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Research Article

Challenges in Listening and Speaking Skills for Arabic Language Pre-Service Teachers: A Correlational Study

Meryem Melike GÜNGENCİ[1] & Musa YILDIZ[2]

[1] Gazi University, Ankara, TÜRKİYE
melikegungenci@gazi.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0002-1885-0551
[2] Gazi University, Ankara, TÜRKİYE
ymusa@gazi.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0002-5274-9481

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers studying in the Arabic language teaching Program in developing their listening and speaking skills and to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in their listening and speaking skills by using correlation analysis. It employs a mixed-method research design, using content analysis to identify challenges and correlation analysis to examine the relationship between the challenges faced in these two language skills. The qualitative findings indicate that pre-service teachers encounter difficulties in various aspects, including vocabulary and semantics, the structure of language, emotional factors, and teaching methodologies. As for the quantitative analysis, a significant correlation is found between listening and speaking skills challenges, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between these skills. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing emotional barriers, effective teaching methodologies, and course materials to foster holistic language development. The study has implications for pre-service teacher education, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and ongoing professional development for teacher educators to educate pre-service teachers effectively. Additionally, suggestions for the Arabic Language Teaching curriculum are included.

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Dinleme

Konuşma

Öğretmen adayı

Öğretmen eğitimi

Öğretmen Adaylarının Dinleme ve Konuşma Becerilerinde Karşılaştıkları Zorluklar Arasındaki İlişki

Özet: Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen adaylarının Arapça Öğretim Programında dinleme ve konuşma becerilerini geliştirmede karşılaştıkları zorlukları tespit etmek ve bu zorluklar arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olup olmadığını korelasyon analizi ile araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmada, zorlukları belirlemek için içerik analizi ve bu iki dil becerisinde karşılaşılan zorluklar arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek için korelasyon analizi kullanılarak nicel bir araştırma tasarımı kullanılmıştır. Nicel analiz, dinleme ve konuşma becerilerinde karşılaşılan zorluklar arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon olduğunu göstermekte ve bu beceriler arasında karşılıklı bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, bütünsel dil gelişimini teşvik etmek için duygusal engellerin aşılmasının, etkili öğretim yöntemlerinin ve ders materyallerinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmen adaylarını etkili bir şekilde eğitmek için öğretmen eğitimcilerine yönelik hedeflenmiş müdahalelere ve sürekli mesleki gelişime duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulayarak hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitimi için çıkarımlarda bulunmaktadır. Çalışma, ayrıca, Arapça öğretimi müfredatına yönelik öneriler de sunmaktadır.

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1. Introduction

As social beings, individuals must communicate with others, and effective communication relies heavily on speaking and listening skills. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2014), communication involves conveying information comprehensibly to all parties. Mastery of speaking skills is crucial for self-expression and interaction within a global society (Rao, 2019). However, developing speaking skills in a foreign language follows the acquisition of listening skills, which are foundational for linguistic and cognitive development (Barron-Gutty & Chupradit, 2009; Seneviratne et al., 2019). Listening skills, essential for understanding spoken words and meanings, begin developing in the womb and play a continuous role in learning and communication (Melanlıoğlu, 2012; Tilwani et al., 2022). Brown and Lee (2015) emphasize the importance of good listening skills for academic and professional success, noting that good listening skills enhance overall language proficiency (Bozorgian, 2012). Despite challenges, particularly with languages like Arabic with unique alphabets and phonetic systems, listening skills are vital for effective language learning (Abu Rabia, 2019; Aburezeq, 2019; Aldhafiri, 2020). Understanding the relationship between listening and speaking skills is essential for overcoming language learning challenges and achieving effective communication.

