

was found that, most of the teachers as well as students suggested the provision of CDs or DVDs and complementary books and changing and updating the books.

In an evaluation of two series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English language in Iranian high schools from 1965 to 2010, Azizifar, Koosha, and Lotfi (2010) found that no significant changes have been made in the textbooks in this period. Besides, according to Shafiee Nahrkhalaji (2012), the general impression, technical quality and appropriateness of the in-house textbooks (i.e. edited by Ministry of Education) have been a subject for debate and criticism in Iran.

### Conclusion

This study provides feedback to the Ministry of Education, teachers, students, as well as researchers in the field of English language education. It raises important issues in the field of English language education and has implications for curriculum design, materials development, and textbook writing. This study is by no means comprehensive and there are some limitations which may be addressed in future studies. The data were collected at one point in time, and as the nature of research in social settings entails, the views of English teachers and learners towards teaching language skills could change over time. The findings are therefore open to confirmation

through replication research and more in-depth quantitative as well as qualitative analyses. In addition, in fact each of the open-ended questions could be a separate research question and worthy of more inspection and investigation.

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**Table 12**  
**Students' ideas about textbooks regarding speaking**

| Ideas       | Students | Suggestions                             | Students |
|-------------|----------|---|----------|
| No response | 2.00 %   |   |          |
| Proponent   | 62.50 %  |   |          |
| Opponent    | 35.50 %  | No suggestion                           | 34.00 %  |
|             |          | No attention is paid to speaking skill  | 12.50 %  |
|             |          | Use of complementary books              | 12.00 %  |
|             |          | Changing and updating the book          | 18.50 %  |
|             |          | Taking use of CDs                       | 13.50 %  |
|             |          | Make speaking sections more interesting | 11.00 %  |

It is shown in table 12 that 35.50 % of the students are displeased with the books' attention to speaking skill. Most of them suggested changing the book, paying attention to this skill in the book, and providing complementary books and CDs. Other less frequent suggestions are presented in the table.

## Discussion

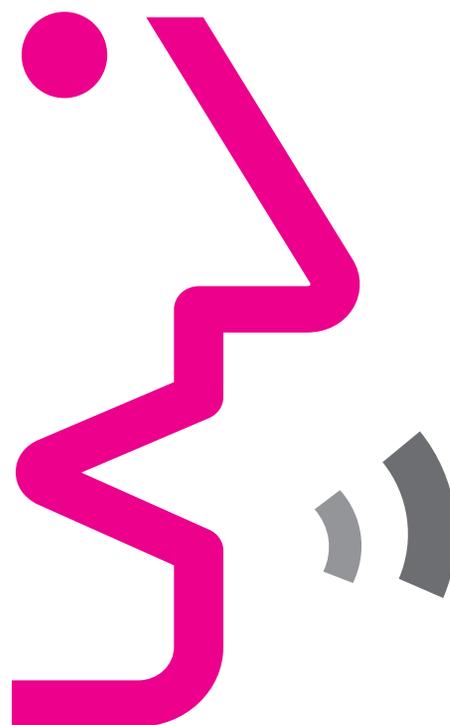
The results of this research regarding the materials used in EFL classrooms revealed that most EFL teachers commonly used whiteboards or blackboards, the use of which is 56.14 % in the case of speaking and 51.46 % in listening. The other commonly used materials are CD or DVD players (42.10 %) in the case of listening and pictures (38.59 %) in speaking. The results also indicated that other materials are not used by most of the teachers. This can be because of lack of such equipment or materials in most high schools.

The results of the research regarding teachers' goals of teaching listening revealed that most of the teachers expressed teaching correct pronunciation and helping the students

develop listening comprehension as their goals; however, the percentage of the students who believe they get these issues is lower. This can reveal that the teachers do not get their expected results.

