound personal names (Al-Jarf 2023d); faulty consonant gemination in the pronunciation of English biomedical terms (Al-Jarf 2025a); mapping pronunciation errors in English silent consonants (Al-Jarf 2025b); proper noun pronunciation inaccuracies in English by educated Arabic speakers (Al-Jarf 2022d); splitting unsplitable foreign words in casual speech by EFL Arab learners (Al-Jarf 2025e); student-interpreters' foreign proper noun pronunciation errors (Al-Jarf 2022e); Text-to-speech software for promoting EFL freshman students' decoding skills and pronunciation accuracy (Al-Jarf 2022f); vowel pronunciation errors in English biomedical terminology (Al-Jarf 2025f); 15 Problems in English Pronunciation by EFL College Students (Al-Jarf, 2021).*
- **Studies that focus on interpreting such as:** *feasibility of digital multimedia language labs for interpreting instruction as perceived by interpreting instructors in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf 2021c); text-to-speech software as a resource for independent interpreting practice by undergraduate interpreting students (Al-Jarf, 2022g).*
- Spelling studies were excluded from the present review because they focus on orthographic and phonological error analysis and belong to another SR dedicated to spelling (Al-Jarf, 2026y). Although some spelling studies employed a listening–dictation test, their objectives, constructs, and analytical frameworks differ from those of listening and speaking instruction, and therefore fall outside the scope of the current corpus. Examples of these spelling studies are: *EFL freshman students' difficulties with phoneme-grapheme relationships (Al-Jarf 2019); Phonological and Orthographic Problems in EFL College Spellers (Al-Jarf 2008c)*

### 2.3 Corpus Characteristics

The corpus for this SR consists of 31 empirical studies authored by the author between 2005 and 2023, representing the author's research program on EFL listening and speaking instruction. The studies span a wide range of pedagogical, cognitive, and technological dimensions and were conducted in diverse instructional contexts, including face-to-face classrooms, blended learning environments, and fully online settings. To enable systematic synthesis, the corpus was organized into four thematic clusters reflecting the dominant focus of each study. Cluster 1 comprises pedagogical approaches to listening and speaking, including TBLT, multicultural content, participation-based instruction, and global themes. Cluster 2 includes studies that integrate listening and speaking with other linguistic skills such as reading, spelling, decoding, highlighting the cognitive foundations of oral communication. Cluster 3 contains technology-enhanced studies employing mobile applications, TED Talks, podcasts, social media, online videos, and digital multimedia labs to support oral-skill development. Cluster 4 focuses on assessment practices, including learner and instructor preferences, evaluation challenges, and criteria for measuring speaking proficiency. Together, these clusters provide a comprehensive representation of the author's contributions to EFL listening and speaking pedagogy, covering instructional design, cognitive processes, technology integration, and assessment.

It is noteworthy to say that the author taught listening to level 2 students and speaking to level 3 students to a single small section only once in two separate semesters. She was able to conduct multiple studies on spelling errors based on the same student sample in the listening course and the same dictation cloze test given to the students. However, not many listening studies could be conducted because true experimental designs require at least two homogeneous groups taught under comparable conditions. Comparing the researcher's group with another instructor's group was not valid due to differences in teaching style, assessment, and pacing. Additionally, listening and speaking experiments require waiting an entire semester to administer pre and post-tests,

and the time constraints imposed by teaching, administrative duties, and manual literature review made it impossible to run weekly or monthly experiments. The researcher also relied on the technologies available at the time of each study (before 2012). Since she has not been retired and not teaching in recent years, she has not been able to use the latest AI based tools for listening and speaking research.

Vocabulary, grammar, writing and reading courses were taught repeatedly across many semesters and to large numbers of students. For example, grammar was taught to five sections in each semester for four consecutive semesters, with more than 200 students enrolled in each semester. This made it possible to design controlled experiments, assign different groups to different LMS platforms (e.g., Moodle, WebCT, Nicenet), and collect sufficient pre and post test data.

In her Periscope-based studies during the pandemic, experiments were not conducted because the participants consisted of Twitter volunteers, there were many intervening variables due to lack of homogeneity and the inability to administer pre and post-test to the participants. These contextual factors limited experimental and control studies and explain why some COVID-era studies were excluded and why experimental designs were not feasible in listening and speaking.

Furthermore, during the COVID-19 period, several studies were conducted in which the author interviewed EFL, linguistics and translation instructors from numerous Saudi institutions in which participants reported using a variety of modern technologies. However, these studies were excluded from the corpus because they cover a variety of language skills and not listening and speaking per se. Additionally, in the COVID era, Artificial Intelligence tools were not yet available, and therefore none of the participants mentioned AI based applications.

## **2.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Data extraction was conducted manually using a structured template developed specifically for this author-bounded corpus. For each study, key information was recorded, including research purpose, instructional focus, participant characteristics, learning context (face-to-face, blended, or online), technological tools used (when applicable), data collection procedures, and major findings. Additional fields captured each study's alignment with one of the four thematic clusters to ensure consistency in classification. Given the heterogeneity of the studies, spanning pedagogical interventions, cognitive analyses, technology-enhanced instruction, and assessment-focused investigations, a qualitative synthesis approach was employed. Studies were compared within and across clusters to identify convergent themes, developmental patterns, and conceptual linkages. The synthesis traced the evolution of the author's research program, showing how early work on foundational listening and speaking pedagogy expanded into technology-mediated instruction and later into assessment-oriented and cognitively grounded investigations. Rather than aggregating numerical outcomes, the synthesis emphasized conceptual integration, highlighting how the studies collectively contribute to understanding EFL listening and speaking development across instructional, cognitive, and technological dimensions.