Teacher education, one of the most critical factors in foreign language teaching, also comes into play. In the education of a qualified teacher, it is essential to identify the challenges that pre-service teachers encounter in the foreign language they learn and to facilitate these difficulties as much as possible. Addressing the challenges pre-service teachers face in speaking and listening skills can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing future pre-service teachers (Han, 2017). By identifying the challenges that prevent pre-service teachers from improving their Arabic listening and speaking skills, this study can help provide information on strategies for providing and maintaining high-quality language education. Pre-service language teachers face numerous challenges while learning a language, including anxiety, low motivation, lack of practice, and lack of cultural awareness (Reynolds et al., 2021). Research on university students learning foreign languages has highlighted these difficulties. Zengin and Toptaş-Şahin (2023) found that pre-service teachers learning German, influenced by their native language knowledge, experienced significant speaking anxiety due to a lack of grammar knowledge. Additionally, Volodymyrivna et al. (2021) identified psychological challenges such as low self-esteem, demotivation, frustration, fear of failure, and the impact of quarantine measures during the language learning process. Therefore, this study aims to identify the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in their listening and speaking skills in the Arabic Language Teaching Programme and to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in their listening and speaking skills. Based on the aim of the study, the following research questions were as follows:

1. What are the problems pre-service Arabic language teachers face in learning listening and speaking skills?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the problems pre-service Arabic language teachers encounter in learning listening and speaking skills?

3. Literature Review

2.1. Pre-service Teacher Education and Foreign Language Teaching

Teaching is the most essential profession, and it stands as the cornerstone of society and shapes society's future. Teachers are pivotal in shaping students' intellectual and socio-emotional growth (Şahin-Toptaş, 2023, p. 58). It can be argued that foreign language teacher

education is essential. The pre-service teacher should have the necessary knowledge and skills to promote linguistic competence and cultural understanding among students. Pre-service foreign language teachers are still active learners of the target language as they are expected to have high proficiency in the target language. They are pre-service teachers because they also learn how to teach the target language. According to Richards (2008), foreign language teacher education is based on two significant factors: changing the knowledge base and teaching techniques to reflect changes in our understanding of foreign language teacher education and satisfying the expanding global need for language teachers. Considering these factors, foreign language pre-service teachers should start their careers with good language proficiency. For this reason, it is essential to identify pre-service teachers' challenges in learning a foreign language throughout their educational lives and to take steps to eliminate these challenges.

Language teacher education programs aim to instill language pre-service teachers with the necessary skills to teach the target language and also improve their language skills; thus, pre-service language teachers often encounter various difficulties in this process, such as anxiety, low motivation, lack of practice, and lack of cultural awareness (Tüfekçi-Can, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2021). Many studies have examined university-level students' problems while learning a foreign language. A study by Seghdi et al. (2021) shows that undergraduate students graduating from the Arabic Language and Literature department at Kharazmi University revealed that despite taking Language Lab courses in Listening and Speaking 1 to 3, the students did not achieve the desired level of speaking skills according to ACTFL guidelines. The main reasons for students' deficiencies in speaking Arabic were identified as lack of confidence in speaking, fear of making lexical errors, and inadequate use of colloquial Arabic, among other factors. Mubarak et al. (2024) research pointed out challenges faced by first-semester students at an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School University in improving their Arabic speaking skills, categorized into internal issues like lack of personal motivation and external problems such as a shortage of classrooms. However, Muassomah et al.'s (2022) study found three types of difficulties Indonesian university students face when learning Arabic: difficulties arising from the internal language, difficulties arising from the students' inner self, and external difficulties. Hastang and Ahmad's (2023) study on Arabic language learners in Indonesia claimed that students struggle with grammar and morphology, specifically understanding new terms, applying rules, and grasping sentence structure.

Zengin and Toptaş-Şahin (2023) examined speaking anxiety in a foreign language and, in particular, the effect of grammar knowledge on this type of anxiety. It was found that pre-service teachers learning German as a foreign language, as well as knowledge of their native language, were highly influential in their speaking skills and that lack of grammar knowledge was a significant factor. It is a factor that increases speech anxiety (Zengin & Toptaş-Şahin, 2023). Volodymyrivna et al.'s (2021) study showed that students have psychological challenges such as self-esteem, demotivation, frustration, fear of failure, and the impact of quarantine measures and conditions in learning foreign languages. These findings underscore anxiety and psychological factors in foreign languages and learning contexts.

