



IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING: MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN INTERVENTION PRACTICUM MODEL AMONG ENGLISH PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract:

Neglecting listening and speaking in the English classroom remains a problematic aspect. Considering pre-service English teachers (PSETs) as the key factor that could help address this issue could be one approach. In pursuit of that path, an intervention program to train them to perform better in teaching listening and speaking was put into practice and assessed. 16 future teachers were part of an intervention program that required them the performance of three microteaching classes (MT1 listening, MT2 speaking, and MT3 integrated). A case study methodology with a pre-experimental quantitative descriptive method was used. Results showed a significant improvement in the teaching performance of the PSET between MT1 and MT2; in MT3, a modest positive difference was observed.

Keywords: improving listening and speaking teaching, pre-service teachers, intervention practicum

1. Introduction

It has been extensively stated that listening and speaking practice in EFL classrooms is crucial for language learning (Asmae & Sana, 2024; Zhao & Lee, 2022), and multiple authors have said that the constant practice of both skills simultaneously is beneficial for EFL students (Hong, 2025; Shago, Bushisso & Olamo, 2025). However, the practice of those skills is usually neglected in EFL classrooms (Hasan, 2023; Abdullah & Hassan Al-Ahdal, 2024; Ahmad, Shabbir, Azam, & Jahan, 2024). This raises the question: Why do English teachers neglect listening and speaking practice? Do English teachers know how to teach?

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If we reflect on the training that every English teacher (or pre-service English teacher—PSET) completes, we might recall that courses in which the importance of developing the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is included in the training. In those courses, the importance of listening comprehension and speaking practice is highlighted, being in agreement with the theoretical principles of EFL (Fenuku, 2024).

But when it comes to the practice of specific skills, such as listening and speaking, some statistics reveal that not many ELT bachelor's programs (from 2800 universities in 56 countries, only 17 universities) include specific courses intended to learn how to design those particular activities. With those numbers, we could ask: is the art of learning how to teach listening comprehension and speaking skills being neglected? Is this one of the reasons language students all around the world express their weaknesses in these two skills?

Examining the common strengths and weaknesses in the training that PSET receive regarding listening and speaking classes is a relevant topic in language teaching.

2. Literature Review

The practice of listening and speaking skills in EFL classrooms is crucial for language learning (Asmae & Sana, 2024; Zhao & Lee, 2022; Elisathusilawani, 2023; Lestari & Nugraha, 2023). Multiple authors have said that the constant practice of both skills simultaneously is beneficial for EFL students (Alisoy, 2022; Zhao & Lee, 2022; Hong, 2025; Shago, Bushisso & Olamo, 2025). Despite these facts highlighting the importance of listening and speaking practice, it is common to neglect these skills in EFL classrooms (Hasan, 2023; Abdullah & Hassan Al-Ahdal, 2024; Ahmad, Shabbir, Azam, & Jahan, 2024). The sustained and constant practice of listening and speaking in the English classes must be part of the regular development of the activities.

In that English learning dynamic, the presence of pre-service English teachers should be recalled. Adequate training before entering the classrooms could be a significant change for learning dynamics. It could be taken for granted that PSET received a proper training, however, different studies (Li, Kuang & Dan, 2023; Wang & Lam, 2024; Korucu-Kış & Bakla, 2026; Abrar *et al.*, 2024; Hong, 2025) have highlighted that regardless of whether pre-service English teachers master theoretical information dealing with language teaching, they display a lack of ability to apply that knowledge in the teaching practice, particularly in listening comprehension and speaking classes.

Frequent errors identified among PSETs are related to the practice of audio-oral skills, that is to say, listening and speaking. Alamri (2018) talked about the inability to select the appropriate teaching method, assessment technique, and time distribution for the content to teach. Nababan & Amalia (2021) observed the use of different methods of teaching and communicating the content effectively. On the other hand, Dzormeku, Veermans, and McMullen (2024) highlighted low confidence, hesitation, and low fluency in oral activities.

Çapar (2024) mentioned the inability to correct sounds, stress, and intelligibility due to limited competence in teaching pronunciation, which may alert them to the need to either take phonetics and phonology courses or rehearse their oral speech before addressing their classes. This deficiency could be related to the need to have low confidence, hesitation, and low fluency in oral activities.

That information led us to think that, in some situations, EFL teachers probably avoid practicing listening comprehension and speaking in class because they did not receive proper preparation to adequately address those classes.

In this work, we present the results of the implementation of an intervention program to train pre-service language teachers in addressing listening and speaking classes more effectively. The implementation was carried out with a group of pre-service language teachers who were taking a mandatory course called "Teaching of Listening Comprehension and Oral Expression." Although in that course students learn about the teaching and assessment of listening and speaking skills, some faults were observed over time in teaching practice, which triggered the interest in proposing a different approach: an intervention program that emphasized the controlled supervised practicum.

