Opinions, Challenges, Beliefs, and Suggestions of Secondary Teachers on Assessing Listening and Speaking

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Abstract

This study explores in-service secondary school EFL teachers' opinions about the implementation of the Turkish Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) speaking and listening skill assessment in the 2023-2024 academic year. The study aims to see if teachers' opinions align with MoNE's expectations and their self-efficacy in the assessment of these skills. It also investigates if teachers encountered any challenges or needs during the assessment process and whether demographic factors such as gender, age, level of education, years of experience and academic background affect their opinions. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. 150 secondary school EFL teachers from Isparta, Türkiye, took part in the survey and were selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-designed five-point Likert scale questionnaire via Google Forms. 17 volunteer teachers were also interviewed semi-structured to get deeper insights into their experiences and views. Findings indicate that EFL teachers generally support the new policy, recognizing its importance for communicative competence. Formal assessments were seen as a step toward more balanced assessment, but teachers noted challenges like lack of training, increased workload, crowded classes, limited hours, and grading difficulties. Regarding demographic influences, gender was found to have a significant effect on some of the questionnaire items while other demographic variables showed limited statistical differences. Teachers suggest that policy changes should be aligned with classroom realities by providing sufficient teacher training, improving assessment resources and taking necessary steps to the mentioned challenges to support a more practical assessment process.

Keywords: Teachers' opinions, self-efficacy belief, assessing speaking and listening skills, secondary school level

Ortaokul Öğretmenlerinin Dinleme ve Konuşma Becerilerinin Değerlendirilmesine İlişkin Görüşleri, Zorlukları, İnançları ve Önerileri

Özet

Bu çalışma, görevdeki ortaokul İngilizce öğretmenlerinin 2023-2024 eğitim-öğretim yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) tarafından uygulamaya konulan konuşma ve dinleme becerilerinin değerlendirilmesine yönelik görüşlerini incelemektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, öğretmenlerin görüşlerinin MEB'in beklentileriyle örtüşüp örtüşmediğini ve bu becerilerin değerlendirilmesine yönelik öz-yeterliklerini ortaya koymaktır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin değerlendirme sürecinde karşılaştıkları zorluklar veya ihtiyaçlar olup olmadığı ve cinsiyet, yaş, eğitim düzeyi, mesleki deneyim süresi ve akademik geçmiş gibi demografik değişkenlerin öğretmen görüşleri üzerindeki etkisi de araştırılmıştır. Araştırmada nicel ve nitel veri toplama yöntemlerinin bir arada kullanıldığı karma yöntem deseni benimsenmiştir. Çalışmaya, kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen Isparta ilinden 150 ortaokul İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Veriler, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen beşli Likert tipi bir anket aracılığıyla Google Forms üzerinden toplanmıştır. Ayrıca, 17 gönüllü

öğretmenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilerek daha derinlemesine bilgi edinilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin genel olarak bu yeni politikayı desteklediklerini ve söz konusu uygulamanın iletişimsel yeterlilik açısından önemli olduğunu kabul ettiklerini göstermektedir. Öğretmenler, bu tür resmî değerlendirmeleri daha dengeli bir ölçme yaklaşımına doğru atılmış bir adım olarak görmekle birlikte, eğitim eksikliği, artan iş yükü, kalabalık sınıflar, sınırlı ders saatleri ve puanlama güçlükleri gibi çeşitli sorunlara da dikkat çekmişlerdir. Demografik değişkenlere bakıldığında ise, cinsiyetin bazı anket maddelerinde anlamlı bir fark yarattığı, diğer değişkenlerin ise istatistiksel olarak sınırlı farklılıklar gösterdiği belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenler, politika değişikliklerinin sınıf içi gerçekliklerle uyumlu hâle getirilmesi gerektiğini vurgulayarak, öğretmen eğitimlerinin artırılması, değerlendirme kaynaklarının geliştirilmesi ve mevcut zorlukların giderilmesine yönelik adımların atılması gerektiğini önermektedirler. Bu sayede, daha uygulanabilir ve etkili bir değerlendirme süreci desteklenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğretmen görüşleri, öz-yeterlik inancı, konuşma ve dinleme becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi, ortaokul düzeyi

1. Introduction

In the academic year of 2023-2024, Türkiye's Ministry of National Education began using formal assessments in secondary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to assess students' listening and speaking skills in contexts that reflect the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)-based secondary school curriculum. The possibility of assessments for listening and speaking skills in assessment contexts followed the English Language Education Curriculum (ELEC) published in 2018, which had earlier rooted the notion of communicative competence in the learning and teaching of English as a second language. The CEFR advocates using English in a range of classroom interactions while developing learners as resourceful and competent language users, as opposed to simply transmitting linguistic knowledge. In accordance with this value and tradition of English language instruction, the Measurement and Evaluation Regulation of the MoNE was published in the Official Gazette on September 9, 2023 (No. 32304), and incorporated the assessment of listening and speaking tasks, and time, into national evaluation practices. The regulation represents a change to the status quo, whereby listening and speaking as key communicative skills did not have an explicit test or grade prior to this policy and teachers have relied upon other forms of assessment in English as a foreign language classrooms, most commonly traditional paper and pen exams based either on multiple-choice or short-answer items as a measure of students' English language proficiency.

This sudden shift from written exams to communicative skill assessments has raised critical concerns among EFL teachers regarding feasibility, fairness, and consistency in practice. Many educators have reported a lack of training, standardized criteria, and adequate resources, which has led to inconsistencies in grading and increased workload (Dinçer, 2024; Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). Similar challenges have been documented internationally, where EFL teachers struggle with subjective grading, crowded classrooms, and insufficient technological infrastructure (Gopal & Embi, 2014; Huuskonen & Kähkönen, 2006). These recurring difficulties suggest that teachers' perceptions and classroom realities play a decisive role in the successful implementation of communicative assessment practices. Understanding these experiences is therefore essential, as teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy directly affect the quality and fairness of assessment, student outcomes, and the overall success of educational reform.

The importance of this study is to explore the issues outlined earlier during the initial stages of national assessment reform in Türkiye. Assessing listening and speaking represents a significant pedagogical shift with English language education moving from an assessment of grammatical knowledge to assessing communicative competence, but once again, an important mismatch revealed by the analysis is between the assessment policy direction and current classroom practices. The current study seeks to understand the mismatch in the context of in-service secondary school EFL teachers' viewpoints, challenges, and beliefs

about assessing listening and speaking. As it addresses teachers' perceptions and practices with regards to the new assessment policy, the study may provide meaningful information regarding the practical aspects of this reform and the extent to which it is aligned to MoNE's intentions. Since teachers are the key change agents assigned to enact assessment reforms, their feedback may also provide important information to help improve future teacher education, assessment instrument development, and assessment policy enactment.

This research makes a contribution to the larger reform of language assessment discussions by positioning it to the Turkish context within the worldwide movement of communicative language assessment. It is suggested that professional development should be more systematic, teachers should have much clearer and more structured assessment rubrics, and the evaluating procedures should evaluate assessments for reliability and fairness. The importance of aligning national assessment practices with international policies related to assessment such as the CEFR is important, but educators must also recognize the importance of remaining sensitive to what is happening in the local context. Responding to the challenges highlighted in this research should lead to curriculum design, teacher education and policymaking, that is premised on recognizing much of the barriers teachers face and providing evidence-based recommendations for teachers to improve assessment practices in their classrooms.

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to document teachers' experiences with the new assessment policy, and bring theory and practice into alignment in support of English Language Assessment. It is hoped that this study adds to the ongoing movement of improving communicative competence among students, the assessment literacy of teachers and the implementation of sustainable change to language education practice in Türkiye.