A study by Kaldırım and Degeç (2017) found that university students learning Turkish as a foreign language at level B2 encountered various listening barriers. These included difficulties with accented speech, frequent idioms and proverbs, inadequate vocabulary development, and a lack of emphasis and voice intonation during speech. Ratnasari (2020) investigated the challenges encountered by students in developing speaking skills, involving three participants: two students from the Mechanical Engineering Department and one English teacher within

the same department. The study revealed four primary challenges: insufficient vocabulary, feelings of nervousness, an unsupportive learning environment, and a lack of understanding of grammar. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of language learning difficulties, indicating that a holistic approach addressing linguistic, psychological, and environmental aspects is essential for effective foreign language education. In this context, it can be said that the difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers learning a foreign language while learning a language are similar.

In conclusion, despite foreign language teachers' critical role in shaping future generations, pre-service teachers face diverse challenges in mastering that language. Key challenges include anxiety, motivation, practice, cultural awareness, speaking, listening, and grammar comprehension. Studies support these difficulties, highlighting the impact of factors like anxiety linked to grammar knowledge, self-esteem issues, and internal/external limitations. Acknowledging and addressing these challenges through tailored solutions is crucial to fostering confident and competent foreign language educators. It will ultimately benefit not only the teachers themselves but also the students they guide in the future.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive research design from quantitative research. According to Creswell (2008), quantitative research tests objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. In addition, Creswell (1994) defined quantitative research as "an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true" (p. 2). According to Creswell (2014), descriptive research involves systematically describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations.

Quantitative research is favored for producing objective, generalizable, and statistically significant results, making it ideal for measuring variables, testing hypotheses, and establishing cause-and-effect relationships with high reliability and validity (England, 2021). This approach is particularly efficient in data collection and analysis for large sample sizes, providing clear numerical evidence that facilitates generalization and prediction while maintaining objectivity and avoiding biases (Seeram, 2021). Conversely, qualitative methods are better suited for exploring complex phenomena and generating new hypotheses. However, their subjective nature and potential lack of replicability make them less suitable for contexts where precise, reliable data are paramount (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

3.2. Participants

One hundred ninety-five pre-service teachers in the Arabic Language Teaching Department of two universities in Türkiye, which provides Arabic as a foreign language, participated in this study. According to the data obtained, out of 195 participants, 165 were 18-25 years old, 17 were 25-32 years old, 13 were 32 years old and over, 153 were women, and 42 were men. At the time of data collection, these participants studied in the second and third years of the Arabic language teaching program. The participants are 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students who studied in the Arabic Language Teaching Department in the 2020-2021 academic year. 143 of the 195 teacher candidates received preparatory education in a foreign language, and 52 started their education directly from the 1st grade without studying in the Arabic Preparatory class.

Regarding oral communication skills, participants took "Speaking Skills-I" and "Listening and Pronunciation-I" courses in the first semester and "Speaking Skills-II" and "Listening and Pronunciation-II" courses in the second semester of the pre-service teacher education program. Then, they took "Advanced Speaking Skills-I" course in the third semester and "Advanced Speaking Skills-II" course in the fourth semester. In the Arabic Language Teaching Program, there are 36 "field knowledge courses," 22 "teaching knowledge courses," 12 "general culture courses," and 16 "elective courses" determined by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE, 2018). The Arabic Language Teaching Program has, in total, 72 hours (42%) of content knowledge courses, 56 (26%) hours of pedagogy courses, and 28 hours (14%) of general culture courses (CoHE, 2018).

3.3. Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

For the quantitative data of the study, two scales were used: "Challenges of Speaking Skills Scale" (CoSSS) and "Challenges of Arabic Listening Skills Scale" (CoLSS), developed by the researchers to identify the problems encountered by students studying the Arabic language while developing their speaking and listening skills. The researchers prepared CoSSS with 25 items under four factors and CoLSS, using the same method, with 24 items under four factors. Both scales were applied on a five-point Likert-type scale as "strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), partially agree (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5)". The data was collected online from the target audience during quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. SPSS 26 and Amos 26 statistical programs were used for validity and reliability analysis of the scale. Items included in the scale in the analysis of the data; Interpreted based on the ranges of 4.20–5.00 "Totally Agree," 3.40–4.19 "Agree," 2.60–3.39 "Partly Agree," 1.80–2.59 "Disagree," 1.00–1.79 "Strongly Disagree" (Creswell, 2015; Taşpınar, 2017).

