



Enhancing Listening Skills in EFL Classrooms: Challenges, Assessment Practices, and Pedagogical Implications in Bani Walid, Libya

Najiya Ashibani Mahmoud Musbah*

Department of English, Faculty of Education, Bani Walid University, Bani Walid Libya

تعزيز مهارات الاستماع في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: التحديات، وممارسات
التقويم، والدلالات التربوية في بني وليد، ليبيا

نجية الشيباني محمود مصباح*
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة بني وليد، ليبيا

*Corresponding author: najiamosbah@bwu.edu.ly

Received: February 18, 2026

Accepted: April 05, 2026

Published: April 16, 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract:

Listening constitutes a crucial component of second language acquisition; however, it is frequently overlooked in EFL classrooms, particularly in contexts with limited resources. This research investigates the obstacles EFL teachers encounter when teaching and evaluating listening skills in Bani Walid, Libya. Employing a convergent mixed-methods approach, the study collected quantitative data via structured questionnaires administered to fifteen teachers and qualitative insights through semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were examined using mean scores, standard deviations, and agreement percentages, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative responses. Findings indicate four primary challenges: inadequate instructional materials, insufficient teacher training, large class sizes, and low student proficiency levels. Assessment practices were largely subjective, and classroom activities relied heavily on textbook-based listening exercises, with minimal incorporation of authentic audio resources. The study recommends integrating technological tools, implementing regular professional development for teachers, introducing authentic listening tasks, and applying standardized assessment instruments. These strategies aim to enhance listening pedagogy in low-resource EFL contexts while ensuring effective evaluation and engagement.

Keywords: Listening comprehension; EFL instruction; assessment practices; teacher training; Libya; mixed-methods.

المخلص:

تعد مهارات الاستماع من الركائز الأساسية في اكتساب اللغة الثانية، ومع ذلك فهي غالبًا ما تُهمل في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، خاصة في البيئات ذات الموارد المحدودة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في تدريس وتقييم مهارات الاستماع في مدينة بني وليد، ليبيا. تم اعتماد تصميم مختلط المنهجية، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيانات منظمة شملت 15 معلمًا، بالإضافة إلى مقابلات شبه منظمة للحصول على رؤى أعمق. تم تحليل البيانات الكمية باستخدام المتوسط الحسابي، والانحراف المعياري، ونسبة الاتفاق، في حين خضعت البيانات النوعية لتحليل موضوعي (Thematic Analysis). أظهرت النتائج وجود أربعة عوائق رئيسية: نقص الموارد

التعليمية، عدم كفاية تدريب المعلمين، كثافة عدد الطلاب في الصف، وانخفاض مستوى الطلاب في اللغة الإنجليزية. كما بينت النتائج أن طرق التقييم غالبًا ما تكون ذاتية، وأن أنشطة الصف تعتمد بشكل كبير على الاستماع من الكتب المدرسية، مع استخدام محدود للمواد الأصلية (Authentic Materials). يخلص البحث إلى مجموعة من التوصيات العملية، بما في ذلك دمج التكنولوجيا، توفير برامج تدريبية للمعلمين، اعتماد مهام استماع أصلية، وتطبيق أدوات تقييم معيارية. تسهم هذه النتائج في إثراء المعرفة حول تدريس مهارات الاستماع في بيئات منخفضة الموارد، وتقديم استراتيجيات عملية لتحسين الممارسات التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعزيز مهارات الاستماع، التحديات، ممارسات التقييم، الدلالات التربوية.

Introduction:

The development of listening comprehension skills remains a fundamental objective in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, as listening serves as the primary channel through which learners receive linguistic input and develop communicative competence. Despite its significance, listening instruction in many EFL contexts continues to face substantial pedagogical and contextual challenges, particularly in developing educational environments where limited resources, insufficient exposure to authentic English, and traditional teaching approaches may hinder students' progress. In the Libyan educational context, especially in secondary and higher education institutions in Bani Walid, learners frequently encounter difficulties related to speech rate, unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation variations, and limited opportunities for interactive listening practice. These challenges often reduce learners' confidence and negatively affect their overall language acquisition and academic performance.