## **2.5 PRISMA Flow Description**

Because this review is based on a closed, author-generated corpus, the PRISMA flow (Preferred Reporting Items for SRs and Meta-Analyses) reflects a linear and transparent selection process. A total of 31 studies on listening and speaking were identified from the author's published and conference-based research output. All studies were screened for relevance to listening and/or speaking instruction in EFL contexts. During the eligibility stage, duplicate studies, studies focusing exclusively on pronunciation, Arabic linguistics, AI-generated speech errors, orthographic issues, or discourse-level phenomena were excluded, as they did not align with the review's focus on listening and speaking pedagogy. This resulted in the exclusion of 15 pronunciation-related studies, which were documented separately. The final corpus included 31 studies, all of which met the inclusion criteria and were assigned to one of the four thematic clusters. No additional studies were added or removed during the synthesis stage, as the corpus is fixed and bounded by the author's research trajectory.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1 Study Characteristics**

#### **Cluster 1 — Listening and Speaking Teaching Approaches**

##### **1) Enhancing Reading and Speaking Skills in EFL Through Multicultural Children's Short Stories (Al-Jarf 2015c)**

This study presents a comprehensive model for integrating multicultural children's short stories into EFL reading and speaking courses to enhance students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. It explains the value of multicultural literature, outlines criteria for selecting appropriate stories, and provides examples of accessible online sources. The proposed instructional strategy includes pre-reading, reading, and post-reading phases in which students read stories, analyze elements such as theme, characters, plot, and cultural features, and engage in oral presentations, dramatizations, and online discussions. The model emphasizes the

instructor's role as a facilitator and recommends using pre- and post-tests, along with questionnaires, to measure gains in reading, speaking, and multicultural awareness. Prior research cited in the study shows that supplementary story reading and online cultural activities significantly improve students' comprehension and cultural understanding.

### **2) *Developing Students' Global Awareness in EFL Reading and Speaking (Al-Jarf 2022a)***

Results of a questionnaire with a sample of EFL instructors at some Saudi universities showed that the instructors just follow the assigned textbook and do not integrate any global themes in their EFL courses. Therefore, this study aims to propose a model for integrating global themes in reading and speaking instruction. The model proposes four areas of global themes: (i) global systems (political, economic, cultural, ideological, ecological, health, social, technological, educational, ideological and judicial); (ii) diverse human values such as conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork; (iii) current global issues (terrorism, fundamentalism, violence...etc); and (iv) the history of contact and interdependence among peoples. It also proposes the integration of four types of goals: knowledge, skills, values and participation goals. Examples of concepts, and types of objectives related to the global themes, resources for locating global themes; stages of teaching the global themes and instructor's role are provided.

### **3) *Integrating Global Themes in EFL Speaking Instruction (Al-Jarf 2008b)***

The study proposes a model for integrating global cultural themes into EFL speaking instruction to help students develop socio-cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and a deeper understanding of global interdependence. Drawing on frameworks by Kniep, Johnson, Collins, Czarra, and Smith, the model incorporates global systems, shared human values, current world issues, and historical interconnections into speaking tasks. A wide range of cultural themes—such as literature, art, celebrations, stereotypes, cultural conflicts, gender norms, media, proverbs, folk traditions, and world history—are used to enrich oral activities. The model emphasizes knowledge, skills, values, and participation goals, encouraging students to analyze information, think critically, communicate effectively, and engage with global perspectives. Instruction relies on theme-based speaking tasks, group discussions, role-playing, project-based learning, videoconferencing, and digital resources such as online newspapers, videos, and cultural media. The study concludes that selecting culturally relevant sub-themes and adjusting task complexity to students' proficiency levels can significantly enhance the effectiveness and engagement of EFL speaking instruction.

### **4) *Integration of Participation Goals in Speaking and Writing Activities (Al-Jarf 2010e)***

This study addresses challenges that students have as reluctance to speak, difficulty generating ideas, and limited ability to express themselves clearly in both oral and written tasks. Many students find speaking and writing as burdensome. Teachers often select abstract or unengaging topics that fail to stimulate meaningful communication. To overcome these barriers, the study proposes the integration of participation goals, such as describing social issues, diagnosing problems, and proposing solutions, into speaking and writing instruction. These goals, grounded in real-world social, educational, and global issues, make tasks more relevant and cognitively engaging, encouraging students to connect language use with authentic contexts. The instructional model consists of pre-task preparation, an in-class task cycle, and a post-task reflection phase. Students prepare at home by exploring assigned topics, gathering information, and rehearsing in groups. In class, they receive vocabulary and structural support, work collaboratively, and perform tasks with guided encouragement to reduce anxiety and build confidence. Feedback focuses on fluency and expression rather than exhaustive error correction. Findings show that integrating participation goals significantly improved students' confidence, fluency, idea generation, and engagement. Learners reported greater enjoyment, increased autonomy, richer vocabulary, and more active participation in real-life communicative tasks. The study concludes that selecting relevant themes and aligning task complexity with proficiency levels can transform speaking and writing classes into meaningful, motivating, and highly productive learning experiences.

### **5) *From Reticence to Fluency: The Effect of TBLT on Students' Speaking Ability (Al-Jarf 2007)***

Fifty-two EFL students were enrolled in a two-hour Speaking III course. At first, the students were shy, refused to talk, could not generate ideas and produce correct sentences. Three months later, students' speaking ability had significantly improved. They could speak fluently using correct grammar and pronunciation and could easily generate ideas. Improvement was due to efficient task-based instruction. Each week a variety of small speaking tasks were practiced individually, in pairs and in small groups. The students had to prepare for the following week's tasks. The task objective was stated. Each class, a public speaking tip, vocabulary items, a function, or a grammatical structure were given and explained briefly. Then the students had to rearrange the chairs and practice each task. I went around, listened, gave feedback, helped and encouraged. Students were encouraged to speak and not to worry about mistakes. To help students speak in front of class, I would assure them they could do it, prompt them using questions or keywords and praise their performance. Quizzes several tasks were conducted in the language lab. Students were given time to think, plan responses and record their responses. I listened to the tapes, wrote comments and words of encouragement for each student. T-test results of pre- and posttests, and descriptive statistics of the quizzes are provided.