During the "Challenges of Speaking Skills Scale" (CoSSS) preparation process, a literature review was conducted on the subject, and experts' opinions were consulted to determine the scale's content validity. A total of 47 items were determined for the scale. To determine the construct validity and reliability of the scale, the preliminary application was applied to 119 students studying in fields related to the research topic. During the "Challenges of Speaking Skills Scale" (CoSSS) preparation process, a literature review was conducted, and experts' opinions were consulted to determine the scale's content validity. A total of 45 items were determined for the scale. To determine the construct validity and reliability of the scale, the preliminary application was applied to 147 students studying in fields related to the research topic. The options on the scale are graded as "completely disagree," "disagree," "undecided," "agree," and "completely agree." Students were informed about the research and the developed scale and asked to answer the scale with sincere and honest thoughts. The quantitative data collected for the research were analyzed using the computer statistical program SPSS 26, and the scale was reliable and valid.

Cronbach Alpha (α) internal consistency coefficient was calculated regarding the reliability of the scales. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the speaking skills scale is 0.93, and the listening skills scale is 0.92. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered sufficient for the reliability of the test scores (Cohen et al., 2011). According to the exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis performed to measure the validity of the scales, both scales were found to have four factors.

4. Results

Pre-service teachers' acquisition of listening and speaking skills are dependent variables. In this study, an attempt was made to describe the current situation. Correlation analysis was performed

to evaluate whether the problems pre-service teachers encountered in acquiring listening and speaking skills were statistically significant. As an answer to the first research question of the study, "What are the challenges pre-service teachers face in listening and speaking skills?" participants' answers to the CoSSS and CoLSS were examined and evaluated.

In response to the first question, "What are the challenges pre-service teachers face in listening and speaking skills?" of the research, the data obtained from the scales are stated numerically in Table 1 and Table 2; in light of these data, the main problems encountered by pre-service teachers in Arabic speaking and listening skills are emotional difficulties, such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes and fear of ridicule, differences in sentence structure between Turkish and Arabic, and difficulties in speaking words with similar pronunciation. In addition, the need to learn many Arabic words, difficulties in remembering words, and the use of figurative words are also common problems. Lack of comprehension when Arabic is spoken quickly, and lack of vocabulary also negatively affect listening skills. There are no significant problems with grammar and course materials.

Table 1.
General Distribution of CoLSS

		Vocabulary and Semantics	Structure of Language	Teaching Listening Skills	The Materials of the Course	The Average of CoLSS
N	Valid	195	195	195	195	195
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.3778	2.4236	2.8513	2.5709	2.9904
Median		3.5000	2.4000	3.0000	2.3333	3.0833
Std. Deviation		.89117	.86374	1.09282	1.11017	.79684

Data obtained from the answers given by the pre-service teachers to the scale items reveals that they had problems in listening skills due to vocabulary teaching and listening skills teaching. Vocabulary teaching refers to introducing vocabulary in the context of reading and listening activities. What is meant by teaching listening skills is to involve pre-service teachers in activities that require active listening and responding, such as group discussions, question-answer sessions, and interactive implementations.

Considering the overall average of the scale, pre-service teachers encountered some problems in their listening skills. It was determined that the students were fine with the structure of the language while listening: Arabic grammar rules, use of prepositions and conjunctions, etc. It was seen that they did not have any problems in subjects such as. When the problems arising from teaching listening skills were analyzed, it was found that the students were only concerned when asked questions in Arabic during the lesson. It was determined that the students were fine with the materials used in the lesson.

