

The Effect of Using Dictogloss Technique on Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of using dictogloss technique on EFL's listening comprehension ability. This was an experimental research with non-randomized control group pretest- posttest design. Class A was the experimental research group, while class B is the control group. Each of them consisted of 25 students. A pre-test was administered to both groups at the beginning of the experiment to ensure that they had the same language background. During 15 sections of study, the Experimental group received treatment by dictogloss technique while the control group did not. At the end of the experiment, a post-test was assigned to both groups to determine whether the dictogloss technique had positively affected the students' listening comprehension abilities. The mean scores gained from both classes showed that the Experimental group had higher mean scores than the Control Group; this showed that the dictogloss technique had worked well.

Keywords: EFL, Listening Comprehension, Dictation, Dictogloss Technique.

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Introduction

It has been claimed that over 50 percent of the time students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening (Nunan, 1998). Despite this, we often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most overlooked among the four skills in the language classroom. (Nation, 2009) Perhaps one of the reasons for undervaluing this skill is connected to the automatic acquisition of listening skill compared with two other skills of reading and writing which need instruction in the first language. We learn our reading and writing in school but no one teaches us listening and speaking skills. This demonstrates that many researches and academic works should be done to develop materials for teaching reading and writing. Besides, teacher should be trained to equip to different methods and techniques to teach their students effectively in schools. This fact means that some portion of weakness in listening skill may come from the first language acquisition.

For many Iranian language learners, learning listening is a challenging work because there are many factors they need to be aware of them. Many learners are unable to grasp native speaker's utterances. These learners state that native speakers speak very fast and we cannot follow them. In fact, they got the difficulty in interpreting what they listen, and they are not able to predict the assimilated sound, intonation, and

stress made by the native speakers. Students feel confused when they listen to the radio or television or a tape recorded by native speaker but they are somehow at ease when they listen to their teacher originally as non-native speaker.

Listening is one of the four basic skills in which student of English should be trained. Since training this skill is often neglected and the students have few opportunities to listen to English spoken in the non-English speaking country, the improvement of the students' listening comprehension will depend largely on effective teaching in the classroom.

Currently, dictation is considered as an interesting example of pragmatic language testing procedure to the extent that, based on Oller's claim (1979), writing a dictation is the reflection of what people do when they use language for communicative purpose in real life situation. Besides, it has been claimed that dictation gives valuable information on the student's language ability. But these are true only if dictation is prepared, presented, and scored appropriately.

We can describe dictation as a technique where the learners receive some spoken input, hold this in their memory for a short time, and then write what they heard. This writing is affected by their skill in listening, their command of the language, and their ability to hold what they have heard in their memory. Dictation is often associated with more traditional teaching methods, and

with testing rather than teaching (Oller and Streiff, 1975; Oller, 1979), however, it remains a valuable teaching technique and variations on dictation such as dictogloss and running dictation are very popular with learners and teachers.

Dictation, although a well-known testing and teaching device, is in many cases misused and unknown. Today, dictation receives a great deal of regard and attention among those involved in functional teaching and testing. But there is evidence of continued misunderstanding among Iranian language teachers about the nature and procedure of dictation and also about proper preparation, presentation, and scoring. The theoretical importance of this study is concerned with the nature of dictation, with process of the mind perceiving the material, and with syntheses and analysis of information during the dictation task. In a nutshell, the result of such a study would be of great value for all students of foreign language especially for those who plan to move to abroad. It also gives the alternative solution to language teachers in teaching listening comprehension. Above all, the findings of the study may be of great benefit for students to improve their listening ability.

For the students of language learning, listening is an important skill that must be mastered during the study in the university. Listening is a receptive skill involving respond to the spoken language. In the listening process, the students do not only hear the

sound of the speaker but they also need to know the context and understand about the speaker's aim. Based on the observation, many of students had some difficulties in knowing what they listened. They just heard what the people said whereas some of them doing something else at the time of teaching process in listening subject. Regarding to this problem, effort need to be implemented to help the students to overcome to their listening comprehension problems. Owing to this issue, the researcher chose the dictogloss technique to solve the problem. The use of this technique expectedly could solve the student's listening problems and their listening skill.

Research Question and Hypothesis

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research question is proposed:

Does the systematic repeated use of dictogloss technique lead to the increase of the English language learners' listening comprehension?

The following null hypothesis is used in conducting this research:

There is no relationship between the systematic repeated use of dictogloss technique and English language learners' listening comprehension progress.