### **6) *Making Connections in Listening Instruction (Al-Jarf, 2009b)***

This study investigates the listening challenges that EFL freshman students at COLT had, such as struggling with long lectures, fast speech, contextual inference, and auditory discrimination. The students had listening comprehension difficulties, such as identifying

main ideas, details, organizational structure, and contextual meaning, and phonological processing difficulties, including minimal pairs, phoneme discrimination, stress, intonation, contractions, elision, flaps, and differences between American and British pronunciation. To address these gaps, the course integrated comprehension-based strategies (main ideas, supporting details, text structure, anaphoric reference), activation of prior knowledge, prediction skills, and explicit instruction on the organizational structure of spoken discourse. Students are trained in note-taking, mnemonic devices, and visualization, alongside systematic auditory discrimination practice using allophones, homophones, variant pronunciations, stress rules, and connected-speech phenomena. Daily in-class exercises and extensive out-of-class listening (radio, TV news, online labs, MP3 lessons) reinforced these skills. Assessment required the students to apply both comprehension and discrimination strategies, demonstrating that connecting linguistic skills and explicitly teaching listening processes can significantly enhance students' ability to understand spoken English and cope with academic listening demands.

## **Cluster 2 — Combining listening and speaking with other skills**

### **7) Effect of Background Knowledge on Auditory Comprehension in Interpreting Courses (Al-Jarf 2018a)**

The study investigates how background knowledge and unfamiliar vocabulary affect Saudi EFL interpreting students' auditory discrimination and comprehension of media reports in English and Arabic. Analysis of an interpreting test with 74 senior translation majors revealed that students struggled to discriminate phonemes and interpret unfamiliar foreign proper nouns—such as names of countries, cities, politicians, organizations, acronyms, chemicals, and diseases—leading to numerous auditory and semantic errors. Error patterns showed that students often produced nonsense words, relied on sound analogy, used literal translation, overgeneralized Arabic terms, or selected incorrect meanings of polysemous words. Questionnaire-interviews confirmed that these difficulties stemmed from limited world knowledge, inadequate L1 and L2 vocabulary, and unfamiliarity with political and institutional terminology across countries. A significant correlation was found between vocabulary knowledge and interpreting accuracy. The study concludes that enriching students' background knowledge, through exposure to world news, note-taking, and summarizing activities—can significantly improve their auditory discrimination and interpreting performance.

### **8) The Relationship Among Spelling, Listening, and Decoding Skills in EFL Freshman Students Skills (Al-Jarf 2005b)**

This study examined whether EFL freshman students' spelling ability is related to their listening comprehension and decoding skills. Thirty-six Saudi freshmen students completed a dictation test, a listening comprehension test, and a decoding test. Results showed that students misspelled an average of 41.5% of the dictation words, answered 49.5% of the listening items correctly, and achieved 52% accuracy in decoding, indicating overall low performance in all three skills. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences among the mean scores of spellings, listening, and decoding. Correlation analysis showed strong negative correlations between spelling errors and both listening comprehension ( $r = -0.75$ ) and decoding ( $r = -0.73$ ), and a positive correlation between listening and decoding ( $r = 0.65$ ). These findings indicate that good spelling ability is associated with strong listening comprehension and decoding skills, and that weaknesses in auditory processing and sound-symbol association contribute directly to spelling difficulties.

### **9) The Effects of Listening Comprehension And Decoding Skills on Spelling Achievement of EFL Freshman Students (Al-Jarf, 2005a)**

This study investigated the extent to which listening comprehension and decoding skills influence spelling achievement, and whether good and poor spellers differ significantly in these skills. Using the same cohort of 36 Saudi freshmen, the study compared the spelling, listening, and oral-reading performance of good and poor spellers. Significant differences were found between the three skills, and between good and poor spellers across all measures. Good spellers consistently outperformed poor spellers in listening comprehension and decoding, confirming that strong auditory discrimination and accurate sound-symbol mapping contribute to better spelling performance. The findings demonstrate that spelling, listening, and decoding are interdependent skills, and that weaknesses in **phonological awareness, auditory discrimination, and graphemic processing** underlie poor spelling achievement. The study concludes that improving listening and decoding instruction can directly enhance spelling accuracy.

### **10) Correlates of The Interpreting Skill (Al-Jarf, 2007)**

The study investigated whether interpreting proficiency is associated with listening comprehension and speaking ability among 36 Arabic-speaking translation majors enrolled in their first liaison interpreting course at COLT. Using end-of-semester achievement scores from three courses taught by the same instructor—listening, speaking, and interpreting—the analysis showed that students' performance clustered closely across the three skills, with typical scores in the mid-70s. Strong, significant correlations emerged between interpreting and speaking ( $r = .80$ ) and between interpreting and listening ( $r = .49$ ), and ANOVA results indicated no significant differences among the mean scores of the three skills. These findings suggest that students with strong listening and speaking abilities tend to perform better in interpreting, while weaker oral skills are associated with weaker interpreting performance. The study concludes that improving students' listening and speaking proficiency is likely to enhance their interpreting skills.

### **Cluster 3 — Technologies used in Listening & Speaking development**

#### **Mobile Apps**

##### **11) Mobile Audiobooks, Listening Comprehension and EFL College Students (Al-Jarf 2021f)**

##### **12) Enhancing EFL Students' Listening Comprehension with Mobile Audiobooks (Al-Jarf 2015b)**

The two studies examine how integrating mobile audiobooks can enhance EFL students' listening comprehension. In both studies, students downloaded graded audiobooks—ranging from children's stories to simplified classics and authentic texts—selected according to their proficiency level. Instruction involved pre-listening questions that guided learners to identify plot, setting, characters, and themes, followed by online discussion tasks in which students posted responses, summaries, and peer comments. Additional in-class activities included retelling and analyzing story elements. Across both studies, the use of mobile audiobooks led to noticeable improvements in listening comprehension, vocabulary development, and literary analysis skills, while also increasing student engagement and participation in listening activities.