Table 2.
General Distribution of CoSSS

		Emotional Reasons	Structure of Language	Teaching Speaking Skills	Vocabulary and Semantics	The Average of CoSSS
N	195	195	195	195	195	195
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.2262	2.7256	2.7128	3.9262	3.1434
Median		3.3333	2.6667	2.8000	4.2000	3.2400
Std. Deviation		1.10752	.98402	.89925	.95867	.83101

According to the data obtained from the answers given by the pre-service teachers to the scale items, they had challenges in speaking skills due to emotional reasons, the structure of the language, vocabulary teaching, and speaking skills teaching. Emotional reasons refer to the anxiety, worry, and fear of making mistakes that pre-service teachers feel while speaking Arabic. By teaching speaking skills, we mean engaging pre-service teachers in activities that require real-time communication, such as role-playing, debates, discussions, and simulations.

Considering the overall average of the scale, pre-service teachers encountered some problems with their speaking skills. Pre-service teachers feel anxious while speaking, become nervous if they cannot speak fluently, and fear being ridiculed by listeners. Additionally, they lack motivation, are easily disturbed by external factors, fear making mistakes, and doubt their speaking abilities. Linguistically, they struggle with differences between Turkish and Arabic sentence structures but do not face significant grammatical issues. They also encounter difficulties with words with similar pronunciations and believe they need to learn many new words to speak fluently. They often struggle to remember words and use figurative language, collocations, and idioms.

The second question of this study is, "Is there a significant relationship between the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in listening and speaking skills?" in response to the question, the answers given by the pre-service teachers to the CoSSS and the CoLSS were compared.

Table 3.

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis for CoSSS and CoLSS

		Emotional Reasons	Structure of Language (CoSSS)	Teaching Speaking Skills	Vocabulary and Semantics (CoSSS)	The Average of CoSSS
Vocabulary and Semantics (CoLSS)	Pearson r	.320**	.207**	.232**	.269**	.325**
	Sig.	.000	.004	.001	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195
Structure of Language (CoLSS)	Pearson r	.183*	.297**	.188**	.113	.239**
	Sig.	.011	.000	.009	.114	.001
	N	195	195	195	195	195
Teaching Listening Skills	Pearson r	.309**	.217**	.282**	.266**	.332**
	Sig.	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195
The Materials of the Course	Pearson r	.235**	.216**	.259**	.267**	.292**
	Sig.	.001	.002	.000	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195
The Average of CoLSS	Pearson r	.332**	.270**	.282**	.283**	.362**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson Correlation measured the relationship between the CoSSS and the CoLSS scores. Cohen (1988) interprets item-total correlations for the items in the measurement tool as low between 0.10 and 0.29, medium between 0.30 and 0.49, and high between 0.50 and 1.00. According to Büyüköztürk (2018) and Tavşancıl (2002), it is stated that item-total correlations above 0.30 will be sufficient, and items with these values are good items. According to the Pearson correlation analysis given in Table 3, it was seen that there was a moderate, positive ($r=.362$), and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship between the pre-service teachers' listening skills and the challenges they encountered in their speaking skills. Therefore, pre-service teachers' challenges in listening and speaking skills increase and decrease significantly. It was observed

that there was a moderate and positive relationship between the sub-dimensions of the two scales. It was observed that there was only a low (r=.113) relationship between challenges arising from the structure of the language in listening skills and challenges arising from word and semantic knowledge in speaking skills.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in their listening and speaking skills in the Arabic Language Teaching Program and to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between the challenges pre-service teachers encounter in their listening and speaking skills. The other aim was to make suggestions for the pre-service Arabic language teaching curriculum to eliminate these challenges if there is a close relationship between the challenges encountered in listening and speaking skills. This study provides insights into pre-service teachers' challenges in acquiring listening and speaking skills in Arabic as a foreign language. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of these challenges, encompassing linguistic, emotional, and pedagogical factors. The significant relationship between listening and speaking proficiency underscores the interconnected nature of these skills, emphasizing the importance of comprehensively addressing challenges to foster holistic language development. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of effective teaching methodologies and course materials in facilitating language acquisition and overcoming barriers to learning.

