

Vietnamese EFL Students' Perception on Using Dictogloss in Listening and Note-taking Classes

Nguyen Le Bao Ngoc^{1*}, Nguyen Hoang Phuong Mai¹

¹ International University, Vietnam National University, HCMC, Vietnam

* Corresponding author's email: nlbngoc@hcmiu.edu.vn

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5512-1139>

 <https://doi.org/10.54855/paic.2343>

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Received: 12/09/2023

Revision: 02/11/2023

Accepted: 03/11/2023

Online: 20/11/2023

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

dictogloss, listening and note-taking, perception

This study investigates the use of dictogloss to improve listening and note-taking skills for Vietnamese EFL learners. The study was conducted in two Listening AE1 classes at International University, VNU-HCMC, with 47 students over a period of 15 weeks. The dictogloss method involved the teacher reading a short text out loud and the students working in groups to recreate the text from week 2 to week 14. The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the dictogloss method through the students' perception and performance. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in the listening and note-taking performance of the students. Moreover, the majority of students found the dictogloss method to be effective in improving their listening skills as well as enhancing their engagement with peers and teachers. However, some students reported experiencing stress and anxiety when using this method. The study suggests that dictogloss can be further studied and employed in the teaching of listening and note-taking skills classes.

Introduction

With the growing role of English as a global language in the modern world, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in non-English speaking countries has gained great attention from English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers and lecturers. However, in most scenarios, teaching listening skills gained the least awareness from research worldwide compared to Speaking, Reading and Writing (Zhang & Sheng, 2023). Nunan (2010) termed listening skills the Cinderella skill due to their less important role in skill teaching. In Turkey, where English is the foreign language that has the most learners, listening skill still needs to be addressed in the curriculum from primary schools to high schools. (Ulum, 2015).

In Vietnam, Listening skill is considered less important than reading, writing and grammar. Especially in Vietnamese high schools, students have very few chances to practice their listening skills (Tran & Duong, 2020). This can be their first time studying this skill for many university students. At International University (IU), Vietnam National University, HCMC,

where English is the medium of instruction, Listening and Note-taking course (Listening AE1) is one compulsory course for students in all majors. While the course is very necessary, the students find it hard to achieve the required passing grade, and they often lose motivation towards the end of the course. This urges the need for a better method and approach to teaching listening to college students.

Despite the small amount of research, numerous efforts have been made to introduce methods for teaching listening to EFL learners. To be more specific, a study carried out among a group of students at Binh Duong University in Vietnam also finds that the mass media plays a key role in helping students boost their listening skills (Vo & Cao, 2022). Also, listening skills have been proven to be improved by using Lyric Training, a lyric training app (Nguyen, 2022). Among the variety of methods, dictogloss, which was formerly introduced in 1990 by Wajnryb as an innovative way to learn grammar (McGuire, 1997), has now increasingly been used in listening classes (Alawiyah & Arrasyid, 2016; Akib & Saputra, 2019; Minh Hai & Hanh, 2021). However, this concept is still new for most Vietnamese EFL students. Plus, there is a lack of dictogloss literature in the Vietnamese teaching context. This study thus seeks to find out whether the dictogloss method is really useful in enhancing students' listening skills as well as exploring students' perceptions of the use of this new method. The result of the study should be of great importance in the research field for this new method, as well as in the teaching of listening skills.

Literature review

Dictogloss

Dictogloss was originally designed to teach grammar (Kidd, 1992). Dictogloss, which involved 4 stages: preparation, dictation, reconstruction, and analysis and correction, was defined as a way students work together in groups to reconstruct texts that are read aloud by their teachers. (Kidd, 1992). Students have more engagement in this method of study throughout the four stages (Nabei, 1996). By applying the dictogloss method, students are better concentrated, and the group work becomes more effective in the classroom (Kurtaj, 2021). To be more specific, the students must pay more attention in order to combine multiple skills in the dictogloss class. (Campos, 2023)

Dictogloss reaches out from grammar class to other skill classes. Kooshafar et al. (2012) used this method to teach writing to a group of Iranian students. They found out that dictogloss brought about better results than the traditional explicit teaching method. Dictogloss was also found useful in helping Arabic learners reinforce and produce imperative verbs and other vocabulary (Husseinali, 2013).