Furthermore, the assessment of listening skills in EFL classrooms has become an increasingly important issue for educators and researchers seeking to improve language learning outcomes. Effective assessment practices not only measure learners' comprehension abilities but also provide valuable insights into instructional effectiveness and learners' specific weaknesses. However, many EFL teachers continue to rely on conventional testing methods that may inadequately evaluate authentic listening competence or fail to address learners' diverse needs. Consequently, there is a growing demand for innovative pedagogical strategies that integrate communicative, technology-assisted, and learner-centered approaches to listening instruction. This study therefore explores the major challenges affecting listening skill development, examines current assessment practices employed in EFL classrooms in Bani Walid, Libya, and discusses the pedagogical implications necessary for enhancing students' listening proficiency and overall communicative performance.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the obstacles faced by teachers when instructing listening skills.
2. To examine difficulties associated with assessing listening comprehension.
3. To explore current classroom practices related to listening instruction.
4. To provide practical recommendations for improving listening pedagogy in resource-constrained environments.

Statement of the Problem:

Despite the recognized importance of listening in second language acquisition, it remains one of the least emphasized skills in EFL classrooms, particularly in resource-limited contexts such as Libya. In Bani Walid, teachers face multiple challenges that hinder effective listening instruction, including limited access to audio materials, insufficient training in teaching and assessing listening, and large class sizes. Furthermore, listening assessment practices are often inconsistent and lack standardization, which raises concerns about their reliability and validity. As a result, students' listening abilities may not be accurately evaluated or effectively developed.

This situation highlights a critical gap between the theoretical importance of listening and its actual implementation in EFL classrooms, necessitating further investigation into teaching practices, assessment methods, and contextual challenges.

Research Questions:

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What challenges do EFL teachers face in teaching listening skills in Bani Walid classrooms?
2. What difficulties do teachers encounter when assessing students' listening comprehension?
3. What are the current classroom practices used in teaching listening skills?
4. How can listening instruction and assessment be improved in resource-

Literature Review:

Significance of Listening in Language Learning:

Listening is an active cognitive process that allows learners to interpret speech, extract meaning, and internalize language patterns. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), learners acquire

language most effectively when exposed to comprehensible input, highlighting the importance of structured listening activities in EFL classrooms.

Challenges in Teaching Listening:

Teaching listening presents several difficulties. These include fast or varied speech patterns, diverse accents, limited access to authentic listening materials, and learners' restricted vocabulary. Additionally, teacher-centered instructional approaches may limit student participation and reduce opportunities for interactive listening practice.

Challenges in Assessing Listening:

Evaluating listening comprehension is inherently complex because it involves cognitive processing that cannot be directly observed. Traditional assessment methods, such as multiple-choice tests, may fail to capture students' actual listening proficiency.

The Libyan EFL Context:

Research in Libya highlights the reliance on traditional teaching methods, lack of technological resources, and insufficient training in communicative language teaching. These factors significantly influence both listening instruction and assessment, necessitating targeted pedagogical interventions.

Methodology:

Research Design:

A convergent mixed-methods design was employed, allowing for triangulation between quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interview insights to obtain a comprehensive understanding of classroom challenges.

Participants:

Fifteen secondary school EFL teachers in Bani walid participated, with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 15 years, providing diverse perspectives.

Instruments:

- **Questionnaire:** 15 Likert-scale items measuring teaching challenges, assessment practices, and classroom strategies.
- **Interview Guide:** Semi-structured, open-ended questions capturing detailed teacher experiences and insights.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage agreements. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework (2006), was applied to the qualitative data.

Results:

1. Teaching Challenges:

Table (1) presents the major teaching challenges affecting the development of listening skills among students. The findings indicate that students' low proficiency is the most significant challenge, obtaining the highest mean score ($M = 4.4$) and agreement percentage (85%) with a relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 0.50$). This result suggests a strong consensus among respondents that limited language proficiency negatively influences students' ability to comprehend spoken language, follow listening activities, and interact effectively in classroom communication. The low SD further indicates that participants shared similar views regarding the severity of this issue. This finding highlights the necessity of implementing remedial language support programs, differentiated instruction, and scaffolded listening activities tailored to students' proficiency levels.