Firstly, results from the first question of the research showed that pre-service teachers generally had some issues with their listening skills. However, they did not struggle with the structure of the Arabic language, including grammar, prepositions, and conjunctions. Their primary challenge was answering questions in Arabic during lessons, although they were comfortable with the lesson materials. As for the problems that pre-service teachers encounter in their speaking skills, they experience anxiety and a lack of motivation when speaking, fearing ridicule and making mistakes, and are quickly disturbed by external factors. While they struggled with differences between Turkish and Arabic sentence structures and words with similar pronunciations, they did not face major grammatical issues. However, they needed to expand their vocabulary and had difficulty remembering words and using figurative language, collocations, and idioms. Linguistically, they needed help with differences between Turkish and Arabic sentence structures, pronunciation similarities, and the need to learn a substantial number of new words. They often had trouble remembering words and using figurative language, collocations, and idioms.

Regarding listening skills, they generally understood grammatical rules, prepositions, and conjunctions. However, they expressed concern when asked questions in Arabic during lessons, although they were comfortable with the materials. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive support to address emotional and linguistic language learning challenges.

Secondly, the results of the second question of the research showed a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between pre-service teachers' listening skills and the challenges they faced in their speaking skills. It indicated that challenges in listening and speaking skills tend to increase and decrease together. These results highlighted the interconnected nature of language skills, suggesting that improvements or difficulties in one area will likely impact the other. It indicated that challenges in listening and speaking skills tend to increase and decrease together. Therefore, adopting a holistic approach to language skill development in teacher training programs is essential, focusing on listening and speaking competencies simultaneously to foster better communication skills.

Also, this study's results align with previous research regarding the interconnectedness of listening and speaking skills in language acquisition. The correlation analysis revealed a significant and positive relationship between the challenges encountered in listening and speaking skills, suggesting that difficulties in one area can impact performance in the other. This reciprocal relationship underscored the necessity of addressing both skills comprehensively to enhance overall language proficiency. Similarly, Astorga (2015) found that improving listening proficiency through targeted instruction led to slight improvements in speaking abilities among higher education students. Enhancing listening skills can positively influence speaking proficiency, corroborating our findings on the interconnectedness of these skills. Both studies emphasized the importance of a balanced approach to teaching listening and speaking, highlighting that advancements in one area can lead to improvements in the other.

The studies on pre-service teachers' challenges of foreign language learning in higher education highlighted the students' diverse challenges during their learning process. These challenges encompass various aspects, including anxiety and psychological factors are prominent, with this study noting anxiety, fear of ridicule, and lack of motivation, while other studies report speaking anxiety, self-esteem issues, and fear of failure (Zengin & Toptaş-Şahin, 2023; Volodymyrivna et al., 2021). Vocabulary and grammar issues are significant in both cases, with this study emphasizing the need for vocabulary expansion and difficulties with similar pronunciations and other studies showing the impact of grammar knowledge on speaking anxiety and the challenges of insufficient vocabulary (Ratnasari, 2020; Hastang & Ahmad, 2023). Listening challenges are also common, with this study pointing to issues in answering questions in Arabic and other studies reporting difficulties with accented speech and idiomatic expressions (Kaldırım & Degeç, 2017).

This study specifically examined challenges in the Arabic Language Teaching Programme, whereas other studies investigated a range of languages, including German, Indonesian, and Turkish, providing a broader perspective. It proposed holistic curriculum changes to address integrated listening and speaking challenges, while other studies focused on specific areas like grammar or vocabulary without linking listening and speaking issues. Unlike other studies that often addressed these issues separately, we found a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between listening and speaking challenges. Additionally, the study did not discuss the impact of cultural factors or quarantine measures, which other studies do address. While other studies mentioned internal language difficulties (Muassomah et al., 2022), this study focused more on classroom interactions, lesson materials, and education, proposing integrated curriculum changes.

