

# Exploring Issues in Developing EFL Learners' Oral English Communicative Competence: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract

This systematic review aims to critically examine current research to explore issues affecting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' oral communicative competence (OCC), focusing on factors contributing to their difficulties and the teaching and assessment methods utilized to enhance OCC. To achieve this, 54 of the 431 studies retrieved from SpringerLink, SCOPUS, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, published between 2010 and 2024 in various EFL contexts, were thoroughly analyzed. Adhering to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Studies conducted in native English-speaking contexts and non-empirical studies were excluded. The findings reveal that teaching resources and methodologies are the predominant challenges impacting learners' OCC in EFL settings. Notably, the adoption of technology in teaching and assessing OCC is on the rise across diverse EFL contexts. This review highlights several critical implications for future researchers and academics: it underscores the need to address environmental, psychological, and linguistic obstacles, along with enhancing teaching and learning resources, to improve the development of oral English communicative competence in EFL learners. By doing so, it contributes valuable insights to the field and encourages the adoption of integrated and technology-based approaches to language education.

**Keywords:** Oral Communicative Competence, English as a Foreign Language, Teaching Methods, Assessment Methods, Systematic Reviews.

## Introduction

In the era of globalization, proficiency in English, particularly in oral communicative competence, has become a pivotal skill for students worldwide. It has become widely accepted that communicative competence is the primary objective of modern English language acquisition (Abdullah et al., 2019; Nasiruddin & Sahril, 2018; Onishchuk et al., 2020). Boylan (2018) emphasized that the development of communicative competence has become a crucial goal of foreign language instruction in contemporary society. Oral communicative

competence, encompassing both speaking and listening skills, is often viewed as the most immediate and practical manifestation of one's language proficiency (Tavil, 2010). While written skills are undeniably crucial, it is through spoken interactions that most real-time, dynamic exchanges occur, be it in academic settings, business negotiations, or daily life (Poolsawad et al., 2015). Moreover, as Richards (2008) posits, in ESL and EFL contexts, learners' success is frequently gauged by their spoken language improvements, underscoring the primacy of oral competence.

In the early 1970s, American sociolinguist Dell Hymes introduced the term "communicative competence" for the first time. The fundamental implication is that language users can comprehend and produce utterances that are contextually appropriate, and they must know how to communicate effectively in various social contexts. However, scholarly opinions regarding the definition of oral communicative competence vary. In her book *Tips for Teaching the Use of Spoken Language*, Bailey (2008) states that "communicative competence is an output verbal skill, a verbal discourse used to express meaning." In Richards' opinion, oral communicative competence entails more than just producing grammatical sentences but also involves knowing what to say to whom and how to say it, and understanding when, where, why, and in what manner it is appropriate (Richards, 2008). Burns and Richards (2009) argues that oral communicative competence involves not just a knowledge of the linguistic forms of a language but also the ability to use this knowledge appropriately in different communicative contexts.

In addition, traditional approaches to teaching oral communicative competence in high schools have often relied on grammar-focused instruction and textbook-based activities. It is accumulated in the literature that common strategies in teaching for English language oral communicative competence are those that accentuate authenticity, social interaction opportunity, integration of language skills and self-confidence development (Borah & Rajkhowa, 2015; Castillo Losada et al., 2017; Farooq, 2015; Ma, 2010). However, these approaches have limitations in effectively equipping students with the linguistic resources necessary for authentic oral communication. They often overlook the importance of vocabulary and fail to provide students with opportunities to encounter and utilize language in meaningful, real-world contexts. Thus, there is a growing need for innovative teaching methods that address these limitations and promote the development of students' oral communicative competence.

Despite the recognized importance of OCC, EFL learners often struggle to develop this competence. Common challenges include language anxiety, which can inhibit learners from participating in oral activities (Ay Yilmaz, 2016), and a lack of authentic communicative practice, as many EFL contexts focus primarily on written language skills (Lee & VanPatten, 1995). Additionally, EFL learners may grapple with cultural differences that affect communication styles, such as directness versus indirectness in speech acts (Sweeney & Hua, 2010).

Given these challenges, the purpose of this systematic overview is to synthesize the existing literature on the issues affecting the development of OCC in EFL learners. The objectives are to identify the key factors that impede OCC development, evaluate the effectiveness of various teaching approaches and assessment methods, and highlight areas for future

research. This overview aims to provide educators, curriculum developers, and policy-makers with evidence-based insights to enhance OCC instruction in EFL contexts.

This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to critically evaluate the factors that impede the development of oral communicative competence in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners and to examine the teaching and assessment methods used at the tertiary level within EFL contexts. The review spans empirical studies published from 2010 to 2024, adhering to the PRISMA model's inclusion and exclusion criteria. The significance of this SLR lies in its detailed presentation of prevalent issues, such as common challenges, effective teaching strategies, and various assessment methods that are instrumental in enhancing learners' oral communicative competence (OCC) in EFL environments. Additionally, this study offers valuable insights for EFL policymakers, educators, and teachers, providing a comprehensive overview of the findings to inform and reshape the pedagogy of oral English communication for future EFL contexts.