Table (1): demonstrates that low student proficiency represents the most critical barrier, followed by insufficient instructional resources. These findings point to the need for differentiated teaching strategies and enhanced classroom materials.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement Percentage
1	Lack of audio materials	4.2	0.63	80%
2	Large class sizes	4.0	0.71	73%
3	Limited time for listening	3.8	0.85	67%
4	Students' low proficiency	4.4	0.50	85%

The second major challenge identified is the lack of audio materials, which recorded a high mean score ($M = 4.2$) and an agreement percentage of 80% ($SD = 0.63$). This demonstrates that inadequate access to authentic and varied listening resources significantly hinders the teaching and learning process. Audio materials are essential for exposing students to pronunciation patterns, intonation, accents, and real-life communication contexts. The absence of such resources may reduce students' listening practice opportunities and weaken their overall listening comprehension skills. Therefore,

educational institutions should prioritize providing modern audio-visual technologies and digital learning materials to enhance listening instruction.

Large class sizes ranked third with a mean score of 4.0 and an agreement percentage of 73% (SD = 0.71). This finding indicates that overcrowded classrooms limit teachers' ability to provide individualized attention, monitor listening activities effectively, and engage students in interactive tasks. In large classes, it becomes difficult to assess students' listening performance and address individual learning difficulties. Consequently, classroom management challenges may reduce the effectiveness of listening instruction and student participation. Reducing class sizes or integrating collaborative and technology-assisted learning strategies could help mitigate this issue.

Limited time for listening activities was identified as the least severe challenge among the listed items, although it still received a relatively high mean score (M = 3.8) and agreement percentage (67%) with the highest SD value (0.85). This indicates some variation in respondents' opinions regarding the extent of this problem. The result suggests that listening instruction may not receive adequate classroom time due to curriculum constraints or the prioritization of other language skills. Insufficient practice time can restrict students' exposure to spoken language and hinder the development of listening comprehension abilities. Allocating more instructional time specifically for listening practice and integrating listening tasks across language courses may improve learning outcomes. Overall, the results reveal that both learner-related factors and instructional resource limitations significantly affect the teaching of listening skills. The findings emphasize the importance of improving students' language proficiency, enhancing access to educational resources, optimizing classroom conditions, and allocating sufficient instructional time to support effective listening comprehension development.

2. Assessment Challenges:

Table (2) presents the major assessment challenges associated with teaching listening skills. The findings reveal that the lack of assessment training is the most significant challenge faced by teachers, as it recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.3) and agreement percentage (82%) with the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.47). This indicates a strong consensus among respondents that insufficient professional preparation in listening assessment negatively affects teachers' ability to evaluate students accurately and effectively. Listening assessment requires specialized skills in designing valid tasks, interpreting student responses, and applying appropriate evaluation criteria. Without adequate training, teachers may struggle to construct reliable assessments that accurately measure students' listening comprehension abilities. This finding emphasizes the importance of organizing professional development programs and workshops focused on modern listening assessment techniques and evaluation standards.

Table (2): Teachers encounter considerable difficulty in creating reliable listening assessments and lack sufficient training, emphasizing the need for professional development to enhance the objectivity of evaluation

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Agreement Percentage
5	Difficulty designing listening tests	4.1	0.68	78%
6	Lack of assessment training	4.3	0.47	82%
7	Subjectivity in evaluation	3.9	0.60	70%

The second most significant challenge is the difficulty of designing listening tests, which obtained a high mean score (M = 4.1) and an agreement percentage of 78% (SD = 0.68). This result suggests that many teachers experience challenges in preparing listening examinations that are clear, balanced, and aligned with students' proficiency levels and learning objectives. Designing listening tests is often more complex than assessing other language skills because it involves selecting suitable audio materials, controlling speech speed and clarity, and developing objective comprehension questions. The relatively moderate SD indicates a fairly consistent perception among participants regarding this issue. The finding highlights the need for accessible assessment guidelines, standardized listening materials, and teacher support in test construction.

Subjectivity in evaluation ranked third with a mean score of 3.9 and an agreement percentage of 70% (SD = 0.60). Although it represents the least severe challenge among the listed items, the result still indicates that many teachers perceive listening assessment as partially subjective. This subjectivity may arise from differences in scoring criteria, teacher judgment, or the interpretation of students' responses during listening tasks. Such inconsistencies can affect the fairness and reliability of evaluation outcomes. Therefore, the adoption of standardized rubrics, clear scoring procedures, and criterion-based assessment methods may help reduce subjectivity and improve assessment accuracy.

