



Investigating Challenges Experienced in listening and speaking Skills development in Rural High Schools in South Africa

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Abstract

Language plays a crucial role in everyday communication. The ability to listen and speak a language serves a very important role in one's communication. The Constitution of South Africa (Act No.200 of 1993) has given official status to the 11 major languages (which were formerly granted only to English and Afrikaans). Regardless, English has remained a major national language and a medium of instruction in schools and universities in South Africa. English has been labelled a nightmare because many learners in schools experience difficulties acquiring communicative competence in English, their second language. This study investigates the challenges encountered in developing listening and speaking skills in EFAL. The study adopted the qualitative case study design to investigate the above challenges. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations. with learners and teachers. The study found that learners have limited English vocabulary. They also have difficulty pronouncing English words and cannot express themselves accurately in English as a second language because it is not their home language. Consequently, their proficiency in the language is low, which impinges on comprehension. The study recommends that teachers ensure they create a beneficial environment for learners to acquire communicative competence; more communicative-focused activities that are conducive to the development of listening and speaking skills should be designed.

Keywords: Communicative competence; Communicative language teaching; Listening and speaking; English first additional language; Languages of learning and teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Listening and speaking skills are major requirements for learners to succeed academically, professionally, and in personal matters they encounter in real-life situations, including in the language classroom (Shrum & Clisan, 2015). Therefore, learners should have a solid foundation in communicative competence to easily access most classroom instructions. Communicative competence refers to the person's ability to present and comprehend information and exchange meaning with the next speaker in a positive way (Vorwerk, 2015). Therefore, learners should be confident and passionate about learning English.

Although the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 200 of 1996) allows all South African languages to be used in education, English is still given preference. As a result, learners must acquire listening and speaking skills to cope with it as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Despite the

Language in Education Policy's provision that indigenous languages can be used as languages of learning and teaching (LoLT), most schools still use English as the medium of instruction. In other words, learners should speak English frequently and engage in activities that help them develop communicative competence in the language. This means that activities such as discussions, debates, dialogues, role-plays, and so forth assigned to learners must cultivate a culture of talking and listening among learners.

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011) acknowledges that listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting, and language structures and conventions are language skills that help learners to become competent in their process of learning. Listening and speaking skills are critical to language development, as they form the foundation of language learning, as explained in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. The CAPS states that these four skills are interdependent and should not be taught in isolation. Hence, listening and speaking skills are important to learning and should be developed early in a child's academic life (DBE, 2011). The approach to teaching these skills should be integrative, according to the curriculum expectations (DBE, 2011).

The importance of this study is informed by the researcher's introspective and academic experience of not being able to speak English fluently, as well as her teaching experience. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the challenges learners experience when developing listening and speaking skills. The data collected in the study may be significant in revealing the challenges teachers experience in teaching communicative competence skills. The results of this research could make teachers aware that listening and speaking skills should not be taught in isolation but should be integrated to enhance learners' communicative competence.

Literature Review

Listening and speaking skills build learners' confidence in approaching whatever circumstances they may encounter in real-life situations (Birma & Maraya, 2026). When learners are fully equipped with communicative competence, they engage successfully with their teachers and classmates. Communicative competence in language learning is typically conceptualised through four interrelated skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which collectively support meaningful communication (Birma & Maraya, 2026). English teachers need to equip learners with strategies such as debates, discussions, group work, presentations, role-plays, and so forth, so that learners can gain confidence in speaking English.

Koran (2015), Pylypyshyna, Palamarchuk and Kudelska (2026) assert that teachers must be responsible for assisting learners in building their communicative competence by providing creative activities that enable them to develop their language competence. When learners are given these activities, they can overcome anxiety, which negatively affects their confidence in learning to speak English. Therefore, classroom lessons should be collaborative to emphasise both forms and meanings. Rendi, Aziz, and Najamuddi (2026) argue that creating conducive environments and activities for listening will enhance learners' listening skills.