In this study, we aimed to:

- Examine common strengths and weaknesses in lesson designs.
- Assess the effectiveness of the intervention program for learning how to design listening and speaking classes.

3. Material and Methods

The effectiveness of the proposed intervention program was tested using a case study pre-experimental quantitative descriptive method. Performance of the pre-service language teachers before and after the intervention model was measured numerically using standardized rubrics (Khatri & Katri, 2022).

The case study methodology, as described by several authors (Lewis, 205; Yin, 2018; Alpi & Evans, 2019), relied on the fact of studying the effectiveness of the model; research was conducted in the real educational environment of the sample; the case was observed through three school periods; and data were collected using different sources: observations, evaluation rubrics, reflections and quantitative measures.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 16 pre-service language students enrolled in the course 'Design of Listening and Speaking Activities' (DLS) during the second school period of 2025. The sampling model was a census (Creswell, 2021) because all sixteen pre-service language teachers enrolled in the course participated in the study.

3.2 The Programs: Current and the Intervention

The official program of the course contains 5 units that cover general aspects of listening and speaking, language teaching in Mexico, listening comprehension teaching, speaking teaching, and the integration of listening and speaking in a class.

The course is regularly developed through 16 weeks of classes. Every week, there are two sessions: one session of 2 hours of classes and one session of 3 hours of classes. Regarding the practicum, the DLS course program proposes 6 practicum teaching activities, which students perform in a real EFL classroom. PSTs must find groups to perform their practicum.

The intervention program for the DLS course (IPDLS) was based on the official DLS course but included some modifications that might be beneficial for the PSTs, both in content and in the practicum.

Regarding the content, IPDLS included not only the theoretical principles proposed in the program but also practical principles that guided the design of the microteaching classes.

In the practicum, the current model proposes 6 microteachings: the students have to find a group to teach in an institution (which helps with the self-managing skills); they have to observe the group and, using the observations, design the class. In IPDLS, regular teachers of the DLS course organized the groups with students collected from the communities. The PSTs receive demographic information (age, grade of schooling, and first language). The content as well as the methodology to follow for the classes must comply with the official Mexican English program.

Content was adapted to the level and age of the students. PSETs designed and taught 3 microteaching classes: one with an emphasis on listening comprehension, one with an emphasis on speaking, and a third one called integrated, in which both skills, listening comprehension and speaking, were practiced equally. Classes were taught in the school environment of the PSETs, which increased the teacher's control and supervision of the practicum.

The PSETs were paired to design and teach the classes. They taught a course with 16 enrolled children. The enrolled children completed the following requirements: they were students at public schools, able to read and write, and did not have formal studies in the English language. Before starting teaching, PSETs were given 2 weeks to prepare micro-teaching.

3.3 Data collection

Data were collected using three evaluation rubrics to record the performance of each microteaching activity, separated into: one rubric of evaluation of listening microteaching, one rubric of evaluation of speaking microteaching, and one rubric of evaluation of integrated microteaching. Those instruments collected quantitative and qualitative data. Compliance with each established criterion granted one point. Partial or noncompliance with the criteria granted 0 points. Qualitative data (notes and suggestions) were also

registered in the rubrics. Although PSTs were paired for the activities, results are presented individually.

4. Results and Discussion

During the performance of the listening class microteaching 1 (MT1), some recurrent errors that revealed the use of inadequate teaching strategies for children were observed: PSTs provided grammar explanations, asked the children to translate sentences from English into Spanish, and assigned extensive writing activities. PSTs received feedback after teaching their classes, which noted both positive and inadequate activities they performed. Also, they participated in a weekly group reflection activity to evaluate their performance and the content presented, with the aim of improving their future microteaching.

In the speaking class, microteaching 2 (MT2), it was observed that the mistakes from microteaching 1 were significantly reduced. However, new mistakes arose: errors from the PSTs during modeling of pronunciation (incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary in English), use of audios at a high speed, and content not related to the topic of the class, for example. Problems with pronunciation confirmed the assertion of theorists (Çapar, *ibidem*; Dzormeku, Veermans & McMullen, *ibidem*) that PSTs avoid oral activities in class because they have pronunciation issues.

At this stage, PSTs also received feedback after teaching their classes and participated in a weekly group reflection activity to evaluate their performance and the content presented, with the aim of improving their future microteaching.

In the integrated class microteaching 3 (MT3), the following errors were registered: overloaded classes with a significant amount of vocabulary, presentation of words unfamiliar to the students, and neglect of students during the activities.