Furthermore, most of the teachers stated enabling the students to communicate orally as their goal of teaching speaking; whereas, the percentage of the students who claimed they attained this end is lower. It is worth mentioning that 17.00 % and 14.00 % of the students declared they learned nothing from their teachers' teaching listening and speaking, respectively, which are rather high percentages regarded as negative marks of the efficacy of these classes. In addition, the data from student questionnaires revealed that, in general, most students are pleased with the teaching of these skills and their satisfaction is almost to the same degree.

The research, moreover, searched for the degree of satisfaction with the textbooks available in high schools. The findings revealed that high percentages of the teachers and the students are dissatisfied with the books' attention to listening and speaking skills. It



**Table 11**

***Effective points of speaking class***

| Themes                       | Students |
|------------------------------|----------|
| No response                  | 12.00 %  |
| Gaining speaking skill       | 27.00 %  |
| Correct pronunciation        | 15.50 %  |
| Vocabulary meaning and usage | 10.50 %  |
| Motivation to speak English  | 7.00 %   |
| Imitating teacher's speaking | 6.00 %   |
| Listening comprehension      | 5.00 %   |
| Nothing                      | 14.00 %  |

Table 11 shows that 14.00 % of the students learned nothing from teaching speaking. 27.00 % of them believe that they have learned to communicate through teaching speaking. Learning to pronounce correctly (15.50 %) and knowing the meaning and use of new vocabulary items (10.50 %) are other rather frequent remarks. Other less frequent statements are shown in the table.

*Item number 4: Is your English book satisfactory in helping you gain speaking skill? If not, what is your suggestion?*



The data show that 69.59 % of the teachers are dissatisfied with the books' attention to speaking skill. As it is presented in table 8, most of them (36.81%) believe that the books do not pay any attention to teaching this skill. A quarter of them (26.90 %) again expect the authorities to change and update the book.

*Students (Listening skill)*

*Item number 3: What effective points have you acquired from your teacher teaching listening?*

**Table 9**

**Effective points of listening class**

| Themes                       | Students |
|------------------------------|----------|
| No response                  | 11.50 %  |
| Gaining listening skill      | 12.00 %  |
| Listening comprehension      | 16.00 %  |
| Pronunciation                | 18.50 %  |
| Vocabulary meaning and usage | 4.00 %   |
| Learning English language    | 10.50 %  |
| Learning grammatical points  | 5.00 %   |
| Improving speaking skill     | 4.00 %   |
| Nothing                      | 17.00 %  |

As it is shown in table 9, students have different ideas about what they learn from their teachers teaching listening. The highest percentages of the students (18.50 %) have declared that they learn how to pronounce the words correctly. This is exactly in line with the goal of 28.07 % of the teachers. However, 17.00 % of them expressed that they learn nothing. This percentage of negative answer is

rather high. Other less frequent responses are presented in the table.

*Item number 4: Is your English book satisfactory in helping you gain listening skill? If not, what is your suggestion?*

**Table 10**

**Students' ideas about textbooks regarding listening**

| Ideas       | Students | Suggestions                             | Students |
|-------------|----------|---|----------|
| No response | 1.50 %   |   |          |
| Proponent   | 43.50 %  |   |          |
| Opponent    | 55.00 %  | No suggestion                           | 20.50 %  |
|             |          | No attention is paid to listening skill | 10.00 %  |
|             |          | Use of complementary books              | 12.50 %  |
|             |          | Changing the whole book                 | 11.50 %  |
|             |          | Taking use of CDs                       | 27.50 %  |
|             |          | Reducing book volume                    | 11.50 %  |
|             |          | Providing films                         | 6.50 %   |

The data revealed through this item show that 55.00 % of the students are displeased with the books' attention to listening skill. Interestingly, 10.00 % of the students believe that no attention is paid to this skill in the book. Most of the students (27.50 %) have suggested the use of CDs in teaching this skill. Other less frequent remarks are shown in table 10.

