

---

**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **The Importance of Listening and Speaking in a Successful English Language Acquisition in Classrooms: Moroccan EFL Classrooms as a Case Study**

**Amelhay Asmae<sup>1</sup> ✉ and Sakale Sana<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>*Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco*

**Corresponding Author:** Amelhay Asmae, **E-mail:** [asmae.amelhay@uit.ac.ma](mailto:asmae.amelhay@uit.ac.ma)

---

**| ABSTRACT**

Listening and speaking are paramount skills that are usually neglected by most teachers in EFL classrooms. Just as a baby, immersed in a sea of spoken language, gradually progresses from attentive listening to initial word production, so too should EFL instruction prioritize the development of these receptive and productive skills sequentially. This study delves into an essential aspect, yet most of the time, it is ignored by EFL Moroccan teachers. First, it underscores the importance of listening and speaking in boosting and improving fluency and accuracy. Furthermore, many reasons contribute to the neglect and marginalization of these abilities in Moroccan EFL classes. Thus, this study looks at the problems pedagogues experience. Second, the study explores a variety of practical activities that teachers can use to develop the listening and speaking skills of their students effectively. In a nutshell, this study shows that the deliberate integration of listening and speaking activities into the learning process can significantly improve student proficiency.

**| KEYWORDS**

Fluency, accuracy, acquisition, listening, speaking.

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 02 July 2024

**PUBLISHED:** 25 July 2024

**DOI:** 10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.3.1

---

### **1. Introduction**

Language learning resembles child L1 acquisition. Infants spend months engaged in their native language before uttering their first words (Cheung, 2010). Therefore, L2 learners should do the same. Listening and speaking are connected and necessary for effective communication. They have a mutual relationship: listening is essential for good spoken output (Renukadevi, 2014). Listening abilities, which include understanding the complexities of sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress, form a solid foundation, accounting for 45% of linguistic competency in effective communication (Renukadevi, 2014). To acquire and understand spoken language, learners must have a strong mastery of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, which are affected by tone of voice, pitch, and accent (Renukadevi, 2014).

This article looks at the struggles experienced by educators in encouraging these paramount skills, which are speaking and listening, during the process of learning English. Additionally, it elucidates how effective listening and conscious speaking can bring about an all-round English language mastery (Haydarova, 2017; Mart, 2020). In order to help promote spoken fluency, this paper underlines the significance of listening as a basis. Hence, strategies are suggested to assist teachers to improve on the communication skills of their learners.

### **2. Literature review**

#### **2.1. Listening**

The primacy of listening comprehension is often overshadowed by the allure of grammar and writing instruction. However, listening is undeniably the cornerstone of human contact and serves as the foundation for spoken fluency (Cheung, 2010). Without

active participation in listening, meaningful communication becomes an unreachable ideal. Effective spoken English, like language learning in infancy, requires months of focused listening before speaking (Renukadevi, 2014). While hearing has always been linked to other language abilities, such as reading and writing, Renukadevi (2014) correctly emphasizes the historical dominance of the written mode in language acquisition, with listening just lately taking its appropriate place. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of listening comprehension and to investigate techniques for incorporating it effectively into Moroccan EFL courses.

## **2.2 Speaking**

The spoken English language is crucial in encouraging individuals to participate in human interactions. Qureshi highlights in his article the essential role of speaking. He describes speaking as the crucial act of translating thoughts, opinions, and emotions into a comprehensible language<sup>5</sup>. Spoken language promotes involvement in many important activities, such as debates, public speeches, and group discussions<sup>6</sup>. Brown and Yuke (1983) stated that speech is frequently the primary skill examined in real-life communication. Also, they highlight its importance in interpersonal success. Furthermore, spoken language skills may be a valuable stepping stone towards professional development. Individuals with great spoken English abilities excel at navigating complicated work contexts, cooperating with colleagues from varied backgrounds, and boldly conveying themselves and their ideas.

## **2.3 The interrelationship of listening and speaking**

Listening and speaking are related skills that are inextricably linked to the process of effective communication. Listening is the receptive basis upon which spoken fluency flourishes. That is to say, learners acquire the necessary knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) to communicate effectively and understand spoken language. Speaking, then, becomes the active application of these acquired skills. As Mark Brown noted in a public speech, strong listening skills are crucial for effective spoken communication (Haydarova, 2017). However, most teachers in Moroccan EFL courses frequently need to pay more attention to these key abilities, such as listening and speaking, rather than just prioritizing other language components, such as reading and writing.

## **3. Methodology**

The main purpose of this section is to emphasize the research methodology used for this qualitative study. The study acknowledges the possible utility of quantitative data in evaluating the importance of listening and speaking skills among Moroccan EFL teachers. Also, the main objective is to enlighten the aspects that contribute to the marginalization of these critical language skills within the classroom. The study uses qualitative methods to investigate educators' lived experiences, specifically the interplay of curriculum constraints, motivational considerations, and time constraints, and how these factors influence the prioritization of listening and speaking skills.