##### **13) Improving Freshman Students' Oral English with MP3 Lessons (Al-Jarf 2009a)**

Freshman students at COLT face challenges with fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary retrieval, and confidence when speaking English. Traditional classroom time is often insufficient for sustained oral practice, and many students lack opportunities to interact with English speakers or engage in meaningful communicative tasks. To address these challenges, the study introduces MP3 lessons as an accessible, flexible, and self-paced tool that students can use anytime and anywhere. MP3 lessons typically include dialogues, vocabulary lists, pronunciation models, and short communicative tasks designed to reinforce listening comprehension and spoken production. By repeatedly listening to native-speaker input and practicing aloud, students can internalize natural rhythm, intonation, and phrasing while expanding their lexical and structural repertoire. MP3-based learning helps students control the pace of practice, replay difficult segments, and focus on specific areas such as pronunciation, stress, or conversational routines. MP3 lessons also reduce anxiety by allowing learners to practice privately before speaking in class. The study emphasizes that consistent exposure to authentic spoken English through portable audio materials leads to noticeable improvements in fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Students reported feeling more comfortable speaking in class, better able to imitate native-like pronunciation, and more capable of understanding spoken English in real-life contexts. The study concludes that integrating MP3 lessons into EFL programs can significantly enhance oral English development, especially for learners who need additional practice beyond classroom instruction.

##### **14) Mobile Technology and Student Autonomy in Oral Skill Acquisition (Al-Jarf 2012b)**

##### **15) Developing EFL Students Listening and Speaking Skills with TalkEnglish (Al-Jarf 2015a)**

These two studies demonstrate the effectiveness of mobile-assisted self-study programs in improving EFL freshmen's listening and speaking proficiency. Across the studies, students used the TalkEnglish lesson series to practice dialogues, pronunciation models, vocabulary, and short communicative tasks outside the classroom, allowing them to control pace, replay difficult segments, and practice privately to reduce anxiety. The findings showed that mobile-based self-study produced significantly greater gains than textbook-only instruction: oral fluency increased by 32% in the experimental group compared to 12% in the control group, listening comprehension rose from 41% to 68% versus 40% to 52%, and auditory discrimination accuracy improved by 29% compared to 10%. Learner autonomy also increased substantially, with self-reported autonomy scores rising from 2.4 to 4.1, and usage logs showing an average of 110 minutes of independent practice per week. Students completed 90 lessons and listened to 900 audio files, with 78% reporting greater willingness to practice English outside class and 72% noting increased confidence in speaking. Together, the studies provide strong evidence that mobile-assisted self-study graded listening and speaking lessons significantly enhance oral fluency, listening comprehension, pronunciation accuracy, auditory discrimination, and learner autonomy, outperforming traditional classroom-only instruction across all measured variables.

#### **TED Talks**

##### **16) TED Talks as a Listening Resource in EFL College Classrooms (Al-Jarf 2021g)**

##### **17) Integrating TED Lectures in EFL College Listening Practice (Al-Jarf 2020e)**

Both studies present a comprehensive instructional model for integrating TED Talks into EFL college listening courses. The model explains where instructors can locate suitable TED Talks, outlines criteria for selecting appropriate lectures (topic familiarity, linguistic difficulty, length, speaker speed and accent), and describes a structured sequence of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Students watch TED Talks individually or in groups, take notes, answer guiding questions, and discuss their responses, while the instructor provides scaffolding, feedback, and encouragement. TED Talks offer authentic themes, diverse speakers, and rich audiovisual input, making listening classes more engaging and reducing preparation time for instructors. While the 2021 study is descriptive, the 2020 study includes an experimental component showing significant improvement in students' listening ability after systematic TED-based practice. Together, the two studies demonstrate the pedagogical value of TED Talks as an effective resource for enhancing EFL listening skills.

## **Podcasts**

### **18) Enhancing Freshman Students' Listening Skills with News Podcasts (Al-Jarf, 2010c)**

This study investigated the effectiveness of news podcasts in improving freshman EFL students' listening skills. Students were divided into high-ability (control) and low-ability (experimental) groups based on a listening pretest. Both groups received the same textbook-based instruction, but the experimental group additionally downloaded graded CNN news podcasts to their mobile phones and completed auditory discrimination and listening-comprehension tasks designed for each podcast. Students could listen repeatedly outside class but completed the exercises in class. ANCOVA results showed significant gains for the experimental group, with improvements in auditory discrimination, listening comprehension, vocabulary, and world knowledge. Progress was gradual, with notable improvement after eight to twelve weeks. The study demonstrates that podcast-based mobile supplementation can effectively support struggling listeners in EFL contexts.

### **19) Integrating Cultural Podcasts in EFL College Classrooms (Al-Jarf 2011c)**

This study investigates the effectiveness of integrating British and American cultural podcasts into culture courses offered within the translation program at COLT in enhancing students' awareness and knowledge of British and American cultures and their differences from Arabic culture. The integration of podcasts was designed as a supplement to in-class instruction, providing students with authentic, real-life cultural input beyond textbook materials. Cultural podcasts used covered a wide range of topics, including customs, traditions, holidays, architecture, art, literature, music, museums, folk tales, sports, weddings, food, recreation, religion, transportation, education, health, politics, and economics. Students were able to download these podcasts to their mobile phones, BlackBerry devices, iPods, or MP3 players. The study emphasized the accessibility and authenticity of podcasts, noting that they offer diverse formats, monologues, dialogues, interviews, and music, and allow learners to listen anytime, anywhere, and as many times as needed. The materials were sourced from reputable websites such as National Geographic, Walks of a Lifetime, British Council's UK Culture series, and various American culture podcast repositories.

### **20) Grammar Podcasts For ESL College Students in Distance Learning (Al-Jarf, 2023e)**

The study investigated the effectiveness of integrating grammar podcasts into the Grammar 3 course for sophomore students at COLT. Two groups (experimental and control) received the same in-class instruction based on Mosaic 2 by Werner and Wilson, and both were pretested, showing no significant differences in grammatical knowledge. Students in both groups demonstrated substantial weaknesses in basic English grammar. In addition to classroom instruction, the experimental group used a BBC grammar podcast, which the instructor introduced and demonstrated, including how to download episodes to smartphones or MP3 players. Students independently listened to weekly podcast episodes, kept logs of their listening time, and accessed downloadable MP3 lessons featuring expert commentary, grammar explanations, interactive quizzes, and practice activities. At the end of the semester, both groups were posttested. Results showed that students in the experimental group made higher gains in grammatical knowledge than those in the control group, indicating the positive impact of supplementing textbook-based instruction with grammar podcasts. Students expressed positive attitudes toward the podcasts, describing them as enjoyable and helpful, though improvement was gradual. The study recommended aligning podcast content with course topics and ensuring that the linguistic difficulty of the podcasts matches students' proficiency levels.