Dictogloss in listening classes

Using dictogloss in listening class receives the most attention from educators and researchers. The benefits gained from improving listening skill is not just the side effects of teaching grammar anymore. Instead, the dictogloss method has been found to improve listening comprehension and improve linguistic knowledge (Vasiljevic, 2010). By listening to the lecturer's voice and reconstructing the script in group work, the students have the opportunity to practice the new vocabulary both in written and spoken forms (Ngo & Le, 2020). Most

importantly, dictogloss method helps lift up students' motivation to study better (Asrobi & Amni, 2017). Last but not least, the learners actively practice the skills rather than the traditional method of teaching, which places listening as a receptive and passive skill (Minh Hai & Hanh, 2021).

Previous studies involving dictogloss in listening classes

Alawiyah and Arrasyid (2016) and Akib and Saputra (2019) used dictogloss in a quasi-experimental study to measure the outcome for two groups of learners; one group received the dictogloss method as the treatment. Both studies found a clear improvement in the treatment group in the post-test. In Vietnam, Minh Hai and Hanh (2021) used a qualitative study in action research to see if the dictogloss method has a good effect on non-English majors' listening comprehension. Forty students were asked to join in focus group interviews, and their listening notes in the class were analyzed. The results revealed that students enjoyed the engagement with this method, and they had acquired a greater awareness of linguistics knowledge. They also believed that the method benefited their listening skill considerably.

However, the previous studies just focused on the perception of the students. There is still a lack of experimental study for this method for Vietnamese university students. In other words, a study with dictogloss used as a treatment should be employed to see the possible effects. This study thus aims at carrying out the study both qualitatively and quantitatively with a group of Vietnamese students.

Research Questions

With all the aforementioned purposes, the study was conducted in order to answer these two questions:

1. Is there a significant improvement in the students' listening pre-test and post-test regarding the use of the dictogloss method?
2. What are the students' perceptions towards the use of the dictogloss method in the listening and note-taking classes?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was conducted at the International University, Vietnam National University, HCMC, Vietnam. The researchers used the convenience sampling method since the school offers the Listening AE1 course every semester, which made it possible for the researchers to apply the method as well as to invite participants for the research. A group of 47 freshmen (30 females and 17 males) from 2 Listening AE1 classes (with a level of IELTS 6.0 and equivalence) volunteered to participate in the study. These students all major in Business Administration, and they all take the Listening AE1 course as part of the requirement of their training curriculum.

Design of the Study

The research combines both the quantitative and qualitative design to achieve the purpose. Quantitatively, a paired-sample t-test was carried out to see if there was any improvement in the listening performance tasks. The paired samples t-test is the right test to use since it can

measure the same group of participants at two different time points (Ross & Willson, 2017). Qualitatively, the follow-up survey results were analyzed to determine the participant's perception of the use of dictogloss in the class.

Data collection & analysis

The researchers started the dictogloss for the entire academic semester. Early in week 2, the researchers started introducing the concept of dictogloss for the two Listening AE1 classes in which they were the lecturers in charge. The students were well aware of the dictogloss method and agreed to participate in the study. In week 4, a pre-test was conducted, and the scores were recorded. The researchers continued to use the dictogloss method weekly until week 14, and a post-test was conducted in the same week to find out if there was any improvement in the students' listening and note-taking skills. A follow-up survey was conducted using Google Forms, and the link for the survey was posted on Blackboard - the online learning system - of the class.

The procedure for conducting the dictogloss method in the class can be summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Procedure of carrying out the dictogloss research

Week	Activities	People in charge
2&3	Introduction of the dictogloss method	Lecturers
4	Pre-test	Lecturers and students
5-14	Applying the dictogloss method	Lecturers and students
14	Post-test	Lecturers and students
15	Survey completion	Students

The procedure for conducting the dictogloss method was described in table 2 below.