Yavuz, Degirmenci, Akyuz, Yılmaz and Celik (2015) attest that teachers themselves cannot create listening activities for learners. That might as well discourage learners from developing strong listening and speaking skills. Yakuz et al. (2015) additionally propose that learners need to be taught to strengthen their listening skills by enhancing their word- and sentence-level skills at the foundation stage, so they can repeat what they hear from their teachers. Regarding sentences, learners can be given activities such as dictation, in which a teacher checks whether learners heard the sound the teacher made.

On the other hand, Nikian et al. (2016) and Rahmania and Wijayatiningsih (2026) established that teacher-centred activities, rather than learner-centred activities, disadvantage learners from acquiring communicative competence. Teacher-centred activities limit learners' ability to express their own views because they are not given opportunities to share their own thinking with their peers. As a result, the activities given to learners should be those that give them the opportunity to apply their thinking skills. Learners must be involved in their own learning because when they are passive listeners, they get bored and fail to learn.

Furthermore, Mapruza (2015) indicates that the use of textbooks in the EFAL classroom prevents

learners from voicing their own opinions. Therefore, learners must be involved in developing creative activities so that they are motivated to learn EFAL and increase their understanding.

According to Akbari (2015), learners put more effort into learning basic grammar to pass the tests and exams to move to the next grade, without considering real-life situations. Consequently, learners experience challenges in developing listening and speaking skills because they do not have enough English to communicate competently with others. Nikian et al. (2016) argue that teachers' negative attitudes towards teaching EFAL are the main factor hindering learners from developing communicative competence.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research methodology within an interpretivist paradigm to explore and understand the challenges learners face in developing listening and speaking skills. The methodological approach was selected to enable the researcher to examine the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives and within their natural socio-cultural contexts. The study focused particularly on learners' difficulties with listening for information and meaning, as well as the strategies and approaches teachers employed to support the development of listening and speaking skills. A case study design was adopted to provide an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon in two rural high schools. Data were collected primarily through classroom observations, with particular attention to teachers' instructional practices, learners' responses and challenges, and the actions and interactions emerging during English lessons. The collected data were analysed interpretively to identify patterns, practices, and meanings relevant to the research objectives.

Research Design

This study employed an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by learners and teachers in developing listening and speaking skills. The interpretivist paradigm was adopted because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena from the perspectives and experiences of the individuals involved. As Dean (2018) explains, interpretivism seeks to understand the world from an individual's perspective. Similarly, qualitative research provides opportunities to explore people's experiences, ways of living, and phenomena within their socio-cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moen & Middelthon, 2015). Within this paradigm, the study employed a case study design as a strategy of inquiry. The case study was considered appropriate because the research sought to investigate learners' difficulties with listening for meaning and developing speaking skills in their natural school contexts.

Research Target/Subject

The research subjects consisted of learners who experienced challenges in listening for meaning and their English teachers in the two selected rural high schools. The schools were selected using convenience sampling, primarily due to their geographical proximity to one another and their accessibility to the researcher. The learners were the primary focus, as the study investigated difficulties in listening for information and meaning, while the teachers were included to examine the strategies and approaches used to develop learners' listening and speaking skills.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher identified the phenomenon and the main challenges learners face in developing listening and speaking skills. Second, the researcher selected two rural high schools as case-study sites based on their accessibility and proximity. Third, classroom observations were conducted to examine how English teachers implemented strategies and approaches for developing learners' listening and speaking skills. During the observations, particular attention was given to learners' difficulties in listening for information and meaning, as well as the teachers' instructional practices. The observations also examined emerging actions, classroom practices, and

interactions among participants in relation to the study's key concepts and objectives. Finally, the information obtained from the observations was interpreted within the socio-cultural context of the participating schools.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The primary instrument in this qualitative study was the researcher, who directly observed and interpreted the phenomenon under investigation. Classroom observation was the primary data collection method. The observations focused on teachers' strategies and approaches in developing listening and speaking skills, learners' responses and difficulties in listening for meaning, and the interactions and practices that emerged during classroom activities. Observation notes were used to document relevant actions, behaviours, instructional practices, and interactions occurring during the lessons. The collected qualitative data therefore consisted primarily of descriptions of classroom practices, learner difficulties, teacher strategies, and participant interactions relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis technique