The researchers set the following research questions for this systematic literature review:

1. What are the factors responsible for EFL learners' poor oral English communicative competence?
2. What are the teaching methods employed for developing learners' oral English communicative competence in EFL contexts?
3. What types of assessment methods are employed for developing learners' oral English communicative competence in EFL contexts?

## **Materials and Methods**

### *Literature Search*

Reputable online databases such as SpringerLink, Scopus, ProQuest, and Google Scholar from 2010 to 2024 were queried for studies addressing the teaching and learning of oral communicative competence in EFL contexts. All articles published in native English-speaking countries, those with non-empirical or anonymous contexts, and articles written earlier than 2010 were excluded. Studies were included if they provided insights into learners' challenges, teaching methods, or assessment practices related to OCC. Exclusion criteria were applied to opinion pieces, non-empirical works, and studies not directly related to EFL settings or OCC development. A systematic search strategy was employed to ensure a comprehensive literature review. Keywords such as "oral communication competence," "EFL learners," "teaching methodologies," "communication strategies," and "assessment methods" were utilized across multiple databases. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were effectively used to refine search results. The search was conducted using advanced search features to target specific fields such as titles, abstracts, and keywords. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed (Moher et al., 2009) for selecting more relevant research studies on the topic and sorting for scrutiny was done with NVIVO for developing themes systematically on the issues for this study.

Table 1

*Inclusion and Exclusion*

<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
(a) Articles must be published in English in a full-text article,	(a) Articles did not concentrate on oral communicative competence for EFL
(b) Articles must be associated with oral communicative competence and EFL	(b) Articles focused on other language learning and teaching
(c) Articles must focus on the assessment or teaching method of OCC	(c) Articles were written in languages other than English,
(d) Articles must provide empirical data,	(d) Articles did not concentrate on the assessment or teaching method of OCC
(e) Articles have to be published between 2010 and 2024.	(e) Articles did not concentrate on The factors of developing OCC

*Selection of Articles*

A PRISMA flow diagram for the search and inclusion/exclusion process is presented in Figure 1. After removed the duplicated records, a total of 410 titles and/or abstracts assembled from the databases were reviewed by the researchers and 291 articles were excluded, as they did not address any of the research questions after being screened by their titles. For finding the most relevant articles to the SLR questions for full review, a total of 119 studies were excluded for not focusing on EFL learning, 11 for not targeting oral communicative competence, 17 for lacking involvement in teaching strategies or assessments, and 10 for being related to thesis writing. Finally, 54 studies met the criteria of this SLR for quality of evidence and pertinence to the research questions. Some articles were analyzed for multiple questions.