### **3.1 Statement of the problem**

Moroccan EFL classes have a similar concern that teachers seldom address, particularly in the public sector. This problem occurs because instructors often push listening and speaking skills to the margins. When queried about the causalities, most teachers cite time restrictions, lack of intrinsic motivation among students for English language acquisition, and the curriculum's length. As a result, a paradigm shift is required in Moroccan EFL classes. Thus, teachers must emphasize the combination of listening and speaking in their lessons since they are vital and crucial in developing communication skills.

### **3.2 Objective of the study**



This study seeks to address a common paradox in Moroccan EFL classrooms. Even if educators recognize the critical importance of listening and speaking skills for English language acquisition, some of these teachers still neglect them or put little emphasis on them. Thus, to reach fluency and accuracy, these crucial skills should be emphasized and actively incorporated into both textbooks and classroom practices.

### **3.3 Participants**

The study's participants comprise a diverse cohort of Moroccan educators drawn from public schools, private institutions, and language centers nationwide. Their standpoints and attitudes towards listening and speaking skills, along with how these skills are integrated into their lesson plans and teaching practices, will be investigated.

### **3.4 Research questions**

To investigate the significance of listening and speaking skills in Moroccan EFL classrooms, four research questions should be addressed.

-  Are listening and speaking skills taught in the Moroccan EFL classrooms?
-  These two skills tend to have little to no attention; thus, what are the challenges of overlooking them?

- What are the strategies and activities teachers may use to incorporate listening and speaking skills into their lesson plans?
- When addressing fluency and accuracy, is it necessary to include listening and speaking? Or does reading and writing seem to be enough to reach them?

#### 4. Results and discussion

This section elucidates the core findings of the study, delving into the perceptions of Moroccan EFL educators from a diverse range of public and private schools across various educational levels regarding listening and speaking skills. The analysis revealed a complicated interplay of aspects influencing these perceptions. Most teachers admitted the significance of listening and speaking for adequate language acquisition. However, their reported integration of these skills into classroom practices varied significantly.

##### 4.1 Speaking and listening in the Moroccan EFL classrooms

To have an overview of how Moroccan EFL educators perceive listening and speaking skills, a survey was issued to 83 teachers. This questionnaire contains a range of questions to investigate teachers' perceptions of these skills, especially in promoting students' fluency and accuracy. Their answers uncovered a notable degree of accord, with the majority, if not all participants, acknowledging the paramount and foundational role of the two skills.

Table 1: Importance of listening and speaking in improving students' fluency and accuracy

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Very important	71	85.1%
Important	12	14.9%
Slightly important	0	0%
Not important at all	0	0%

Even though listening and speaking skills are included and integrated into the Moroccan curriculum, the survey revealed a significant difference between policy and practice. That is to say, even if teachers acknowledged the importance of listening and speaking, most surveyed teachers admitted limited integration of these skills into their classrooms due to various factors. To delve deeper into this discrepancy, the survey then inquired about the specific challenges educators face when incorporating listening and speaking activities.

Table 2: what challenges do you face when teaching listening skills?

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Lack of equipment.	11	23,40%
Lack of motivation and concentration.	11	23.40%
Low level of students.	18	38.30%
Time constraints.	3	6.39%
Culture.	1	2.12%
No accurate answer.	3	6.39%

The survey answers demonstrated a multifaceted explanation behind the biased integration of listening and speaking skills. Some educators cited some reasons behind this lack of integration, such as a lack of essential pedagogical resources, including an absence of audio equipment (speakers) and access to data. There are also technical problems, such as the absence of electricity in some rural areas, which made the challenges worse and made it harder to incorporate listening and speaking. For instance, one of the teachers inquired in the survey demonstrated this dilemma, stating that "the school provides no speakers, no access to electrical outlets in my classroom, nor any budgetary allocation for their purchase. Furthermore, data access is restricted, rendering the use of audio materials impractical. In the absence of these resources, I am averse to incorporating listening activities and refrain from utilizing my equipment." several educators additionally ascribed the limited integration to student proficiency levels. Since English language instruction is not formally introduced within the Moroccan public school system until the ninth grade, with recent inclusion in select seventh and eighth grades, students often lack a foundational understanding of the language, hindering their ability to comprehend native-speaker speech. This stands in stark contrast to private schools, where English instruction may commence as early as kindergarten.

A high school teacher elaborated on this challenge: "Engaging students in listening activities presents a significant obstacle. Learners lack the habituation of frequent exposure to spoken English. Hence, students struggle with learning and understanding the diverse pronunciations and accents, and that is because they did not receive prior listening practices either in their personal life or even at school in primary or middle school; after all, English in Morocco is not integrated into school until 7th grade, but students pay little attention to it because they are not examined until the baccalaureate level.

Another educator reinforced and strengthened the opinion of the challenges faced by students with limited exposure, stating: "Students who haven't benefitted from early English language exposure struggle to understand native speakers and recorded listening materials due to a multitude of factors, such as accents, colloquialisms, slang, idioms, speech rate, stress patterns, intonation, and the nuances of spoken interaction, such as conversational fillers ('um,' 'unh,' 'like'), reduced forms and contractions, and even seemingly innocuous background comments."