The data were analysed qualitatively within the interpretivist paradigm. The analysis focused on interpreting the observed actions, practices, interactions, and experiences of participants in relation to learners' difficulties in listening for information and meaning, as well as the development of speaking skills. The researcher examined the observation data to identify meaningful patterns, recurring practices, and challenges emerging across the two cases. The findings were then interpreted in context by considering the participants' classroom experiences and the socio-cultural settings in which the teaching and learning activities took place. This interpretive process enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges associated with listening and speaking development, as well as the strategies teachers employ to address them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Dean, 2018; Moen & Middelthon, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Learners interview results

There are various challenges that learners encounter when acquiring communicative competence. Learners were asked the following questions:

“How do you feel when you have to listen to someone speaking in a language you're learning?”

Learners responded to the above question:

Grade 8 Learners' Responses:

- **Learner 1:** *"I feel anxious because I'm scared I'll miss something important."*
- **Learner 2:** *"I feel lost sometimes, but I try to pay attention to keywords."*
- **Learner 3:** *"It makes me nervous, especially if they speak fast."*
- **Learner 4:** *"I feel frustrated when I can't understand what they're saying."*
- **Learner 5:** *"I feel fine if they speak slowly. If not, I get nervous."*
- **Learner 6:** *"I feel embarrassed when I don't understand"*
- **Learner 7:** *"I feel confused when they use words I don't know."*
- **Learner 8:** *"Sometimes I feel okay, but mostly I feel nervous."*
- **Learner 9:** *"I feel stressed when I can't follow everything"*
- **Learner 10:** *"I feel nervous, especially when I can't ask for clarification."*

This is very disturbing because we live in a world where English takes precedence. Therefore, it becomes difficult for learners to appreciate the world they live in because, without listening and speaking skills, they cannot explore it globally.

Table 1 The results from the interviews show that the majority of learners cannot speak English fluently.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	1	1%	1%	1%
No	9	99%	99%	99%
Total	10	100	100	100

If English words are unfamiliar to learners, they cannot understand and communicate effectively in English. Therefore, language teachers should ensure they use a wide range of vocabulary when teaching learners and encourage them to use dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words. Akbari (2015) concurs that learners do not understand English because most grew up in rural areas, where English exposure is limited. Therefore, their lack of proficiency holds them back from understanding more English words. Learners must associate with people who speak English frequently so they can learn the language authentically.

What kind of activities or tasks do you find most challenging when it comes to listening and speaking?

Table 2 Learner Responses to Question 5

Learner	Grade	School	Response
Learner 1	8	A	"I find group discussions challenging because I can't follow what everyone is saying."
Learner 2	8	A	"Listening to audio recordings is difficult for me, especially if the speaker talks too fast."
Learner 3	8	A	"Role plays are hard. I forget what to say when it's my turn."
Learner 4	8	A	"I struggle with summarizing what I hear from videos."
Learner 5	8	A	"Debates are difficult because I'm not confident speaking in front of others."
Learner 6	8	A	"Sometimes I find it hard to understand the teacher when they speak quickly."
Learner 7	8	B	"Listening to songs and trying to understand the lyrics is really tough for me."
Learner 8	8	B	"I have a hard time speaking up in class discussions. I feel nervous."
Learner 9	8	B	"I find presentations challenging because I get anxious and forget my points."
Learner 10	9	B	"Watching videos without subtitles is difficult for me because I miss a lot of information."

One learner stated that he cannot pronounce words well. However, pronunciation is also the best tool for effective communication. If a teacher cannot pronounce words correctly, learners will also be disadvantaged because they will not know how to pronounce English words properly. Therefore, when they communicate with others, there will be a barrier. Furthermore, if learners cannot express themselves in English, it becomes a problem because English is also their medium of instruction in all schools. English is also a tool for communication in the workplace. Therefore, learners must acquire a solid foundation in the language's communication skills to express themselves effectively.