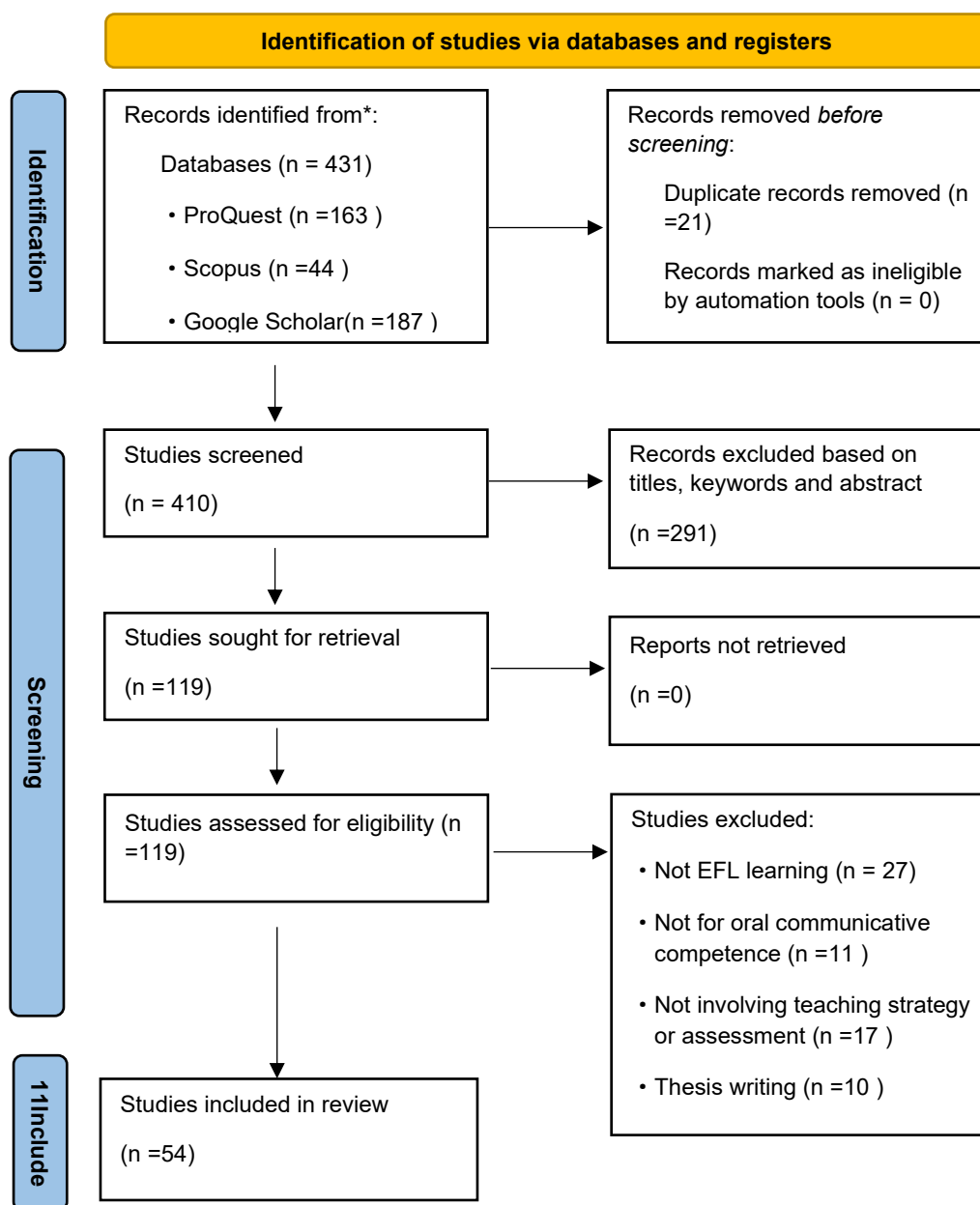


Figure 1 PRISMA flow diagram

### Preparing Phase

The preparation phases of the analysis comprised all the processes necessary for the analysis (Figure 2). In the pre-analysis phase, Zotero was used for making references database for all the primary studies (n=54). From the Zotero, all the articles were exported as .ris files to import into NVIVO 12 software. The imported articles were classified for ensuring the targeted year of publication and EFL contexts with NVIVO. Then, pre-codes were developed as primary nodes in NVIVO 12 for learners' poor performance and teaching, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Under the primary nodes, sub-nodes were built to get a scrutinized analysis of the texts. These nodes and sub-nodes were the answers to the SLR questions.

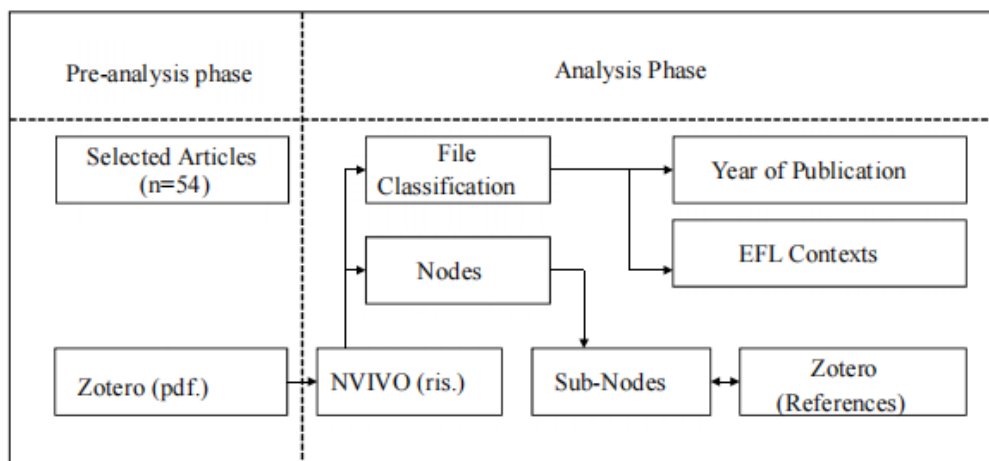


Figure 2 Preparing phases of the analysis

*Analysis Phase*

For the systematic literature review (SLR) conducted within EFL contexts (see Figure 3), all selected articles were processed for thematic analysis using NVIVO software. NVIVO is designed to facilitate the analysis of qualitative data in studies employing qualitative or mixed-method approaches. In this research, thematic analysis was utilized to organize information and reveal underlying meanings, following the methodology described by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006). In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze texts for identifying themes pertaining to factors causing learners' poor performance, teaching strategies, and assessment methods for developing learners' oral communicative competence in EFL contexts. The rationale for this analysis stems from the belief that a deeper understanding of the causes behind learners' weak oral communicative competence, alongside knowledge of efficacious teaching and assessment methods, would enable EFL teachers and practitioners to focus more effectively on developing these competencies. Thus, the SLR serves a critical role in comprehensively reviewing pertinent articles and examining the data through thematic analysis. From the SLR, three major themes were identified: factors contributing to learners' poor performance, teaching strategies, and assessment methods.