*Students (Speaking skill)*

*Item number 3: What effective points have you acquired from your teacher teaching speaking?*

Teachers have stated different goals for teaching listening skill to their students. Teaching pronunciation and listening comprehension have the highest percentages.

*Item number 4: Do you think that the textbook / material you are using to teach listening is appropriate? If not, what is your suggestion?*

**Table 6**  
**Teachers' ideas about textbooks regarding listening**

| Ideas       | Teachers | Suggestions  | Teachers |
|-------------|----------|--|----------|
| No response | 4.67 %   |  |          |
| Proponent   | 30.99 %  | No suggestion  | 4.13 %   |
| Opponent    | 64.32 %  | Updating and changing                                | 20.05 %  |
|             |          | Providing CD or DVD                                  | 39.23 %  |
|             |          | Decreasing volume                                    | 12.45 %  |
|             |          | No attention is paid to listening skill in the book. | 18.29 %  |
|             |          | Complementary books for listening                    | 8.35 %   |

The analysis of this item shows that 64.32 % of the teachers are dissatisfied with books' attention to listening skill, giving some suggestions regarding what they think the problem is. As it is presented in table 6, most of them (39.23%) recommended that the authorities should provide CDs or DVDs to help them teach this skill. Interestingly, 18.29 % of them believe that the books have not paid any attention to teaching this skill.

*Teachers (Speaking skill)*

*Item number 3: What are your goals for teaching speaking?*

**Table 7**

**Teachers' goals for teaching speaking**

| Goals                              | Teachers |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| No response                        | 3.50 %   |
| Being able to communicate          | 59.06 %  |
| Using new vocabulary               | 5.84 %   |
| Getting motivated to learn English | 5.26 %   |
| Comprehending oral language        | 4.67 %   |
| Pronunciation                      | 5.26 %   |
| Using new grammatical points       | 4.67 %   |
| Getting self confidence to speak   | 5.26 %   |
| Learning English use               | 5.84 %   |

As it is shown in table 7, 59.06 % of the teachers stated that they teach speaking skill in order to enable the students to communicate orally and express their meaning.

*Item number 4: Do you think that the textbook/material you are using to teach reading is appropriate? If not, what is your suggestion?*

**Table 8**

**Teachers' ideas about textbooks regarding speaking**

| Ideas       | Teachers | Suggestions   | Teachers |
|-------------|----------|---|----------|
| No response | 14.61 %  |   |          |
| Proponent   | 15.78 %  | No suggestion                                       | 4.21 %   |
| Opponent    | 69.59 %  | Updating and changing                               | 26.90 %  |
|             |          | Providing CD or DVD                                 | 4.67%    |
|             |          | Decreasing volume                                   | 7.60 %   |
|             |          | No attention is paid to listening skill in the book | 36.81 %  |
|             |          | Complementary books for listening                   | 14.03 %  |
|             |          | Making applicable to real life situations           | 6.43 %   |

The first line of the table reveals that most of the teachers always or often allot special time to teaching L/S skills in their classes. The next line shows that most teachers often or sometimes teach L/S as a whole class activity. However, the number of those who *never* teach these skills as a whole class activity is also considerable.

The second item looked for the materials used by the teachers. The data are shown in table 3. As it is clear from the table, boards, then CD or DVD players, and then pictures are the tools most of them used, whereas other tools were not utilized by many teachers. In general, it can be said that the use of these materials is not high among EFL teachers.

**Table 3**  
*Materials for teaching listening and speaking*

| Materials                       | Users   |         | No response |        |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|
|                                 | L       | S       | L           | S      |
| <b>Computer</b>                 | 39.18 % | 32.74 % | 4.67 %      | 2.92 % |
| <b>Video projector</b>          | 30.40 % | 23.97 % | 4.67 %      | 2.92 % |
| <b>CD or DVD player</b>         | 42.10 % | 33.91 % | 5.26 %      | 2.92 % |
| <b>Whiteboard or blackboard</b> | 51.46 % | 56.14 % | 4.67 %      | 2.92 % |
| <b>Pictures</b>                 | 32.16 % | 38.59 % | 5.26 %      | 2.92 % |

*Students (listening and speaking)*

Table 4 shows the result of the answers given by students to items number one and two of L/S sections in the students' questionnaire.