After all data was collected, the researchers input the students' scores on Minitab 20 for analysis. The paired samples t-test was run. Also, the answer to the survey was collected via the Google form and demonstrated in Google sheet.

Table 2*Steps of a listening class using the dictogloss method*

Steps	Activities	Notes
1	Students formed groups of 3-4 students and chose one student to stay inside the class, the rest of the students would wait outside the classroom	
2	Lecturers recited one short paragraph or short passage using the topic of the unit lessons.	The researchers prepared the materials for each class in advance.
3	One member from each group listened to the teachers reciting the paragraphs/ passages and took notes.	
4	All students would return to class and begin their group work. The students who remained in the class would recite the notes to the rest of the groups.	The members took turns staying in the class. No same student would stay in class for two consecutive weeks.
5	All the students worked on the follow-up activities provided by the lecturers.	The activities varied each week.
6	The lecturers showed the script and the answers of the activities.	

Results/Findings and discussion*Listening improvement*

The results showed an improvement in the scores of the post-test compared to the pre-test. The participants' mean scores were 74.49 (SD=13.79) and 77.57 (SD=13.26) in the pre-test and post-test, respectively. To see if the improvement was statistically significant, the researchers ran the paired samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference between the results of the two tests. The result is displayed in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3*Descriptive statistics for the pre-test (quiz 1) and post-test (quiz 2)*

Sample	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
Quiz 1	47	74.49	13.79	2.01
Quiz 2	47	77.57	13.26	1.93

Table 4

Paired samples t-test for *the pre-test (quiz 1) and post-test (quiz 2)*

95% CI for					
Mean	StDev	SE Mean	μ _difference	t-value	p-value
-3.09	11.90	1.74	(-6.58, 0.41)	-1.81	0.039

 μ _difference: population mean of (Quiz 1 - Quiz 2)

A paired samples t-test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test results for the same group of participants. Table 4 shows the t-value of -1.81 and p-value of 0.039, which is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the mean score of the pre-test was significantly smaller than that of the post-test. 47 students in the study made little yet obvious improvement in their listening performance.

Students' perceptions of the dictogloss method

For the perception survey, Q1 (see Appendix) reveals a mean score of 4.553 out of 5, which asked about the frequent use of the dictogloss method in the classroom. Q2-5 (see Appendix) showed high agreement and satisfaction from the participants with the use of the dictogloss method in the class. The results for the 7 Likert scale questions are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean scores for the perception related to the use of dictogloss method

Questions	Content	Mean (out of 5)
2	being comfortable with the method	3.9
3	being necessary for improving listening skills	4.5
4	creating more engagement between teachers and students	4.1
5	enhancing students' motivation in the class	4.1

From Q6-7 (see Appendix), the students trusted that the dictogloss method was effectively used by the lecturers (mean score 4.3 out of 5), and it greatly improved their listening skills (mean score 4.1 out of 5).

Q8-10 further explored the perceptions of students related to this new method. Most students believed that the best part of dictogloss was the “*high engagement*” between lecturers and students. Instead of the traditional and passive one-way audio, they found it more engaging when listening to the lecturer’s voice and then took turns recreating the script. One student highlighted the good aspect of the lecturer’s voice as he mentioned, “*When the teacher read the passage out loud, we can easily focus on each word. Moreover, she can directly control the speed of the information, which helps us a lot in listening, and when we listen by that method with the voice of the teacher, it can be more familiar to us in the first step of practice listening.*” The high motivation for studying and listening was also reported by many students in the survey.