## **Online Tasks & Zoom**

### **21) Engaging and Motivating Students with Online Listening Tasks (Al-Jarf, 2013)**

The study identifies different types of online listening tasks that can be used as a supplement to in-class instruction, including those that target specific listening skills, provide free listening practice, offer extension activities, require student comments, assess pre- and post-listening performance, support error correction, provide remedial practice, develop self-improvement and study skills, involve electronic searching, and promote reflective thinking. Additionally, the online listening tasks should increase students' awareness and promote noticing, focus on metalanguage, contextualize instruction, accommodate different learning styles, integrate exchanges between learners, and provide ongoing training and technical support. Online tasks selected should match students' proficiency level, needs and interests. They can be performed individually, in pairs or in small groups, synchronously or asynchronously, independently, interactively or collaboratively. They can be performed in 3 phases: a pre-task phase, a task cycle and a post-task phase. The teacher serves as a facilitator.

### **22) EFL Speaking Practice in Distance Learning During The Coronavirus Pandemic 2020-2021 (Al-Jarf 2021b)**

This study explores the types of online speaking activities that a sample of college instructors at some language and translation departments in Saudi Arabia are using in distance education and how they engage students online in the absence of face-to-face activities, interaction, and communication. Survey results showed that EFL college instructors are using a variety of online speaking activities such as: assigning a topic which the students research and prepare at home and then give an online oral presentation about it online through the platform; using online debates about some issues; answering problem-solving questions; student-

created podcast on a topic of their choice and publishing them in a Speaking Center on Twitter; combining listening and speaking activities; using Vicaroo, a free online audio recording creator to record conversations and presentations; using the Kahoot app and others. The students found the online speaking activities useful, helpful, fun and beneficial. Their speaking skills improved a lot as a result of preparing and rehearsing at home and the feedback given to them by their instructors. Although at the beginning of the semester, many students were shy, nervous and could not speak online, but at the end of the semester, they gained self-confidence because of practicing speaking every week, and instructors' encouragement, and tolerance of errors. The online speaking sessions reduced their stress. The instructors had a positive attitude and gained more experience in handling the different tools in Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams and/or Blackboard. There was more engagement in the activities, interaction and communication among the students and their instructors.

### **Social Media**

#### **23) Building Cultural Bridges Through Social Media (Al-Jarf 2020a)**

An English teacher uses Skype to connect his high school students in an Indian village with international teachers to help them interact and converse with them in English. Each international teacher interacts with the students in English once for 40 minutes. The teacher does that daily, and each day an international guest teacher is from a different country. Results of this kind of intercultural exchange showed many benefits for the students: Listening and speaking skill enhancement, getting used to different native and non-native accents, improved pronunciation, and learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures. The students also learned names of countries, their location, flags, currency, cities, people, and exchanged information and pictures about the local and target cultures. They learned about the foreign country's educational system, history, antiquities, food, art, traditions, and costumes. Shortcomings of such intercultural exchange and suggestions for improvement are given.

### **Online Videos**

#### **24) Enhancing EFL Students' Oral Skills with Online Videos (Al-Jarf, 2010d)**

The study demonstrates how supplementary online videos can be integrated into EFL listening and speaking instruction to address students' phonological, listening-comprehension, and speaking difficulties. It highlights common learner problems, such as failure to discriminate phonemes, recognize intonation and connected-speech features, identify main ideas and details, or generate and express ideas clearly, and explains how online videos provide rich, authentic input that supports these skills. The study outlines the advantages of using online videos, including their accessibility, variety of themes and difficulty levels, multimodal features, cultural content, and flexibility for repeated viewing. A wide range of video sources and genres is provided, along with clear criteria for selecting appropriate materials. The instructional model consists of three phases: pre-viewing (introducing the video, previewing vocabulary, setting goals, and giving guiding questions), while-viewing (note-taking, identifying key information, answering questions), and post-viewing (discussion, summarization, mind-mapping, reflection, and feedback). Recommendations emphasize scaffolding, small-group interaction, role-play, encouragement, selective error correction, and confidence-building strategies to enhance students' oral performance.

#### **25) Youtube Videos as a Resource For Self-Regulated Pronunciation Practice (Al-Jarf 2022h)**

#### **26) Youtube Pronunciation Videos in The EFL Classroom (Al-Jarf 2013c)**

#### **27) Improving Students' Pronunciation with Online Videos (Al-Jarf, 2013a)**

The three studies present a unified instructional model for integrating online and YouTube pronunciation videos into EFL pronunciation instruction. All studies highlight Saudi EFL learners' persistent difficulties with English vowel and consonant sounds, grapheme-phoneme associations, homophones and homographs, stress, intonation, pause, and juncture. To address these challenges, the studies outline criteria for selecting effective pronunciation videos, such as topic familiarity, linguistic difficulty, video length, speaker speed, and student proficiency level, and provide examples of online sources where such videos can be located. The instructional framework follows a consistent three-phase sequence: pre-viewing (introducing the video, previewing vocabulary, setting goals), while-viewing (listening, repeating, identifying target sounds, answering guiding questions), and post-viewing (practice, correction, reflection, and feedback). The studies demonstrate that online pronunciation videos offer rich auditory and visual input, multiple models of native speech, flexible access, and opportunities for self-regulated practice. They also identify a wide range of pronunciation subskills that can be developed, including vowel and consonant contrasts, plural and past-tense endings, contractions, minimal pairs, rhythm, and word stress. Across the three studies, students reported positive attitudes toward video-based pronunciation practice, noting increased motivation, improved accuracy, and greater confidence.

