TEACHING EFL LISTENING IN MOROCCAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

The listening skill is one of the most important, but challenging language skills to teach to EFL learners. However, the way it is generally taught in EFL contexts does not seem to be conducive to its acquisition. This study investigates the teaching of EFL listening in Moroccan public high schools. More specifically, it probes into how and how often the listening skill is taught. To this end, a mixed-method approach is adopted, which combines data from questionnaires, document analysis, interviews, and classroom observations collected from 158 teachers and 144 students who volunteered to participate in this study. The findings revealed that Moroccan public high school EFL teachers rarely teach listening due to various reasons. When they do teach it, though, they generally adopt a product-based approach that focuses mainly on testing comprehension. The study concludes with numerous pedagogical and research implications, such as the need for quality pre-service and in-service training in the teaching of EFL listening and the need for improving the quality and approach of listening materials and activities in the textbooks.

Keywords: EFL listening, product approach, process approach

1. Introduction

While the centrality of listening is undeniable (Feyten, 1991; Nunan, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005), its systematic neglect in the L2 classroom in general and the EFL classroom in particular is widely acknowledged (Nunan, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Field, 2008; Nation & Newton, 2009; Feyten, 1991; Vandergrift, 2004). According to Hamouda (2013), listening is critical in language learning as it provides the learner with the understandable input required to master a language. As a result, listening is an important aspect of L2 learning and must be taught in L2 classes. In this context, Morley (2001)

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advocates for adequate listening teaching if proficiency in the target language is to be achieved. Despite the fact that listening is highly valued in theory, it is not valued enough in the EFL classroom. Listening comprehension still receives little time and attention in the language class compared with the other language skills (Vandergrift, 2004), which means that listening is taken for granted (Morley, 1991; Nation & Newton, 2009). Richards and Rodgers (2001) claim that listening remains the most overlooked skill in second and foreign language classes. Similarly, Nunan (1997) posits that EFL listening has always been overlooked in practice when compared to reading and that listening instruction is inferior to reading instruction. Listening, according to Mendelssohn (1994), has also been neglected in comparison to other language skills.

2. Review of Literature

Listening has been called the Cinderella skill (Mendelsohn, 1994; Nunan,1997); it has been overlooked and undervalued compared to the other language skills of reading, writing, and speaking, just as Cinderella was neglected and treated poorly by her stepmother and stepsisters in the famous fairy tale. It has also been called the forgotten skill (Burley-Allen, 1995), and described as an overlooked dimension of L2 learning (Feyten, 1991). According to Mendelsohn (1994, 1995), there are three key reasons why listening is still undervalued and inadequately taught in many second language and foreign language schools. The first reason, he claims, is that conventional second and foreign language listening media do not always reflect what is listened to in the actual world, with abnormally spoken language and inappropriate, boring, and irrelevant content. The second reason, according to him, is that it is thought that students will gain listening comprehension through "Osmosis" (Mendelsohn, 1995, p.133); and the third reason, according to him, is that second language and foreign language teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach listening.

When listening is taught, it is taught ineffectively using one of the most severely criticized approaches, namely, the product approach, which focuses on testing students' listening abilities rather than teaching them how to listen (Field, 2008). Although teachers can assess understanding by focusing solely on the outcome of listening, the response (right or wrong) does not assist listeners to better grasp the processes that underpin good understanding, which is a key element of effective listening (Vandergrift, 2011). A typical listening lesson sequence under the product approach, according to Field (2008), consists of three stages: pre-listening, listening, and post-listening. It is a standard "listen, answer, check" sequence that's naturally product-oriented (Siegel, 2014). The product approach often employs multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and matching questions. The conventional belief is that properly answering such questions indicates high listening abilities, whereas wrong responses indicate poor listening skills (Field, 2008). The product approach is frequently chastised for repeatedly testing current listening capacity rather than contributing to the progressive and staged growth of learners' listening abilities (Richards, 1983).

Through the questions they develop, the teacher or author of the listening material selects what information is relevant (Field, 2008). Inauthentic display questions are common (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Other drawbacks of the product approach include an isolated and stressful classroom environment (Field, 2008), as well as limited, if any, real-world applications (Ur, 1984; Siegel, 2011). As such, EFL listening lessons turn the listening classroom into an anxiety-filled environment that puts a lot of pressure on the students because the teacher is only interested in the correct answer to comprehension questions, which is based on information that the teacher and textbook designer deem important. To put it another way, the student does not concentrate on what they consider to be significant (Morley, 1995). According to Field (1998), the listening lessons taught under this approach are similar to most listening tests that use comprehension-based questions to assess listening competence since they focus entirely on the outcome of listening rather than the process itself. Thus, one of the most common objections leveled against the product approach is that it fails to improve students' listening skills in a systematic manner.

Despite its numerous drawbacks, the product approach is still in use in a number of education systems. In a survey of university language teachers conducted by Siegel (2013) in Japan, understanding-based exercises were shown to be the most common. Goh (2010) also claims that in many language classes, listening instruction focuses almost entirely on understanding the meaning of the spoken texts, with such little time devoted to training about the listening process and how to listen. A study conducted by Bouziri (2007) to explore listening teachers' views about teaching listening at the tertiary level in the Tunisian setting revealed that the product-based approach to teaching listening predominates in the EFL classroom. According to the findings of research undertaken by Renandya and Hu (2018) in China, listening instruction is characterized by a special focus on the product of listening rather than the process of listening. The same study revealed that listening instruction is dominated by test-based practices requiring students to supply correct answers to a set of comprehension questions.

