Assessing EFL Listening and Speaking Skills During Remote Teaching

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to analyse how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening and speaking skills were assessed during remote teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were 174 senior high school students in public and private institutions, 102 EFL teachers, 32 high school authorities, and 80 students' parents. The methodology comprised a quantitative approach in which students', teachers', and authorities' surveys were analysed. The instruments employed consisted of a five-point Likert scale that included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree regarding items related to assessment. The findings suggest that for assessing listening and speaking skills the teachers in the research mostly used online technological tools such as quizzes, chatrooms, and blogs. Furthermore, the assessment instruments included oral presentations, questioning, as well as listening and speaking tests. Finally, formative and summative assessments were mainly employed to evaluate students' listening and speaking skills during the pandemic.

Keywords: assessment, EFL, listening, speaking, remote teaching

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a great influence on the way of teaching, forcing educators to shift from face-to-face classes to remote teaching. Instructors were on the front lines, adapting and implementing teaching contexts and strategies to ensure students continue learning during the lockdown (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), 1.5 billion students were affected by school closures. In this remote setting, teachers had the challenge not only to teach but also to assess students online. In fact, assessment is a very important part of the teaching process because it allows us to verify students' skills progress. Therefore, in the context of online learning, it is worth investigating the perceptions of methods used in assessing EFL learners as well as the difficulties that may prevent students from being effectively assessed (Abduh, 2021). Utilizing online tools for assessing listening and speaking skills introduces significant challenges. Teachers are required to adjust to a multitude of assessment methods and employ diverse strategies to accurately gauge students' performance in these domains. One strategy to evaluate students' performance is the use of technology that allows teachers to assess listening and speaking skills. In this respect, the findings of a study by Nugraha, et al. (2021) showed that students believed that online assessment using Quizizz is more intriguing and engaging compared to paper-and-pencil quiz format. On the other hand, Al-Jarf, (2021) reported that EFL instructors used a variety of online speaking activities such as assigning a topic for students to research and prepare at home to deliver an online oral presentation about it through the platform; online debates about some issues; answering problem-solving questions; student-created podcasts on a topic of their choice which were published in a Speaking Center on Twitter. From the aforementioned, this study aims to find out whether technological tools were used to assess, types of assessment, and techniques implemented by teachers to gather evidence regarding students' performance in listening and speaking in remote teaching. Therefore, this study seeks to respond to the following research questions.

1. Were technological tools used for assessing listening and speaking in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in public and private institutions?

2. What types of assessment were used to evaluate listening and speaking in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3. What instruments were used to evaluate listening and speaking in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Remote Teaching

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) refers to a temporary transition in how instructional content is delivered, prompted by crises, leading to the adoption of an alternative delivery method. The use of total remote teaching solutions for education is considered ERT. The main purpose of ERT is not to re-create a strong educational environment but a quick, temporary, and accessible solution for emergency times (Hodges et al., 2020).

It is important to highlight that remote teaching and online teaching are not similar terms, in this sense, Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) explain that online distance education implies interactions between different participants using diverse channels that allow students to be

more engaged in the learning process. On the other hand, what we are currently facing because of the COVID-19 pandemic is referred to as emergency remote teaching, which should be seen as a temporary solution to an immediate problem. Though remote teaching benefits from the practices of online distance education, the tools to be used to support each type of education delivery cannot be the same.

Furthermore, Schlesselman (2020) claims that many universities around the world have emergently shifted to remote teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift from face-to-face education to remote teaching requires us to rely on synchronous attendance which proves to be challenging due to technology, connectivity, availability, and time zone constraints. On the contrary, in the case of online learning, it has been designed based on many standards to ensure optimal learning; thus, what is acceptable as emergency remote teaching may not be appropriate for an online semester. In this regard, instead of trying to reproduce face-to-face activities using technology, it would be necessary to create quality online courses by engaging learners with the content, fostering teamwork, and building community.