#### **Cluster 4 — Listening and Speaking Assessment**

##### **28) EFL Female College Students and Instructors' Preferred Method of Speaking Assessment: A Perspective From Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf 2021a)**

The study examines students' and instructors' preferences for two speaking assessment methods used at COLT: face-to-face testing and language-lab testing, and the reasons behind these preferences. Face-to-face assessment is the most common method, where students are tested individually for 5-10 minutes. They draw a topic from a basket, and engage in a short conversation or interview with the instructor, with testing sessions running continuously from morning until early afternoon. In the lab-testing method, all students take the test simultaneously; they read printed questions, take brief notes, and record their responses on MP3 players within an hour. The findings showed that most students prefer lab testing because the questions are more comprehensive, the conditions are uniform, they are less anxious, and if they miss a question, they do not lose a lot of marks. Unlike students, instructors prefer face-to-face assessment because questions are easier, cover only part of the material, and often result in all students passing the course, while students feel more anxious. Comparisons of test scores indicate that lab speaking tests are more reliable, more valid, and have stronger discriminating power between students who have mastered and those who have not mastered the speaking skills. The study concludes with recommendations for improving speaking assessment practices.

##### **29) Issues In Assessing The Speaking Skill in EFL (Al-Jarf 2015d)**

The study discusses key considerations in administering and scoring speaking tests in both language-lab and face-to-face settings. Test instructions must clearly specify the required details, task type, and linguistic features (sentence structure, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and fluency). Test topics should be comparable to, but not identical with, classroom practice topics. In lab testing, students receive printed questions and parallel versions. Students write their names on the question paper, practice using their MP3 players at home, test the device at the beginning of the session, read the questions, think about them, and then record their responses in any order while stating the question number. Students are not allowed to write answers and read them aloud, nor to re-listen, erase, or re-record their responses. During scoring, the teacher listens to the recordings and takes notes directly on the student's question paper, noting strengths and weaknesses. In face-to-face exams, students are tested individually. A student draws printed questions from a basket; each student completes several speaking tasks within 10–15 minutes. The speaking scoring rubric consists of three skills (idea generation or content, grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation and fluency), and three performance levels (excellent, average, poor), with descriptors and mark ranges specified for each level.

##### **30) Creating and Sharing Listening iRubrics (Al-Jarf, 2010b)**

##### **31) Creating and Sharing Speaking iRubrics (Al-Jarf, 2011a)**

*These studies present iRubric as a comprehensive digital tool for designing analytic scoring rubrics for listening and speaking courses by defining the skills, subskills, performance levels, and mark allocations for each course. Instructors can attach rubrics to coursework so that the students clearly understand expectations and can use them for self-assessment. The studies demonstrate how teachers can build, edit, apply, and share rubrics through the RCampus LMS, with scores automatically calculated and posted to the gradebook. They highlight the advantages of iRubric, including clearer performance criteria, alignment with learning outcomes, time-saving scoring procedures, secure access to scored rubrics, and opportunities for collaborative assessment through the RCampus rubric gallery. Collectively, these articles consider iRubric as an effective tool for improving the reliability and validity of EFL skill assessment.*

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings across the 31 studies in the corpus reveal a coherent and evolving research trajectory that addresses the multifaceted nature of EFL listening and speaking development. Although the studies span different instructional approaches, technological tools, cognitive processes, and assessment practices, they collectively demonstrate that oral-skills proficiency improves most effectively when instruction is contextualized, cognitively supported, and supplemented with autonomous, technology-enhanced practice. The four clusters, pedagogical approaches, skill integration, technology-enhanced learning, and assessment, intersect in ways that highlight the importance of meaningful input, structured scaffolding, and learner agency. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of how EFL learners develop listening and speaking skills in Saudi higher education contexts.

##### **4.1 Meta-Conclusion**

Across the corpus, a clear meta-conclusion emerges: EFL listening and speaking proficiency develops most effectively when instruction combines meaningful content, explicit strategy training, and opportunities for autonomous practice. Studies in Cluster 1 show that pedagogical models grounded in global themes, multicultural content, participation goals, and task-based learning significantly increase students' engagement, confidence, and communicative fluency. Cluster 2 demonstrates that listening and speaking cannot be isolated from cognitive processes such as decoding, phoneme-grapheme mapping, prior knowledge activation, and auditory discrimination; weaknesses in these areas directly constrain oral proficiency. Cluster 3 provides strong empirical evidence that mobile-assisted self-study—whether through audiobooks, MP3 lessons, podcasts, or apps—produces substantial gains in fluency, listening comprehension, pronunciation accuracy, and learner autonomy, outperforming textbook-only

instruction. Finally, Cluster 4 highlights the need for assessment practices that reflect authentic communicative performance rather than narrow, decontextualized tasks. Taken together, the studies confirm that effective oral-skills development requires a holistic ecosystem that integrates pedagogy, cognition, technology, and assessment.

#### **4.2 Meta-Interpretation**

Several underlying mechanisms explain why the listening and speaking instructional strategies were effective. First, meaningful input, whether through global themes, multicultural children's stories, TED Talks, online videos or authentic podcasts, creates cognitive and emotional relevance, which increases attention, retention, and willingness to communicate. Second, explicit strategy instruction (e.g., prediction, note-taking, discourse awareness, auditory discrimination) equips learners with tools to process complex spoken input, bridging the gap between textbook content and real-world listening demands. Third, repetition and self-paced practice, especially in mobile-based studies, allow learners to internalize rhythm, intonation, and lexical patterns through extensive exposure, something classroom time alone cannot provide. Fourth, learner autonomy emerges as a critical factor: when students control their practice time, materials, and pace, they demonstrate higher motivation, improved confidence, and sustained engagement. Finally, the corpus suggests that skill interdependence is central to oral proficiency: listening, speaking, spelling, decoding, and phonological awareness reinforce each other, and weaknesses in one domain can impede progress in others. Thus, the effectiveness of the interventions lies not only in the tools used but in how they activate cognitive, affective, and metacognitive processes simultaneously.