The ability to develop listening and speaking skills is a major requirement for learners to succeed academically, professionally, and in personal issues that they encounter in real-life situations (Shrum & Clisan, 2015; Birma, Maraya, Ramalingam et al., 2026). As a result, it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure that learners acquire communication skills at an early stage. Early acquisition of communicative competence skills will prepare learners to be confident speakers even when they enter higher education institutions. If learners are competent speakers, they will feel secure even in their workplace. Hence, it is rare to win interviews with poor communication skills. However, one enjoys the work environment when they do not experience any friction at work.

Nevertheless, English teachers must ensure that they teach learners collaboratively so that learners can communicate with their peers every day in English. This is because even if the language is foreign to

them, they can learn it. Therefore, when learners speak English daily, they will master the language and become competent speakers of English. Bissenbayeva et al. (2013) claim that most learners lack the most important skills of communicative competence: listening and speaking. As a result, learners feel disadvantaged when they reach the professional stage because they lack communicative competence.

One of the participants said, *"I know a few words of English because it is not my mother tongue."* This impression shows that learners have negative attitudes towards English. They have a negative mentality that they cannot understand English because it is not their mother tongue. Therefore, learners also create a barricade for themselves because of this mentality. If learners do not cultivate positive attitudes, their listening and speaking skills will not improve. However, it is not only learners who have a negative attitude towards acquiring communicative competence skills; teachers do as well. Nikian, Nor, and Aziz (2013) show that most teachers have negative attitudes in teaching English as a First Additional Language. Subsequently, learners also feel discouraged because they lack motivation from their teachers.

Learners observation results

From the observation results, it is very disturbing to learn that most learners cannot speak English fluently. Hence, it kills their confidence, and learners end up fearing speaking in English because they become shy (Nyborg, Mjelve, Edwards & Crozier, 2020). If the words cannot flow at an impressive pace, learners cannot obtain good marks because, with presentations, marks are given for good hearing, voice/audibility, fluency, and articulation. According to Millrood (2015), most English teachers focus more on reading and writing skills rather than listening and speaking skills. This prevents learners from communicating competently during the acquisition process. As a result, learners make more progress in their reading and writing skills but struggle with their speaking and listening skills. Subsequently, it becomes useless for learners to master one skill and fail at the other. Lorena (2015) agrees that listening and speaking skills should not be taught in isolation but rather integrated so that learners can develop all four skills simultaneously. Furthermore, the quality of learners' voices is closely linked to their ability to communicate effectively. If learners are not fluent in the language, their voices become low because they cannot raise them, knowing they do not speak well. Therefore, even if learners' voices are detected across all frequencies, their adequacy for learning becomes a challenge for learners who lack communicative competence. This is because they make the learning process impossible. The quality of the voice is judged to be within normal limits.

Teachers interview results

Teachers were asked the following questions:

What are the main difficulties you encounter when teaching listening and speaking skills?

Participant one's response: *Learners find difficulty in retrieving the appropriate words from memory. They show frustration associated with the inability to communicate.*

Participant two responded: *When learners speak different home languages in a classroom, it can be challenging to find texts or examples that address all of them. Some learners feel alienated when the listening exercises or examples are culturally unfamiliar, and there aren't enough resources to support learners with lower proficiency levels.*

From participant one's response, it becomes clear that when learners lack communicative skills, they become discouraged from speaking the language because they struggle to construct coherent sentences in their minds before speaking. Therefore, the inability to acquire communicative skills becomes a stumbling block to learners engaging in activities that require speaking. It is normal to feel negative when speaking the language that is foreign because there are many unfamiliar words. Learning a native language is a long process. However, it is the responsibility of both learners and teachers to ensure they create conducive environments that enable them to become competent English speakers.

In line with this, Mapruza (2015) highlights that the use of textbooks in EFAL classrooms disables learners from voicing their own opinions. Therefore, learners must be involved in developing creative activities to motivate them to learn native languages and deepen their understanding.

