Using Dictogloss to enhance Listening Comprehension Skills for English Majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education

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ABSTRACT: Listening as documented in English education literature is a critical skill as it provides significant inputs for learners' language production. However, due to the exam formats in all Vietnamese school levels which involves more language knowledge, reading and mechanical writing, listening is not regarded a focus in English learning in schools and thus becomes a challenge for the majority of learners including English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam. The present study aims to enhance the first-year English majors' listening comprehension via the use of Dictogloss technique. This quasi-experimental research investigates the impact of Dictogloss technique on listening comprehension skills of first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education in the academic year 2020-2021. The study employed quantitative method with tests as the research instrument. 15 first-year students majoring in English from Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam were involved in the intervention period of 8 weeks. The scores of pre and post-listening tests were processed and analyzed by SPSS version 26.0. The results showed that the application of Dictogloss technique in listening lessons has a positive impact on the participants' listening performances. The students who took part in this experiment achieved better results in the listening test. It is therefore suggested that the Dictogloss technique should be more regularly used in the listening teaching to improve students' listening comprehension skills.

KEYWORDS : *Dictogloss technique, listening comprehension, listening skills*

I. INTRODUCTION

As trained to become teachers of English at schools, English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education (TNUE) are not only required to proficient in teaching skills but also competent in language use. Therefore, roughly 50% of the English Teacher Education academic program at TNUE covers courses for language proficiency development in which listening is a crucial part.

However, those students, who mainly come from the remote and rural areas in Vietnam where facilities for foreign language learning are largely limited to school textbooks and seriously suffer from the heavy knowledge-based academic program and examination system where multiple choice tests on grammar, vocabulary and reading are dominant, do not have much opportunity to have frequent practice of listening skill in their school and thus admit the skill is one of their biggest obstacles to their language learning when they move to university education. They find listening lessons frustrating as they cannot complete the given tasks. Moreover, students often gain the lowest scores in listening tests compared to the achievement test results of other three skills. Seeking to help English majors in TNUE improve their listening skill, the present study organizes a group of 15 first-year students who employ Dictogloss as a technique in their listening lessons and then investigates the impact of the technique on students' listening comprehension skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Dictogloss in listening comprehension

Ruth Wanjryb was the first to introduce Dictogloss as an alternative way of teaching grammar (1990). It was then designed and used for a variety of teaching purposes, including listening comprehension, text reconstruction, and integrated abilities, in order to facilitate students' cooperative learning and learner autonomy [1].

When it comes to teaching listening, Dictogloss allows teachers to shift their attention from measuring how much has been learned to assisting students in learning more (Prince, 2013) [2]. Therefore, Dictogloss can be described as a special dictation exercise in which students listen to a short text and write down key phrases, which are then used as a foundation for reconstruction.

Dictogloss is usually divided into four stages: preparation, listening procedure, reconstruction, correction and analysis. Before beginning the listening stage, in preparation stage, teachers give students specific instructions on the assignment they must complete and divide them into classes. This stage is designed to introduce learners to the unfamiliar vocabulary as well as a general understanding of the subject. Students would be more open to the listening stage as a result of this. According to Jimenez and Perez (2012), studying vocabulary necessitates students' continuous exposure to texts through a variety of transmission and perception methods [3]. In the next stage, the students take notes when listening to the document, which is read at regular speed from the recording or by the educator. They do not take notes the first time. According to Kondo et al. (2012), learners are advised to understand the gist of the text during the first lesson [4]. They are not permitted to take notes in order to concentrate on the interpretation of the letter (Prince, 2013). They must take notes on the keywords used to tie the document together in the reconstruction stage during the second time listening [2]. The reconstruction stage requires students to work in small groups to recreate a new version of the text using common materials, while students collect notes in groups, work on their versions of texts, and review grammar, textual cohesion, and logical meaning together; teachers observe the process and point out any potential grammatical mistakes without making corrections. The final step is the stage of correction and analysis. Students review and equate their revised text to that of other groups and the original transcript of the audio and making any possible corrections. It is worth noting, though, that learners do not see the original text until they have analyzed their own editions.

2.2. Advantages and disadvantages of Dictogloss technique

Dictogloss is beneficial to the teaching of listening comprehension in the following ways.