With regard to the Moroccan EFL context, despite the elevated position of listening in current English textbooks and the pedagogical guidelines (2007), it is still seen as a neglected part of the teaching-learning process. In contrast to the pedagogical trend, Hassim (2020) posits that Moroccan English teachers neglecting listening lessons in the EFL classroom in favor of other skills (e.g. reading and writing) and language activities (e.g. grammar and functions) is a pedagogically inappropriate practice observed in many public high schools in Morocco. A study conducted by Zahir and Elfechtali (2020) revealed that most Moroccan public high school teachers skip teaching listening altogether and those who include it test it rather than teach it using the product approach. The same study revealed that 4.84% of the respondents to a question in the questionnaire think that the situation of the teaching of listening in the second-year classes of the Moroccan Baccalaureate is disastrous, and 11.29% say it is very poor, while 25.81% say this skill is not given the importance it deserves and 33.87% say they are dissatisfied with the way it is taught. In the same study, interviews indicated the same trend. For instance, when asked if they teach listening on a regular basis, teacher responses revealed that

none of the respondents teach listening on a regular basis, and 60% of respondents say they teach listening infrequently, whereas 40% skip it altogether. Similarly, Bakkas and Rahhou (2017) report that 68% of EFL teachers do not teach listening skill at all, and they skip it in the textbook. Another study conducted by ELT supervisors in L'Oriental Regional Academy in 2010 revealed that the EFL teachers skip listening lessons. Likewise, Benhima (2020) reports that only 16 percent of teachers questioned said they teach listening consistently whenever it comes in the textbook, while 24 percent said they seldom teach listening, 64 percent said they occasionally teach listening, and 16 percent said they never teach listening. According to the same survey, the approach followed is that of the product approach rather than that of the process approach. When questioned about using listening in formative assessment instead of reading in the same survey, 87 percent of teachers said they never do so. In reaction to this observed practice, Hassim (2020) argues that listening is indispensable and that neglecting it in the EFL classroom is an unacceptable pedagogical practice. To justify this pedagogically inappropriate practice, the participants in the aforementioned studies blamed the situation on the teaching conditions. They claim that the listening passages are artificial, inauthentic, and not appealing to learners, which is congruent with Mendelsohn' (1994, 1995) assertion that inauthentic and artificial listening texts are the main reason why the teaching of listening remains neglected. They even alluded to the lack of equipment as a constraint to teaching listening. Also, they indicated that another reason for skipping listening lessons is that it is not tested. Therefore, teaching EFL listening in Morocco seems to be the exception rather than the rule for most teachers and in most public high schools.

Morocco developed a new pedagogical paradigm at the turn of the 21st century to meet the challenges of globalization (CNEF, 1999). As part of this new paradigm, the Moroccan Ministry of Education adopted the Competency-Based Approach (Pedagogical Guidelines, 2009). The aim of EFL teaching naturally influences the selection of which language skills should be prioritized. Long before the pedagogical reform, the essential aim of English instruction in Morocco was to teach students how to read English texts. Therefore, the teaching of reading and writing was prioritized in Morocco's English language curriculum. With the implementation of the new English curriculum, EFL education is now intended to encompass all four language skills that must be taught as processes rather than products in a standards-based approach (Pedagogical Guidelines, 2007). In this context, the pedagogical guidelines (2007) emphatically acknowledge the necessity of teaching listening, a shift that has heightened the relevance of EFL listening development in high school.

In accordance with these principles, listening became a part of the textbooks published in 2006 and 2007 and which are still in use today. Formerly, the baccalaureate exam's washback effect resulted in the introduction of a range of textbooks with a primary concentration on reading and writing (e.g. English in Life textbook series). In the year 2005, new textbooks were released. The listening exercises and activities, according to the textbook authors, represent a process-based rather than a product-based approach to teaching listening. Instead of focusing on the listening skill in isolation, the pedagogical guidelines (2007) and these textbook authors emphasize a systematic and principled

integration of skills, particularly listening and speaking. In other words, the pedagogical guidelines (2007) encourage skill integration, in which listening is considered a process rather than a product.

3. Research Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to promote listening instruction, which derives from the researcher's observations of EFL listening instruction as an EFL teacher and trainer and from his readings on listening within the context of professional teacher development. These factors motivated the researcher to undertake this study to investigate the presence of EFL listening in Morocco and how it is implemented in the classroom. This study, hence, has two objectives. The study's first objective is to determine the frequency with which students are taught listening. Second, the study aims to look into how Moroccan EFL teachers teach listening in their classrooms. Hence, the research questions driving the conduct of the study are as follows:

1) How often do Moroccan public high school teachers teach EFL listening?
2) How is EFL listening taught in the Moroccan public high schools?

Based on the literature reviewed and the researcher's observations, these questions could be translated into the following hypotheses:

1) Moroccan public high school teachers rarely teach EFL listening to their students.
2) Most Moroccan public high school teachers teach EFL listening using a product-based approach.

4. Methods

This study adopts a mixed-method design. It combined quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a more complete picture of EFL listening instruction and a better understanding of how it operates in the Moroccan environment. In the analysis and interpretation of the results, these data were integrated, compared, and blended within the framework of convergent and concurrent triangulation, which allowed for the cross-examination of the data obtained. Due to practical constraints relative to the availability and accessibility of the target participants, convenience sampling was used to recruit volunteers among public high school EFL teachers and students.

Though the researcher contacted many people (513 subjects) in various ways within the framework of the current study, the participants who directly took part in the study were only 302 altogether. These participants took part in the study through four different research instruments. The participants included 158 public high school teachers of English and 144 public high school EFL students. The students participated in the study by filling in the students' questionnaire (144). For their part, the teachers participated through filling out the teachers' questionnaire (120), through being observed in the course of delivering a listening lesson (5), through interviews with the researcher (10) and through providing their record books for analysis (28). It is worth mentioning

that out of the ten teachers interviewed, five teachers were observed prior to the interviews.

As regards the demographics of the EFL teachers who participated in this study, they were varied in terms of sex, age, university degree, place of work, university training, seniority, and professional experience. The participants in this study also included 144 Moroccan public high school students who study English as a foreign language. As for the demographic information about the students who participated in the study, they were also varied in terms of age, sex, level, school and major. They were 100 females and 44 males, aged between 15 and 21. They were recruited through their teachers. The students belong to different high school levels, majors and streams.