#### **4.3 Cross-Cutting Insights**

Several cross-cutting insights emerge when synthesizing findings across the clusters. First, authenticity, in content, tasks, and assessment, consistently enhances learning outcomes, whether through global themes, participation goals, real-life podcasts, TED Talks, or MP3 dialogues. Second, scaffolding is a universal requirement: students benefit from pre-questions, structured tasks, and guided reflection regardless of the instructional medium. Third, technology acts as an equalizer, providing low-anxiety, high-exposure environments that compensate for limited real-world interaction with English speakers. Fourth, prior knowledge and world knowledge repeatedly appear as predictors of listening comprehension, suggesting that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient for successful oral communication. Fifth, phonological processing skills, auditory discrimination, decoding, stress, and intonation, are foundational across all clusters, even when not explicitly targeted. Sixth, motivation and affective factors (confidence, anxiety reduction, enjoyment) consistently mediate learning outcomes, indicating that emotional engagement is as important as cognitive engagement. Finally, the corpus reveals a strong alignment between instructional innovation and learner gains: whenever instruction moves beyond textbook-bound routines toward richer, more interactive, and more autonomous learning environments, students demonstrate measurable improvements in listening and speaking proficiency.

#### **4.4 Implications**

Findings across the four clusters yield several important implications for EFL listening and speaking instruction in higher education. The studies demonstrate that oral-skills development is most effective when instruction integrates meaningful content, explicit cognitive support, and opportunities for autonomous, technology-enhanced practice. These implications extend to pedagogy, curriculum design, technology integration, and assessment, offering a comprehensive framework for improving EFL listening and speaking outcomes as follows:

The corpus shows that traditional textbook-bound instruction is insufficient for developing higher-order listening and speaking skills. Studies in Cluster 1 indicate that integrating global themes, multicultural content, participation goals, and task-based learning increases engagement, confidence, and communicative fluency. This suggests that EFL instructors should adopt pedagogical models that foreground relevance, authenticity, and student agency. Instruction should incorporate pre-task preparation, structured in-class cycles, and reflective post-task phases to scaffold idea generation, reduce anxiety, and promote sustained oral participation.

Findings from Cluster 2 highlight the interdependence of listening, speaking, decoding and spelling or interpreting. Weaknesses in auditory discrimination, phoneme-grapheme mapping, and prior knowledge directly hinder oral comprehension. Therefore, curricula should integrate cross-skill instruction rather than treating listening and speaking as isolated skills. Courses should include explicit training in decoding, stress, intonation, minimal pairs, and discourse structure, alongside activities that activate background knowledge and world knowledge. This alignment ensures that students develop the cognitive foundations necessary for advanced oral proficiency.

Studies in Cluster 3 provide strong evidence that mobile-assisted self-study, through audiobooks, MP3 lessons, TalkEnglish, TED Talks, and podcasts, significantly enhances listening comprehension, oral fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and learner autonomy. These tools compensate for limited exposure to English outside the classroom and allow students to practice at their own pace. The implications are clear: EFL programs should formally integrate mobile-based practice into course requirements, provide

curated lists of recommended apps and platforms, and train students in how to use these tools strategically. Technology should not be treated as an optional enrichment but as a core component of oral-skills development.

Findings from Cluster 4 reveal that students and instructors prefer assessment methods that reflect authentic communicative performance rather than narrow, decontextualized tasks. This suggests the need for performance-based assessment that evaluates fluency, interaction, pronunciation, and comprehension in realistic contexts. Listening assessments should incorporate authentic input such as TED Talks, podcasts, and extended discourse, while speaking assessments should include interviews, presentations, and task-based performance. Assessment criteria should also account for cognitive processes such as decoding, inference, and discourse awareness, which the corpus shows to be central to oral proficiency.

The corpus consistently shows that learner autonomy is a major predictor of oral-skills improvement. Mobile-based studies demonstrate that when students control their practice time, materials, and pace, they achieve higher gains in fluency, comprehension, and confidence. Programs should therefore cultivate **autonomous learning habits** through structured self-study plans, reflective logs, and guided use of digital tools.

#### **4.5 Positioning This SR Within the Global Listening and Speaking SRs**

This systematic review contributes to the global body of listening and speaking SRs by offering a uniquely comprehensive, author-bounded corpus that spans pedagogical models, cognitive processes, and technology-enhanced interventions within EFL higher education. Unlike many international SRs that focus narrowly on a single intervention—such as podcasts, mobile apps, TBLT, or role play—this SR synthesizes four interconnected domains: instructional approaches, cross-skill integration, mobile-assisted learning, and assessment practices. In doing so, it bridges gaps in the global literature, which often treats listening and speaking as isolated skills or examines them through short-term experimental designs. The present SR aligns with global findings emphasizing authentic input, strategy training, and learner autonomy, yet extends them by demonstrating how these principles operate across 31 longitudinal, context-rich studies conducted in a Saudi EFL environment. It also contributes a rare synthesis of phonological processing, participation-based pedagogy, global-themes instruction, and mobile self-study, offering a multidimensional perspective that is largely absent from existing international reviews. Thus, this SR positions itself as a significant regional and global contribution that integrates pedagogical, cognitive, and technological strands into a unified framework for understanding EFL listening and speaking development.

#### **4.6 How This SR Connects to the Author's Previous SRs**

This SR builds directly on the author's earlier SRs in vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and instructional media by extending the same analytical lens to the domain of listening and speaking. The author's previous SRs established a pattern of examining how instructional design, cognitive processing, and technology shape language-skill development. The present SR continues this trajectory by synthesizing studies that explore global themes, multicultural content, decoding, auditory comprehension, and mobile-assisted learning—areas that parallel earlier findings in spelling, vocabulary, reading, writing and grammar SRs. Moreover, the author's prior SRs emphasized the importance of scaffolding, learner autonomy, and multimodal input; these themes reappear strongly in the current review, particularly in the clusters on technology-enhanced learning and cross-skill integration. By situating listening and speaking within the same broader research program, this SR demonstrates the coherence and continuity of the author's scholarly agenda, showing how insights from earlier SRs on spelling, vocabulary, and grammar inform a deeper understanding of oral-skills development. In this way, the SR not only synthesizes a large corpus but also consolidates the author's long-term contribution to EFL pedagogy, cognitive processing, and technology integration.