**4.2 Listening and speaking in the Moroccan curriculum**

Moroccan EFL textbooks are another issue faced by learners and teachers. Focus 2003 and Ticket to English 2006 do not adopt the latest methodologies and technological advancements in language acquisition, and that is due to the fact that they haven't been updated or changed for almost 2 decades. Even with the most recent and updated textbook, spotlight 2023, it still requires a dozen supplementary materials such as data projectors, audio equipment, flashcards, and many other supplies to be able to integrate the 4 skills equally. Hence, this highlights a likely contrast between the curriculum itself and the practical realities of implementing a communicative approach in a resource-constrained classroom.

To explore this issue further, the study embodied a survey to know and understand educators' perceptions of Moroccan EFL textbooks. The results revealed a spectrum of opinions. 88%, which is the majority of teachers asked, expressed a desire for revised and improved textbooks. The remaining 12%, which represents the minority, either relied on alternative resources since they work in private schools or they felt that the current materials were adequate and did not see the need for change.

Table 3: The perception of Moroccan textbooks.

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Outdated and in need of updates	73	88%
Good, no need for any change	3	3.6%
Good, but needs some modifications and materials	3	3.6%
Do not use Moroccan curriculum	4	4.8%

The survey further delved into the representation of listening and speaking skills within Moroccan EFL textbooks. Most respondents affirmed the inclusion of these skills within the curriculum as outlined in the textbooks. However, a minority of educators held a different viewpoint. This suggests a possible discrepancy between the intended curriculum, as outlined in the textbooks, and the actual emphasis placed on these skills in the materials.

Table 4: Listening and speaking as part of the Moroccan textbook.

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes, they are part of it.	73	88%
No, they are not.	10	12%

However, this dissonance between the stated curriculum and the reported practices of educators, as highlighted in the previous section, calls for further investigation. While listening and speaking skills are ostensibly included in Moroccan EFL textbooks, as evidenced by survey results, a sizable proportion of teachers report limited integration of these skills into their classrooms due to a combination of previously discussed factors.

**4.3 Strategies for integrating listening and speaking in language learning**

The successful integration of listening and speaking skills necessitates a flexible pedagogical framework that can adapt to diverse learning environments and cater to the unique needs of each student. To explore the current practices within Moroccan EFL

classrooms, the study surveyed educators on the tools and activities they employ when incorporating listening and speaking activities. The following section delves into the arsenal of strategies utilized by the teachers.

Table 5: Activities used by teachers to integrate listening in their classrooms

	Activities	Number of respondents	Percentages
Listening	Songs, games, and podcasts	50	60.2%
	Educational videos	20	24.1%
	Recordings from book	8	9.6%
	Nothing	5	6.1%

Table 6: activities used by teacher to integrate speaking in their classrooms

	Activities	Number of respondents	Percentages
Speaking	Discussion	29	35%
	Role play	36	43.4%
	Classroom project	2	2.4%
	Describing	12	14.4%
	Nothing	4	4.8%

The survey data reveals some interesting trends in how teachers integrate listening and speaking skills in their classrooms. Songs, games, and podcasts reign supreme for listening activities, with over 60% of respondents utilizing this engaging approach. Educational videos hold a strong second place at nearly 25%, suggesting their effectiveness in capturing student attention. Recordings from books appear less common, used by only around 10% of teachers. Notably, a small number (around 6%) don't integrate listening activities at all.

Turning to speaking activities, discussion and role-playing emerge as the clear champions, employed by over 35% and 43% of teachers, respectively. These methods likely foster valuable communication skills through interactive participation. Describing activities and classroom projects seem to be less frequently implemented, chosen by around 14% and 2% of respondents. Similar to listening activities, a small percentage of teachers (around 5%) forgo integrating speaking activities into their lessons, highlighting a potential area for further exploration in educational practices.

## 5. Conclusion

Throughout this article, we've focused on the relationship between listening and speaking in the context of English language acquisition. Based on the premise that listening serves as a foundation for speaking and vice versa, the study examines how Moroccan teachers perceive these two skills and whether or not they incorporate them into their teaching process. Also, it aims to examine the Moroccan curriculum and what it has to offer for teaching listening and speaking. Finally, it provides insights into practical strategies for teaching and learning them.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## References

- [1] Assingment - 2 psycholinguistics (n.d) (5655) the importance of speaking skills for EFL learners mrs ishrat aamer qureshi student of diploma tEFL roll no: ap department of English, alama iqbal open university, pakistan ishrataamer@hotmail.com 1/10
- [2] Cheung, Y. K. (2010). The importance of teaching listening in the EFL classroom. Distributed by eric clearinghouse.
- [3] Haydarova K.D (2017). The importance of listening and speaking. "eurasian scientific journal 1 2017" [the importance of listening and speaking \(journalpro.ru\)](#)
- [4] Mart, C. (2020). Integrating listening and speaking skills to promote speech production and language development.
- [5] Renukadevi, D. (2014). The role of listening in language acquisition; the challenges & strategies in teaching listening. *International journal of education and information studies*, 4, 2277-3169. <http://www.ripublication.com>
- [6] Rao, S. P. (2019). The importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. *Alford council of international English & literature journal*, 2, 6-18.