Firstly, Dictogloss increases students' understanding of linguistic skills (Vasiljevic, 2010) [5]. The learners use their notes to discuss and reproduce the text with their peers at the reconstruction stage. They are able to think about the text more deeply as a result of this, and they are able to connect each word in the notes to form sentences and form a coherent text. Furthermore, listeners can specifically practice certain new words in both written and spoken forms by taking notes and discussing them; therefore, vocabulary is practicallyobtained. Besides, while reconstructing the notes, the students must logically rearrange their ideas. Then, in the final step of analyzing and correcting, they would closely equate their reconstructed text to that of other groups and also the original text to find any differences. As a result, they self-observe and self-realize rhetorical patterns and language characteristics in the target language as a result of this process (Shak, 2006) [6].

Secondly, Dictogloss enhance learners'cooperation skills in their study. In a typical listening class, students work alone for the majority of the time; but, with Dictogloss, they have the opportunity to collaborate with their classmates. Collaborative learning allows students to share themselves openly, gather more feedback from people of diverse backgrounds, and minimize workload (Burdett, 2003). Collaboration, especially in listening skills, allows listeners to suggest further hypotheses without hesitation in order to interpret the text because they only have to talk in their small community [7].

Finally, Dictogloss gives learners a specific goal and meaning for listening (Vasiljevic, 2010) [5]. Dictogloss is a meaning-based practice in which students reconstruct the text from what they hear. They collaborate with friends to figure out the context, and in the end, they have a reproduced version. Instead of only listening and doing drills as in a typical listening class, the students are actively involved in this process. As a result, listening becomes more engaging.

Besides the benefits as mentioned above, preparing for a Dictogloss lesson, on the other hand, will take a long time. The subject, the length of the test and the sentences, the delivery pace, and the vocabulary familiarity must all be adapted to meet the intent and level of proficiency of the students. Additionally, the challenge of recalling, taking notes, students' diverse study habits, and their mindset toward group work are all factors to consider. When developing a Dictogloss lesson, all of these aspects must be addressed.

III. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to see whether the Dictogloss technique could help first year English majors at TNE improve their English listening comprehension. The researcher used a quantitative method to measure the effect of Dictogloss technique on students' English listening comprehension ability.

3.1. Participants

A group of 15 English freshmen majoring in English at TNUE was selected to participate in the study. They are all female at the age range of 19-20 who have learnt English at school for 3-7 years. Their proficiency level is estimated at A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Most of them have chosen English as their major and are well aware of the requirement that the outcome standard for their academic program is set to C1; hence, a lot of efforts for proficiency development should be devoted and fluency in listening is also required to those majors.

3.2. Research design

First of all, the researcher arranged a discussion with 37 first-year English majors to launch the study. Participants were given general information about how the treatment would be carried out and they were asked to take part in the experiment. After the meeting, 15 of them decided to engage in the study for eight weeks during the academic year 2020-2021. The participants then took the pre-test so that the researcher could determine their listening ability before attending the experiment. Besides, they were given instructions on the procedure of a Dictogloss task in order to gain an understanding of how Dictogloss technique would be used in listening comprehension.

After that, the participants went through a 2-month experiment in which they were exposed to eight different topics in English using the Dictogloss technique. During the experiment, participants were given relevant vocabulary and phrases relating to the subject in a Dictogloss activity so that they would be well-prepared for the listening procedure. Then they listened to a short text twice, the first time without taking notes and the second time writing down what they might hear; they then reconstructed the text in groups or pairs. Finally, they compared their work to that of others as well as the original.

Eventually, after 8 weeks of the treatment, the participants were given a post-test, and based on the results of the test judgments on the improvement of the listening comprehension skills was given. The same procedure was used to score the post-test, and the findings of both the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. The results of the two tests were then compared and finally the effectiveness of the Dictogloss on students' listening comprehension skills was evaluated.

3.3. Data collection instruments

Tests were used to measure competence, knowledge, intelligence, and ability of talent which is possessed by individuals or groups to collect data. In the present study, a listening test was conducted twice to gather quantitative data on students' listening comprehension skills before and after the intervention. The pre and post-test have the same form with 3 parts (included 25 questions with the total score of 10). The three parts of the tests were designed with different types of such exercises as finding the differences (part 1), gap-filling (part 2) and answering the questions (part 3).