Background of Study

Listening comprehension enables learners to function successfully in second language community. Celce-Murcia and McIntosh (1981) believe that the aim of listening comprehension is

to make learners understand the language used by native speakers. They believe that in language teaching and learning, the important principles that determine the norms of appropriate language use within the framework of the listening represent comprehension. According to Rost (2002), there are three types of listening: (1) Selective listening: Selective listening tasks encourage learners to approach genuine spoken texts by adopting a strategy of focusing of specific information rather than trying to understand and recall everything. Reconstruction of the spoken material based on selective listening tasks can help students link selective listening to global listening. (2) Interactive listening: Interactive listening refers to listening in collaborative conversation. Collaborative conversation, in which learners interact with each other or with native speakers, is established as a vital means of language development. (3) Intensive listening: Intensive listening refers to listening for precise sounds, words, phrases, grammatical units, and pragmatic units. Although listening intensively is not often called for in everyday situations, the ability to listen intensively whenever required is an essential component of listening proficiency.

The prototypical intensive listening activity is dictation, the transcription of the exact words that a speaker utters. Dictation is often claimed to be an excellent integrative test because it involves listening, vocabulary, grammar,

and the ability to make inferences from context.

Listening and listening comprehension are synonymous. Listening for comprehension is a traditional way of thinking about the nature of listening. The main function of listening in second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse. Listening is the ability to identify and understand what someone is saying. Taylor (1981) as cited in Cardona (2013) has said that units are decoded and linked together to form words; words are linked together to form phrases; phrases are connected together to form utterances, and utterances are joined together to form complete meaningful texts. In other words, the meaning is interpreted from the last step in the process.

Nunan (2003) states that listening is a process of decoding the sounds that one hears from the smallest meaningful unit, a phoneme, to a complete text. Furthermore, Brown (2001) has suggested that learning to listen really means learning to respond to and continue a chain of listening and responding. Cook (1996) has affirmed that listening limitations may be caused not by lack of language, but by lack of memory or vocabulary knowledge.

Dictogloss is a teaching technique that may help to solve the teaching-learning problems of the teacher and her students as mentioned above. It calls for active participation in problem-solving and critical thinking that encourage students to be more active and increase their self-esteem to use

English communicatively and to more easily understand the materials being taught. Moreover, the students may have more chances to practice English while learning since they are engaged in activities that stimulate them to use the language.

The dictogloss technique is a combination of classic teaching techniques where listeners are required to reconstruct a text by listening and noting down keywords. Hence, the students are able to sharpen their English listening comprehension skills using this technique, and it is hoped that it can motivate students to have a good attitude to learning English listening. Vasiljevic (2010) has said that dictogloss is a classroom dictation activity where students listen to a passage, note down key words and then work together to create a version of the original text.

The use of dictogloss involves students paying attention to all four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) and encourages learner's autonomy, co-operation, curricular integration, diversity, thinking skills, and alternative assessment techniques (Jacobs & Small, 2003). The original dictogloss procedure according to Wajnryb (1990) consists of four basic steps:

1) Warm-up/preparation in which the students find about the topic and do some vocabulary preparation, 2) Dictation in which the teacher either reads or plays the audio of the text three times at a normal reading aloud speed and the students make notes of key words,

concepts etc., 3) Reconstruction in which the teacher asks the students to reconstruct the text they have listened to base on their notes, and 4) Analysis and correction in which the students analyze and correct their reconstructed texts with the teacher's guidance.

Several studies have considered some stages that describe dictogloss as an innovative strategy to learn a second language. In addition, Shak (2006) has explained in her research on children using dictogloss that there are five basic stages (*listening, noticing, activity, checking, and writing*) that can be implemented in the teaching- learning process as in the following:

1. Listening stage: in which the teacher prepares learners for the topic of the dictogloss text via storytelling, listening for the first time and whole class discussion.

2. Noticing stage: this is applied by learners when they take notes while and after listening to the text for a second time at normal speed for reading aloud.

3. Activity stage: this is when learners work together in small groups to recreate texts based on what they remember of what they heard.

4. Checking stage: this is used to analyze and compare the various written versions in a whole class setting, and to check if they are on the right track.

5. Writing stage: this is specially implemented to give the learners the opportunity to produce a similar text individually and demonstrate what they have understood about the reading. On

the other hand, Wajnryb (1990) has described in detail four stages of dictogloss that are implemented the most in teaching listening. Those stages are preparation, dictation, reconstruction, and analysis and correction.