2.2 Importance of Teaching EFL Listening and Speaking

To ensure the comprehensive development of students' communication skills in English it is vital to help students develop listening and speaking skills. Listening is essential in the language classroom because it provides input for the students. Without adequate input according to the level, any learning simply cannot begin. Certainly, listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners' attention to new forms including vocabulary, grammar, and new interaction patterns in the language. This skill is extremely important not only as a receptive skill, but it is also vital in the development of spoken language proficiency (Rost, 1991). As Renukadevi (2014) acknowledges, Listening is crucial in language learning as it aids in acquiring proper pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and sentence structure. The ability to comprehend messages often relies on tone, pitch, and accent alone. Effective learning hinges on understanding input accurately, and without this skill, progress is hindered. Furthermore, effective communication becomes unattainable without strong listening abilities. Regarding speaking, Rao (2019) affirms that it is the most important skill to acquire in ESL or EFL. Thus, the modern world demands the requirement of communication skills from learners, and English teachers must teach their learners the needed skills so that they improve their abilities in speaking to perform well in real-life situations.

2.3 Assessing Listening and Speaking Skills

Assessment is broadly defined as the systematic process that allows teachers to diagnose students' proficiency or achievement level in the English language. According to Macalister and Nation (2019), there are six major types of monitoring and assessment. They include placement assessment, observation of learning, short-term achievement assessment, diagnostic assessment, achievement assessment, and proficiency assessment. On the other hand, Brown (2019) highlights summative and formative as the most common types of assessment. Concerning formative assessment, it is used to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses regarding language learning. Conversely, Shaaban (2005) states that foreign language classes predominantly emphasize summative assessments designed to gauge learners' proficiency in language structures and linguistic precision, rather than evaluating their ability to effectively communicate in the language. Nonetheless, even though summative speaking assessments often elicit resistance from students, educators persist in utilizing this method to ascertain whether learners have achieved language learning objectives or not (Green, 2013).

In fact, language assessment in the English language learning context is a challenging process for both teachers and students. Especially when assessing listening and speaking skills, basic skills for communication. Bygate (2001) claims that speaking is reciprocal, it is to say that "interlocutors are normally all able to contribute simultaneously to the discourse and to respond immediately to each other's contributions" (p. 14). Additionally, during spoken communication, individuals engage in the act of assigning meaning based on their intentions, communication objectives, and the speaker's intended message (Green, 2013). Consequently, this dynamic nature renders verbal expression less predetermined and subject to the ebb and flow of conversation (Mauranen, 2006).

Evaluating speaking proficiency involves considerations (Burns, 2012), such as educators needing to pinpoint an effective tool or approach for assessing learners, whether in real-time or through recorded presentations (Ginther, 2012).

Besides that, Li (2019) highlights that all types of speaking tests should measure language proficiency including fluency, appropriate vocabulary knowledge, grammatical use, social interaction, and completion of the task requested. In this sense, teachers must be well-trained to be able to make good decisions and select appropriate tasks considering students' linguistic abilities and course goals (Fulcher, 2018; Ginther, 2012; Shaaban, 2005).

2.4 ICT Tools to Assess Listening and Speaking Skills

There are several technological tools that allow teachers to assess learners' productive and receptive skills. For instance, in the case of listening, as explained by Abdulrahman et al. (2018) and Naidionova and Ponomarenko (2018), teachers can request students to listen to online podcasts and then ask learners to respond to questions related to the contents of the podcasts to assess their listening comprehension. As for speaking, Turmudi, (2020) suggests the use of a synchronous speaking assessment. Thus, teachers can utilize any web-based technology as an option to have real-time interaction in speaking assessment. Therefore, the application of videoconferencing in speaking activities is more engaging for students as it provides real-time communication (Vurdien, 2019).

2.5 Previous Studies

Mall-Amiri and Askarzadeh (2018) conducted research to investigate and compare the effect of peer and portfolio assessment on EFL learners' speaking proficiency and their critical thinking skills. For this study, 32 intermediate EFL learners were non-randomly selected

based on their PET scores. Two experimental groups of 16 participated, the portfolio assessment group and the peer assessment group. Both groups took a PET speaking test and a critical thinking questionnaire as posttests. The results evidence that portfolio and peer assessment improved the students' critical thinking. It was further revealed that peer assessment enhanced the learners' speaking achievement significantly more than portfolio assessment.