2. Literature Review

Assessment is a fundamental element of education, serving as both a diagnostic tool and a means of guiding instruction. It allows educators to measure student learning, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adapt instructional strategies accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In English language education, assessment is particularly significant as it evaluates proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, providing a reliable measure of students' language abilities (Brown, 2004). Formative assessments, such as reflective journals and class discussions, facilitate continuous feedback, fostering self-regulated learning and metacognitive awareness (Brookhart, 2010). Meanwhile, summative assessments, including standardized tests like TOEFL and IELTS, offer a comprehensive evaluation of student competence at the end of a learning period. Effective assessments not only support academic achievement but also enhance communicative competence by prioritizing real-world language use through task-based assessments (Coombe et al., 2007). Furthermore, fair and inclusive assessments promote equity by accommodating students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (McKay, 2006). By combining formative and summative approaches, well-designed assessments improve learning, inform instruction, and guide educational policies, ensuring meaningful language education experiences. When aligned with educational objectives, assessment becomes a powerful means of enhancing language learning, refining teaching practices, and fostering long-term academic success.

Listening is a fundamental component of communication and language learning, requiring active cognitive engagement in processing, interpreting, and evaluating auditory input. While hearing is a passive act of perceiving sound, listening involves the conscious effort to derive meaning, making it essential for language acquisition (Kline, 1996; Rost, 2025). Since listening precedes speaking, reading, and writing, it plays a foundational role in language development (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Nunan, 1998). Historically, listening skills were overlooked in language education, with a greater emphasis placed on reading and grammar instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, scholars now recognize listening as an active skill crucial for developing other language competencies (Sudewi & Fadilah, 2023). Effective language instruction integrates listening with other skills to promote meaningful communication. Moreover, listening

ability influences speaking proficiency, as comprehension of spoken language allows learners to engage in interactive conversations (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking, like listening, is a dynamic and complex skill involving linguistic accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and sociocultural competence (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). It has historically been undervalued in language instruction, but contemporary approaches emphasize communicative competence and real-life speaking tasks (Bygate, 2009).

Assessing listening and speaking skills requires structured methods that reflect real-world communication. Listening assessments range from intensive tasks focused on phonological recognition to extensive tasks measuring comprehension of longer texts (Brown, 2004). Speaking assessments evaluate fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and interactional competence through tasks like role-plays, interviews, and discussions (Roever & McNamara, 2006). Reliable assessments must account for external factors such as test anxiety and cultural differences, requiring clear rubrics and consistent evaluation criteria (Lambert & Lines, 2000). Formative assessments, such as peer reviews and self-evaluations, support continuous improvement, while summative assessments, such as oral presentations and standardized tests, provide comprehensive evaluations of learners' abilities (Brookhart & McMillan, 2019). Authentic tasks, including recorded conversations and spontaneous discussions, enhance assessment validity by mirroring real-world communication (McKay, 2006). The integration of innovative tools, such as speech recognition software and digital recording platforms, further enhances the assessment process by providing dynamic and individualized feedback. Ultimately, effective listening and speaking assessments must balance reliability, authenticity, and inclusivity to support learners' communicative competence and long-term language development.

Teacher self-efficacy, a concept introduced in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, plays a crucial role in shaping educators' motivation, instructional methods, and classroom management. In English language teaching (ELT), self-efficacy influences teachers' ability to implement learner-centered approaches, address diverse linguistic needs, and effectively assess students' language proficiency (Wyatt & Faez, 2024). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more adaptable, employ creative teaching strategies, and foster student engagement, whereas those with low self-efficacy often struggle with discipline, instructional flexibility, and motivation (Chacón, 2005; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). Training, teaching experience, and school context significantly shape self-efficacy, with well-trained teachers demonstrating greater resilience and adaptability (Garvis & Pendergast, 2016). Self-efficacy is also crucial in assessment, influencing teachers' confidence in designing fair evaluations and providing meaningful feedback (Wyatt & Faez, 2024). However, many ELT teachers feel underprepared in assessment practices, often relying on traditional testing methods due to limited training (Garvis & Pendergast, 2016). Strengthening assessment literacy through professional development, reflective teaching, and mentorship can enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness in student evaluation (Bowles & Pearman, 2017). Ultimately, fostering teacher self-efficacy is essential for improving instructional quality, student outcomes, and overall classroom success.

Assessing listening and speaking skills in English language education presents multiple challenges, including subjectivity, cultural biases, logistical constraints, and the dynamic nature of these skills. Subjectivity in assessment arises from inconsistencies in evaluation criteria, as assessors may be influenced by biases or ambiguity in indicators, particularly in pronunciation and fluency (Brookhart & McMillan, 2019; Fulcher, 2015). Authentic assessment tasks also pose difficulties since role-plays and interviews lack the full complexity of real-life communication (Brown, 2004). Resource limitations further exacerbate these challenges, as conducting oral tests requires significant time, manpower, and technical support, making them difficult to implement in large or underfunded institutions (Hughes & Hughes, 2020; Luoma, 2004). Test anxiety is another obstacle, as high-stakes environments can hinder students' fluency and coherence (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Horwitz, 2010). Additionally, cultural biases in listening and speaking assessments can disadvantage learners unfamiliar with specific accents or idiomatic expressions (McKay, 2006; McNamara, 2000). Furthermore, traditional assessments fail to measure interactive aspects like turn-taking and negotiation of meaning (Luoma, 2004). Balancing formative and summative assessments remains

challenging, as summative tests often overshadow formative feedback, despite its importance for skill development (Coombe et al., 2007; Lambert & Lines, 2000). Addressing these challenges requires fairness, inclusivity, diverse task design, multiple assessors, and the integration of technology to ensure accurate assessment of students' communicative competencies.

The history of English language education in Türkiye has been shaped by significant reforms aimed at improving language instruction and aligning with global standards. The 1997 educational reform marked a transformative shift by making English compulsory in primary schools, introducing a communicative, student-centered approach (Kırkgöz, 2009). Further curriculum revisions in 2006 sought to align with EU standards (MoNE, 2006), and the 2012-2013 adoption of the 4+4+4 system extended compulsory education to 12 years, introducing English in the 2nd and 3rd grades (MoNE, 2013). In 2018, the MoNE revised the English language teaching program based on CEFR guidelines. The most recent change, the 2023 MoNE Measurement and Evaluation Regulation, introduced common skill-based foreign language exams, allocating 25% each to speaking and listening, and 50% to reading and writing. The December 2023 guide emphasized process-oriented assessment, authentic evaluation, flexibility, and objective grading criteria. These reforms, despite challenges, reflect Türkiye's commitment to enhancing English education quality in line with CEFR's objective of fostering international cooperation and standardization in language education (Council of Europe [CoE], 2018).

An examination of the national and international literature on the assessment of speaking and listening skills in language education reveals various challenges and perspectives. Research highlights key issues such as time constraints, lack of resources, and teacher training deficiencies, which impact the effectiveness of oral skill assessments. Huuskonen and Kähkönen (2006) conducted a study in western Finland and Oulu, highlighting challenges in testing oral skills, particularly time constraints, lack of technical resources, and insufficient assessment training. Gopal and Embi (2014) surveyed secondary school teachers in Malaysia, revealing positive beliefs about communicative language testing but identifying obstacles such as large class sizes, high workloads, and insufficient assessment tools. Similarly, Narathakoon et al. (2020) studied Thai grade 6 teachers, confirming time constraints in classroom assessments and emphasizing the necessity of professional training to bridge the gap between assessment beliefs and practices. Ha et al. (2021) examined Vietnamese high school teachers' reluctance to assess speaking and listening due to large class sizes, lack of resources, and absence of these skills in final exams, suggesting curriculum and exam reforms. Maliva et al. (2022) investigated Tanzanian teachers, finding that oral language assessments were infrequent and primarily conducted in smaller classes, concluding that strengthening assessments is essential for improvement. Regmi (2022) studied Nepalese secondary teachers, showing positive attitudes toward listening assessment but identifying challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources. Teachers called for curriculum designers to prioritize listening assessments.