Under these overarching themes, several sub-themes emerged. For environmental factors, these included constraints such as limited course duration, an unsupportive learning environment, lack of extracurricular activities, reduced face-to-face instruction, large class sizes, textbook and curriculum limitations, educational traditions, incentives, and the absence of formal oral tests. Psychological factors encompassed issues like low self-discipline, reluctance, lack of confidence, anxiety, and emotional challenges. Linguistic factors involved inadequate mastery of the language, sociocultural codes, and communicative abilities, as well as low vocabulary levels and insufficient knowledge of language and strategic competence. Teaching resource factors were influenced by traditional teaching methods and a lack of resources. Similarly, within the teaching methods theme, sub-themes such as technology-based, task-based, interactive, microteaching, and communicative methods emerged. Furthermore, within the assessment methods theme, sub-themes such as technology-driven, direct, interactive and participatory, standardized testing, teaching and curriculum-related assessments, professional development, and teacher evaluations, as well as communicative

competence assessments, were identified. These themes and sub-themes served as guiding points for the researchers, facilitating the achievement of the study's objectives.

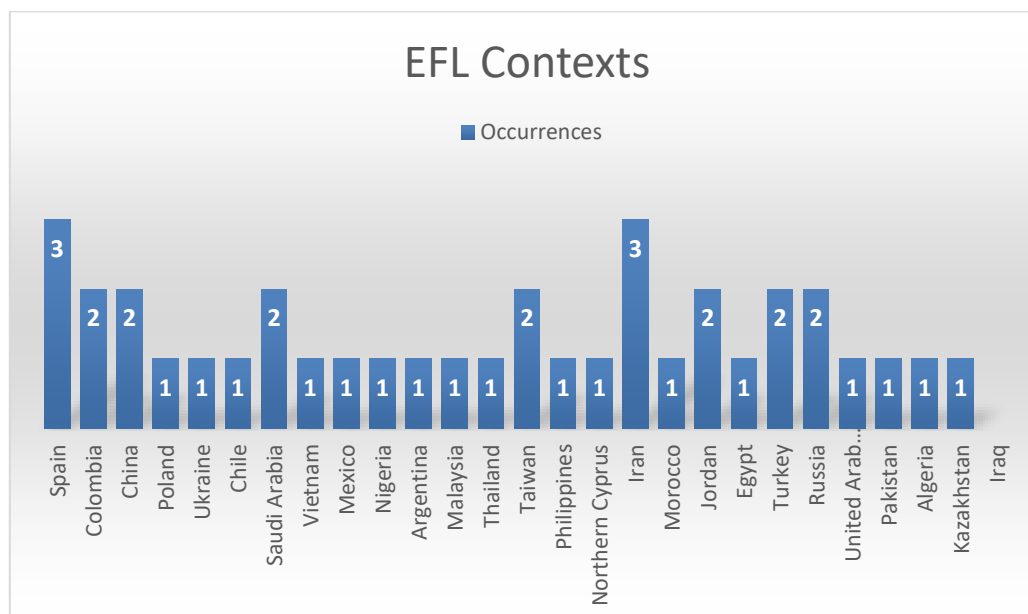


Figure 3 EFL contexts of the studies

## Results and Discussion

This section illustrates the detailed answers to the SLR questions for this review. The researchers identified the factors that were responsible for EFL learners' poor oral English communicative competence, teaching, and assessment techniques for developing oral communicative competence in EFL contexts from the previous studies. The final section offers a discussion on insights for dealing with these problems, introducing teaching and assessment techniques for developing learners' oral English communicative competence in EFL contexts.

### *Factors for EFL Learners' Poor Oral English Communicative Competence*

Based on the analysis of the studies, the results of the first research question are presented in Table 2. Of the 54 studies, 38 studies reported different factors that were responsible for developing learners' oral communicative competence. The hierarchy chart showed that there were four different factors, e.g., environmental ( $n=11$ ), psychological ( $n=5$ ), linguistic ( $n=10$ ), and teaching ( $n=12$ ) influencing the development of learners' oral communicative competence at the tertiary level in EFL contexts. The majority of the studies stated that teaching factors were the prime cause of EFL learners' OCC developing. On the other hand, the fewest number of studies reported that the psychological factor was the significant factor for EFL learners' OCC development at the tertiary level. Other studies reported more than one factor. Some of the sub-factors will be discussed below