A set of four research instruments, including questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis were employed in collecting the data. The utility in providing data regarding previous practices and attitudes prompted the use of semi-structured teacher questionnaires adapted from Bouziri (2007) and structured student questionnaires adapted from Siegel (2015). The study included five classroom observation sessions, which provided insight into how listening instruction works in an EFL classroom in terms of teaching approach. Interviews, on the other hand, collected explanatory and confirmatory evidence to justify any stated attitude or observed behavior that requires more clarification and explanation. Document analysis was also used to collect documented information regarding listening teaching. Teachers' record books, which detail the teacher's activity over a long stretch of time, were collected and analyzed.

Teachers and students, as well as record books from outside the study, were used to test the instruments. The participants' input and the findings from the piloting were utilized to assess the instruments' ability to provide needed information. In terms of piloting, this was accomplished by employing test-retest for teacher questionnaires, student questionnaires, and interviews, as well as inter-observer reliability for classroom observation and document analysis, in addition to getting comments from fellow teachers and ELT supervisors.

Teachers and students were supplied with paper and online questionnaires, and classrooms were observed using observation grids and a smartphone. To reduce the Hawthorne effect when it comes to the data collected from students, the students were explicitly and unambiguously informed that their involvement would have no impact on their English grades. After contacting a number of English instructors, five teachers were observed delivering listening lessons in the classroom. These teachers were interviewed following the classes and asked to explain the phases, methods, and approaches used in their delivery. Five other teachers who forego teaching listening were also interviewed. Record books were also gathered from teachers for document analysis.

The data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. MS Excel was used to analyze descriptive data, mostly in the form of percentages. These percentages were used to make graphs with categories for each statement. The data were analyzed separately, then compared and summarized before being synthesized for qualitative analysis. After considering the relevance of the findings based on what was already known about the

research topic in the literature, all of the findings were evaluated and discussed. After the results had been evaluated, new perspectives on the situation were analyzed and interpreted. Before discussing the results of the teacher and student questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis as a whole, each of these was studied separately and in isolation.

Following the analysis of the results, the researcher used triangulation to increase the reliability of the aggregated data. The cross-tabulation of various results provided by different methods was made possible through methodological triangulation. The results were interpreted by triangulation and cross-checking of the various types of data obtained. These levels of cross-examination were included in the research design to strengthen the study's interpretations and conclusions. The data produced by the different search instruments, as well as the voices of the participants, were compared and contrasted, as well.

5. Results

### 5.1 EFL Listening Teaching Frequency

Out of 51 teachers contacted, 23 teachers refused to provide the researcher with their record books and said that they never teach listening. Regarding the record books collected, their analysis did not only yield information about the frequency of teaching listening but they also yielded very important data about the frequency of the teaching of the other skills and the other components, such as grammar, functions, vocabulary etc., which enabled the researcher to make comparisons between the teaching of the four language skills and the other components (grammar, functions, vocabulary etc.), on the one hand, and between the teaching of listening and the teaching of the other language skills, on the other hand. About what is taught to the students, Figure 1 below indicates that the language components of grammar, functions, vocabulary, etc. constitute 54%, and the skills constitute 46%.

Figure 1: Frequency of Teaching the Four Skills vs
Frequency of Teaching the Other Language Components
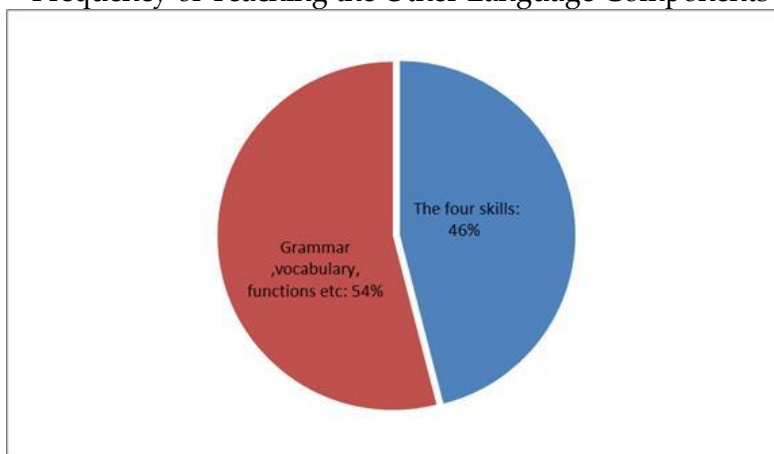
With regard to the skills taught to students and the positions they hold amongst the four skills in terms of frequency, Figure 2 below compares them and gives their order. As Figure 2 below illustrates, the results reveal that the listening skill remains the least taught (13%) among the language skills, and reading is the most taught (49%), followed by writing (24%) and speaking (14%).

Figure 2: Presence of Listening as Compared to the Other Language Skills
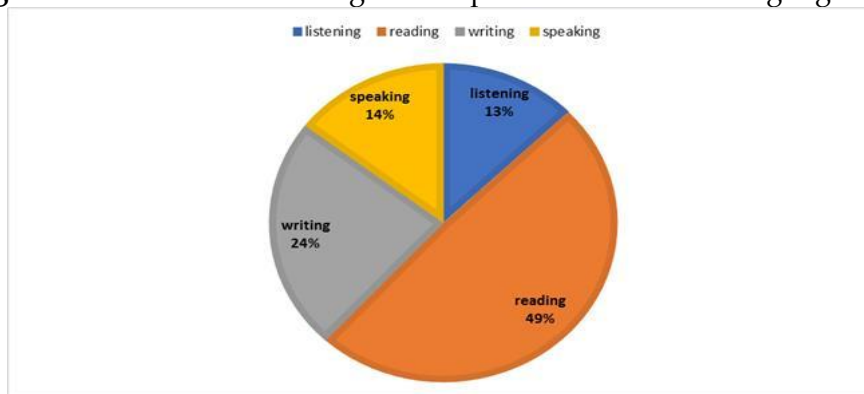
As Figure 3 shows, the results obtained from the record book document analysis indicate that the vast majority of the teachers (81%) do not teach listening regularly, most of those who teach it regularly do not always teach it using the listening texts and activities suggested by the textbook (11%) and those who teach it occasionally constitute 4%.