The preparation stage is used when the teacher implements the dictogloss instructions. Teachers must give students clear commands about the tasks that they have to do and organize them into groups before the dictation stage begins. The main goal in this step is preparing learners with known and unknown vocabulary needed for the text they will be listening to by exploiting the warm-up activities in each lesson. This type of vocabulary-centered warm-up makes learners more receptive to listening in the next stage.

In the dictation stage, the learners listen to a text read aloud twice. The first time, they are not supposed to note key words; nevertheless, Kondo et al. (2010) have claimed that during the first reading, learners are instructed to grasp the gist of the text but are not supposed to take any notes. During the second listening, they should make notes about the content and the topic as useful tools to help them put the text together in the next stage, the reconstruction stage.

During the reconstruction stage, the learners and their teacher work together. In that sense, while the learners proceed to collect notes in groups and work on their version of the text in order to help them check the grammar, textual

cohesion, and logical sense, the teacher monitors the activities and points out some possible grammatical errors without providing any actual language inputs.

The teacher conducts the analysis and correction session stage in their own preferred style to encourage learners to compare the various versions and to discuss the language choices made.

According to Vasiljevic (2010) dictogloss has some advantages as follows:

1. Dictogloss is an effective way of combining individual and group work activities. Students listen and take notes individually and then work together to reconstruct their texts. The reconstruction task gives students focus and a clear objective.

2. The dictogloss procedures facilitate the development of communicative competence between learners. A collaborative reconstruction task gives learners opportunities to practice and use all modes of language in communication. There is turn-taking among them which uses verbal and written confirmation and clarification.

3. The reconstruction stage helps students to develop their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. It helps them to compare input to their own representation of the text.

4. Dictogloss develops strategies for solving problems. It leads learners to help each other in recreating their own version of a text that depends on information from the teacher. The analysis and

correction stage enables students to see their linguistic shortcomings where they have done well and where they need to improve.

5. Dictogloss offers a unique blending of teaching listening comprehension and the assessment of students' listening ability.

In a dictogloss task, students need phonemic identification, lexical recognition, syntactic analysis, and semantic interpretation. The reconstruction task offers an insight into the students' performance at all stages of the speech perception process. From their notes, the learners and their teacher can verify and identify the parts of the text and specific words or structures that may have caused miscomprehensions. Furthermore, the nature of the reconstruction task forces students to listen carefully to other students' input, providing additional opportunities for listening practice.

There are some important issues that teachers and learners need to be careful about with regard to dictogloss's implementation. According to Vasiljevic (2010), the teachers should be careful about socio-cultural context, work-group composition, and student assessment. He also argues that the learners should recognize the benefits of collaborative learning. As Nunan (1988) discuss, no curriculum can be learner-centered unless the learner's subjective needs and perceptions about the learning process are taken into account. Moreover, according to Johnson and Johnson (1999a), the learners are given two

responsibilities: to maximize their own learning and to maximize the learning of all other group members. They also add that heterogeneously grouped teams bring more benefits than heterogeneously formed teams. Finally, the learners need to be assessed fairly with teachers' feedback and coaching. As Johnson and Johnson (1999b) argue, cooperative learning groups can be seen as windows into students' minds.

Wilson (2003) suggests adding a "discovery" step to the dictogloss activity to improve learners' perception of spoken language. In this step, learners compare the reconstructed text and the original and notice the three types of errors that got in the way of understanding the text.

Vasiljevic (2010) investigated dictogloss as an interactive method of teaching listening comprehension to L2 learners. It revealed that the procedure of dictogloss technique entails both language decoding (dictation) and its encoding (reconstruction) and, as a result, enhances both students' listening and communication skills. According to him, dictogloss pushes learners to produce a meaningful and accurate text and to reflect on their own choices. He added that this task provides students with a sense of achievement and personal accountability and encourages them to think about the process of language learning and how to approach it more effectively.

Shofiyah (2010) conducted a quantitative research method, using quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test. He examined the effectiveness of dictogloss technique on students' narrative writing at the first-grade students in SMA Manba'ul Ulum. The result of findings showed that there was a significant difference between students' narrative writing score who were taught by dictogloss technique and those who were not taught by dictogloss technique.

Anis (2013) examined an experimental research entitled "The Writing Skill of the Eleventh Grade Students of SMK Tunas Harapan Pati" using dictocomp technique to improve writing skill of students in grade eleven in the academic year 2013/2014. The finding of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the writing skills of students who were taught by dictocomp technique and those who were not taught by dictocomp technique.

Research Method

In this research, the researcher used experimental research. It was to investigate whether there is or there is no significant effect of using dictogloss technique on students' listening ability. An experiment was a scientific investigation in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables, controls any other relevant variables, and observes the effect of the manipulations on the dependent variable(s) (Ary, 2010).