Participant two's response: *Learners have language that is less sophisticated than their peers'.*

Another factor that discouraged learners from acquiring communicative competence skills was that they compared their language competence with that of those for whom English is the mother tongue. As a result, this instilled a sense of inferiority and held learners back from exercising their listening and speaking skills. When learners for whom English is a foreign language hear other learners with English proficiency, they become discouraged. This prevented them from practising English skills. Nevertheless, when a language is foreign to learners, it is very difficult for them to become fluent because of the workload of learning all the new vocabulary. Learners who are fortunate to be good articulators of English are those from advantaged families, because they attend Model C schools. Therefore, they become widely exposed to and acquire native-like competence. As a result, teachers must ensure they create a classroom where English is ideal for learners. Hence, Sayer (2018) makes it clear that learners need to learn the language in the social classroom, which will enable them to interact with their peers and socialise positively, thus exercising their communicative competence.

English First Additional Language teachers' role

Participant one's response:

"My responsibility as a language teacher is to provide learners with enough opportunity to communicate frequently in the classroom so that their listening and speaking skills can be enhanced."

Based on the participants' results, teachers are aware of their responsibilities, but they do not implement what they teach. They are aware that learners need to be taught in a collaborative learning paradigm, but they do not provide that opportunity because they spend most of their time in class teaching English to learners in their mother tongue. According to van der Veen et al. (2017), learners are more likely to develop oral language skills when they are engaged in classroom discussions. With the teachers' guidance, learners will become familiar with appropriate activities to enhance their communication skills. However, activities allocated to learners must cultivate the culture of talking and listening through discussions, debates, dialogues, role-plays, and so forth.

Participant two's response: *"My role is to expand the learners' language by providing them with more advanced vocabulary."*

The participant's response is authentic because one of the learners stated that they lack sufficient English vocabulary. Therefore, teachers can introduce new vocabulary at the beginning of every topic and encourage learners to use dictionaries to clarify unfamiliar words. This will help learners build sufficient vocabulary, thereby enhancing their communicative competence. If teachers want to expand learners' language, they must move away from traditional teaching methods and adopt a learner-centred approach, which focuses more on the learner (Ive, 2017).

Questionnaire's results

Most learners stated that their listening skills are lacking. However, through observations, the researcher discovered that learners chose listening skills because they were too lazy to talk and learn. They just enjoy being passive listeners, listening to their teachers, and when their teacher asks them questions regarding the text he just presented, they just keep quiet, and some say they did not comprehend what the teacher said. As a result, it becomes challenging because learners will not acquire communicative competence with this attitude. When learners are given opportunities to speak in class, they stay quiet, and some say they don't know what to say because they don't know English. If one learner tries to speak in English in class, they laugh at them. This, therefore, affects their confidence in speaking English and creates a challenge for the learner to try again.

Surprisingly, most learners consider presentations an activity that can enhance their communicative competence, but they do not take them seriously. During presentations, they create a funny atmosphere where they just laugh at each other, making it difficult for the teacher to manage the classroom. Nevertheless, listening and speaking skills are crucial for effective and meaningful participation in oral conversations.

There is no way learners can speak English without acquiring communicative competence. That is why learners feel lost if they do not understand the messages being spoken.

Therefore, teachers must ensure they provide learners with sufficient authentic materials and activities to develop their listening skills, such as group discussions and presentations. According to Asemota (2015) and Rahmania and Wijayatiningsih (2026), teachers should expose learners to a variety of conversations to expand their listening skills. Furthermore, they can listen to native speakers' speeches to hear the rigidity of the English language.

Learners should also strive to learn listening and speaking skills because it takes a village to succeed in life. Chang et.al. (2014) argue that fluency, rather than accuracy, must also be considered when learning listening and speaking skills.

Recommendations

The following are the study's recommendations.