Initially, the pre-test was delivered to the participants to gather information about the students' present listening performance. The post-test was conducted at the final stage of the study to decide whether the students' listening skills were enhanced or not after the Dictogloss technique was implemented in English teaching for the first-year English major at Thai Nguyen University of Education within 8 weeks of the second term in the academic year 2020-2021. The students' pre- and post-test scores were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 26.0 to compare the mean scores in the two tests and to see how successful the Dictogloss technique is at improving students' listening skills.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Students' performances reflected in the pre-test

Table 1. Frequencies of students' pre-test scores

Pre-test scores	Frequency	Percent
1.6	1	6.7
2.0	1	6.7
3.6	1	6.7
4.0	2	13.3
4.4	1	6.7
4.8	2	13.3
5.2	3	20.0
6.0	1	6.7
7.2	2	13.3
8.0	1	6.7
Total	**15**	**100.0**

From the results of the pre-test in table 1, the number of the test score below 5.0 accounts for the highest proportion of 53.3% (8 out of 15 students) while the number of students who got the mark above 5 is 7 students (equivalent to 46.7% participants). It can be concluded that more than a half of the participants had poor performances in listening comprehension skills and the students who had good listening comprehension skills were the minor.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of pre-test on students' performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-Test	15	1.6	8.0	4.880
Valid N (listwise)	15			

Table 2 shows the results of students' listening performances before participating in Dictogloss activities. The minimum score of the students' performance was 1.6 out of 10 (equivalent to 16% completion of the test) while the maximum was 8.0 (equivalent to 80%). The mean score was 4.880 (equivalent to 48.8% completion of the test), which can be interpreted that the listening comprehension skills of the first –year English majors at Thai Nguyen University were below the average.

4.2. Student's performances reflected in the post-test

Table 3. Frequencies of students' post-test scores

Post-test scores	Frequency	Percent
4.8	2	13.3
5.2	2	13.3
5.6	1	6.7
6.0	2	13.3
6.4	2	13.3
6.8	1	6.7
7.2	2	13.3
8.0	2	13.3
8.4	1	6.7
Total	**15**	**100.0**

Table 3 indicates the frequency of students' post-test scores. The highest score, 8.4, accounted for 6.7% of all students' grades, but only in one frequency. The lowest score, 4.8, was earned by one student and accounted for 13.3% of the total. After the treatment, it can be clearly seen that the grades of students' listening performancesin the post-test rose remarkably in comparison with those of the pre-test. 93.3% of the participants got the scores above 5 whereas this figure in the pre-test was 46.7%. The number of students got the scores below 5 dropped by 46.6%.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of post-test on students' performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Post-Test	15	4.8	8.4	6.400
Valid N (listwise)	15			

The results of students' performance after the implementation of Dictoglosstechnique in improving English listening comprehension skills for the first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education are illustrated in Table 4. As shown in the table, the minimum score of the students' post-test performance was 4.8 out of 10 (equivalent to 48% completion of the test) while the maximum was 8.4 (equivalent to 84%). The mean score was 6.4, which can be interpreted that the students' comprehension skills were now evaluated at a fairly good level.

4.3. The impact of Dictogloss technique on students' listening performance

Table 5. Statistics of pre-test and post-test scores

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Test	4.880	15	1.7837	.4606
	Post-Test	6.400	15	1.1808	.3049

It can be shown from Table 5 that the post-test result is higher than the pre-test by 1.520 (6.400 - 4.880), which means that English listening performances of the students who participated in Dictogloss lessons were noticeably enhanced. The decrease in the standard deviation reflected in the post-test indicates that the gap in students' listening comprehension performances was shortened.

Table 6. Correlations between pre-test and post-test results

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Pre-Test & Post-Test	15	.738	.002

The link between pre-test and post-test scores is indicated in Table 6. The correlation coefficientof 0.738 with a corresponding p-value of 0.002 signifies an important connection. It can conclude that the application of Dictogloss technique in English listening comprehension lessons for the first-year English major has greatly influenced on students' English listening results.

Table 7. Paired differences between pre-test and post-test
Paired Differences

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pre-Test - Post-Test	-1.5200	1.2114	.3128	-2.1908	-.8492	-4.860	14	.000

Table 7 gives information about the differences between pre-test and post-test. The noticeable difference from 0.05 level of significance is showed by obtained t-value of 4.860 and the corresponding p-value of 0.002 at df = 14. From this outcome, it can conclude that the use of Dictogloss technique in the Thai Nguyen University of Education English program showed usefulness to students' listening performance.

