



# Using Dictogloss As An Interactive Method Of Teaching Listening Comprehension

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## Abstract

Listening is one of the important language skills. Traditionally, listening skills have been taught in isolation or it is sometimes combined with speaking tasks. Dictogloss is an interactive method which promotes cooperative learning and can assist in the development of both the teacher and students' listening skills. Unlike in the traditional method of dictation, in dictogloss only the gist of the text is expected to be produced by the students. To find the usefulness of the method in a second language learning context, twenty BA ED (Hausa) one hundred level students from the Language Arts section of the Ahmadu Bello University were used. Two texts, one from 'Oliver Twist' and the other was 'The Seven Voyages of Simbad'. These were dictated to the students, one for each day. The result of the second task was recorded. The first exercise served as practice for the students to become familiar with the procedure. Although it is a new procedure, the results showed an improvement from the results of the first task. The students enjoyed the exercise and were willing to continue the next day even though the first results were not very good. Recommendations were given on how second language teachers could use dictogloss to their advantage for cooperative learning in listening comprehension classes.

**Keywords:** Interactive method, listening comprehension, teaching listening

## 1. Introduction

Learning paradigms are now shifting beyond the changes experienced in 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of the role of teaching and learning. The role of teacher shifted from teaching to learning facilitation. Now the shift is towards facilitated and supported enquiry. Soloway (2003) in Brown (2005) states that inquiry into authentic questions generated from student experiences is now the central strategy for teaching.

In the past, education activities focused on the strong points, preferences and teaching style of the teacher. That which worked best for the teacher, determined the design of the learning environment and the nature of the activities. Teacher centeredness is also characterized by the view that teacher is the primary source of knowledge for learners. In a learner-centered environment the focus is on the preferences and learning styles of the learners. Learning environment is designed according to the needs and possibilities of the particular learner group.

Teachers cannot be regarded as the only source of knowledge and cannot focus on the traditional transfer of content any longer. They need to focus on the facilitation of learning. Instructional staff is no longer the fountainhead of information since technology can now provide students with access to an infinite amount of and an array of data and information. The role of instructor changes to one of learning facilitator.

Active and interactive learning, discovery and knowledge building are part of the constructivist theory of learning that promotes students to discover principles for themselves and to construct knowledge by working to solve realistic problems found in self directed transformational and experiential learning (Merriam & Capparella, 1991 in Radin,2009). Constructivism is a learning theory which views learning as a process in which the learner actively engages in constructing knowledge from his experiences to internalize concepts, rules and general principles. These would be applied to the real world context.

The assumption of the constructivists is that knowledge is constructed from experience and learning is a personal interpretation of the world using active processes in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience. The constructivists feel that the conceptual growth comes from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives and the changing of our internal representation through collaborative learning. Learning should be situated in a realistic setting (Jibir-Daura & Inusa, 2012).

Interactive learning means acquiring information through hands on. Interactive learning is widespread in schools outside Nigeria today and often involves the use of computers and other equipment. Teachers use interactive learning as a way to get students engaged, arouse their interests in subject matters, as they are not always successful at getting their students on

board. Using interactive techniques in the classroom can be challenging for both teachers and students. Teachers give up their centralized learning role as experts or source of authority as they become facilitators and students take responsibility for not only what but also how they learn.

Incorporating interactive learning in the classroom requires students to act. They have an opportunity to provide personal insights and interpretation, develop their own ideas. The process allows students to experiment with ideas, to develop concepts and to integrate them into systems. Interactive teaching may positively affect the attitude of students towards oneself and peers in the learning process, fostering team-building in the classroom. Interactive learning opens space for social experiences between students and teacher.

Dictogloss is an interactive teaching method using dictation activity where learners listen to a passage, note down keywords and then work together to create a reconstructed version of the text. It was originally introduced by Ruth Wajnryb in (1990) as an alternative method of teaching grammar. The original Dictogloss has four basic steps: preparation, dictation, reconstruction and analysis and correction (Vasiljevic, 2010).