Figure 3: Frequency of Teaching Listening
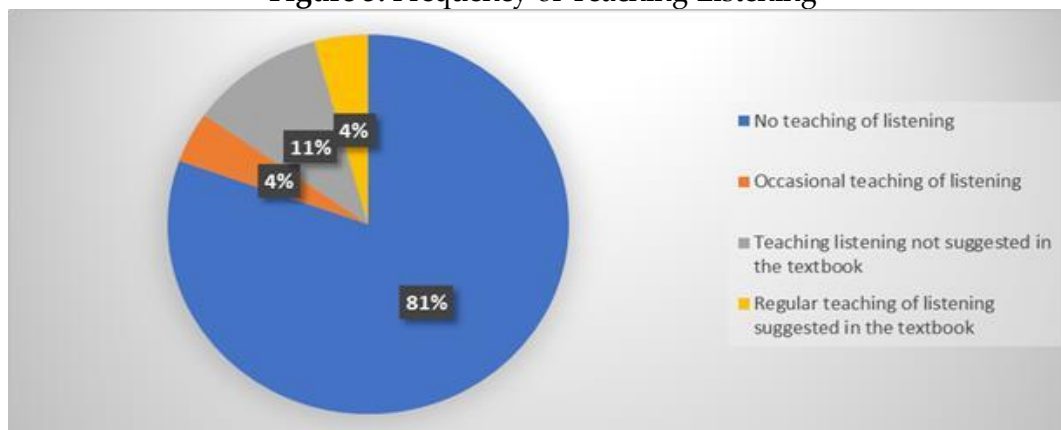
The results collected through the questionnaire reveal the same tendency. As shown in Figure 4 below, many of the teachers admit to not teaching listening regularly as stipulated by the official pedagogical guidelines, the textbook and the teacher's guide.

Figure 4: Teachers' Responses about the Frequency of Teaching Listening
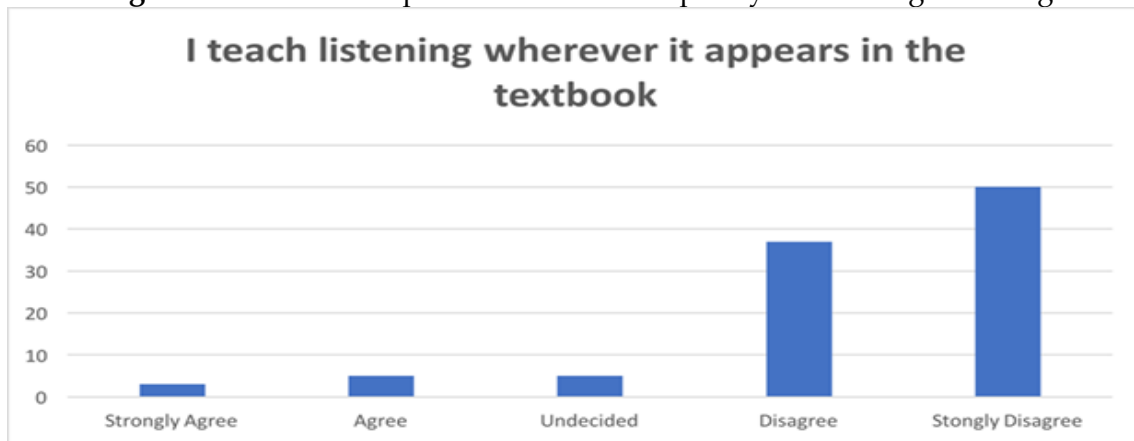
The results of the interviews indicate the same tendency, as the teachers interviewed confirm that they and most of their colleagues skip listening whenever they come to it in the textbook, especially when teaching second-year Baccalaureate classes. During the interviews, six of the ten participants explained that reading was the most important language skill, while three others cited writing, and only one mentioned listening. The same tendency was revealed by classroom observations in the sense that when the researcher looked for the listening lessons to observe, he only managed to observe five class sessions as most teachers turned down his request. To justify their refusal, they gave some significant information about the frequency of teaching listening, which is the same as the data gained by document analysis and teachers' questionnaires. Most of them said that they rarely teach listening. Some said that listening is not at all part of their teaching. Others said that listening is dropped from their teaching when the exam approaches or when they have a lengthy syllabus to cover and no time to "waste" on teaching listening.

5.2 EFL Listening Teaching Approach

To answer the research question related to the way listening is taught in the Moroccan EFL classroom, classroom observation was complemented by the other instruments. As such, the data collected from the class observation method about the approach adopted to teaching listening are of a descriptive nature, as the paragraphs below show.

The teachers observed that they had several teaching practices in common. Most of the teachers in the lessons observed seemed to teach to the textbook. They appeared to follow it to the letter, leading their students to do the exercises one by one in the order suggested by the textbook designer. The teacher and the author of the listening lesson material (in other words, not the listener) decide what information is important through the questions they ask. This is especially observed by the researcher regarding the pre-listening and the while-listening stages as post-listening activity was not done by any of the teachers observed. Most of the teachers (4) did the warm-up and the listening comprehension activities in the textbook following exactly what is in the textbook, but one teacher skipped one activity. The pattern of "listen, answer, check" was simply repeated in all the lessons observed. The same cycle was repeated with all the exercises.