Ounis (2017) explored the most important conceptions and real forms of assessing EFL learners' speaking skills at a tertiary level. The study was carried out in Gabes at the Arts and Humanities Faculty in Sfax, 20 instructors were surveyed with a 10-question questionnaire asking about their professional teaching experience in conducting oral skill sessions as well as the way they used to assess speaking (classroom tasks frequently used, type of assessment that they relied on, and the major source of speaking assessment). The findings showed that tasks used to assess were mainly focused on developing students' speaking skills through the use of analytic rubrics and interactive, authentic, communicative activities. The main types of classroom assessment were formative and summative.

The objective of the study by Syahrin and Salih (2020) was to investigate the online educational journey of a cohort of English as a Second Language students within a higher education institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on investigating how the students' preferred online learning style interacted with the technologies used on the e-learning platform (Moodle) for their ESL course. The main objective was to assess whether the students' learning styles and the technologies employed complemented each other effectively. Additionally, the research aimed to evaluate the ESL e-learning course by examining the different technologies that could be integrated into the online classroom to cater to diverse learning styles. Data was collected from 32 undergraduate students using Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory. The study also analyzed Moodle, employing Warburton's Technologies in Use framework to gain insights into the technologies experienced by students in the online environment. The findings indicated that most students' preferred learning styles aligned with the technologies they encountered in the virtual classroom. This alignment suggested a positive relationship between the technology in use and the students' learning style preferences. However, the study also highlighted a concern regarding the emphasis on receptive skills (listening and reading) in the specific skill-based pedagogy language classroom, with a notable lack of attention to productive skills (speaking and writing). This observation raises important considerations for ESL course instructors, policymakers, and the broader community.

Chien et al. (2020) carried out a study in which a spherical video-based virtual reality (SVVR) setting was built to place students in authentic English-speaking settings. In addition, it investigated how this approach facilitated students in offering feedback on their peers' speaking skills and encouraged them to reflect on their own performance. This research was carried out as part of a high school English course. Furthermore, this study classified the types of peer comments into four categories: Praise, Criticism, Opinion, and Irrelevant. Thus, results indicate that praise feedback was beneficial for the learners' English-speaking performance; in this case, the criticism feedback was likely unfavorable. Furthermore, during the initial peer assessment stage, there was no significant correlation between irrelevant feedback and students' performance, but in a later stage of peer assessment, there was a meaningful negative correlation.

The study conducted by Al-Jarf (2021) delved into the online speaking activities undertaken by college instructors in language and translation departments at select Saudi universities during the pandemic. The research was aimed at understanding how those activities engaged students in the virtual realm, compensating for the lack of in-person interaction. Surveys were used to gather data, revealing that EFL college instructors employed a diverse range of online speaking activities, including assigning research topics for students to prepare at home and present online, hosting online debates, posing problem-solving questions, encouraging student-created podcasts published on Twitter, combining listening and speaking tasks, utilizing Vicaroo for audio recordings, and integrating tools like the Kahoot app. The study also reports the perspectives of both students and instructors on the impact of these activities on students' speaking skill development in the context of distance learning.

Shofatunnisa et al. (2021) carried out a qualitative study to explore and compare the results of the experience of EFL teachers assessing students' speaking skills in an online EFL Speaking course using YouTube videos. The students were asked to record two videos which were scored using the Public Speaking Competence Rubric (PSCR), which measures aspects such as the selection of the topic, organization, the use of supporting material, conclusion, word choice, vocal expression, nonverbal behavior that adapts to the audience, and visual aids. It was concluded that assessing students' speaking skills through the SRV was beneficial for them as they could edit the material and for teachers because when grading, they could repeat and pause the video to ensure a more objective evaluation.

In another study, Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2021) explored the barriers faced by Iranian EFL teachers when assessing learners' online assessment and the strategies implemented at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted through a qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews to collect data from 20 EFL teachers. The data collected were analyzed through content analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the teachers' responses. The results evidence insights into the experiences and challenges of EFL teachers on different technological, pedagogical, affective, and administrative problems; despite those difficulties, the teachers managed to adapt online assessment practices to the resources available and the circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Method

3.1 Setting and Participants

This study involved 388 participants from both public and private educational institutions, comprising 102 EFL teachers, 174 senior high school students, 32 administrators, and 80 students' parents (as illustrated in Table 1). The participants were selected from a diverse range of educational institutions, ranging from primary to university levels, situated in the southern region of Ecuador. The instructors were

teaching in face-to-face learning environments, but then they were suddenly required to shift to the remote teaching modality because of the COVID-19 lockdown and needed to adapt their teaching to the emergency prioritized curriculum established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. The students' proficiency levels varied from A1 to A2 according to the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020).