Besides, some drawbacks of the method could be summarized as follows. Firstly, it created certain stress for the students with poor listening skills since they needed to be responsible for taking notes and reciting the script for the rest of the groups, as mentioned in the response, "I often feel pressure when I'm the one who stays inside the class and listen to the context since I will play a major role in my group and my work can affect the others' performance." Also, some students admitted that they were quite new to the method, and it took more time for them to get acquainted with it. The students also suggested that the lecturer could solve this problem by giving more bonuses for the group work or creating more fun activities to check comprehension besides the traditional question types such as the True-False statements or Fill-in-the-blank practice.

The improvement of the students in the post-test was aligned with other studies in the field (Akib & Saputra, 2019; Alawiyah & Arrasyid, 2016). The engagement aspect from students' perception also agreed with Vasiljevic (2010) and Minh Hai and Hanh (2021), who proposed that students worked better when they worked together to reconstruct the script in order to do the follow-up listening activities. Unfortunately, the scope of the study was limited, with only two classes and 47 students. It was quite subjective to jump to a big generalization. However, the result of the study revealed the potential of carrying out the dictogloss method on a larger scale. Lecturers may consider using this method in different types of listening classes to create better engagement and higher motivation among students. The study also suggested that dictogloss could be further exploited in different listening courses so that students would not consider listening as a receptive and boring skill.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the dictogloss method in teaching listening and note-taking for Vietnamese university students. The findings of this study indicated that the dictogloss method was advantageous in improving students' listening comprehension, creating better engagement between teachers and students, and lifting up students' motivation in class. Being familiar with the lecturer's voice adds a bonus to the students' overall classroom experience. Besides the good points, it was also worth acknowledging the potential stress it may bring for students. Therefore, it is recommended that more studies using the method should be carried out to delve deeper into the impacts of this method. Also, educators and curriculum designers should consider how to strategically apply dictogloss in the lesson plans so as to take advantage of the method while alleviating the possible stress it may cause to learners.

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Biodata

Ngoc Nguyen holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University, Sydney. She has great interest in the study of linguistics, especially in semantics and pragmatics. She has many years teaching experience in Academic English, Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology, Semantics and Syntax. Besides linguistics, she has conducted a number of studies related to enhancing students' motivation and performance in skills classes. She is now working as a full time lecturer in International University, Vietnam National University HCMC.

Nguyen Hoang Phuong Mai is currently a lecturer at International University, Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City. She holds a Master Degree in TESOL from University of Queensland, Australia. Having more than 10 years experience in teaching English to Vietnamese students at all levels, she has great interest in carrying out research on *Affective Filter in Second Language Acquisition* and *Innovative Approaches in Language Teaching* with the intention of continually improving her teaching quality.

Appendix

Survey questions for students

Student’s name: Student's email address:

Description:

1. Dictogloss is a language learning activity that combines listening, speaking, and writing skills. In dictogloss, the teacher reads a short text out loud to the students, who then work together in small groups to reconstruct the text as accurately as possible.
2. Dictogloss is often used in listening classes as a way to improve students' listening and writing skills. It challenges students to focus on important details, such as key vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, and helps to develop their ability to take notes and summarize information. It can also help students to develop their ability to recognize the context and meaning of new vocabulary words and to practice using them in a natural context.

A. On a scale of 1-5, answer the following questions

Question 1: How often do your teacher use the dictogloss method in class to practice your listening skills?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Very often

Question 2: How comfortable are you with the dictogloss method?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very comfortable

Question 3: Do you feel that the dictogloss method is necessary for improving your English listening skills?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very necessary

Question 4: Do you feel that the dictogloss method creates more engagement between teachers and students in the listening and note-taking classes?

No, not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Yes, significant improvement

Question 5: Do you feel that the dictogloss method enhances students' motivation in the listening and note-taking classes?

No, not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Yes, significant improvement

Question 6: How effective do you feel the teacher's use of the dictogloss method is in class?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very effective

Question 7: How would you rate the effectiveness of the dictogloss method in improving your listening skills?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very effective

B. Provide extended answer for the following questions

Question 8: What do you like about the dictogloss method?

Question 9: What do you dislike about the dictogloss method?

Question 10: What suggestions would you have for the teacher to use the dictogloss method more effectively in class?