The teacher involved the students who had the textbook, including the students who had the answers pre-scribbled in their used textbooks, but did not target the overwhelming majority of the students who did not have the textbooks. Regarding the time allotted to listening, the listening lessons observed were delivered in one-hour sessions which determined, or rather affected, the time management and pace of the lesson. The pace of the lessons was generally too fast for most of the students, who received little or no feedback at all on their listening and on their answers. Although most teachers in the interviews responded by saying that they supplement and adapt the listening texts and activities to address a variety of high-order strategies and meet the learning needs and interests of the students, the researcher did not see them doing this at all in any of the observation sessions. The teachers heavily depended on the textbook exercises and activities, which mainly focused on the more traditional features of listening, such as listening for gist and listening for details. According to the observation data, a typical listening lesson would follow the scene described below:

A. The Pre-listening Stage

Most of the time (about 65%) allotted to this stage is spent on the pre-teaching of vocabulary, and little time is spent on the pre-listening tasks intended to set the scene for the listening activity. The teacher asks the students to look at the pictures, read out the questions directly from the book, and elicit answers from the class. It is worth mentioning that the teacher in this stage consciously or unconsciously discloses the content of the text as if to prepare the students to come up with the correct answer later when they listen to it. Also, vocabulary pre-teaching concerns too many vocabulary items, most of which are neither keywords nor hard-to-guess words, that is to say, words that cannot be guessed by students from the context. Hence, the students have little suspense before listening to the text. This stage takes almost half the session time, which is 25 minutes, and the rest of the class time is allotted to the while-listening tasks.

B. The While-listening Stage

An audio track is played while the students listen. The teacher can display a transcript of the track on the board using an overhead projector. Students answer pre-set questions. Students check answers with each other and with the teacher. The teacher has the students listen once and answer the questions. As soon as the students have found the right answer, the teacher moves on to another question. If the students fail to accomplish the listening tasks, the teacher makes sure the students understand the question and has them listen again to the text rather than giving them feedback about their listening. In other words, if the students are stuck and none of them comes up with the correct answer, the teacher resorts to reformulating and rephrasing the question, sometimes disclosing the answer and then asking the students to listen a second time, especially to the part that contains the answer or to the whole text but draws their attention to the part that contains the correct answer. Students listen to the same text a second time to come up with the correct answer (not answers). If the students fail to come up with the right answer, this time, the teacher gives the students the answer and carries on with the other tasks. The

teacher tends to play the textbook audio texts a maximum of two runs, though this procedure is likely to differ depending on the class taught and the students' level. The same cycle is repeated with a new exercise. The pattern of "listen, answer, check" is simply repeated in all the exercises in Siegel's (2015)'s words. The focus is on the students' ability to answer comprehension questions correctly. The teacher does little to help students develop their listening processes and strategies. The students' attitude during these listening lessons is very passive, and it is rare to see them keep up their attention for more than one minute or two. The same select students consistently answer the questions and hence appear to determine the teacher's movement to a new exercise. The bulk of the class only watches passively. Another thing that attracted the researcher's attention is that most students treat the listening activity as a school activity like others in which they have to supply the correct answer to the pre-set questions rather than a real-life activity in which they interact with the speaker. To illustrate this, some students are tense and under so much pressure that they turn to their classmates for the correct answer rather than listening to get the answer for themselves. The teacher's focus is mainly on the correct answers and, by extension, on the students who provide them regardless of how they have obtained them. Also, it was noticed that little attention is paid to those who are reluctant to participate or those who fail to come up with the correct answers. Generally, no attention on the part of the teacher appeared to be given to mistakes or what might have caused them. Thus, incorrect answers are received with some discomfort and embarrassment, at least when the researcher was there. The students who supply incorrect answers are neither praised for their effort, nor encouraged to make another attempt nor given advice on how to listen. Their answers are met with a blunt "no". However, their fellow students who come up with the correct answer are praised very much by the listening teacher using such expressions as "excellent", "good job", "great," etc.

C. The Post-listening Stage

It is rarely done in class and the lesson is usually closed with having the students copy down the pre-taught vocabulary from the board into their notebooks. Out of five teachers observed, only one teacher reached the post-listening stage, but he only asked the students to do it as a homework assignment because of the lack of time according to him. From the observations conducted, the teachers practically follow the same steps when delivering a listening lesson. The textbook seems to guide their teaching practice to a great extent. The teachers instruct the students to do the comprehension tasks suggested in the textbook. In these tasks, the teachers check the students' comprehension of part of a listening script. To this end, the teachers look for the correct answer to the questions asked by the authors of the listening material. In other words, the textbook designers and the teachers, rather than the listener/learner, decide what information is important. Thus, a typical listening lesson would generally follow the classroom sequence shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: A Typical Listening Lesson Sequence
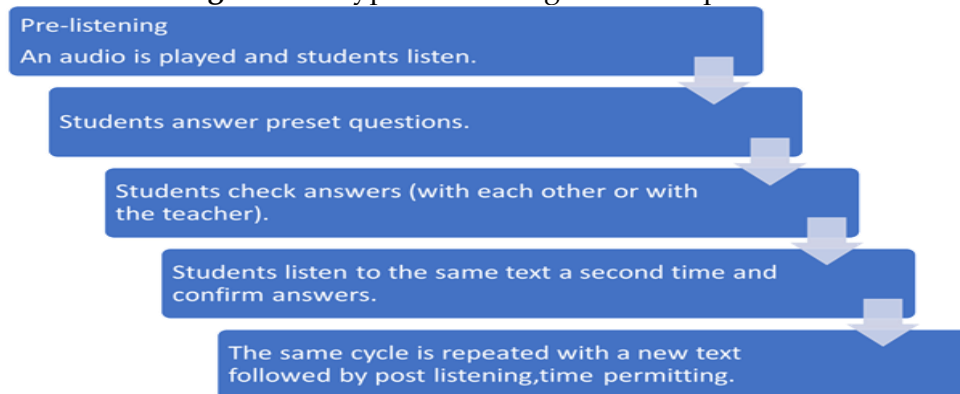
Note: The listening lesson sequence has been adapted from Siegel (2015).