Table 1. Distribution of participants in the sample

Participants	Number	Public	Private
Teachers	102	58%	42%
Students	174	75%	25%
Authorities	32	50%	50%
Parents	80	43%	57%

3.2 Research Instruments

The instruments used included questionnaires for students, teachers, administrators, and students' parents (see Appendix A, B, C, and D). The questionnaires consisted of 19 items, each utilizing a five-point agreement Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). All the research instruments were designed to determine the types of assessment and the methods and instruments used for assessing the effectiveness of listening and speaking skills. The instruments were administered using the Google Forms tool because of the COVID-19 lockdown. Before administration, the instruments were validated and piloted to ensure their reliability and accuracy.

3.3 Procedure

The study involved a purposive sampling method utilized to select the subjects for this research. This method of sampling involves selecting participants that might contribute to gathering data that ensures the perspectives of the individuals recruited to achieve the objectives of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Participants were intentionally chosen based on specific criteria to ensure representation from relevant educational institutions.

The researchers approached the institution administrators for formal approval. A request letter was sent to the principals of each of the 40 institutions that participated in this study. Parents were asked to sign a consent letter to allow their children to voluntarily take part in the study. To administer the instruments, a link from Google Forms was displayed to the authorities of the educational institution to gather the data. All the information gathered from the instruments was analyzed based on the SPSS software. It is crucial to note that the surveys underwent a thorough validation procedure prior to their distribution. This process confirmed the reliability of the instruments, as evidenced by an internal consistency score of 0.7 according to Cronbach's alpha.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Use of online technological tools to evaluate listening and speaking

Type of institution	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total %
Private	0.0	2.1	6.2	31.3	60.4	100%
Public	1.9	3.7	20.3	38.9	35.2	100%
Average	0.95	2.9	13.25	35.1	47.8	100%

Note. The use of online tools (e.g., online quizzes, blogs, chatrooms, among others) to evaluate listening and speaking.

Table 2 depicts the results of the teachers' opinions about the use of online technological tools to assess students in public and private institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers used technological tools such as online quizzes, blogs, and chatrooms among others to assess the students' listening and speaking skills since an average of 47.8% of the respondents strongly agree with this fact. As Majid (2020) highlights, technology supports EFL teachers in the process of assessing learners' progress, because of the variety of digital devices to build assessment activities for students. The findings of the present study were corroborated by the opinion of the students since they strongly agreed with the fact that their teachers used technological tools to evaluate listening and speaking skills. Even though the teaching-learning process was carried out in a remote setting, teachers were able to use different types of tools to assess listening and speaking skills. In addition, high school authorities stated that their teachers are constantly trained in the use of online tools to deliver the courses, which was also confirmed by the learners' parents who expressed that they have seen their children use online tools to take tests.

Table 3. Types of assessment

Private and Public High Schools					
Types of assessment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Placement assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Diagnostic assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment	0%	8%	23%	37%	32%
Summative assessment (achievement) assessment)	2%	6%	7%	31%	54%
Proficiency assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Observation of learning	0%	26%	44%	10%	20%