In the Turkish context, Dinçer (2024) explored Turkish teachers' views on speaking exams, finding them beneficial but hindered by preparation challenges, stress, adaptation difficulties, and increased workload. Collaboration among teachers was seen as a motivational factor. Özdemir (2018) analyzed speaking exams in Turkish high schools, finding that students and teachers viewed them favorably, though teachers admitted to inflating scores, reducing reliability. Han and Kaya (2014) investigated Turkish teachers' assessment techniques, revealing that speaking was seen as the hardest skill to assess and training had little impact on assessment preferences. Ölmezer-Öztürk (2018) validated the Language Assessment Knowledge Scale (LAKS) and assessed Turkish EFL teachers, finding low scores in listening assessment and a need for better pre-service and in-service training. Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2019) emphasized the need for skill-specific training in language assessment based on EFL teachers' perspectives. İleri (2019) found that Turkish teachers felt inadequate in assessing speaking skills early in their careers but improved with experience. Speaking was perceived as harder to assess than other skills. Aktaş (2021) studied the implementation of Turkey's 2017 lower secondary English curriculum, highlighting the need for more course hours, smaller classes, and the inclusion of speaking and listening in national exams. Tokur-Üner

(2022) and Tokur-Üner & Aşılıoğlu (2022) examined Turkish teachers' perspectives on assessment, revealing a preference for traditional methods and the neglect of speaking and listening due to resource constraints. Satgun and Aşık (2023) assessed Turkish in-service teachers' LAL levels, finding adequate knowledge in reading and speaking but deficiencies in writing and listening. Informal assessment practices led to reliability concerns, emphasizing the need for training in listening assessment. These findings from the Turkish context align with global discussions emphasizing the communicative and intercultural role of English in contemporary education.

English has increasingly become the global lingua franca, serving as a primary means of communication across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins & Morán Panero, 2024; Sifakis & Tsantila, 2018). Recognizing this shift, the 2018 English language curriculum in Türkiye was revised to align with the CEFR, incorporating the assessment of listening and speaking skills into standardized language exams (CoE, 2018). This reform aims to enhance communicative competence by prioritizing real-life interaction over traditional grammar-focused evaluation.

However, the implementation of listening and speaking assessments in Türkiye remains relatively new, with limited empirical research on its challenges (Dinçer, 2024; Özdemir, 2018). This study contributes to the growing body of literature on language assessment by exploring EFL teachers' perspectives on the difficulties they face in assessing these skills and how these challenges relate to demographic factors. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for improving assessment practices, curriculum development, and teacher training programs (Cook & Wei, 2016). Additionally, as ELF-aware pedagogy promotes intelligibility over native-speaker norms, this study highlights the need for more inclusive and communicative assessment strategies in Türkiye (Sifakis & Tsantila, 2018).

In conclusion, research on speaking and listening assessment highlights common global challenges such as time constraints, resource limitations, and teacher preparedness. Studies from different contexts, including Türkiye, emphasize the need for curriculum reforms, increased professional training, and improvements in assessment techniques to ensure more effective language education. The primary objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of in-service secondary school language teachers in Türkiye regarding the challenges they face in assessing listening and speaking skills. In alignment with this primary objective, the following questions were formulated.

1. To what extent do teachers' opinions align with the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) official stance—outlined in the 2018 CEFR-based English Language Teaching Curriculum and the 2023 Measurement and Evaluation Regulation—which emphasize the systematic assessment of listening and speaking skills as part of communicative competence?

2. What are teachers' opinions on material development/use and self-efficacy in the process of assessing speaking and listening skills?

3. Do teachers have difficulties/problems/needs in assessing speaking and listening skills? If so, what are their suggestions?

4. Are there significant differences between teachers' opinions and demographic information such as gender, age, years of work experience, education level, employment status, and graduation department?

3. Method

This section describes the research design, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, validity and reliability.

3.1. Research Design

A mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, was employed in this study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Mixed methods research, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2023), systematically combines qualitative insights—such as participant perspectives—with quantitative rigor, enabling a more nuanced analysis. This study adopted a QUAN → QUAL approach, where quantitative data was collected first through a questionnaire, followed by qualitative interviews to enhance interpretation. Dörnyei (2007) identifies nine types of mixed-methods designs based on sequence and dominance, with this study utilizing sequential integration to refine open-ended questions based on survey findings. By ensuring qualitative responses constituted over ten percent of the quantitative data, the study enhanced depth and contextual understanding.

3.2. Participants

The study sample comprised 150 in-service language teachers working at state secondary schools in Isparta, Türkiye, during 2024-2025. Convenience sampling was employed to select participants based on accessibility and suitability for the researcher (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009; Mackey & Gass, 2022). Additionally, 25 teachers volunteered for interviews, with 17 ultimately participating. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to participants, ranging from Participant 1 (P1) to Participant 17 (P17). A summary of participant profiles is given briefly. The majority of the 150 questionnaire participants were female (108) English language teachers, with males accounting for 42. Most participants were aged between 31 and 50, and the most common work experience range was 16-20 years, followed by 6-10 and 11-15 years. A bachelor's degree was the most prevalent qualification (121 participants), while 27 held a master's degree, and only two had a doctorate. Nearly all participants were full-time staff, except for two wage-earning individuals; whose employment status was excluded from significance testing. Regarding educational background, 114 participants graduated from English language teaching departments, 31 from faculties of arts and sciences, three from other education departments, and two from unrelated fields. Among the 17 interview participants, the majority were female (11), while six were male. The most common age range was 41-50, followed by 31-40. Most participants had 16-20 years of professional experience, with fewer having 11-15 years or over 21 years. A bachelor's degree was the most common qualification, while only three held a master's degree—one in English language and literature and two in unrelated fields. All participants were full-time staff. The predominant department of graduation was the faculty of education in English language teaching, followed by three participants from English language and literature, with no representation from unrelated fields.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized two data collection instruments: a five-point Likert-type questionnaire (Appendix B.) and a semi-structured interview (Appendix A.). The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included seven items, beginning with a consent statement, followed by demographic questions regarding gender, age, years of experience, education level, employment status, university type, and academic background. The second part, titled the "Opinions Questionnaire", was developed by the researcher to examine teachers' perspectives on assessing listening and speaking skills. This section contained 18 items organized into three conceptual sections, each aligned with the study's research focus: Section 1 (Items 1–4): Assessing listening skills, Section 2 (Items 5–8): Assessing speaking skills, Section 3 (Items 9–18): Broader aspects such as feasibility, fairness, resource adequacy, and alignment with MoNE's policy framework.

The items were designed in accordance with the 2018 CEFR-based English Language Education Curriculum and the 2023 Measurement and Evaluation Regulation, reflecting the MoNE's emphasis on communicative competence and the assessment of productive skills. Relevant literature on EFL assessment practices (e.g., Dinçer, 2024; Gopal & Embi, 2014; Huuskonen & Kähkönen, 2006; Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019) was also consulted during item development to ensure theoretical grounding and contextual relevance. The third part of the questionnaire provided space for participants to share their contact information if they wished to participate in follow-up interviews.

The second data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview consisting of 13 open-ended questions. These interviews were conducted with volunteer participants who had provided consent and contact details through the questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews was to collect rich, qualitative data that would complement the quantitative findings by exploring teachers' experiences, beliefs, and challenges in greater depth.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Drawing upon the researcher's position as an English language teacher, strategic measures were taken to enhance participant engagement. The questionnaire was converted into an online format using Google Forms and administered in the participants' first language (L1) to improve comprehension and response accuracy (Harkness et al., 2003), while also fostering familiarity and cultural relevance (Johnson & van de Vijver, 2003). Before distribution, participants were informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality principles, and voluntary nature, and they indicated consent by selecting the statement "I agree" at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Initial recruitment efforts targeted the researcher's professional network, followed by outreach to 102 schools in Isparta via email. Due to low initial response rates within the ten-day period, reminder emails were sent, 65 phone calls were made to school principals, and 37 schools were visited for face-to-face requests. The questionnaire link was also shared in teacher social media groups to reach a wider participant pool across Isparta/Türkiye. Once the quantitative data collection was completed, the responses were automatically compiled through Google Forms, numerically coded in Excel, and subsequently transferred to SPSS version 27 for statistical analysis.