Table 2

*Category of the factors*

Category	Factors	Frequency
Environmental (n=11)	Limited course duration	1
	Unsupportive learning environment	2
	Limited extracurricular activities	1
	Reduced face-to-face instruction	2
	Large class sizes	1
	Textbook and curriculum constraints	2
	Educational traditions and incentives	1
	Absence of formal oral tests	1
Psychological (n=5)	Lack of self-discipline	1
	Reluctance to express in the target language	1
	Lack of confidence	1
	Fear of making mistakes and negative feedback	1
	Online learning challenges	1
Linguistic (n=10)	Gaps in language knowledge	2
	Inadequate command of the linguistic and sociocultural code	1
	Lack of strategic competence	1
	Unfamiliar vocabulary use	3
	Inadequate communicative abilities	3
Teaching (n=12)	Traditional teaching methods	5
	Incomplete textbook content	1
	Traditional grammar-based instruction	2
	Unengaging teaching methods	1
	Lack of CLT implementation	1
	Learners' lack of practical experiences	2

*Environmental Factors*

Environmental factors, which are integral to the context and conditions of EFL learning and teaching, have been identified as pivotal in shaping learners' oral communicative competence. The research has delineated several distinct environmental factors that can potentially hinder the development of oral communicative competence among EFL learners: limited course duration (n=1), unsupportive learning environment (n=2), limited extracurricular activities (n=1), reduced face-to-face instruction (n=2), Large class sizes (n=1), textbook and curriculum constraints (n=2), educational traditions and incentives (n=1), and absence of formal oral tests (n=1).

The literature reviews have outlined several environmental factors that may impede the acquisition of oral communicative competence in EFL learners. For instance, insufficient course duration, as indicated by Xie (2016), often falls short of providing adequate opportunities for oral practice, thereby affecting the enhancement of these skills. An



environment deficient in resources and not favorable to English usage can also pose a barrier to learners' efforts to practice and refine their oral skills (Xie, 2016). Additionally, the lack of supplementary English language activities may limit learners' opportunities to engage in real-world communication beyond the classroom setting (Xie, 2016). What's more, students are lack of exposure to English communication environment (Rao & Lei, 2014). The advent of online learning during the pandemic has led to a reduction in direct interaction, which has been found to negatively affect the development of oral skills (Hamidi & Rahimpour, 2023). Furthermore, pedagogical approaches that are outdated and center around the teacher rather than student participation can engender passive learning dynamics and may limit opportunities for oral practice (Syed et al., 2019). Traditional teaching methods, which are still prevalent in many EFL contexts, often fail to actively engage students in the learning process, thereby constricting the development of their oral communication skills (Raduà, 2020). The document also highlights that the mixed abilities of EFL learners and their varied educational backgrounds can result in an uneven development of oral skills, with higher-level learners often outperforming their peers (Bruner et al., 2015; Soomro et al., 2019). Large class sizes, another prevalent environmental factor, can complicate teachers' efforts to provide the individualized attention necessary for effective oral practice (Chen & Goh, 2011).

All in all, environmental factors such as limited practice opportunities, unsupportive learning environments, traditional teaching methods, and large class sizes significantly contribute to the challenges faced by EFL learners in achieving proficiency in oral communicative skills. Further exploration of additional factors, including the influence of the first language and exposure to English outside the classroom, is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of their impact on oral communicative competence.

### *Psychological Factors*

Psychological factors are paramount within the EFL learning and teaching context and significantly influence learners' development of oral communicative competence. The document has identified five key psychological factors that can potentially hinder the enhancement of Oral Communicative Competence among EFL learners: lack of self-discipline (n=1), reluctance to express in the target language (n=1), lack of confidence in their ability to speak (n=1), fear of making mistakes and receiving negative feedback (n=1), and challenges faced by teachers and learners during online learning (n=1).

The literature has outlined several psychological factors that may obstruct the acquisition of oral communicative competence in EFL learners. For instance, the absence of self-discipline among adult learners, as noted by (2015), can result in inconsistent study habits and a failure to engage in regular language practice, thereby affecting the development of oral communicative competence. A tense classroom environment, as suggested by Ali et al., can make learners hesitant to express themselves in the target language, reducing their opportunities to practice and refine their communicative skills (Rabab, 2016). Additionally, a lack of confidence in their speaking abilities and fear of mistakes can cause learners to hold back from participating in oral activities, limiting their exposure to the language and chances for improvement (Bruner et al., 2015; Soomro et al., 2019). The transition to online learning during the pandemic has introduced new challenges, such as diminished interaction and increased distractions, which can negatively affect the development of oral communicative competence. Furthermore, pedagogical approaches that are outdated and center around the

teacher rather than student participation can lead to passive learning dynamics, limiting opportunities for oral practice (Syed et al., 2019). The fear of making mistakes and receiving negative feedback can also discourage learners from engaging in communicative tasks, thereby constricting the development of their Oral Communicative Competence.

In summary, psychological factors such as lack of self-discipline, reluctance to express in the target language, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and challenges of online learning significantly contribute to the difficulties faced by EFL learners in achieving proficiency in oral communicative competence. Further exploration of additional psychological factors, including the influence of learner motivation and the role of a supportive learning environment, is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of their impact on oral communicative competence.