The assessment was carried out considering different types, which included the use of placement, diagnostic, formative, summative, and

proficiency assessment as well as observation of learning, as it is displayed in Table 3. As for the application of placement assessment during remote teaching, all the teachers strongly disagree with the use of this type of assessment to measure listening and speaking skills. Regarding diagnostic assessment, the table reports 100% in the strongly disagree scale, this evidences that students' previous knowledge was not tested to determine learners' weaknesses and strengths in what concerns these skills. In the case of formative assessment, 32% of teachers strongly agree and 37% agree on the use of this form of evaluation to check students' progress, which allowed instructors to provide opportune feedback and make decisions to improve the teaching-learning process, which was corroborated by students. In this regard, Anisa (2021) asserts that formative assessment contributes to monitoring the ongoing teaching-learning process and prepares students to reach learning outcomes. On the other hand, 54% of the teachers strongly agree and 31 % agree on the fact that summative assessment was widely used during remote teaching with the purpose of providing students a passing grade. These results are aligned with what students mentioned since they strongly agreed that their teachers used this kind of assessment to measure their listening and speaking knowledge. Regarding proficiency assessment all teachers (100%) strongly disagree on the use of proficiency assessment; in fact, proficiency tests are not used in EFL classrooms because they are aimed at determining students' proficiency level which is uncommon in high schools. Finally, regarding teachers' opinions concerning the use of o of learning, only 20 % strongly agree and 10 % agree on the use of this way of evaluation to monitor students listening and speaking progress. Furthermore, high school authorities verified that, from the above-mentioned types of assessment, their English teachers constantly use formative and summative assessments.

Table 4. Instruments used for assessing listening and speaking.

Private and Public High Schools					
Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I use paraphrasing and summarizing.	1.0%	8.8%	26.5%	43.1%	20.6%
I use projects.	1.0%	5.9%	21.6%	37.3%	34.3%
I use e-portfolios.	8.8%	6.9%	14.7%	25.5%	44.1%
I use listening and speaking tests.	11%	3%	7.5%	10%	68.5%
I use reading-aloud tasks.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I use conversations.	60.0%	30.0%	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%
I use picture-cued tasks	20%	8%	0.0%	40%	32 %
I use questions and answers.	8%	4%	13%	6%	69%
I use interviews.	62%	10%	5%	6%	17%
I use oral presentations.	0%	2%	9%	8%	81%
I use retelling stories.	40%	28%	20%	12%	0%
I use games.	50%	20%	0%	20%	10%

Table 4 presents information about the different types of instruments used by EFL teachers to assess listening and speaking. Regarding the use of paraphrasing and summarizing, 63.7% of teachers who participated in this study agree that these types of instruments were highly used during remote teaching to assess listening and speaking skills. These facts indicate that teachers know that paraphrasing and summarizing information helps students improve their listening and speaking abilities. This is in line with Cheung (2016), who explains that paraphrasing activities enhance pupils' ability to make syntactic and semantic processes in the target language at structural and informational levels. In addition, paraphrasing and summarizing sentences help students comprehend and organize the language, thus leading to interpreting the target language better. In this line, Li (2018) claims that summarizing is effective in improving students' overall production and accuracy in the target language. Regarding the use of projects for evaluating listening and speaking skills, it is important to highlight that they can be an effective way to assess listening and speaking skills. In this study, 71.6% of the teachers agreed that they used projects such as podcasts on a given topic, create video presentations or projects in which students had to use technological resources or tools to work collaboratively and showcase their communication skills, allowing students to work on their own time and present their work in class. According to Huang (2015), project-based is a tool that allows students to get the knowledge that can be useful for students to self-assess.

Another assessment instrument used by EFL teachers to track the progress of students' listening and speaking skills during COVID-19 pandemic was the e-portfolio, the results show that 69.6% of teachers affirmed that they did use this assessment tool. In fact, e-portfolios provide authentic information for teachers to be able to provide feedback to properly guide students, helping them to further develop their skills. These results are in line with what Habeeb and Ebrahim (2019) state, who affirm that this tool allows teachers not only to enhance learning but also to assess their progress. Moreover, Cepik and Yastibas (2013) consider that speaking e-portfolios enhance student autonomy through self-assessment as well as the freedom to choose relevant information for assignments.

The results show that most of the teachers (78.5%) used listening and speaking tests to assess students' oral comprehension and communication skills because they allowed teachers to quickly track progress in real time and identify areas for immediate feedback. Besides that, they can be administered remotely and tailored to particular needs, levels, and online environments to measure how students respond and interact in oral examinations. In fact, as Hemmati and Ghaderi (2014) highlight that this type of evaluation attempts to measure learners ´capability to understand and grasp oral information.