The teachers' questionnaire yielded very important results about the way of teaching listening. As Figure 6 below shows, the overwhelming majority of listening activities were comprehension questions (91 %) followed by activities requiring students to "Fill in the blanks" (58 %) and activities asking students to decide if statements are "True or False" (52.5 %). Activities requiring students to "solve problems" constitute 27 %, activities involving students "taking notes" constitute 33 % and activities in which students are asked to "give the right order" constitute 3.5%. Such self-report data are congruent with the observed findings described above.

Figure 6: Listening Activities
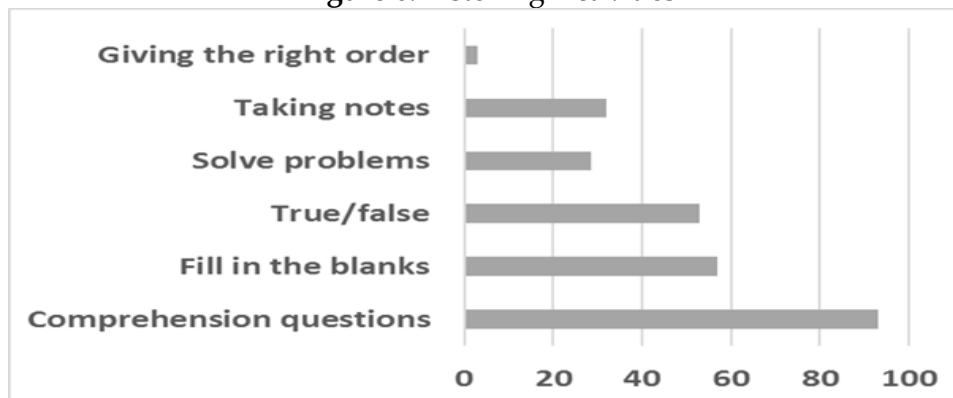
As Figure 7 below illustrates, most teachers in the questionnaire consider teaching listening as having students listen to a spoken text and testing their comprehension of it. This perception expressed in the questionnaire was noticed by the researcher from the teaching practices shown by the teachers all throughout the lessons observed.

Figure 7: Perception of Teaching Listening
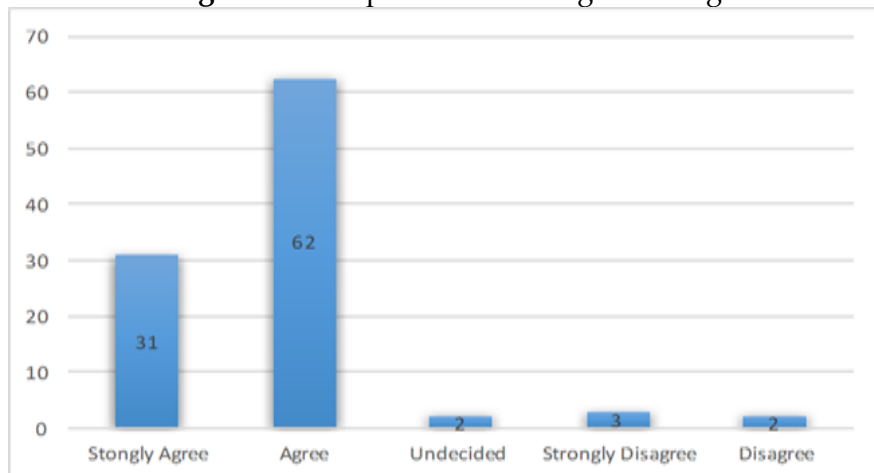
Note: Questionnaire statement: I think teaching listening consists
in having the students listen to the tape and testing their comprehension

The results collected from the interviews are, to a great extent, similar to the results collected through the observation sessions and the questionnaires in the sense that the information obtained from the teachers interviewed confirmed the attitudes stated in the questionnaires and the practices noticed in classroom observation. In this regard, the interviewees explained that factors such as time, class size, syllabus coverage, textbook design, students' proficiency level in English, students' motivation, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and teachers' training are among the major factors that force them to follow the product approach to teaching listening. These factors were mentioned several times in the interviews as constraints preventing teachers from experimenting with new approaches. The interviewees pointed out that teaching listening in such conditions can but accentuate the use of the product approach. Though they use it, they seem to agree that listening instruction under this approach misses the point and forces the listening teacher to end up testing listening rather than teaching it. In addition to the lack of time and the poor quality of the inauthentic listening activities in the textbooks, the respondents to the interview questions also pointed out that listening is poorly taught due to a lack of training not only in listening instruction but also in the development of teaching materials.

In addition to teachers' questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews, document analysis also yielded very important results in terms of how listening is taught. The results generated by the analysis of the record books seemed to confirm the data produced by the other instruments with regard to the approach, perception and materials. Teachers are likely to teach listening to the textbook following the approach that shapes its activities, leading the students to do the tasks in the same order and sequence as the one seen in the lessons observed in search of the correct answers to the comprehension questions.

In summary, the data collected by the questionnaires, observations, interviews and document analysis combined and complemented each other to give a comprehensive picture of the pedagogical approach followed by teachers in teaching listening.