### *Linguistic Factors*

Linguistic factors are fundamental to the development of oral communicative competence in EFL learners. These factors pertain to the learners' mastery of the language itself and can greatly influence their ability to communicate effectively. There are a range of linguistic factors that can potentially hinder the oral communicative competence of EFL learners: gaps in language knowledge (n=2), pronunciation difficulties (n=1), soft or quiet speech (n=1), grammar issues (n=1), unfamiliar vocabulary use (n=3), and inadequate communicative abilities (n=3).

The literature has outlined several linguistic factors that may impede the acquisition of oral communicative competence in EFL learners. For instance, gaps in language knowledge can lead to misunderstandings and hinder the ability to express complex ideas, affecting the enhancement of these skills (Rabab'ah, 2016a). Unfamiliar vocabulary use can cause communication breakdowns, as learners may not know the appropriate words to convey their thoughts (Rabab'ah, 2015). In addition, inadequate command of the linguistic and sociocultural code can limit the effectiveness of communication, as well as strategic competence (Syed et al., 2019). Inadequate communicative abilities refer to the overall struggle to use language effectively in communicative situations, which can stem from a combination of the aforementioned linguistic challenges.

Linguistic factors such as gaps in language knowledge, linguistic, sociocultural code, and strategic competence or unfamiliar vocabulary use, and inadequate communicative abilities significantly contribute to the challenges faced by EFL learners in achieving proficiency in Oral Communicative Competence. Addressing these linguistic factors is crucial for enhancing learners' ability to communicate effectively in English.

### *Teaching Factors*

Teaching resources and methodologies are critical components in the educational framework that can significantly shape EFL learners' oral communicative competence. The document has identified several teaching resource factors that can potentially hinder the development of oral communicative skills among EFL learners: traditional teaching methods (n=5), incomplete textbook content (n=1), traditional grammar-based instruction (n=2), unengaging teaching methods (n=1), lack of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) implementation (n=1), and learners' lack of practical experiences

The literature has outlined several teaching resource factors that may impede the acquisition of oral communicative competence in EFL learners. For instance, traditional teaching methods that do not incorporate authentic materials can limit learners' exposure to real-life language use, thereby affecting the enhancement of their communicative skills (Nguyen & Le, 2020). Incomplete textbook content often lacks the depth and variety needed to challenge and develop learners' language abilities, leading to a gap in linguistic knowledge (Rabab'ah, 2016a). Textbooks also lack variety and authenticity in activities and tasks (Nguyen & Le, 2020). Furthermore, unengaging teaching methods may not capture the interest and participation of learners, leading to disengagement and a lack of motivation to improve oral skills. (Fatima et al., Spring 2021). In addition, the lack of CLT implementation in teaching English is notable, as CLT focuses on interaction and communication, which are crucial for developing Oral Communicative Competence (Raduà&Ortiz, 2020)

In conclusion, teaching resource factors such as traditional teaching methods, incomplete textbook content, lack of authentic context practice, unengaging teaching methods, and lack of CLT implementation significantly contribute to the challenges faced by EFL learners in achieving proficiency in oral communicative competence. It is recommended that future research and educational practices address these issues by integrating more engaging, authentic, and communicative-oriented teaching resources and methods. This includes the development of comprehensive textbooks, the inclusion of real-world language tasks, and the adoption of teaching approaches that actively involve learners in the language learning process.

### **Teaching Methods**

Based on the analysis of the studies, the findings in Table 3 highlight a variety of teaching methods designed to enhance learners' oral communicative competence in diverse EFL contexts. These methods, categorized into six major pedagogical approaches, illustrate how different strategies can be tailored to meet varying educational needs and learning environments.

Among these, technology-based approaches stand out for their ability to create interactive and engaging learning experiences. Methods such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL), blended learning, social media platforms, and multimedia tools like podcasting not only develop linguistic skills but also promote digital literacy (Arancón et al., 2012; Gràcia et al., 2022; Özperçin & Günay, 2020; Urbaniak, 2015; Zhai & Razali, 2022). By incorporating these tools, teachers provide students with opportunities for authentic practice and innovative engagement, enhancing both language proficiency and digital competence.

Building on this, task-oriented approaches offer another effective means of developing oral communicative competence. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been particularly praised for engaging learners in practical, goal-oriented tasks that simulate real-life communication (Camacho Vásquez & Portilla Arciniegas, 2022; Chen, 2021). Similarly, project-based and cooperative learning approaches emphasize collaboration and experiential learning, further enhancing students' ability to use language in functional and meaningful ways.

In parallel, contextual and content-integrated methods focus on immersing learners in realistic and meaningful language experiences. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and the use of authentic materials are especially effective in creating a natural context for language acquisition, promoting deeper understanding and more effective learning (Castillo Losada et al., 2017; Czura & Kołodzyńska, 2015). Additionally, practices like guided inquiry and service-learning connect language learning with real-world applications, enriching the overall learning experience and providing learners with practical insights (Concha-Fritz et al., 2020; Fuertes et al., 2020).