Interviews, conducted in L1 via Zoom, WhatsApp, or phone calls, were held with volunteers who provided contact information at the end of the questionnaire. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and followed a semi-structured format designed to elicit detailed accounts of teachers' experiences with listening and speaking assessment. Prior to each interview, the informed consent form was read aloud, and participants' privacy was safeguarded by omitting identifying information. All interviews were audio-recorded for transcription, paraphrased for clarity, and securely stored for later qualitative analysis and evidence.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected via Google Forms was initially imported into Excel, where numerical values were assigned using formula functions before being transferred to SPSS version 27 for analysis. Following the guidelines of Büyüköztürk (2024), various statistical techniques were applied, including descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation, and multiple comparisons) and inferential tests with a significance level of $p = 0.05$. Normality tests assessed Skewness and Kurtosis, confirming a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), which led to the use of parametric tests such as independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA.

In accordance with the research design, questionnaire items were grouped under conceptual constructs that corresponded to each research question, ensuring theoretical coherence between the quantitative data and the study's aims. Specifically, Items 1, 5, 9, 10, and 11 addressed Research Question 1; Items 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, and 16 addressed Research Question 2; and Items 3, 7, 12, 17, and 18 addressed Research Question 3. Demographic variables were analyzed in relation to these constructs to determine whether participant characteristics (e.g., gender, education level, experience etc.) influenced teachers' opinions. Where demographic categories had insufficient variance, such as low counts in certain degree levels or departments, groups were merged to enable statistical testing.

The qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, paraphrased, and translated into English, ensuring clarity and anonymity (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Saunders et al., 2015). Participant validation was conducted to confirm the accuracy of translations and interpretations before analysis. The verified data were then analyzed using MAXQDA, following the coding strategies of Saldaña (2021). A deductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021) guided coding and theme identification, aligning the analysis with the research questions and relevant literature while ensuring transparency and consistency in interpretation.

3.6. Validity and Reliability

A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 40 state secondary school teachers in Burdur, Türkiye, to identify potential flaws, ambiguities, or redundancies in the items. Feedback from participants contributed to refining the questionnaire in its initial improvement phase, ensuring clarity and contextual relevance. Following this phase, the reliability of the final version was assessed using Cronbachs Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of $\alpha = .72$, surpassing the .70 threshold for acceptable internal consistency (Dörnyei, 2007).

The construct validity and reliability of both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions were further enhanced through input from experienced English language teachers with MA and PhD degrees who were directly involved in the item development and review process. Their contributions ensured that the items accurately represented the study's constructs and aligned with the objectives of the 2018 CEFR-based English Language Education Curriculum and the 2023 Measurement and Evaluation Regulation. In the second refinement phase, expert opinion forms were utilized, and under the supervision of three faculty members, additional revisions were made to ensure that the instruments demonstrated both content validity and internal consistency.

Additionally, to enhance the credibility of the qualitative findings, member checking was conducted. After the interview data were transcribed, translated, and thematically analyzed, the paraphrased statements were shared with the original interviewees to confirm that the identified themes and interpretations accurately reflected their intended meanings. This verification process ensured alignment between participants' perspectives and the thematic outcomes, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness and overall reliability of the qualitative analysis.

4. Findings

The study's first research question explored to what extent in-service secondary school teachers' opinions on assessing listening and speaking skills align with the MoNE's official stance outlined in the 2018 CEFR-based curriculum and the 2023 Measurement and Evaluation Regulation which started to be practiced in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Table 1.
Consistency of teachers' opinions with the MoNE

(N =150, Overall Mean = 4.13, SD (σ)= .90)	M	SD
1. I find it positive that listening skills are assessed.	4.41	.67
5. I find it positive that speaking skills are assessed.	4.40	.75
9. I think that this practice should have been done much earlier.	4.07	1.04
10. Assessing listening and speaking skills increases my students' English proficiency.	4.17	.92
11. The assessment of listening and speaking skills is beneficial for the students in terms of improving their grade point average.	3.64	1.11

The items in Table 1 were designed to examine teachers' perspectives on the implementation of listening and speaking assessments in general. The mean scores for the responses to these items ranged from 3.64 to 4.41, with the highest means observed for items 1 and 5. Item 11 had the lowest mean score (3.64), but it still fell within the "Agree" category. Overall, the participants expressed positive opinions on assessing listening and speaking skills, as reflected in the overall mean score of 4.13, which falls within the positive response range (3.41–5.00). Additionally, the standard deviation (σ = .90) indicated that participants' responses were relatively consistent, with no extreme variations. The interview findings aligned with the statistical results in Table 1, as all participants except one expressed positive opinion regarding the assessment of listening and speaking skills in English language education.

> *P6: "Thanks to this practice, students recognize listening and speaking skills as separate abilities. In this context, they approach exams with more care and preparation. For this reason, this practice should continue."*

> *P9: "I see this situation negatively. I think this practice is unnecessary."*

Teachers appreciated this implementation, considering it a beneficial approach that provides a more comprehensive evaluation of students' language abilities beyond grammar and written exams. They observed increased student engagement and motivation toward listening and speaking activities. Overall, the teachers viewed this shift as a significant and valuable improvement in English language teaching and assessment. Only one participant, P9, expressed a negative opinion, which was further explored under research question three.

The teachers' perspectives gathered from the interview sub-question reinforced the importance of assessing speaking and listening skills alongside reading and writing for a more comprehensive language evaluation. Many teachers highlighted that before this change, students proficient in speaking and listening were often overlooked in proficiency assessments, which they viewed as unfair.

> *P1: "I think this is necessary. Because we know that language teaching does not only consist of reading comprehension or writing skills. Listening and speaking are also very important for us. Therefore, I think this is necessary."*

They emphasized that language acquisition is a holistic process, requiring balanced evaluation of all four skills. While some, particularly P9, raised concerns about the additional workload caused by separate assessments for speaking and listening, the majority agreed that this reform provides a more accurate and equitable measure of students' language abilities. Overall, teachers' views were in alignment with the MoNE's decision to implement these assessments alongside traditional written exams.

The second research question explored teachers' perspectives on material development, usage, and self-efficacy in assessing speaking and listening skills. The findings (Table 2) indicate that teachers felt confident in their knowledge of methods and techniques for assessing both listening (4.25) and speaking

skills (4.23), both falling within the "Strongly Agree" category. However, they were undecided (3.23) about their familiarity with the assessment section of the 2018 MoNE English teaching program based on the CEFR. Similarly, when asked about directly using materials prepared by colleagues, teachers remained neutral (3.21). In contrast, they strongly agreed (4.25) that they review colleagues' materials but ultimately develop their own exam and scoring materials for assessing listening and speaking skills.

Table 2.
Teachers' opinions on material development, use and self-efficacy

	M	SD
3. I have sufficient knowledge (methods and techniques) to assess listening skills.	4.25	.73
7. I have sufficient knowledge (methods and techniques) to assess speaking skills.	4.23	.68
12. I am knowledgeable about the assessment section of the English teaching program developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2018 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).	3.23	1.15
17. I directly use the materials prepared by my colleagues in the assessment and scoring of listening and speaking skills.	3.21	1.12
18. In assessing and scoring listening and speaking skills, I create my own exam and scoring materials by examining the ones prepared by my colleagues.	4.25	.67

Teachers generally felt confident in assessing speaking and listening skills, though some acknowledged biases and challenges like accent differences and material selection. Self-assessed proficiency ranged from 50% to over 90%, with more uncertainty at advanced levels. Continuous professional development was seen as important. Teachers emphasized creating a supportive assessment environment through structured materials, practice activities, and gamification to reduce anxiety and build student confidence.