**Table 4**  
*Statistics on the listening and speaking skills regarding teachers and classes*

|   | Very much |         | Much    |         | Somewhat |         | A little |         | Little |        | No response |        |
|---|-----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|
|   | L         | S       | L       | S       | L        | S       | L        | S       | L      | S      | L           | S      |
| <b>Teacher's attention to L/S skill</b> | 39.50 %   | 37.50 % | 29.50 % | 24.50 % | 22.50 %  | 27.00 % | 5.50 %   | 8.00 %  | 1.50 % | 2.00 % | 1.50 %      | 1.00 % |
| <b>Usefulness of L/S class</b>          | 19.00 %   | 19.00 % | 42.00 % | 32.50 % | 27.00 %  | 32.00 % | 8.50 %   | 11.00 % | 2.50 % | 4.00 % | 1.00 %      | 1.50 % |

As it is shown in the table, most of the students are highly pleased with the attention of their teachers to teaching these skills and the efficacy of their classes.

**Qualitative/Quantitative Findings**

*Teachers (Listening skill)*

The qualitative analysis of the open-ended items from teachers' listening questionnaire is presented below. The themes arising from each item are presented in separate tables.

Item number 3: What are your goals for teaching listening?

**Table 5**  
*Teachers' goals for teaching listening*

| Goals                            | Teachers |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| <b>No response</b>               | 4.67 %   |
| <b>Pronunciation</b>             | 28.07 %  |
| <b>Listening comprehension</b>   | 25.73 %  |
| <b>Prerequisite of speaking</b>  | 16.95 %  |
| <b>Improving listening skill</b> | 14.61 %  |
| <b>Improving learning</b>        | 7.60 %   |



● **Instruments**

Two paper and pencil questionnaires were developed by the researchers after a careful study of already existing teacher evaluation questionnaires. The questionnaires had three sections. The first section was a cover page introducing the questionnaire and asking the participants for some demographic information. The other two sections included some fixed-response (i.e., multiple choice and Likert scale) and open-ended items about teaching listening and speaking skills. The language used was Persian. Moreover, the questionnaires were revised several times in a pilot study meant to investigate the clarity of the items and to add or drop faulty items. The reliability of the items estimated through Cronbach's alpha for multiple choice items was 80.03 (teacher questionnaire) and 82.14 (student questionnaire), and for the Likert scale items, it was 81.05 and 80.26, respectively.

● **Procedure**

The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers and sometimes with the help of the authorities in the Ministry of Education (West Azerbaijan Office) in March, April, and May 2012 and were collected a week after distribution. They were collected and archived for later analysis to find out common ideas about the way listening and speaking skills are

taught in Iranian high schools.

● **Data analysis**

The first section of the questionnaires was studied to find out the demographic information about the participants. In the other sections, the answers to the fixed-response items were counted up for each item and the frequency of the responses were calculated. Besides, the answers to the open-ended items were studied and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The researchers also made use of triangulation by checking the accuracy of teachers' claims against data coming from students. The results of the analyses as well as the relevant discussions are presented in the following sections.

**Results**

**Quantitative findings**

The quantitative analysis of fixed-response items is presented below. First, the data coming from the two teacher questionnaires, that is listening and speaking, are analyzed. Then, the corresponding data from the two student questionnaires are analyzed.

*Teachers (listening and speaking)*

The first item dealt with the way the teachers organize their listening (L) and speaking (S) classes (see table 2).