The research was implemented on all of the students studying in the fourth semester. The location of the research is in Takestan Azad University, Iran. It consisted of two classes with 50 students. The researcher chose two classes, namely A and B as the research samples. The subjects' ages ranged from 18 to 30. All participants had passed Grammar one and two, and they had been homogenized on the base of TOEFL Listening Comprehension test by an F test at the beginning of the study. In doing so, the researcher could minimize the threats to internal and external validity of the research. The course consisted of 10 lessons each containing dialogues and short conversations. The instructor for the two classes was the same and the subjects were not aware of the research procedure and the result obtained by the pre-test for both classes did not show any significant differences.

The research is non-randomized control group, pretest-posttest design. The treatment given is the implementation of dictogloss technique to improve the students' listening ability. The procedure of research were as follows; determining sample of the research by using purposive sampling, b) determining the experimental group and the control group by flipping a coin, c) giving pretest (Y1) to both experimental and control group, d) counting the mean from each group, e) giving treatment (X) to the experimental group only, f) giving posttest (Y2) to both experimental and control group to know the influence of the

treatment that is used, g) counting the mean from each group, and h) analyzing the result of posttest (Y2) from both experimental and control group using t-test.

Data Analysis Method

To test the hypothesis formulated in this study, the researcher used T-test analysis to compare the mean score obtained because the sample size was small. The pre-test administered at the beginning of the study yielded two mean scores: one was related to the control group and the other to the Experimental group. The statistical technique of F-test was employed for those two mean scores in order to determine whether there was any significant differences in listening comprehension of the learners between the two groups at the beginning of the study. The same technique was also used to compare the mean scores of the same groups on the post-test. To shed more light on the data obtained in this study, the statistical technique of matched T-test was also employed to compare the mean scores of each group on the pre-test with that of the same group on the post-test. The T-test was again used for the purpose of comparing the gained scores of the two groups with each other to determine whether there was any differences between the two groups regarding the improvement made by each during the time of treatment.

The researcher formulated a null hypothesis on the bases of .05 level of significance. If the treatment did result in higher

scores for Experimental group, and the number of differences between the control group and the Experimental group exceeded the T-critical value, the researcher might reject the null hypothesis otherwise, the null hypothesis was correct.

Results

As it was mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of the study was to scrutinize whether there was any significant relationship between the systematic repeated use of dictogloss technique and EFLs' listening comprehension progress. To do so, the researcher went through a comprehensive discussion of related literature and then presented the method through which the study was conducted. Furthermore, the statistical analysis which were proposed for the study, and the reason why the researcher found the procedure justifiable were elaborated on. Below, the results of statistical analyses are discussed and presented in full details.

In order to see whether the two sample meet the condition of equality or homogeneity of variance, an F test- a TOEFL listening comprehension test- was pretested at the beginning of the study. To test for the homogeneity of variance, the researcher used an F distribution table. An F critical value of 1.98 had to be equated or exceeded to determine that the difference between variance was significant at the .05 level. In this study since $1.679 < 1.98$, the researcher concluded that the

variance fulfilled the condition of homogeneity and that the method of pooled variance was appropriate.

To shed more light on the pretest stage, the researcher went through T-test analyses and calculated the mean score, the standard deviation,

and the standard error of difference between two means, and t-observed analyses. The T-test for comparing the performance of the two classes on the TOEFL listening comprehension test is listed in the table 1.

Table no 1: T-test for comparing the performance of the two class at the pretest stage

Class	n	X	S	S (Xe- Xc)	t-observed
Ce	25	27/04	9/83	2/660	./390
Cc	25	26	8/96		

P < . /05

d.f = 48

T-observed value = 2/021

After 15 weeks treatment that the experimental class received, it is time to test the hypothesis. It is worth mentioning that the hypothesis for this study was null, and the probability level chosen to reject the null hypothesis was. /05. To do so, a TOEFL listening comprehension test was administered to the two classes. The score obtained from the two classes were arranged and compared with each other. The next step was to calculate the mean scores of each class separately. Since the mean score of the experimental class changed from 27/04 at the pre-test stage to 36/40 at the post-test stage (9/36 points improvement) and that of the control class from 26 to 29/96 (3/96 points of improvement), our teaching device had worked well.