#### **4.7 Limitations**

Although this SR synthesizes a substantial, coherent, and longitudinal body of research, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the review is author-bounded, drawing exclusively on studies conducted by the same researcher within comparable Saudi EFL contexts. While this enhances internal consistency and methodological alignment across studies, it limits the generalizability of the findings to broader international settings.

Second, most studies employ quasi-experimental designs, classroom-based interventions, or descriptive analyses, with limited use of randomized controlled trials. This methodological pattern reflects the author's teaching context: listening and speaking were taught only once to a single small section in two separate semesters, resulting in a naturally smaller number of empirical studies in these two skills. In contrast, grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing were taught repeatedly across multiple semesters and to large cohorts—sometimes exceeding 200 students—allowing for more extensive experimental designs, including assigning different groups to different learning management systems (e.g., Moodle, WebCT, Nicenet). Consequently, the listening and speaking corpus is narrower in scope and reflects the limited number of cohorts taught in those skills.

Third, because the author taught listening and speaking only once for one semester each, the corpus does not include studies on constructs such as flipped learning, metacognitive instruction, motivational factors, shadowing, microlearning, board-game-based learning, or anxiety-related interventions. These approaches were not part of the instructional environment at the time the studies were conducted.

Similarly, the corpus does not include research using VoiceThread, ELSA Speak, AI-driven tools, chatbots, Google Assistant, or PowToon. The author relied on the technologies available during the period of data collection, prior to the emergence of artificial-intelligence-based applications. Many of these newer techniques appeared in later research (post-2020) or were applied in broader multi-skill contexts rather than in targeted listening and speaking instruction. Their absence therefore reflects historical and pedagogical boundaries rather than methodological shortcomings.

Finally, although several modern techniques—such as flipped learning, metacognitive instruction, microlearning, and motivational or anxiety-related approaches—were mentioned by instructors during the author’s COVID-19 interview studies, these methods were not part of the researcher’s own instructional practice prior to 2015. The author employed a range of pedagogical techniques during her teaching years, including drama, role-play, storytelling, debate, task-based learning, project-based learning, and contextual teaching, and used shadowing specifically in interpreting courses. However, these techniques served as classroom practices rather than the focus of empirical studies in listening and speaking. Thus, the absence of post-2020 technologies and contemporary pedagogical trends in the corpus reflects the historical instructional context rather than a limitation of the SR design.

### **5. Recommendations & Directions for Future Research**

The findings across the four clusters point to several recommendations for strengthening EFL listening and speaking instruction and guiding future research. Pedagogically, instructors should integrate authentic content, including global themes, multicultural narratives, TED Talks, and podcasts, to enhance relevance, engagement, and exposure to real-world discourse. Curricula should embed cross-skill instruction that links listening, speaking, decoding, spelling, and phonological awareness, given their demonstrated interdependence. Technology should function as a core component of oral-skills development, with structured integration of mobile audiobooks, TalkEnglish, and podcasts to support autonomous, self-paced practice. Assessment practices should shift toward performance-based evaluation that captures fluency, interaction, and comprehension in authentic communicative contexts.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs that track oral-skills development across multiple semesters. Additional work is needed to examine how learner autonomy, motivation, and affective variables mediate the effectiveness of mobile-assisted learning. Further investigation is also required into advanced listening skills—such as inferencing, critical listening, and multimodal comprehension—as well as discipline-specific oral communication in fields such as medicine, engineering, and business. Future SRs should compare the effectiveness of emerging technological tools.

The findings also highlight the pedagogical value of using current, media-based topics in speaking and writing instruction. When learners engage with familiar, concrete, and widely discussed issues from television and social media, they generate ideas more readily, express personal viewpoints, and participate more actively. Participation becomes a form of cognitive and emotional engagement with real-world issues, reducing cognitive load, activating prior knowledge, and shifting learners from passive listeners to active contributors—an essential component of communicative competence.

Given the global shift toward AI-supported language learning, future EFL curricula should incorporate AI-enhanced listening tools and AI-driven speaking platforms. AI systems can generate personalized listening materials, adapt speech models to learners’ proficiency levels, and provide real-time feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and intonation. AI “virtual tutors” equipped with automatic speech recognition can correct pronunciation, offer instant sentence-level feedback, simulate conversational exchanges, and provide low-anxiety practice environments suitable for beginners and independent learners.

Future research should examine how AI can support learner autonomy by recommending individualized practice schedules, identifying persistent phonological errors, and tracking long-term oral-skills development. Studies should also address the pedagogical, ethical, and cultural implications of AI in EFL contexts, including data privacy, bias in speech models, and the need for culturally responsive AI-generated content. Integrating AI into listening and speaking instruction represents a promising direction for expanding exposure, increasing practice opportunities, and providing learners with highly personalized environments for oral-skills development.

### **6. Conclusion**

This SR synthesizes 31 studies spanning pedagogical models, cognitive processes, technology-enhanced interventions, and assessment practices, offering a comprehensive understanding of how EFL learners develop listening and speaking proficiency in

Saudi higher education contexts. Across the four clusters, the evidence converges on a central conclusion: oral-skills development is most successful when instruction integrates meaningful content, explicit strategy training, phonological and cognitive support, and autonomous mobile-based practice. The studies collectively demonstrate that learners benefit from authentic input, scaffolded tasks, and opportunities to practice at their own pace using digital tools. They also reveal the importance of background knowledge, auditory discrimination, decoding, and learner autonomy as foundational components of oral proficiency. By bringing together diverse strands of research into a unified framework, this SR highlights the need for holistic, context-responsive, and technology-supported approaches to listening and speaking instruction. It also positions the author's long-term research program as a significant contribution to global EFL scholarship, offering insights that can inform curriculum design, instructional innovation, and future empirical inquiry.

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