> *P17: "I would say it is fifty percent out of one hundred. I find it sufficient to do our job. However, we try to use practical methods and tools as much as possible. Over the years, of course, one becomes more experienced, but I still think we have shortcomings."*

Teachers use diverse methods to assess listening and speaking skills. For speaking exams, many provide topics in advance and evaluate grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. Listening exams often involve multiple audio playbacks, note-taking, and interactive tools. Creating a low-anxiety environment is prioritized through warm-up questions, flexible assessment formats, and casual seating arrangements. Rubrics are commonly used to ensure fairness, with a focus on communication over strict grammar accuracy. Teachers also incorporate songs, role-playing, and feedback opportunities to enhance student engagement and skill development.

> *P8: "Especially for speaking skills, I very often use role-playing cards. Because the more actively and productively children engage in the process, the more progress they make. For example, in class, I generally use an eclectic approach because there are very different student profiles. I act according to the cognitive level of the child. I work a lot with voice recordings."*

Teachers generally viewed Türkiye's current English curriculum positively, appreciating its real-life connections and value integration. However, they found the 5th and 6th grade curriculum too dense, while the 7th and 8th grade levels were more manageable. They noted that the curriculum has remained unchanged since 2018 and suggested simplification and greater student awareness. Despite these concerns, they believed the curriculum is improving, with the MoNE's achievement table being a useful guide.

> *P10: "The curriculum is generally good and nice, but I find the fifth and sixth grade curriculum very dense. In the seventh and eighth grades, students feel somewhat more comfortable regarding the curriculum."*

Teachers had differing levels of familiarity with the CEFR-based assessment section of the 2018 curriculum.

> P11: "I actually have some knowledge on this subject. My master's thesis was related to the CEFR, so I have some ideas about this. Various assessment and evaluation techniques are emphasized in CEFR. I know that these techniques are especially based on alternative assessment and process evaluation. So, these are what I can say about the assessment section. Especially alternative assessment methods, process evaluation, and product-based outcome assessment are prioritized."

> P3: "Actually, I don't have much information on this subject, so I can't say much."

One teacher had extensive knowledge, having written a master's thesis on the topic, and actively applied CEFR guidelines, including alternative assessment methods and multidimensional evaluation. Another teacher had a general understanding, recognizing its emphasis on core language skills and proficiency levels. However, many teachers lacked detailed knowledge of the CEFR's integration into the curriculum, indicating a need for further training and support. This finding aligned with the results from questionnaire item 12, which showed uncertainty among teachers regarding their familiarity with the curriculum's assessment section.

Teachers employed diverse strategies in selecting and using materials for English language exams. Some adapted ready-made exam questions, while others created their own listening texts, which did not fully align with the questionnaire findings in Table 2.

> P2: "I prepared the questions myself. I didn't use a ready-made exam. I created listening texts from other sources and prepared questions for them. I didn't use extra resources for the listening exam."

> P4: "Right now, I use ready-made materials and assess them in writing. I use some websites."

Many sought materials online, using platforms like YouTube and educational websites, whereas some relied on textbook-based resources to maintain consistency in scoring. Various technological tools, including interactive whiteboards and games, were integrated to enhance assessments. While some teachers collaborated with colleagues, others worked independently to develop exam materials. Overall, teachers balanced ready-made and self-created resources to meet their students' learning needs effectively. The third research question explored whether in-service secondary school teachers faced difficulties, problems, or needs in assessing listening and speaking skills, along with any suggestions they provided.

Table 3.
Teachers' opinions on difficulties, problems and needs

(N =150, Overall Mean = 2.78, SD (σ)= 1.22)	M	SD
4. I have difficulties/problems/needs regarding the assessment of listening skills.	2.70	1.17
8. I have difficulties/problems/needs regarding the assessment of speaking skills.	2.85	1.26

Item 4 in Table 3 addressed listening skill assessment, while item 8 focused on speaking skill assessment. The analysis of questionnaire items 4 and 8 revealed that teachers were generally undecided about whether they faced difficulties in assessing listening and speaking skills, with an average score of 2.78. To gain deeper insights into the underlying reasons, as well as the specific challenges and needs teachers may have encountered, further examination of the interview responses was necessary. The following section presents qualitative findings summarized as a table instead of interview excerpts.

Table 4.

The frequency of teachers' opinions on difficulties, problems, and needs by reoccurrence

Difficulties/problems/needs (N =17)	f	%
Students' challenges: low proficiency, reluctance, and anxiety	45	14.90
Extra workload/burden	31	10.26
Need for in-service training	27	8.94
Time consuming/constrains	27	8.94
Other challenges about the implementation (noise, re-examination)	19	6.29
Problem with crowded classes	19	6.29
E-school system 10 minutes time limit	17	5.63
Insufficient number of lesson hours	17	5.63
Curriculum problems	14	4.64
E-school system entering all 3 scores requisite	13	4.30
Insufficient material	13	4.30
Technical/infrastructural problems	8	2.65
Textbooks problems	7	2.32
No problem finding materials	6	1.99
No problem with the implementation	6	1.99
Started without preparation/piloting/training	6	1.99
Problems with e-school system other than 10 minutes limit and input requirements	4	1.32
Language difficulties/barriers (pronunciation, etc.)	4	1.32
Personal challenges (marriage, family life, etc.)	4	1.32
Reasons for failure in speaking/listening proficiency	4	1.32
… (reduced due to large size)	…	…
Total coding	302	100.00

The analysis of Table 4 highlighted key challenges faced by teachers in assessing listening and speaking skills. The most frequently mentioned issue was students' low proficiency levels, reluctance, and anxiety. Excessive workload ranked second, followed by the need for in-service training and limited time. Other common concerns included classroom noise, re-exams, crowded classrooms, and the ten-minute time constraint for entering scores into the e-school system. Teachers also cited curriculum-related issues, insufficient teaching materials, technical problems, and inadequate infrastructure. Despite these challenges, teachers generally did not report difficulties in finding materials or implementing the system. However, they pointed out that the assessment practice was introduced without adequate preparation, piloting, or training. A few teachers mentioned that they faced no problems with class size, technical issues, textbooks, or time constraints. Only one teacher stated that the implementation did not add to their workload and that lesson hours were sufficient.

Table 5.
Teachers' suggestions regarding the implementation

(N =17)	f	%
Curriculum suggestions	14	22.95
Suggestions on guidance/training/standardization	11	18.03
Suggestions on material use/possibilities	10	16.39
Number of class hours suggestions	7	11.48
E-school system suggestions	5	8.20
Improvement and change regarding the implementation	3	4.92
Suggestions irrelevant to the topic	3	4.92
Education system suggestions	3	4.92
Reducing student numbers in crowded classes	2	3.28
The co-efficiency of English in LGS	1	1.64
Textbook suggestions	1	1.64
Suggestions for technological infrastructures	1	1.64
Total coding	61	100.00

The analysis of Table 5 revealed that teachers' most frequent suggestion was curriculum improvements (22.95%), highlighting the need for refinements in content and structure. The importance of better guidance, training, and standardization followed (18.03%), emphasizing the necessity of clear frameworks for effective implementation. Material availability and usage were also key concerns (16.39%), as teachers sought enhanced resources. Adjustments to class hours were suggested in 11.48% of responses, while improvements to the e-school system to address existing limitations were mentioned in 8.20% of cases. A smaller portion of suggestions focused on broader changes, such as improving the overall implementation process (4.92%), adjusting the education system (4.92%), and other unrelated ideas (4.92%). Reducing class sizes was suggested twice (3.28%), reflecting concerns about its impact on teaching quality. Individual suggestions included increasing the English co-efficiency in the High School Entrance Exam (LGS) (1.64%), textbook improvements (1.64%), and technological infrastructure enhancements (1.64%). The total coding frequency reached 61, offering a detailed view of the variety of suggestions made by teachers.