Statistical results described a consistent and clear improvement across the three microteaching activities.

Table 1: Students' Performance Across Three
Microteaching Assessments During the Intervention

Statistic	MT 1	MT 2	MT 3
Mean	4.88	7.02	7.44
Media	5.00	7.50	7.60

A strong improvement between MT1 and MT2 was observed; the increase between MT2 and MT3 was smaller but also showed a positive variation.

To observe longitudinal changes and to determine if there were significant differences in performance across MT1, MT2, and MT3, the Friedman test was applied. Results were:

$$\chi^2(2) = 14.00$$

$$p = .0009 \text{ (} p < .001 \text{)}$$

N = 16

Results indicated that there was a significant difference in PSTs' performance across the three microteaching activities.

Measuring the magnitude of the longitudinal effect using Kendall's $W = .438$; results represent a moderate effect size, suggesting positive changes numerical and, consequently, educational.

Calculating the magnitude of improvement from MT1 to MT3, results showed that 14 of the 16 PSTs improved (87.5%), and 2 PSTs decreased in their performance (12.5%). Mean absolute improvement was $7.44 - 4.88 = +2.56$ points, providing a median individual improvement of $+2.70$ points. Results revealed that PSTs' performance improved progressively through the microteaching presentations, particularly when comparing MT1 and MT2, proposing that facing an eventual intervention program with more MT sessions would diminish the error in the practicum.

5. Recommendations

After the implementation of the intervention program, we could observe that several aspects of the teaching of listening and speaking are taken for granted by PSETs, making close supervision more precise.

It was revealed that PSETs relied on grammar and translation to address the content. These strategies were the foundation of the grammar translation method and the audiolingual approach, both of which are considered outdated language teaching methods (Naghiyeva, 2025). Regardless, PSETs are familiar with other language teaching approaches (communicative approach, task-based, and TPR method), which are considered ideal to teach children (Pinter, 2015; Ziyoda, 2026), they relied on what they considered was correct or at least a safe bet because grammar translation and the audiolingual approach are still being used to teach English in the schools. It could be inferred that PSETs and in-service teachers tend to apply what they consider useful from their experience, neglecting current trends in language teaching.

Observing the errors in pronunciation made by the pre-service teachers confirmed the assertion of Çapar, Dzormeku, Veermans & McMullen regarding the reasons for avoiding speaking practice in class. One consideration for PSETs is to check the meaning and pronunciation of words, phrases, and sentences presented in class and to not be ashamed of ignoring those aspects, but to be responsible for properly addressing the information. Also, PSETs should be encouraged to self-evaluate and be conscious of their weaknesses in teaching and try to overcome those weaknesses using autonomous practices.

Close supervision of practicum is probably one of the most necessary activities in the preparation of language teachers. Experience is crucial in every field of knowledge, and language teaching is not the exception (Edge & Garton, 2013; Darder *et al.*, 2023). As teachers of PESTs, we should not leave them "unattended" during the practicum. Training them and giving them autonomy seems to be the right approach. But autonomy

could lead to the installation of detrimental habits if PSTs are not aware of the mistakes and errors they make.

6. Conclusion

During the pre-service period, pre-service teachers take courses that include a practicum, which is a transition between the theoretical preparation and real classroom practice. During that period, pre-service teachers have the opportunity to shape their pedagogical and ethical beliefs, professional identity, and instructional habits. Meanwhile, experience, institutional routines, and contextual constraints shape in-service teachers. Pre-service teachers are more receptive to feedback and willing to use new findings (pedagogically and technologically).

Listening and speaking are crucial for the language learning process; they have been highlighted from a theoretical perspective but neglected in practice, and the practicum performed by PSET supports this assertion. Despite the theoretical knowledge that PSET possess in teaching strategies, they tend to neglect the practice of listening and speaking, leading us to conclude that there is a gap between theory and practice that must be addressed, for example, through the implementation of intervention programs that emphasize the practicum.

The intervention program implemented among the PSET in this study focused on both learning the theory of teaching listening and speaking and putting it into practice. Designing classes with the actual English program of Mexico might be an asset, as during the in-service period they will already know the content and how to apply it in the classroom.

But besides the methodology of teaching, the close supervision and constant feedback might be a key factor. New teachers might face multiple challenges, and having an experienced teacher by their side to support them and advise them is useful. Progressive development of teaching performance showed the importance of supervision. Results also showed that the design of integrated classes (listening and speaking together) facilitates the development of the PSETs over individual listening or speaking ones. The design of lessons, activities, strategies, and assessment of the content and skills nurtures the abilities of future teachers. We might also conclude that the more involved the PSETs are in practicum, the better their performance in pedagogical activities.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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