**Table 2**

***Class organization in teaching listening and speaking***

| Organization   | Always or almost always |         | Often   |         | Sometimes |         | Never   |         | No response |        |
|--|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|
|  | L                       | S       | L       | S       | L         | S       | L       | S       | L           | S      |
| I allot special time to work on students' L/S ability. | 35.08 %                 | 30.40 % | 30.40 % | 34.50 % | 21.05 %   | 25.14 % | 9.35 %  | 8.18 %  | 4.09 %      | 1.75 % |
| I teach L/S as a whole-class activity.                 | 8.77 %                  | 14.61 % | 31.57 % | 26.90 % | 27.48 %   | 28.07 % | 28.07 % | 28.07 % | 4.09 %      | 2.33 % |

found teachers competent in listening skill but inadequate in writing skill, and that teachers used speaking skill most in their lessons.

Dahmardeh (2009) conducted a study to investigate English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iran as well as the extent of its compatibility with communicative pedagogy. He found that while the newly designed curriculum document is to a great extent compatible with communicative pedagogy, the materials used by teachers, as well as the current ELT program, are mainly structurally based and cannot be considered as communicative. These findings and the existence of a lack of research on language skills teaching in Iran can be good sources of motivation for conducting a study in this regard.

This study was accordingly an endeavor to look into the current situation of teaching language skills in Iranian high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. More specifically, the research was aimed to find out the attitudes of EFL teachers and students toward teaching language skills of *listening and speaking*.

To this end, this study sought answers to the following major research questions:

1. What are the opinions of English teachers on teaching listening skill in Iran's high schools?
2. What are the opinions of English teachers on teaching speaking skill in Iran's high schools?
3. What are the opinions of students on teaching listening skill in Iran's high schools?
4. What are the opinions of students on teaching speaking skill in Iran's high schools?

## Method

### ● Participants

Both male and female teachers (N=171) and students (N=200) from different schools, either public or private in almost all cities and some

villages of West Azerbaijan, Iran, participated in this survey (see table 1). Sampling was of the convenience type and an attempt was made to include as many teachers from as many schools as possible to make the sample more representative of the population.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic information of the participants**

|                       |                         | Students | Teachers |       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| <b>Total</b>          | -                       | 200      | 171      |       |
| <b>Gender</b>         | Male                    | 119      | 83       |       |
|                       | Female                  | 81       | 88       |       |
| <b>First language</b> | Azeri                   | 131      | 120      |       |
|                       | Kurdish                 | 59       | 47       |       |
|                       | Persian                 | 7        | 4        |       |
|                       | Armenian                | 3        | -        |       |
| <b>District</b>       | Urmia district no. 1    | 41       | 26       |       |
|                       | Urmia district no. 2    | 38       | 21       |       |
|                       | Silvana                 | 30       | 8        |       |
|                       | Nazlu                   | 31       | 5        |       |
|                       | SumayBradust            | 20       | 6        |       |
|                       | Chaypareh               | 40       | 8        |       |
|                       | Mahabad                 | -        | 7        |       |
|                       | Poldasht                | -        | 5        |       |
|                       | Shot                    | -        | 6        |       |
|                       | Bukan                   | -        | 21       |       |
| <b>Age</b>            | Maku                    | -        | 9        |       |
|                       | Chaldran                | -        | 3        |       |
|                       | Sardasht                | -        | 6        |       |
|                       | Khoy                    | -        | 11       |       |
|                       | Shahindezh              | -        | 4        |       |
|                       | Tekab                   | -        | 8        |       |
|                       | Oshnavieh               | -        | 7        |       |
|                       | Salmas                  | -        | 10       |       |
|                       | Years                   | 15.43    | -        |       |
|                       | <b>Teaching English</b> | Years    | -        | 14.23 |
| Hours per week        |                         | -        | 26.58    |       |
| <b>Degree</b>         | High school             | First    | 60       | -     |
|                       |                         | Second   | 58       | -     |
|                       |                         | Third    | 62       | -     |
|                       |                         | Fourth   | 20       | -     |
|                       | BA                      | -        | 141      |       |
|                       | MA                      | -        | 28       |       |
| PhD                   | -                       | 2        |          |       |