Furthermore, communicative and strategic approaches play a pivotal role in enhancing oral skills. Drawing on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), these methods prioritize interaction and meaningful communication, often utilizing tools like WebQuests and simulated real-life scenarios to encourage active engagement (Camacho Vásquez & Portilla Arciniegas, 2022). Complementing this, strategic and metacognitive approaches, such as communication strategy training and self-regulated learning, empower learners to take control of their language development, fostering independence and confidence (Ahmed & Qoura, 2017; Rabab'ah, 2016b).

Although innovative methods have gained increasing attention, traditional and structured approaches remain foundational in language education. Intensive reading courses and the grammar-translation method, for example, provide systematic instruction that builds a strong base in grammar and vocabulary (Rao & Lei, 2014). Similarly, controlled practices like lexicogrammar exercises with automated feedback ensure targeted improvements in linguistic accuracy (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013).

Finally, innovative and interactive methods bring a creative dimension to language learning. Techniques such as massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) offer engaging and immersive ways for students to practice their language skills, motivating learners and fostering sustained interaction (Bakan & Turgay, 2022).

In conclusion, these findings underscore the importance of employing a variety of teaching methods to address the diverse needs of learners and create a comprehensive language learning experience. A well-balanced combination of traditional and innovative approaches, supported by technology and designed to encourage real-world communication, is critical for developing learners' oral communicative competence in EFL contexts. To build on these insights, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of these strategies and identify the most effective combinations for different learner profiles and educational settings.

Table 3

*Hierarchy Chart of Teaching Method*

Category	Sub-methods
<b>Technology-Based Approaches</b>	CALL Blended Learning Social Media for Language Learning Multimodal Learning Specific Software
<b>Task-Oriented Learning</b>	Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Project-Based Learning Cooperative Learning Role-Playing and Simulation Games
<b>Contextual and Content-Integrated Learning</b>	Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Authentic Materials Utilization Guided Inquiry Service-Learning
<b>Communicative and Strategic Approaches</b>	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) WebQuest Tools Communication Strategy Training Self-Regulated Learning Strategies
<b>Traditional and Structured Learning</b>	Intensive Reading Courses Grammar-Translation Method Controlled Practice
<b>Innovative and Interactive Methods</b>	MMORPGs for Language Practice Interactive Strategies and Activities

**Assessment Methods**

The research has delineated a spectrum of assessment methodologies that cater to the multifaceted domain of oral communicative competence (OCC) in English as a Foreign Language context. Assessing oral communicative competence is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a variety of methods to accurately measure a learner's ability to use language in real-world communication. With the advent of technology and evolving educational methodologies, the landscape of language assessment has expanded to include both traditional and innovative approaches.

Based on the analysis of the studies, the results of the second research question are presented in Table 4. Technology-driven methods have become increasingly prevalent, with automated software systems providing immediate feedback on linguistic accuracy (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013). The integration of technology in assessment has expanded to include online platforms such as Zoom, which facilitate real-time oral evaluations (Cruz-Ramos & Herrera-Díaz, 2022), and TikTok, which offers a creative avenue for language expression (Zhai & Razali, 2022).

Direct assessment methods, such as individual interviews and focus group discussions, allow for personalized feedback and a deeper understanding of a learner's communicative abilities (Camacho Vásquez & Portilla Arciniegas, 2022; Gràcia et al., 2022). These methods are

complemented by peer and self-assessments, which promote learner autonomy and critical reflection (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013).

Standardized testing, like the College English Test (CET) Band 4, provides a benchmark for measuring proficiency on a large scale (Rao & Lei, 2014). In contrast, teaching and curriculum-related assessments, including pre- and post-tests, offer insights into the progression of communicative skills over time (Czura & Kołodyska, 2015).

Professional development and teacher assessment are facilitated through collaborative reflection and self-assessment tools like EVALOE-SSD, which are essential for continuous improvement in teaching practices (Gràcia et al., 2022). Meanwhile, communicative competence assessments, such as skill inventories and task performance evaluations, are designed to be more holistic, evaluating the practical use of language in communicative situations (Ahmed & Qoura, 2017)(Ahmed, Qoura, & AlSheikh, 2017; Özperçin & Günay, 2020).

The synthesis of these studies indicates that while various assessment methods have been explored, there remains a necessity for further research to optimize and innovate the evaluation of EFL learners' OCC. The identified assessment methods, including university-based assessments, teacher feedback, mobile-based feedback, and mixed panel assessments, each contribute to a comprehensive understanding of learners' communicative abilities and suggest that a multifaceted approach may be most effective in facilitating learners' oral performance development.