Picture-cued tasks were another type of instrument used by 72% of the EFL teachers who participated in this study to evaluate high school students' listening and speaking skills. Picture-cued tasks allow learners to demonstrate their understanding of a given task, and then use

their speaking skills to present their ideas where teachers can also assess pronunciation, fluency, and intonation; all these thanks to the effective way to provide learners a visual aid to prompt speech production in English.

The questions and answers technique was an instrument highly used by teachers during the pandemic to assess listening and speaking skills as shown in Table 3 where 69% of teachers affirmed that question and answer strategy is used to measure students' ability to listen, comprehend, and respond to a variety of questions, from simple to complex. This technique can also help identify weaknesses in terms of language use and comprehension when speaking.

Oral presentations allow teachers to check students' understanding of subject content and to observe students' use of body language and other non-verbal communication elements of their language. Besides that, they allow them to assess fluency, pronunciation, and the ability to articulate thoughts, ideas, and feelings. All of this makes oral presentations an effective tool for assessing both listening and speaking, this is why they have been used in a very high percentage (89%). In fact, according to Tsang (2020), oral presentations are important instruments for learning and frequently serve as assessment of students' understanding of a subject.

Regarding Reading-aloud tasks the results evidenced that they were not used at all by teachers during the remote learning classes since 100% of them indicate that they did not work with this type of assessment. This result would be due to the lack of time during the listening and speaking activities used to assess learners. On the other hand, conversations were not used by most teachers to evaluate students' listening and speaking production. A possible reason for instructors not using conversations to assess pupils may be related to the amount of time devoted to each class and the poor Internet connection to promote interactions in the classroom. Furthermore, most teachers were not able to use re-telling stories and interviews to evaluate listening and speaking activities. This fact may be the result of a lack of training on behalf of the instructors who may not know the advantages of providing students with the opportunity of telling stories and interviews and assessing learners by means of these instruments. These findings are aligned with Blume (2020), who found that teachers lack the use of digital tools including gaming for teaching purposes and have insufficient prior experience in working with games.

In the teaching process, activities dealing with reading aloud tasks, conversations, retelling stories, and games were not used because the learning environment did not allow students to work face-to-face, so instructors were not able to use such activities to evaluate students. In this regard, Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2021) point out that the shift from traditional face-to-face assessment to virtual assessment due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major influence on different aspects such as the use of technology in the design and development of classroom evaluation practices.

5. Conclusions

The findings of the study demonstrate that educators in both public and private high schools used a range of online tools, including online quizzes, blogs, and chat rooms to assess students' listening and speaking skills throughout the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, these findings affirm the success of the assessment process, even in the face of the imperative shift to remote teaching methodologies during this period.

Regarding the assessment methods utilized to evaluate listening and speaking skills in remote teaching, most educators adopted both formative and summative assessment approaches. Additionally, teachers in both public and private institutions diversified their evaluation strategies by incorporating methods such as peer assessment and project-based assessment during the pandemic.

In terms of the instruments used to assess listening and speaking skills, students were primarily evaluated through tests, oral presentations, e-portfolios, and projects. These instruments were widely employed to evaluate students' abilities. In contrast, the utilization of reading-aloud tasks, conversations, interviews, story retellings, and educational games was relatively limited, suggesting that these strategies were less commonly used. This highlights the prevailing preference for formal assessment methods over more interactive and informal ones in the context of assessing these specific language skills in both public and private establishments.

5.1 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study provide new directions for further research. Different tools and procedures used to assess students' listening and speaking skills emerged from this study. However, we suggest that experimental studies to determine what tools and processes are more adequate to evaluate students could be conducted.

5.2 Implications for Future Research

The outcomes of this study have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed current EFL teaching. This transformation goes beyond ushering in a technology-centric era, enhancing the use of existing but underused technological tools, making EFL education more accessible and adaptable. It has also paved the way for the seamless integration of remote assessment methods and tools, spanning traditional face-to-face instruction, as well as distance and online learning modes.

In the post-pandemic educational landscape, instructors should continue employing a wide spectrum of assessment techniques, ranging from online quizzes to video-based speaking evaluations and electronic writing assignments since these digital tools not only provide instantaneous feedback but also enable the meticulous tracking of student progress while addressing today´s learners characteristics.