6. Discussion

Four different research instruments were used to analyze the frequency of teaching listening in the Moroccan public high school EFL classroom. The instruments yielded several findings and accordingly answered the research question set at the beginning of the study. In this regard, the findings revealed that listening is rarely taught and hence counts as the least taught skill as compared with the other language components and the other skills. Reading is the most frequently taught, followed by writing and speaking. Few teachers' record books contained listening lesson plans. Few of the teachers surveyed in the questionnaire abide by pedagogical guidelines and teach listening where it appears in the textbook. Few of those interviewed and their colleagues teach listening. Very few teachers were observed teaching listening as most teachers dropped it from their teaching. In other words, listening is often given less attention than the other macro skills in the EFL classroom. These results are congruent with Hassim (2020)'s conclusion that listening is overlooked by teachers because they give high priority to reading, writing, and vocabulary. These findings also corroborate research findings, previously cited, that describe listening as the "Cinderella skill" (Mendelsohn, 1994), as the "forgotten skill" (Burley-Allen, 1995), and as an "overlooked dimension" of L2 acquisition (Feyten, 1991). In the same context, the results are consistent with the statement that listening comprehension still receives little time and attention in the language class compared with the other language skills (Vandergrift, 2004) and that listening is taken for granted (Morley, 1991; Nation & Newton, 2009). Furthermore, these results serve to confirm the findings yielded by Benhima (2020), who concludes that listening is not regularly taught in many Moroccan public high schools. Also, these results confirm the conclusions of Zahir and Elfechtali (2020), Bakkas and Rahhou (2017), and the ELT inspectors of L'Oriental Regional Academy (2010), which all indicate that most teachers skip listening when they come to the textbook. The results also indicate that listening is the most neglected of all skills, which agrees with the position of listening in the literature as the least taught of all language skills. For instance, the findings of this study confirm Richards and Rodgers's (2001) view that listening remains the most overlooked skill in second and foreign language classes. Also, these results validate Nunan's (1997) claim that EFL listening has always been overlooked in practice when compared to reading and that listening instruction is inferior to reading instruction. Similarly, the data corroborate Mendelssohn's (1994) claim that listening has been neglected in comparison to other language skills. This neglect constitutes an anomaly that is likely to result in the deprivation of EFL learners of the numerous benefits of listening. Reading and writing are likely taught because they are tested on the Baccalaureate exam, which supports the argument of Richards (2005) that listening is not taught because it is not tested. Listening, therefore, will remain the most neglected language skill in the EFL classroom as long as it is not tested.

In a nutshell, the fact that teachers fail to teach listening on a regular basis following a pedagogically-sound approach as stipulated by language teaching research recommendations and by the official regulatory documents issued by the Ministry of

education is not without its drawbacks and has serious implications for the EFL students. EFL students' learning of English is incomplete as they are not given enough opportunity to practice listening comprehension, which contradicts what is recommended by the language teaching literature and the Moroccan official pedagogical guidelines.

The reasons provided by the interviewees for not teaching listening in Moroccan public high school EFL classrooms are plausible and well-supported by the literature on listening comprehension.

Time and Syllabus Coverage: Time constraints are a significant factor, as highlighted in the literature. Mendelsohn (1995) points out that listening is often neglected in the curriculum, with priority given to other skills, such as reading and writing. Similarly, Field (2008) and Renandya and Hu (2018) note that teachers often bypass listening instruction due to the pressure to cover more tangible areas of the syllabus. Moroccan studies (Zahir & Elfechtali, 2020; Benhima, 2020) confirm that teachers frequently skip or minimize listening lessons in favor of meeting syllabus demands.

Class Size: Large class sizes create logistical challenges that make teaching listening difficult. Teachers struggle to provide individualized attention, and managing listening activities in overcrowded classrooms becomes impractical. This issue is frequently cited as a barrier in contexts where classroom sizes are too large to facilitate effective listening instruction.

Textbook Design and Inauthentic Listening Materials: Teachers often express concerns about the artificial nature of the listening materials provided in textbooks. Mendelsohn (1994, 1995) argues that conventional listening materials are often inauthentic, failing to reflect the natural characteristics of real-world listening. This leads to disengagement from both students and teachers. Zahir & Elfechtali (2020) also found that inauthentic materials contribute to the marginalization of listening in Moroccan classrooms.

Students' Proficiency Levels and Motivation: Teachers highlight students' low proficiency levels and lack of motivation as reasons for not prioritizing listening instruction. Low-proficiency students often struggle with listening activities, which can reduce their motivation and lead teachers to avoid focusing on this skill. Studies (e.g., Ur, 1984; Field, 2008) suggest that listening is often seen as too challenging for students with lower English proficiency, further contributing to its neglect.

Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Training: A lack of sufficient training in listening instruction is a major challenge. Teachers often report feeling ill-prepared to teach listening effectively. Mendelsohn (1995) and Field (2008) note that many teachers lack the pedagogical knowledge and confidence to incorporate listening activities into their lessons. In Morocco, Benhima (2020) and Zahir & Elfechtali (2020) all point to a shortage of professional development opportunities focused on listening instruction, leaving teachers without the tools they need to teach this skill.

In summary, the reasons given by teachers for not teaching listening in Moroccan public high schools—such as time constraints, large class sizes, inauthentic materials, low student proficiency, and inadequate training—are well-documented in the literature.

These factors make it difficult for teachers to prioritize listening instruction in their classrooms.

Regarding the teaching approach, the data from the various instruments used revealed that the approach adopted in teaching listening is the product approach, with a special focus on comprehension. The participants in the present study think that the purpose of listening lessons is listening to a text and correctly answering several comprehension questions about it. As such, the listening lessons under this approach resemble most listening tests that rely on comprehension-based questions to evaluate listening ability, as they focus solely on the product of listening rather than the process itself. In so doing, the teachers only test listening and fail to enable the students to develop listening skill and communicate through it, which is the main objective of the teaching of listening according to the pedagogical guidelines (2007). This confirms the research hypothesis that the product approach dominates the teaching of EFL listening in Moroccan public high schools.