To be sure whether our dictogloss technique had been an effective tool in increasing EFLs' listening comprehension, the T-test analysis was used. The researcher needed to calculate the mean scores, the standard deviation, and the standard error of difference between two means to obtain the t-observed analyses. Since the t-observed exceeded the t-critical value $3/319 > 2/021$, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and supported the alternative hypothesis that "there was a relationship between repeated use of dictogloss technique and EFLs' listening comprehension progress". This did mean that our dictogloss technique, a teaching, and testing device, had worked well.

Table no 2: T-test for comparing the performance of the two class at the post-test stage

Class	n	X	S	S (Xe- Xc)	t-observed
Ce	25	36/40	6/05	1/94	3/319
Cc	25	29/96	7/58		

$P < .05$

d.f = 48

T-critical value = 2/021

Discussion and Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to explore whether an experimental application of the dictogloss technique could positively affect students' listening skills. It was found that the dictogloss technique had a positive effect on the students' listening skills. It is worth saying that the result obtained from this study is in congruence with the results obtained from the studies conducted by Vasiljevic (2010), Shofiyah (2010), and Anis (2013). From the purely educational standpoint, the value of dictation is two-fold; one for testing and the other for teaching. Since one cannot make clear-cut distinction between teaching and testing, the following implications are mentioned. Firstly, dictation gives practice in oral comprehension. The result of the research showed that students understood the content of the short stories selected as passages for dictation, so it can be claimed, safely, that dictation can be at least used as a technique to develop and test students' listening comprehension. Secondly, when students write down what they have heard, they make the transfer from spoken to written language. The written record proves the students ability to reproduce spoken language in written form. Moreover, when they

are not forced to speak while listening, they do not have any stress and anxiety so that comprehension is taken place completely. Thirdly, dictation as a pragmatic language test is constructed in a meaningful coherent unit of discourse, so it takes into account both linguistic and extra-linguistic context. Fourthly, another valuable that the students learn from dictation is that dictation helps them sharpen their handwriting and spelling. They are encouraged to use contextual and grammatical clues to write down what they might have missed and to make further corrections; therefore, it seems to be fruitful for writing skill too.

The study has particular relevance to the methodology of teaching and testing English as foreign language. A considerable part of the weekly schedule of English classes in Iranian high schools allotted to dictation; therefore research in this field will yield useful implications. In short, the result of this study may be of benefit for both language learners and language teachers. Above all, such an empirical result may pave the way for other researchers to study other testing devices as a practical tool for teaching.

Some teachers think of dictation chiefly as a test of spelling.

Although dictation may include an assessment of spelling, it tests a wide range of skills. A dictation can also provide a useful means of measuring general language performance. Dictation is one of the testing device which has been in close association with listening comprehension.

There is a close relationship between teaching methods and testing procedures. In this study, as our testing device, dictogloss technique, worked very well to increase second language learners' listening comprehension, this can be a good signal for other researchers to go through the use of various kinds of dictation type test (such as elicited imitation, partial dictation, running dictation) to increase second language learners' knowledge of listening comprehension. It is also an appropriate device to assess students' knowledge of listening comprehension. Above all, the dictation type test is a pragmatic test because it involves more than one skill (listening, writing and reading) or receptive and productive skills; therefore, it can be a valid test of measuring second language learners' knowledge of proficiency.

Considering the findings of the study, it is true to say that dictogloss is an effective technique to use to foster students listening comprehension for several reasons. The interaction between the students in the process of using dictogloss technique make the process of acquisition faster and natural. On the other hand, since cognitive load is proved to be one

of the strongest barrier in understanding and perceiving the spoken message, the collaboration of reconstruction task among students in the group during the practice of dictogloss technique remove the anxiety in the learners and lower the cognitive load favorably. Dictogloss offers opportunities for co-operative learning in which students work with each other to obtain their shared goals. This is done through learning from each other and it double the learning outcomes.

Using dictogloss may be more effective for the students with introvert characteristics who do not dare to express themselves in the classroom in front of their classmates. This is a good practice for this kind of students to break the ice and voice their ideas in front of the whole class.

Based on the results of the study, the students' listening comprehension in the experimental class improved significantly as compared to those in the control class. In other words, the implementation of dictogloss considerably improved the students' outcomes for learning listening comprehension.

Several pedagogical implications emerged from the results of the present study. To begin with, the study could be an attempt to contribute to the Iranian educational reform process, encouraging an effective implementation of the dictogloss technique in university. In light of these results, the following recommendations were made: (1) that educational policy-makers

may consider the applicability of the dictogloss technique in the university syllabus; (2) that EFL teachers may receive in-service training in applying dictogloss technique; and (3) that local ELT material developers consider including dictogloss technique in their teaching products.

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