5.3 Limitations

This research suffered from some limitations. Firstly, even though the number and type of participants varied, it is recommended to

include other educational settings such as schools and universities. Furthermore, the study found that formative and summative assessments were conducted, it is suggested to examine the influence of such types of evaluation on students through experimental research. Moreover, apart from the technological tools studied, we recommend exploring other tools to assess listening and speaking skills.

Authors contributions

All authors have thoroughly reviewed and authorized the final manuscript. The study benefitted from equal contributions from each one of the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear teacher:

We would like to request your voluntary participation in a questionnaire aimed at gathering information about your perception of assessing English as a Foreign Language listening and speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your valuable input will be greatly appreciated.

Choose the option that best expresses your perceptions in relation to teaching styles.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I use online tools (e.g., online quizzes, blogs, chatrooms, among others) to evaluate listening and speaking.					
I use placement assessment for measuring students' knowledge					
I use diagnostic assessment for measuring students' knowledge					
I use formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment) for measuring students' knowledge					
I summative assessment (achievement) assessment) for measuring students' knowledge					
I use proficiency assessment for measuring students' knowledge					
I use Observation of learning for measuring students' knowledge					
I use paraphrasing and summarizing.					
I use projects.					
I use e-portfolios.					
I use listening and speaking tests.					
I use reading aloud tasks.					
I use conversations.					
I use picture cued tasks					
I use questions and answers.					
I use interviews.					
I use oral presentations.					
I use re-telling stories.					
I use games					

APPENDIX B

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear student:

We would like to request your voluntary participation in a questionnaire aimed at gathering information about your perception of assessing English as a Foreign Language listening and speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your valuable input will be greatly appreciated.

Choose the option that best expresses your perceptions in relation to teaching styles.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher uses online tools (e.g., online quizzes, blogs, chatrooms, among others) to evaluate listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses placement assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses diagnostic assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses summative assessment (achievement) assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses proficiency test for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses observation of learning for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses paraphrasing and summarizing for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses projects for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses e-portfolios for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses listening and speaking tests for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses reading aloud tasks for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses conversations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses picture cued tasks for assessing listening and speaking slills.					
The teacher uses questions and answers for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses interviews for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses oral presentations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses re-telling stories for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses games for assessing listening and speaking skills.					

APPENDIX C

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear parent:

We would like to request your voluntary participation in a questionnaire aimed at gathering information about your perception of assessing English as a Foreign Language listening and speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your valuable input will be greatly appreciated.

Choose the option that best expresses your perceptions in relation to teaching styles.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher uses online tools (e.g., online quizzes, blogs, chatrooms, among others) to evaluate listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses placement assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses diagnostic assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses summative assessment (achievement) assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses proficiency test for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses observation of learning for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses paraphrasing and summarizing for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses projects for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses e-portfolios for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses listening and speaking tests for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses reading aloud tasks for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses conversations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses picture cued tasks for assessing listening and speaking slills.					
The teacher uses questions and answers for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses interviews for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses oral presentations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses re-telling stories for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses games for assessing listening and speaking skills.					

APPENDIX D

AUTHORITIES' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear high school principal:

We would like to request your voluntary participation in a questionnaire aimed at gathering information about your perception of assessing English as a Foreign Language listening and speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your valuable input will be greatly appreciated.

Choose the option that best expresses your perceptions in relation to teaching styles.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher uses online tools (e.g., online quizzes, blogs, chatrooms, among others) to evaluate listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses placement assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses diagnostic assessment for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses summative assessment (achievement) assessment) for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses proficiency tests for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses observation of learning for measuring listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses paraphrasing and summarizing for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses projects for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses e-portfolios for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses listening and speaking tests for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses reading aloud tasks for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses conversations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses picture cued tasks for assessing listening and speaking slills.					
The teacher uses questions and answers for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses interviews for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses oral presentations for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses re-telling stories for assessing listening and speaking skills.					
The teacher uses games for assessing listening and speaking skills.					