The approach followed in the teaching of EFL listening in Morocco appears to embody the approach described in the literature and hence, it suffers from the various shortcomings and limitations associated with it. This supports Field's (2008) claim that the product approach dominates EFL listening classrooms despite its numerous drawbacks. While an exclusive focus on the product of listening enables teachers to check comprehension, the answer (correct or incorrect) does not assist students in grasping the processes underlying successful comprehension, which is a characteristic of successful listeners (Vandergrift, 2011). Likewise, the findings of the current study confirm those of a survey of university language teachers conducted by Siegel (2013) in Japan, in which understanding-based exercises were shown to be the most common. Also, the results of this study validate those of Goh (2010), who also claims that in many language classes, listening instruction focuses almost entirely on understanding the meaning of the spoken texts, with such little time devoted to training about the listening process and how to listen. The current study also converges with a study conducted by Bouziri (2007) in Tunisia among university teachers and a survey by Benhima (2020) in Morocco, which found a predominance of the product-based approach. Additionally, the findings of the present study are consistent with those of Renandya and Hu (2018) in China, in which listening instruction is characterized by a special focus on the product of listening rather than the process of listening. Similarly, the findings of this study corroborate those of the study conducted by Zahir and Elfechtali (2020), which revealed that most Moroccan public high school teachers test rather than teach listening using the product approach. Based on these results, the teachers neither use the process approach nor teach listening with the other skills, especially speaking, as stipulated by the pedagogical guidelines (2007). This corroborates Siegel's findings (2014), who asserts that some teachers use a range of techniques while others limit their teaching to product-based approaches.

One of the reasons why the teachers in Morocco and elsewhere adopt the product approach is their assumption that answering such questions correctly equates to high listening proficiency, while incorrect answers signal poor listening (Field, 2008). According to the pedagogical guidelines (2007), such listening lessons should easily be

supplemented with tasks that encourage students to think about how they listen and generate tips on how to listen so that listening lessons serve as an interesting piece of meaningful communication in which students will interact communicatively with the spoken discourse to decipher the literal and the intended meaning.

The obsolescence of the listening materials included in the textbooks was blamed for the approach followed. In other words, teachers' and students' input and feedback for ameliorating the quality of the listening materials in these textbooks should be considered if this undesirable approach is to be changed. According to Field (2008), the product approach is one of the most common and most criticized approaches to teaching listening. Changing the way listening is taught requires rethinking, reconsidering and updating the current teaching conditions, the current teaching materials and the current teacher training practices. The number of hours devoted to English should be increased, the class size should be reduced, the syllabus should be made lighter, and the textbooks should be changed or at least updated in terms of listening texts and activities. The use of this approach is likely due to numerous factors, including lack of time and large class size. In the absence of any alternative to the product-based approach under the current conditions, teachers will keep using this approach despite its many disadvantages.

As hypothesized at the beginning of the study, the data collected confirmed that the approach adopted in teaching listening is predominantly product-based. The data highlighted that when students are taught listening, their listening ability is only tested rather than developed, which necessitates a substantial shift from the predominant product-oriented listening pedagogy. EFL learners need a change from the standard comprehension-based "listen, answer, check" methodology that is prevalent in the Moroccan EFL textbooks and, by extension, in the Moroccan EFL classrooms. The teachers who care only about the product of listening deprive their students of the benefits offered by other approaches. These teachers should be sensitized to abandon their teacher-centered lessons for a more student-centered integrated approach to the teaching of listening, which helps students develop and practice listening. In this regard, textbook writers, syllabus designers and ELT supervisors should take the responsibility of guiding teachers towards such an approach. Textbook designers should update or replace the current textbooks with new ones that respond to the latest research-based developments and advances in the field of teaching listening. In this context, textbook designers should produce teacher guides that inform teachers of relevant suggestions on how to use the process-based approach and the appropriate activities for teaching listening. In terms of listening pedagogy, new textbooks should suggest systematic student-training activities and tasks covering all listening strategies identified to be involved in listening. In the same vein, ELT supervisors should organize pedagogical training sessions, meetings, and workshops on the teaching of listening.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the unsatisfactory frequency and the inadequate way of teaching EFL listening in Moroccan public high schools. EFL students' learning of

English is incomplete as they are not given the opportunity to listen to English spoken by different people other than their teachers. In terms of approach, students' listening is tested rather than developed owing to the use of the product approach that favors comprehension over training and development. The textbooks currently in use have become obsolete in terms of content and approach and, hence, need to be replaced. As such, the findings of this research have very important pedagogical implications for those directly concerned with the teaching of listening; namely, teachers, textbook writers, syllabus designers and teacher supervisors and trainers. This research highlights the need to provide theoretical and practical training for EFL teachers, to upgrade the EFL listening materials and the listening activities in the textbooks in terms of quality and approach, and to increase the amount of time allotted to English in the Moroccan public high schools in order to eradicate the various factors resulting in teachers' lack of motivation for the teaching of listening and their lack of interest in supplementing the textbooks with more engaging teaching listening materials.

As published research investigating how and how often listening is taught in the Moroccan EFL context are rare, further research is still needed in order to confirm or disconfirm the findings of the present study. Further research is also required to investigate the impact of not teaching listening on students' English language learning. In this regard, it would be interesting to investigate the effect of not teaching listening through an experimental study in which students studying listening are compared with those who do not study listening. Also, a longitudinal experimental study could be conducted to this effect by comparing the students' level and performance in terms of language learning and listening development before and after teaching listening over a certain period. Additionally, more research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the product-based approach to teaching listening since it is the most common in EFL textbooks and classrooms and the most criticized in literature. Future studies can also address the extent to which the process approach benefits the students and contributes to the development of their listening skills. Also, an experimental study could be conducted to compare this approach with the other approaches in terms of effectiveness. Furthermore, more research is necessary to scrutinize the factors preventing teachers from teaching listening since these factors seem to be numerous. In addition, more research is required to examine the effect of the listening texts and materials in the textbooks on the teaching of listening since many teachers drop listening from their teaching due to their dissatisfaction with the quality of the listening texts and activities suggested in the textbooks. For instance, since the lack of appropriate and engaging listening texts and activities in the textbook makes teachers skip the teaching of listening, a future study could examine the effect of the quality of instructional materials on the teaching of listening.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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