Moreover, they suggested extending e-school login durations, simplifying grammar topics, increasing class hours, and standardizing assessment practices across schools. Additionally, they emphasized the need for better teaching materials, such as textbooks with QR codes and digital applications for language practice. Overcrowded classrooms were also a concern, with teachers advocating for smaller class sizes to improve speaking assessments. Other recommendations included piloting new initiatives before full implementation, involving teachers in curriculum development, and introducing extracurricular activities to enhance students' language learning experiences. The study's fourth research question investigated whether in-service secondary school teachers' opinions on assessing listening and speaking skills, varied based on demographic characteristics. These included gender, age, years of work experience, education level, and graduation department. Statistical analyses using one-way ANOVA and independent-samples t-tests revealed significant differences in opinions, particularly based on gender, with some variations also observed in age, experience, education level, and graduation department.

Table 6.
The significance between genders regarding questionnaire item 1

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I find it positive that listening skills are assessed.	Equal variances assumed	3.65	.06	3.06	148	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			3.45	97.52	.001

The Levene's test result (p=0.003) in Table 6 indicated a significant difference between male and female teachers' views on assessing listening skills, with male teachers having a more positive perspective. Likewise, the Levene's test result (p=0.004) also indicated a significant gender difference, with male teachers considering themselves more proficient in assessing listening skills.

Table 7.
Multiple comparisons of age ranges regarding questionnaire item 2

(Games-Howell test) Dependent Variable: 2. I have been assessing listening skills before this application even if it was not officially scored and considering them as in-class performance grades.				
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
41-50	21-30	-.44	.32	.532
	31-40	-.32	.24	.532
	51 and above	-1.07	.31	.027
51 and above	21-30	.63	.37	.355
	31-40	.75	.30	.131
	41-50	1.07	.31	.027

A significant difference (p=0.027) in Table 7 was found between the age groups 41-50 and 51+, with the 41-50 group being the most undecided about assessing listening skills before the new system. The 51+ group had the highest agreement, but their smaller sample size limits generalizability. Interview responses mostly supported assessing listening skills, though fewer teachers were positive compared to speaking assessments.

Table 8.
Multiple comparisons of years of professional work ranges regarding questionnaire item 12

(Games-Howell test) Dependent Variable: 12. I am knowledgeable about the assessment section of the English teaching program developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2018 based on the CEFR.				
(I) Years of professional work experience	(J) Years of professional work experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1-5	6-10	.95	.26	.008
	11-15	.54	.30	.408
	16-20	.82	.25	.023
	21 and above	.57	.30	.349
6-10	1-5	-.95	.26	.008
	11-15	-.41	.29	.615
	16-20	-.13	.24	.983
	21 and above	-.38	.29	.686
16-20	1-5	-.82	.25	.023
	6-10	.13	.24	.983
	11-15	-.28	.29	.859
	21 and above	-.25	.29	.905

A significant difference was found between teachers with 1-5 years of experience and those with 6-10 and 16-20 years (p=0.008 and p=0.023) shown in Table 8. The least experienced group had the highest agreement (mean = 3.92) on being knowledgeable about the CEFR-based assessment section, while all other experience levels were undecided. However, qualitative data revealed that most teachers, including those with five years of experience, lacked solid knowledge, suggesting that even some agreeing responses might reflect uncertainty.

Table 9.
The significance between education levels regarding questionnaire item 8

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
8. I have difficulties/ problems/needs regarding the assessment of speaking skills.	Equal variances assumed	3.63	.06	2.26	148	.025
	Equal variances not assumed			2.50	48.42	.016

A significant difference was found between teachers with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees (p=0.025) shown in Table 9, suggesting that bachelor's degree holders might face more challenges in assessing speaking skills. However, qualitative data indicated that all teachers, including those with a master's degree, experienced difficulties or had needs in this area.

Table 10.
The significance between department of graduations regarding questionnaire item 4

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
4. I have difficulties/ problems/needs regarding the assessment of listening skills.	Equal variances assumed	.18	.67	-2.28	148	.024
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.19	55.23	.033

A significant difference (p=0.024) in Table 10 was found between graduation departments, suggesting that ELT graduates might face fewer difficulties in assessing listening skills than non-ELT graduates. However, qualitative data showed that even ELT graduates, including three with a master's degree, reported similar challenges and needs.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study explored to what extent in-service secondary school teachers' opinions on assessing listening and speaking skills align with the MoNE's official stance outlined in the 2018 CEFR-based curriculum and the 2023 Measurement and Evaluation Regulation. Findings indicated that teachers generally recognized the importance of evaluating these skills to foster communicative competence, as emphasized by MoNE (2018) and the CEFR framework (CoE, 2018). Prior research also highlighted the necessity of assessing all four language skills equally (Gopal & Embi, 2014; Regmi, 2022; Tokur-Üner, 2022), reinforcing the idea that listening and speaking play a crucial role in language acquisition. Interviewed teachers frequently emphasized the importance of listening and speaking skills in language learning. Sudewi and Fadilah (2023) suggested that proficiency in listening is essential for developing speaking, reading, and writing abilities. Additionally, previous studies indicated that teachers and students alike perceived speaking assessments as necessary and beneficial (Dinçer, 2024; Özdemir, 2018).

Despite the positive attitudes toward speaking and listening assessments, prior studies revealed a long-standing neglect of these skills in classroom practice. Research showed that teachers often avoided

assessing them, instead prioritizing traditional methods that focused on grammar and reading (Aktaş, 2021; Ha et al., 2021; Han & Kaya, 2014; Maliva et al., 2022). The marginalization of listening in language education was also noted, with Richards and Rodgers (2001) stating that listening was historically undervalued (Nunan, 1998). Teachers' knowledge of language assessment, particularly in listening, was found to be weak (Ölmezer-Öztürk, 2018; Satgun & Aşık, 2023; Tokur-Üner, 2022). Although they demonstrated awareness of MoNE's curriculum, their implementation of assessment strategies did not fully align with its objectives. This discrepancy suggested that while teachers recognized the importance of these skills, they lacked the necessary expertise to assess them effectively.

The assessment of speaking and listening skills presents a complex array of challenges, encompassing logistical, pedagogical, psychological, and systemic issues. Teachers reported difficulties such as large class sizes, lack of technological resources, increased workloads, and student anxiety, all of which hinder effective language evaluation. These findings align with previous studies, including those by Narathakoon et al. (2020), Gopal and Embi (2014), Dinçer (2024), Özdemir (2018), Aktaş (2021), Tokur-Üner and Aşılıoğlu (2022), Maliva et al. (2022) and Huuskonen & Kähkönen (2006) who identified similar constraints among Thai, Malaysian, Turkish, Tanzanian and Finnish teachers, particularly time limitations and inadequate assessment training. Cultural factors further complicated listening assessments, as standardized materials did not always align with students' linguistic backgrounds (McKay, 2006). Teachers reported that students struggled with comprehension due to unfamiliar accents, idioms, and cultural references, a challenge also discussed by Lambert and Lines (2000) and McNamara (2000). These difficulties were exacerbated in diverse classrooms, such as rural areas in Türkiye, where students had varying levels of exposure to the target language.