6. Limitations and Implications

The study has six implications for improving pre-service teachers' language skills and teacher education programs. Firstly, this study's emphasis on the role of teaching methodologies and course materials in influencing students' language acquisition experiences is addressed in the research by Fu et al. (2023). They explored the relationship between metacognitive awareness and listening skills among Chinese EFL learners, finding that metacognitive awareness significantly enhances listening performance, supporting the development of speaking skills. It aligns with our conclusion that the structure of language courses, including content and delivery methods, can significantly impact students' ability to develop listening and speaking skills. Effective teaching strategies that foster metacognitive awareness and other supportive methodologies are essential in addressing the specific challenges associated with language acquisition.

Secondly, the study's results and the above research collectively emphasize the interconnectedness of listening and speaking skills. They highlight the necessity for comprehensive and effective teaching strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners. Educators should focus on integrated approaches that simultaneously develop both listening and speaking proficiencies to overcome the challenges in language acquisition. Addressing these skills together, supported by well-structured language courses and innovative teaching methodologies, can significantly enhance students' language proficiency and learning experiences. The findings underscore the need for ongoing professional development opportunities for language instructors to enhance their pedagogical strategies and effectively address the challenges faced by language learners. Workshops, seminars, and peer collaboration initiatives can provide educators with the tools and resources to create supportive learning environments conducive to language acquisition and proficiency development. Moreover, collaboration with language acquisition and cultural studies experts can further enrich educators' understanding of the complexities of teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

The study underscores the significance of emotional factors in language learning. Emotional barriers, such as anxiety or self-confidence issues, can hinder students' progress and affect their performance in listening and speaking activities. Recognizing and addressing these emotional challenges is essential for creating a supportive learning environment conducive to language development. Studies on the effect of emotional factors in foreign language learning have shown that emotional factors play a significant role in language learning, affecting both learners' cognitive processes and overall achievement (Shao et al., 2020; Yu, 2022). In order to reduce the anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers and provide emotional support, it is necessary to create a supportive classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. Workshops can be organized to manage language learning anxiety, including techniques such as mindfulness and relaxation exercises. Cultural content can be added to lessons to develop cultural awareness in the target language and make language learning more enjoyable.

Educators can use the identified challenges to design targeted interventions to improve pre-service teachers' listening and speaking skills. Strategies incorporating multimedia resources, interactive activities, and real-life simulations into language instruction could help address these challenges effectively. In addition, educators and language practitioners should prioritize addressing the identified challenges through tailored interventions and instructional approaches. By recognizing and mitigating the obstacles to listening and speaking proficiency, educators can better support pre-service teachers and enhance their overall language learning experiences. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to cultivating proficient language users with the necessary skills to engage meaningfully in linguistic and cultural exchange. In such processes, communicative materials should be used instead of non-communicative ones (Arikan, 2014, p. 22).

Instead of considering the activities for listening and speaking skills separately in the curriculum prepared for the Arabic language teaching undergraduate program, integrated skill development practices that address the relationship between these two skills can be designed. The curriculum can be organized around thematic units that include relevant words, expressions, and cultural contexts to make learning more relatable and meaningful. Pre-service teachers can also be encouraged to use Arabic in practical, everyday contexts by applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and task-based approaches that prioritize real-life communication scenarios. To conclude, formative assessments can provide regular, constructive feedback on listening and speaking performance. Peer evaluation sessions can be

implemented where pre-service teachers can practice speaking and get feedback from their classmates.

The study has three limitations. First, it was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced the participants' learning experiences and responses. The online data collection method implemented during quarantine might have introduced biases or limitations due to technological constraints or resource access differences. Therefore, replicating the study in a traditional classroom setting could provide additional insights into pre-service teachers' challenges in their language learning journey.

Finally, although the researchers developed scales to assess the challenges encountered in listening and speaking skills, the reliability and validity of these instruments were evaluated using statistical analyses. However, self-reported data collected through Likert-type scales may have inherent limitations or biases. Future studies could incorporate multiple data collection methods, such as observations or interviews, to enhance the validity of the findings. The other limitation is this study only focuses on the listening and speaking skills of the participants. Therefore, their proficiency in other language skills (writing and reading) and the probable influences of those skills are out of the scope of this study.

Ethical Issues

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from Gazi University on 17.12.2020 with the number E.135747.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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