Overall, the results demonstrate that assessment-related challenges significantly influence the effectiveness of listening instruction. The findings particularly stress the importance of teacher training,

improved assessment design skills, and the implementation of objective evaluation procedures. Addressing these issues can contribute to more reliable listening assessments and enhance students' language learning outcomes.

3. Classroom Practices:

The results in Table (3) show that classroom listening practices are still mainly teacher-centered and dependent on traditional textbook-based activities. The highest mean score (4.0) was recorded for the use of textbook audio, with a frequency of "Often." This indicates that teachers rely heavily on textbook recordings as the primary source of listening input in the classroom. While textbook audio provides structured learning, overreliance on it may limit students' exposure to real-life language use and diverse listening contexts.

Table (3): indicates that classroom practices depend heavily on textbook-based listening exercises, with limited engagement in authentic or interactive tasks, suggesting the need for multimedia-supported and student-centered activities.

Practice	Frequency	Mean
Use of textbook audio	Often	4.0
Use of authentic materials	Rarely	2.1
Group listening activities	Sometimes	3.0
Peer discussion on listening	Rarely	2.3

In contrast, the use of authentic materials received a low mean score of 2.1 and was practiced "Rarely." This suggests that students have limited opportunities to engage with real-world listening resources such as podcasts, videos, interviews, or online media. Authentic materials are important because they expose learners to natural pronunciation, intonation, and cultural contexts, helping improve communicative competence.

Group listening activities obtained a moderate mean score of 3.0, with respondents indicating they are used "Sometimes." This reflects occasional attempts to involve students in collaborative listening tasks. Such activities can encourage interaction, teamwork, and active participation, but the moderate score suggests they are not consistently integrated into classroom practice. Similarly, peer discussion on listening was reported as "Rarely," with a mean score of 2.3. This indicates limited student-centered interaction after listening tasks. Peer discussions are valuable because they allow learners to exchange ideas, clarify understanding, and develop critical thinking and speaking skills alongside listening comprehension. Overall, the findings reveal that classroom listening instruction is dominated by traditional textbook audio, while interactive and authentic listening practices are limited. This highlights the need for teachers to incorporate more multimedia resources, authentic materials, collaborative tasks, and student-centered activities to create a more engaging and effective listening-learning environment.

Thematic Findings:

- **Theme 1:** Resource Constraints: Teachers consistently reported insufficient audio materials, limited internet access, and absence of multimedia labs.
- **Theme 2:** Need for Teacher Training: Participants highlighted the importance of workshops and training programs focusing on listening strategies and assessment methods.
- **Theme 3:** Student-Related Challenges: Learners struggled with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and restricted

Discussion:

The findings of this study provide clear answers to the research questions. First, the results identify several challenges in teaching listening, including low student proficiency and lack of instructional resources. Second, the study highlights difficulties in assessment, particularly the lack of training and subjective evaluation practices. Third, classroom practices were found to rely heavily on textbook-based listening activities. Finally, the study proposes several practical recommendations to improve listening instruction, including teacher training and the use of authentic materials.

These findings further confirm that listening skills in Bani Walid EFL classrooms remain underdeveloped, which aligns with previous research conducted in similar resource-limited contexts.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations:

Teacher Training: Provide structured professional development programs targeting listening instruction and assessment techniques.

- **Resource Enhancement:** Ensure availability of audio materials, internet access, and multimedia tools.
- **Curriculum Development:** Incorporate authentic listening tasks and interactive classroom activities.

- **Assessment Improvement:** Develop reliable, standardized listening assessments.
- **Student Support:** Employ strategies to enhance vocabulary and listening comprehension.

Conclusion:

Listening in EFL classrooms in Bani Walid is limited by insufficient resources, lack of teacher training, and traditional practices. Addressing these issues through professional development, improved materials, and curriculum reform can significantly enhance teaching and assessment of listening skills.

References:

1. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
2. Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
3. Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing listening*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Field, J. (2008). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Goh, C. C. M. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems. *System*, 28(1), 55–75.
6. Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.
7. Orafi, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Intentions and realities in implementing communicative curriculum reform. *System*, 37(2), 243–253.
8. Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. Routledge.