Following the implementation of the new assessment system, qualitative findings indicated that the changes had positively influenced student motivation and engagement. Teachers reported an increased emphasis on speaking and listening activities in their classrooms, which aligned with the findings of Dinçer (2024). However, concerns arose regarding the lack of standardized assessment criteria and rubrics, leading to issues of fairness and consistency (Brown, 2004; Huuskonen & Kähkönen, 2006). Teachers expressed uncertainty about their assessment accuracy, with some students even questioning grading criteria. In assessing speaking, teachers commonly used four to five criteria, including fluency, grammar, accuracy, and content (Fulcher, 2015). Leong and Ahmadi (2017) stressed the importance of pronunciation in oral proficiency, highlighting phonological elements such as pitch, intonation, and stress. Many teachers found speaking assessment more complex than evaluating other language skills, which lowered their confidence in grading speaking tasks (İleri, 2019). As a result, there was a strong demand for further professional development programs to enhance teachers' skills in assessing listening and speaking effectively.

Teachers' self-efficacy in assessing listening and speaking skills varied. While many considered themselves competent, they still recognized the need for additional in-service training (Satgun & Aşık, 2023; Tokur-Üner, 2022; Wyatt & Faez, 2024). Notably, only two teachers demonstrated familiarity with the assessment components of the CEFR, highlighting a general knowledge gap in this area. Despite acknowledging the importance of professional development, teachers raised concerns about the effectiveness of existing training programs.

Some teachers relied on using the same textbook materials for assessments, making exams easier for students and potentially compromising fairness (Özdemir, 2018). Additionally, inconsistencies in the application of the assessment system were noted, particularly between different school types and teaching contexts. Teachers also felt unprepared for sudden changes in assessment policies, mirroring findings from previous studies (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Dinçer, 2024). They suggested a gradual rollout of the new system, beginning with younger students and expanding over time. Similar challenges were reported in Finnish and Malaysian schools, where a lack of resources and training made implementation difficult (Gopal & Embi, 2014; Regmi, 2022). While demographic factors like experience, education level, and

gender were found to have no significant effect on teachers' language assessment knowledge (Ölmezer-Öztürk, 2018; Satgun & Aşık, 2023), this study did observe minor differences (Huuskonen & Kähkönen, 2006) in these variables. However, these distinctions were not strongly reflected in qualitative findings, suggesting that broader systemic issues played a more critical role in shaping teachers' assessment practices.

The research identifies a number of major challenges in the assessment of speaking and listening competencies, and offers recommendations for education ministries, curriculum developers, school leaders and teachers. Teachers spoke to challenges concerning lack of training, limited resources, large classes, timing issues and varying grading practices. Addressing challenges takes a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that attends to teacher preparation, assessment frameworks, allocation of resources, and the education policy. The findings will offer the MoNE an evidence-base to inform considerations about future revisions of national assessment guidance and training programs aimed at improving oral assessment evidence for a validity, fair assessment, and sustainability.

A principal takeaway from this research is the pressing and urgent necessity for extensive professional development and teacher training related to assessment of speaking and listening abilities. The teachers expressed not knowing how to assess oral performance both accurately and consistently, and this highlighted a professed lack of theoretical knowledge, and how to practically apply that knowledge effectively. Thus, if possible, after qualifying as teachers, PD programs focused on developing teachers' assessment literacy should include a focus on rubric development, assessment reliability, and feedback. Training should occur with experienced teacher-leaders conducting interactive, workshop-based experiences so teachers can watch, practice, and assess oral performances in a mock-style assessment. Also, it would be beneficial to have a peer collaboration and mentorship component so that teachers can start sharing success and additional student-centered practices in different contexts. Either MoNE can further develop or endorse PD programs to ensure national consistency, and to also create a structure for teacher professional learning that is on-going and not just a "one-off" PD workshop.

A further significant issue relates to ensuring the availability of adequate resources and technology to facilitate oral assessments. Attending to comments provided by several teachers, there appeared to be a lack of sufficient working audio equipment, language labs, and digital resources to support assessments of listening and speaking skills. It is critical that schools have high-quality headsets, high-quality recording devices, and interactive resources in place to facilitate both formative and summative assessment of listening and speaking. Moreover, schools could also take better advantage of technology, including the potential use of speech recognition programs and online assessments, that can make the assessment of listening and speaking more objective and more manageable for large classes. All of these potentially available assessments would ease the workload of teachers associated with assessment while at the same time allow for assessment data to be stored, analyzed, and reported in an efficient manner.

The results further emphasize numerous structural and policy-related considerations for implementation. Large class sizes and lack of time to provide students with an individual assessment made it challenging for teachers to assess their students in a meaningful way, as well as provide meaningful feedback. In light of this, policymakers may want to adjust class sizes, allow for periods of assessment, or encourage smaller group evaluation. In addition, curriculum developers should build in speaking and listening activities regularly into the lesson plans to emphasize ongoing and formative assessment, rather than a one-time term exam.

Another priority is to align national assessment policies with classroom practices. Teachers explained that there is an inconsistency between the communicative aims of the new curriculum and the reality of high-stakes assessment focusing on reading and writing. Including formative oral assessment in national grading for assessment (as much as can be avoided) would further support the credibility of assessment that focuses on speaking and listening skills. In addition, the development of standardized rubrics and national scoring

frameworks can ensure fairness and transparency in school assessment practices and can create a culture of fair assessment to ensure all learners are assessed on agreed criteria across the school.

The role of teacher participation in policy formulation and implementation emerged as another concern. Many participants indicated their lack of opportunities for engagement in the process of implementation of the new assessment system. Involving teachers in discussions about policy, pilot studies, and evaluation committees would assist the MoNE in developing more feasible reforms that met the needs of schools and classrooms. This involvement will also assist in making teachers feel more a part of the change process while simultaneously making certain that new assessment policies were based on real classroom practices.

Lastly, the findings have implications for student preparedness and confidence. Several teachers noted that students became anxious during assessments, especially when they were holding a speaking test, and this significantly affected their performance. Teachers can implement ways to alleviate anxiety by gradually introducing informal speaking activities, strategies for peer engagement, and scaffolded oral items so that their students can build confidence before being subjected to a formal assessment. Another curricular use when developing after school programs is improving textbooks and instructional materials by adding speaking and listening activities that are more communicative and closer to experiences they have as speakers and listeners in "real-life" situations.

In conclusion, the evidence implies that improving speaking and listening assessment in Türkiye should incorporate a holistic policy perspective. MoNE and the educational system should provide structured professional development opportunities, thoughtful technology uses, uniformity in assessment criteria, and consistency of policy and practice between teachers and the national objectives. If these steps are taken, communicative assessment will be fairer, more reliable to teachers and learners, and more effective in its goal of establishing a more learner-centered experience.

6. Assumptions, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

This research was premised on a series of important assumptions that influenced both the collection of data and the interpretation of findings. It was assumed that the in-service English language teachers who agreed to respond to the questionnaire and participate in interviews would give responses that were honest and carefully considered, and would accurately represent their realities in the classroom. It was also assumed that the participants understood the questions and terminology used in both the questionnaire and in the interviews, given their professional training and professional experience. Further, all participants were employed in a professional context as English language teachers in state secondary schools in Isparta, Türkiye, and had similar and shared contexts in terms of having a familiarity with recent MoNE reforms on assessment. Thus, the study assumes that teachers' responses provide genuine views regarding teachers' experiences of assessing speaking and listening skills in this educational context.

Notwithstanding, the study has some limitations that should be acknowledged while interpreting outcomes. One limitation relates to the use of several single-item measures in the quantitative analyses. While the questionnaire, as a whole, revealed an acceptable level of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$), there were some measures represented by single-item measures instead of multi-item measures. This method of using single-items not only helped keep the questionnaire concise and relevant to our research, but it may have limited the precision and internal reliability of some measures. This explores the opportunity for a framework in future studies where researchers can develop and validate subscales that measure important constructs with multiple items.