Table 4

*Assessment Methods*

Category	Assessment Method	Reference
Technology-Driven Assessment	Automated software system feedback	Rodríguez et al., 2012
	Automatic assessment of vocabulary and grammar	Rodríguez et al., 2012
	Zoom online assessment	Cruz-Ramos & Herrera-Díaz, 2022
	TikTok video assessment	Zhai & Razali, 2021
	Student assessment using questionnaires	Kyrpy et al., 2021
	Teacher self-assessment using EVALOE-SSD	Gràcia et al., 2022
Direct Assessment	Direct observation	Portilla & Camacho, 2017
	Individual interviews	Czura & Kołodyska, 2015

Interactive and Participatory	Interviews	Portilla & Camacho, 2017
	Focus group discussions	Gràcia, Alvarado, & Nieva, 2022
	Peer and self-assessment	Rodríguez et al., 2012
	Self-assessment using rubrics	Portilla & Camacho, 2017
	Peer feedback on podcast products	Özperçin & Günay, 2020
Standardized Testing	College English Test (CET) Band 4	Rao & Lei, 2014
Teaching and Curriculum-Related Assessment	Student interaction progress reports	Rodríguez et al., 2012
	Pre-test, control test, and post-intervention tests	Cruz-Ramos & Herrera-Díaz, 2022
	Pre- and post-tests of oral skills	Czura & Kołodźńska, 2015
Professional Development and Teacher Assessment	Direct feedback from teachers	Rodríguez et al., 2012
	Teacher collaborative reflection	Gràcia, Alvarado, & Nieva, 2022
Communicative Competence Assessment	Oral communicative competence skill inventory	Ahmed et al., 2017
	Pre- and post-tests of oral communicative competence	Ahmed et al., 2017
	Self-assessment of task performance	Özperçin & Günay, 2020

### Limitations and Implications

This systematic review scrutinized empirical studies to unearth the intricacies involved in the acquisition of oral communicative competence by EFL learners. Through meticulous research spanning from 2010 to 2024, this study illuminated four principal barriers: environmental, psychological, linguistic, and resource-related. Yet, beyond these, other critical factors such as the influence of learners' first language, their motivational drive, affective states like nervousness and stress, and specific linguistic challenges including intonation and lexicon scarcity have been identified. These factors, while impactful, have not been as thoroughly investigated within the EFL context.

While previous research has considered the efficacy of teaching strategies, a notable gap remains concerning learners' self-efficacy and its impediment to developing OCC. Furthermore, the review exposes a deficit in research on resolving these identified problems within EFL learning environments. The integration of technology in teaching has shown



significant potential for enhancing EFL learners' oral skills, yet studies delving into the theoretical underpinnings and comparative efficacy of different technological tools remain scarce. The debate continues as to which technological applications prove most advantageous for OCC teaching in the EFL context. These overlooked areas underscore the pressing need for a comprehensive synthesis of existing studies to provide a clearer understanding of the multifaceted challenges EFL learners face in developing oral communicative competence. This study was motivated by the necessity to bridge this gap and to offer educators and researchers a consolidated overview of both well-explored and underexplored factors influencing OCC.

The assessment methods explored in this study, though varied, underscore a need for further research aimed at refining and innovating the evaluation of EFL learners' oral communicative competence. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution ushers in unprecedented technological advancements, it becomes crucial to reconsider how these innovations can be effectively harnessed to bolster OCC for EFL learners.

Therefore, the findings from this study offer a nuanced and contemporary perspective on teaching and assessing OCC, yielding actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers. The identified challenges and educational approaches present opportunities for enhancing OCC in EFL contexts. The study advocates for more empirical research to devise strategies that address these challenges. To progress learners' OCC, a pivot towards innovation in both pedagogical and assessment techniques is called for, expanding the knowledge base and shedding light on underexplored issues that influence the development of OCC in EFL settings. Moreover, this study contributes to the existing literature by systematically categorizing the key barriers to OCC and highlighting emerging trends, particularly the role of technology in language learning. By synthesizing diverse empirical findings, this review offers a strategic foundation for future research and practical interventions in EFL pedagogy.

In conclusion, while this review provides a robust overview of the current state of OCC development in EFL learners, it also emphasizes the need for a concerted effort to address the less-explored dimensions. Stakeholders are encouraged to consider these findings in their future endeavors to foster a richer, more communicative EFL learning environment.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic literature review critically examined factors affecting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' oral communicative competence (OCC) and explored effective teaching and assessment methods to enhance it. The analysis revealed that teaching resources and instructional methods are significant challenges impacting OCC development. Additionally, the growing integration of technology in teaching and assessment offers promising solutions, though more research is needed to maximize its effectiveness.

Key findings highlight the need to address environmental, psychological, and linguistic barriers to improve learners' oral skills. Adopting targeted teaching strategies, providing more opportunities for oral practice, and ensuring access to adequate teaching resources are essential steps toward enhancing OCC. This review provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers, encouraging the adoption of more integrated and technology-



supported approaches in language education. Future research should continue exploring innovative teaching and assessment methods to overcome these challenges and better support EFL learners in developing their oral communicative competence.

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