It is clear that there are differences between the frequencies of students' pre-test and post-test scores. Overall, the post-test outcome is 1.520 points higher than the pre-test. The highest score in the pre-test is 8.0, but in the post-test, it improved by 0.4 points. Furthermore, the minimum score of the post-test is 4.8, which greatly differs from the minimum of the pre-test (1.6). It was shown that first-year English listening comprehension performances improved significantly after the experiment, based on evidence from pre-test and post-test results.

4.4. Discussion

The following discussion is made in the light of the test results as well as the observation of students' participation in the implementation of Dictogloss technique in the listening class.

The low grades in the English majors' listening pre-test indicate that listening is a challenge to those students. This would negatively affect their oral communication in English as well as limit their inputs for language proficiency development. Moreover, as the specialization courses are taught in English, students' poor listening performance would also lead to insufficient understanding of the lecture contents. Consequently, their academic achievements would be seriously influenced and the potentials for future career success would be doubted. Therefore, improving their English listening skill is a fundamental requirement for those English majors.

While attending in listening lessons with Dictogloss technique, the participants demonstrated that they had more proper approaches to listening texts. They have considered the listening text as a whole image in order to comprehend both explicitly and implicitly, as well as to listen for keywords, structures, and connections between concepts. This would facilitate their practice of listening skill and enhance their comprehension. Furthermore, Dictogloss techniquehas also made the learning process more engaging and active as students have become more collaborative, supportive and tolerant in the lessons when they work with others, exchanging information to reconstruct the text. The involvement of background and linguistic knowledge as well as other 4C skills in the 4 phases in the use of Dictogloss would significantly contribute to students' more comprehensive development.

The post-test results do not only suggest positive impacts of using Dictogloss on students' listening comprehension skills but also encourage the learners' confidence of one's own ability. Improvements in the English majors' listening performances after the intervention would pave the ground for more frequent implementation of Dictogloss in listening lessons as a critical technique. Furthermore, the increase in students' listening scores allows the students to feel more positive and confident in their competence, which encourages them to make greater efforts for further academic and life success.

Nevertheless, there should be several considerations in the integration of Dictogloss in listening lessons to optimize the benefits of the technique towards students' listening comprehension skills.

First and foremost, despite its advantages and effectiveness, Dictogloss should not be employed as a unique technique in the listening lesson as it may lead to students' boredom and reduce in motivation. Various, sensitive and flexible uses of different techniques help reduce the limitations of one technique and boost their strengths. Those include but do not limit to note-taking, guessing, information transfer, paraphrase and translation, questions and answers, summarizing, etc. Besides, Dictogloss is a time-consuming technique which if it is used dominantly in the language class, it may increase the risks of ignorance of other skills. Thus, Ditogloss, should be employed as an alternative technique among a wide range of choices for listening lessons.

Secondly, for more successful integration of Dictogloss in listening lessons, it should be required that the class size be small enough. In English classes with similar number of students (around 40 in a class) to those in TNUE, teachers who intend to use Dictogloss may feel frustrated as they would have inadequate time to take care of all learners. With smaller class size, the teacher has more opportunity to support all learning groups, check their reconstruction works and provide feedback for students' correction and analysis. Moreover, the teacher's supervision of students' group work is also important because she would ensure that students with high proficiency do not dominate the group in the reconstruction stage so that every student would equally participate in the task and benefit from the learning. Reasonable class size will assist the teacher in performing her duties much better.

Last but not least, it is fundamental that the teacher should have wise choices of the listening text. Adequate length, relevant level to students' current listening proficiency, familiarity to the vocabulary, a variety of topics, relevance to students' interests and needs, authentic materials, and high quality listening tapes encourage students' participation in the all 4 Dictogloss phases and retain their interest and motivation in the learning process. These requirements in text selection drive the teacher to have careful preparation for the lesson to guarantee the optimal benefits of Dictogloss to her students.

V.   CONCLUSION

Recognizing that the English majors at TNUE have struggled with listening comprehension and have made little progress in listening classesdespite teachers' and students' attempts, the researcher has found it important to seekfor feasible solutions to the improvement of the students' listening skill. The treatment of integrating Dictogloss technique into listening lessons for English majors at TNUE has shown positive effects on students' listening performances. The study's data and main results support the findings in other studies [8], [9], [10]that Dictogloss can help students enhance their listening comprehension critically. The participants' higher scores in the post-test indicate the effectiveness of Dictogloss on students' listening comprehension performances. Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest the implementation of Dictoglossas a meaningful technique to enhance students' listening comprehension skill not only in Thai Nguyen University of Education but also in other educational institutions with similar contexts.

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