1. Firstly, teachers must ensure they create a supportive environment for learners so they can develop communicative competence positively. This aligns with findings that learners feel inferior compared to their counterparts (home-language speakers).
2. Teachers must also create activities that will enable learners to communicate frequently.
3. Learners must read as much as possible because reading improves vocabulary and helps one to become familiar with sentence structure and word order, and schools must make reading resources available. This will help address the challenge that learners lack adequate space to develop their vocabulary. They should be afforded more opportunities to listen to a wider range of texts.
4. Learners must also invest in good dictionaries. When they are unsure of a word's meaning or encounter an unfamiliar word, they should look it up in a dictionary, and schools must ensure that dictionaries are available.
5. Learners must develop active listening skills to improve communication with others and be aware of their own communication barriers.
6. They must learn different phrases and strategies that improve how they respond to each other, and they must not fear being offended.
7. They must feel comfortable expressing their emotions and looking the speaker in the eye when communicating. This is in line with findings that learners speak in class and in front of native speakers of the home language.
8. Learners must set aside distracting thoughts and listen to the speaker's body language.

Discussion

The thematic data analysis technique was used to analyse the qualitative data collected through the interview schedules, observations, and questionnaires. This study aimed to investigate the challenges encountered in developing listening and speaking skills. The questions used in interviews, observations and questionnaires were deemed relevant to achieve the aim of the research. The results are presented in two sections: from learners and from teachers.

The most spoken languages at the two Secondary schools are isiNdebele, Xitsonga and Sepedi. However, the only African languages that learners learn at both schools are Sepedi and English, with English taught as a subject and used as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The learners are, however, multilingual, as most claimed to speak more than two languages in addition to their mother tongues.

The results from the interviews show that the majority of learners cannot speak English fluently. Learners face various problems that prevent them from speaking English fluently, such as limited vocabulary, isolating words when speaking or using sentence fragments, an inability to construct coherent sentences, poor pronunciation, a mother-tongue accent, translating mother-tongue words when speaking English, and a lack of a proper English foundation.

The participants' responses show that learners have poor vocabulary. According to Moody, Hu et al. (2018), vocabulary usually develops with age, and most children develop it when engaging with

their families in conversation. Therefore, if learners fail to develop vocabulary at a young age, it becomes difficult for them to learn English and acquire an extensive vocabulary. Therefore, this remains a burden for learners because vocabulary is a fundamental tool for communication and knowledge acquisition. Nevertheless, Parupalli (2019) addresses the need for learners to practice their speaking skills through collaborative communication. As a result, learners' vocabulary will improve because when they talk frequently with one another, they become accustomed to unfamiliar words, thereby enhancing their vocabulary.

Learners isolate words when speaking because they are not exposed to the language enough to articulate in it. They relax so much that they always speak their mother tongue, and it becomes difficult for them to speak English. In line with Samira (2014) and Hinkel (2018), learners who are unable to communicate effectively perform very poorly in activities that require them to speak when they reach higher education or a professional stage. They do not seem to enjoy their studies because, at the tertiary level, they are expected to have communicative competence. When learners cannot construct coherent sentences in English, it becomes disturbing because one cannot speak fluently in English without good sentence construction. This explains why they tend to translate English words into their home languages. Kondrateva and Valeev (2014) acknowledge that learners have difficulty speaking English because they grew up in an environment where they never experienced meaningful, consistent communication in the language. Therefore, these learners have low motivation to speak the language because the environment did not provide them with opportunities to interact with English speakers.

Language teachers tend to clarify for learners in their mother tongues when learners do not understand them. This hinders learners' language development because they lack the eagerness to learn English; they know their teachers will explain it in a language they understand better. Thus, language teachers must ensure they clarify concepts to learners in English so that learners can learn to think in English. However, this must not weaken learners' confidence; instead, it should help them acquire communicative competence by providing access to communication tools that boost their speaking ability. Öz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz (2015) argue that teachers must motivate learners because they are learners' role models. If teachers cannot motivate learners to acquire listening and speaking skills, learners rarely gain self-motivation on their own.