## چکیده

این تحقیق با هدف دستیابی به نظرات دبیران زبان انگلیسی و دانش‌آموزان دبیرستان‌های ایران در زمینه تدریس مهارت‌های زبانی گوش دادن و صحبت کردن و مقایسه آن‌ها در سطح استان آذربایجان غربی انجام گرفته است. در جریان پژوهش، ۱۷۱ معلم و ۲۰۰ دانش‌آموز پرسش‌نامه‌هایی را در قالب دو فرم، یکی برای معلمان و یکی برای دانش‌آموزان، دریافت کردند که حاوی سؤالات چندگزینه‌ای و تشریحی بودند. از روش‌های تحلیل آماری و کیفی برای بررسی اطلاعات به‌دست آمده استفاده شد. نتایج حاکی از این بود که کم‌توجهی معلمان به دو مهارت مذکور، نقصان کتاب‌ها و کمبود تجهیزات آموزشی مورد نیاز از جمله عواملی هستند که از عملکرد بهتر برنامه‌های آموزشی زبان انگلیسی جلوگیری می‌کنند. امید است نتایج این تحقیق باعث شناخت بیشتر معلمان زبان انگلیسی و سیاست‌گذاران آموزشی از برنامه‌های آموزشی این زبان شود.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** نگرش، ارزیابی، تدریس زبان انگلیسی، مهارت‌های زبانی، صحبت کردن، گوش دادن

## Abstract

The present study attempted to find out how Iranian high school EFL teachers and students perceive the teaching status of language skills of listening and speaking. The study was conducted in West Azerbaijan, Iran. One hundred and seventy one EFL high school teachers as well as 200 students were given a questionnaire. Two forms of questionnaires, with both fixed-response and open-ended items, were used, one for teachers and the other for students. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to analyze the data elicited. The findings revealed that teachers' inadequate attention, books' shortcomings, and lack of necessary equipment are among the major problems that render high school EFL programs inadequate and undesirable in teaching these two skills. It is hoped that EFL teachers and policy makers can benefit from the finding of this research.

**Key Words:** attitudes, EFL, evaluation, language skills, listening, speaking

## Introduction

Beliefs about language learning have been one of the research foci of recent years, presumably based on the assumption that beliefs govern people's behaviors (Puchta, 1999). Nonetheless, according to Borg (2007), little research has been conducted in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), regarding teachers' perception of their classroom practices. Besides, according to Stevick (1980), *what goes on inside* learners, which includes learners' beliefs, also seems to have a strong impact on learners' learning during the language learning process.

Various studies have attempted to evaluate a multitude of variables linked with EFL teaching in Iran and elsewhere. For example, Babai Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) attempted to characterize qualities of an Effective English Language Teacher (EELT) as perceived by Iranian English language teachers and

learners. The results revealed significant differences between teachers' and learners' views on some characteristics of EELTs. Teachers seemed to agree more strongly than students that an EELT should assign homework and integrate group activities into the classroom. Other areas of significant difference in opinions included preparing the lesson well, using lesson plans and assessing what students have learned reasonably.

Kolaç, Ulaş, Sevim, and Mutlu (2010) investigated the opinions of the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching on the status of teachers' usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum. The opinions of 235 students, attending the Department of Turkish Language Education during 2009-2010 were checked, and a survey form was used as the data collection instrument. The results of the data analysis revealed that teacher candidates



# Attitudes of Iranian High School EFL Teachers and Students toward Teaching Oral Language Skills

**Karim Sadeghi**

(PhD in TESOL, Urmia University)

ksadeghi03@gmail.com

**Shiva Bidel Nikou**

(MA in TEFL, Urmia University)

Junior high school English teacher, Chaypareh,  
West Azerbaijan

shiva\_nikou@yahoo.com