A second limitation involves the use of convenience sampling which limits assertability of the findings. Most of the participants came from schools that were either accessible to the researcher or responded voluntarily to an online invitation. The researchers did attempt to get responses from a variety of teachers from a variety of schools, though the response may not be representative of all EFL teachers in secondary

schools in Türkiye. Because of this limitation, the findings should be interpreted as suggestive rather than assumed to represent all EFL teachers in secondary schools in Türkiye. As is customary with all research that relies on survey methods, findings rely on self-reported data that may represent either personal bias or subjective meaning-making of the survey items. In addition, the focus was strictly to teachers' experiences and did not include any observational data from the classroom, or any data from the students to deepen understanding of assessment practices. Lastly, the study represented just one province, and one academic year, and should be read as a context-bound study as opposed to any sort of generalizability.

In recognizing these limitations, the boundaries of the current research also allow for thinking about future research. Research on speaking and listening assessment research should be taken up for both depth and breadth of inquiry. Longitudinal studies might capture how teachers' understandings and assessment practices change over time, for example as teachers become more familiar with the system, to learn if early discomfort ultimately diminishes. Studies that also track students' progress over time might lead to findings about the impact of speaking and listening assessment on language learning, students' proficiencies, motivation, and future confidence over time. Cross-comparative research across a range of contexts and school types in Türkiye would further our understanding of the nuanced contextual factors that influence implementation (including class size, resource availability, and administrative support, etc.). Furthermore, this study adopted a singularly focused perspective of views of the teachers; future studies can benefit from considering the voices of students in published literature and their experiences, challenges, and attitudes toward speaking and listening assessments. These insights may lead to assessment design that is more student-centered, and promote engagement and communicative competence.

Another fruitful avenue for future research is examining technology in assessing speaking and listening skills. It would be worthwhile, for example, to consider and investigate whether digitized resources like speech recognition software, computer-based scoring systems, and online recording platforms integrated with artificial intelligence (AI) could offer some solutions to some of the problematic logistics faced by teachers currently. Experimental research interventions could compare a traditional forced-choice method with a method that draws on teacher or student technology, to find the most reliable, efficient, and scalable method to use in either a classroom assessment or large-scale assessment context. Future studies could also involve students from a private school or other context to increase our understanding of appropriate or best approaches to assess oral skill competencies. In sum, these suggestions highlight the importance of ongoing, data-driven research on speaking and listening assessment practices that move policy innovations beyond theory into classroom practice, and towards fair and sustainable language learning outcomes in Türkiye.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Semi-Structured Interview in L2

Dear Colleague,

As part of the research titled "English Language Teachers' Opinions on Assessment of Speaking and Listening Skills at Secondary School Level" I am in need of your valuable opinions. The purpose of the study is to examine the views of middle school English teachers on the assessment of listening and speaking skills implemented by the Ministry of National Education in the 2023-2024 academic year. For this purpose, questions related to this implementation will be directed to you.

Your opinions will only be used within the scope of the research, and your personal data will not be shared with anyone. Your participation in this study is voluntary. At any stage of the research, you may choose to withdraw from participating, request the deletion or return of your data. The interview will last approximately 20 minutes. Thank you for your valuable insights and contributions to the research.

□I agree.

Semi-Structured Interview – Guiding Questions

1. What do you think about the application of the assessment of listening and speaking skills that started to be implemented in the 2023-2024 education year by the MoNE in secondary schools?

1.1. Do we need to assess listening and speaking skills separately apart from the written exam?

1.2. How would you evaluate these skills before?

1.3. How do you assess listening and speaking skills now? (developmental or in a certain period of time, materials, exam and scoring process etc.)

1.4. Does this application provide any advantages or disadvantages to the students' proficiency level or grades? Please, elaborate on this question.

1.5. What do you think about the LGS (High school entrance exam)? Should the listening and speaking skills scores be added to the LGS score or not? Why?

2. How knowledgeable are you about the assessment section of the English teaching program developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2018 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the last up to date curriculum? What are your opinions on the assessment section?

3. Do you think you have sufficient knowledge (methods and techniques) to assess listening and speaking skills? Can you explain by giving examples? How do you asses these skills? Do you need in-service training or is there a need for it in general, considering your observations and experience?

4. What do you think about the e-school system where we input the results of the exams?

5. How competent/sufficient do you regard yourself in assessing listening and speaking skills?

5.1. What are the best things you apply/achieve in assessing listening and speaking skills?

6. What are the difficulties/problems/needs you have encountered during the assessment of listening and speaking skills?

7. Are there any other suggestions or opinions you want to state about that is not mentioned in the interview?

Appendix B. Questionnaire in L2

Dear Colleague,

I am in need of your valuable opinions for an academic study titled "English Language Teachers' Opinions on Assessment of Speaking and Listening Skills at Secondary School Level"

The study consists of three parts and will take approximately ten minutes of your time. To serve the purpose of the study, it is expected that you sincerely and thoroughly respond to the questions below. Your opinions will only be used within the scope of the research, and your personal data will not be shared with anyone. Filling out the survey is entirely optional, and no personal information will be requested. Thank you for your valuable opinions and contributions to the research. For more information contact is available at gokhansduyl@gmail.com.

Gökhan ÇOPUR

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"I realize that I am participating in this study voluntarily and I accept that the information I will provide will be used in academic research"　　　　□I agree.

Part 1: Demographic information

Please mark the option that best describes your situation.

Gender: □Female □Male

Age: □21-30 □31-40 □41-50 □51 and above

Years of professional work experience: □1-5 □6-10 □11-15 □16-20 □21 and above

Your level of education: □Bachelor's degree □Master's degree □Doctorate

Your employment status: □Wage-earning □Contracted □Staff

Department of Graduation:

□ Faculty of Education - English Language Education (English Teaching)

□ Faculty of Arts and Sciences (English Language and Literature, English Translation and Interpretation, American Culture and Literature, English Linguistics, etc.)

□ Other Teaching Departments (Turkish Teaching, Classroom Teaching, Mathematics Teaching, etc.)

□ Another department not directly related to English or teaching (Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, etc.)

Part 2: Questionnaire. Opinion questions. Please select the option that best corresponds to your opinion among the following criteria: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. Listening Section					
1. I find it positive that listening skills are assessed.					
2. I have been assessing listening skills before this application even if it was not officially scored and considering them as in-class performance grades.					
3. I have sufficient knowledge (methods and techniques) to assess listening skills.					
4. I have difficulties/problems/needs regarding the assessment of listening skills.					
B. Speaking Section					
5. I find it positive that speaking skills are assessed.					
6. I have been assessing speaking skills before this application even if it was not officially scored and considering them as in-class performance grades.					
7. I have sufficient knowledge (methods and techniques) to assess speaking skills.					
8. I have difficulties/problems/needs regarding the assessment of speaking skills.					
C. Joint Section					
9. I think that this practice should have been done much earlier.					
10. Assessing listening and speaking skills increases my students' English proficiency.					
11. The assessment of listening and speaking skills is beneficial for the students in terms of improving their grade point average.					
12. I am knowledgeable about the assessment section of the English teaching program developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2018 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).					
13. I find it positive that there are areas where listening and speaking skills scores can be written in the e-school system.					
14. I think that the practice of assessing listening and speaking skills should have been started to be implemented from 5th grade towards the 8th each year gradually.					
15. I think that listening and speaking skills scores should be added to the LGS score.					
16. Instead of assessing listening and speaking skills only once during the exam period, it is necessary to assess them as a developmental process.					
17. I directly use the materials prepared by my colleagues in the assessment and scoring of listening and speaking skills.					
18. In assessing and scoring listening and speaking skills, I create my own exam and scoring materials by examining the ones prepared by my colleagues.					

Part 3: Interview contact information. If you would like to contribute further to the study by participating in an interview, please provide your contact information (e-mail, phone number etc.) below. Thank you.