It is very disturbing that the findings show that 20% of learners can communicate using English outside the class, and about 80% of learners cannot speak independently outside the classroom. Therefore, most learners need a lot of assistance from their English teachers. In line with Su Bergil (2016), most learners experience challenges in acquiring communicative competence because their English teachers do not provide activities that enable them to use the language in diverse situations. That is why the majority of learners rely on their teachers' English competence – which is not good, as it hinders their language development. If learners are denied opportunities to speak in class, it becomes difficult for them to speak in situations where they are compelled to communicate. As a result, teachers should allow learners to speak frequently in class. English teachers should also ensure that they involve learners in activities that help them become independent as they acquire communicative competence. Furthermore, Fan et al. (2018) agree that teachers must interact with the learners by allowing learners to express themselves in English. Teachers should abandon their traditional methods, in which they are the only ones talking until the end of the session.

Rahmatillah (2019) proposes that learners should be taught using the Communicative Language Teaching approach because it places learners at the forefront. With this approach, learners are exposed to social interactions. Additionally, Yavuz and Arslan (2018) applaud cooperative learning for the acquisition of listening and speaking skills, as learners who engage and interact with their peers encourage and motivate one another. This method gives an advantage to shy learners because they can express themselves in group discussions rather than individually. Nevertheless, Rasskazova, Guzikova and Green (2017) blame teachers who teach learners in a classroom that is not positive or conducive, as they become more serious and fail to create a friendly learning and teaching environment. This results

in poor communicative competence. A negative classroom weakens learners' potential because they become discouraged and even fear to showcase their thinking abilities. As a result, teachers carry a strong burden, which prevents learners from developing listening and speaking skills. Teachers should encourage a social classroom by being friendly to learners (Serkan, 2013). Based on these outcomes, the researcher concludes that teachers should serve as vehicles for helping learners develop EFAL skills.

Nevertheless, the findings show that teachers attend to learners' individual problems in developing listening and speaking skills. This is a positive attitude that teachers should portray to learners, because a conducive classroom is one where the teacher is friendly in a way that makes all learners comfortable in their learning process. Therefore, all participants seemed happy to have First Additional Language teachers who accommodate all their needs. Hence, the biggest problems lie within them (learners) because if their teachers attend to their individual problems, it means that learners themselves do not put enough effort into learning the language. Although a teacher serves as a gateway to help learners acquire communicative competence, it becomes the learners' full responsibility to ensure they engage positively with their peers by communicating in a foreign language, even outside the classroom. The more they talk with their classmates, the better their communication skills will become.

This confirms the reviewed literature, as the Department of Education (2011) indicates that one of the teachers' roles is to monitor and facilitate learners' progress. In agreement with the above, Rahmania and Wijayatiningsih (2026) argue that the development of listening and speaking should be viewed as a complementary and integrated process rather than as separate language skills. Therefore, the findings show that English teachers are at least doing something right. As a result, this shows that learners must also be the masters of their own learning. As Atamanovaa and Bogomaz (2014) argue, learners should also take full responsibility for their own learning by maintaining their personal potential in a positive way so that they can acquire communicative competence effectively. Certainly, Khan (2016) adds that learners must be willing to learn English and develop a positive attitude toward language acquisition. Even though English teachers at the two secondary schools can address individual problems in learners' First Additional Language acquisition, it becomes challenging when learners themselves do not show any effort in developing their listening and speaking skills.

Most learners and teachers who participated in this study are aware of their challenges in communicative competence in English First Additional Language, but are not aware of the significant impact this has on their teaching and learning processes. Hence, teachers do not care about learners' acquisition of communicative competence skills because it was observed that English teachers teach learners English in their mother tongue.

They only care about the issue of learners passing and progressing to the next grade. This disadvantages both learners and teachers because teachers cannot grow professionally, and learners cannot be academically productive. It is not beneficial for teachers and learners to master only the content of a lesson if listening and speaking skills are not developed. Nevertheless, both teachers and learners are responsible for learners' acquisition of listening and speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the challenges encountered in developing English listening and speaking skills. It contributes to the body of knowledge in listening and speaking development. The development of communicative competence is also critical in learners' listening and speaking skills.

Teachers should expand learners' language by providing more advanced vocabulary and giving them sufficient opportunities to communicate through speaking activities. Hence, they need to apply it throughout the teaching and learning process.

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