The purpose of preparation stage is to make students more receptive to the listening passage. Listening is a dynamic process where the listeners construct meaning based on the interplay of background knowledge and the new concepts presented in the text. Listening comprehension requires both topical and linguistic knowledge. Teachers can facilitate this process by providing background information and helping students with unfamiliar language.

In preparation, a topical warm-up is important as it enables learners to activate their background knowledge. Knowledge of the content helps the listeners to interpret the message correctly. This is because understanding presupposes an interaction between the knowledge stored in the semantic memory and perceptual experience (Kintsch, 1977). Listening requires both topical and linguistic knowledge. Teachers can facilitate this knowledge by providing background information and helping students with unfamiliar language. The warm-up period is a preparation stage that familiarizes students with the vocabulary they will meet in the text. Preparation can only serve its purpose when texts with culturally unfamiliar concepts are introduced. This can be done by giving students some topical questions for discussion (Vasiljevic, 2010).

Insufficient vocabulary knowledge is a cause of listening comprehension problems. In perception problems of acoustic forms learners often experience difficulties in processing audio input. Learners may not know the words that appear in the spoken discourse or they may not be able to recognize them in the strings of connected speech. Failure to understand the input correctly also means the learners will have difficulties anticipating the upcoming discourse.

Sufficient vocabulary preparation is also important because lexical knowledge entails background knowledge (Rumelhart, 1980). Therefore vocabulary activities at the preparation stage have three main objectives: to familiarize learners with the meaning and form of new word, to help learners recognize lexical items in the strings of connected speech and to promote productive usage of the target words necessary for the reconstruction stage. Considering the limited time that can be devoted to vocabulary instruction, it is important to select activities that will promote some aspects of word knowledge.

When dictogloss procedure is introduced, learners may need to listen to the teacher several times. The learners are to listen to the dictation twice with each reading being identical to the other without taking notes or writing anything. They only listen to get a general idea about the text. As inexperienced learners tend to try to write down everything, teachers should emphasize that they should focus on keywords only that would help them reconstruct the text. The students take down notes at the second reading. The third listening gives learners a chance to confirm the information and revise their notes if necessary. A short 5-minute break between the second and third listening gives students a chance to add discuss their notes and identify points they need to focus on. As listeners get use to the procedure and their listening comprehension improves, it might be sufficient to read or play a recording twice.

Reconstruction is the central part of the dictogloss listening lesson. After the third reading, learners reconstruct the text using the notes they recorded at the stage two of the dictation. Then three to four students pool their notes and use their mental resources in reconstructing a version of the text. The groups reconstruct the text in writing. The purpose is not to replicate the original text, but to maintain the informational content. The text is produced from the pooled information of the group members. In order to enforce the target vocabulary and ensure that the main points are included, students are asked to use all the words from the preparation stage

During reconstruction, the teacher's role is to monitor the activity. No language input should be provided during this stage. There are several things, however, that the teacher can do to make the reconstruction process easier for the student. For example, enlarged copies of the lecture script may be posted around the room. One member from each group can check the script and go back to report what information was missing. When gathering the same information, students should not write anything nor have the written reconstruction with them. All information should be exchanged orally. During reconstruction, teachers should also observe the nature of group interaction to ensure that all students participate and that the more advanced students do not dominate the group. They should encourage silent students to adjust the timing if necessary.

In a dictogloss listening class, the main purpose of the analysis and correction stage is to identify the problems students have with text comprehension. The reconstruction tasks ask students to use their language ability to put words into meaningful units. In that process higher ability students are likely to replace the word from the original text with their words. These ideas should be marked correct. Reconstruction checklist is provided, for each idea. Students are given an option of solely included, partially included or not included at all. The advantage of using reconstruction checklist is that students get immediate feedback on their performance. Ur (1998) observes, unlike reading and writing assignments which can tolerate delayed feedback, it is essential that learners get feedback on their performance while what they have heard is still echoing somewhere on their mind and there is still a possibility of hearing it again. The fact that dictogloss has very

specific outcomes makes it easier for students to evaluate their success. The teacher's job is to make sure peer feedback is correct and to provide additional linguistic guidance if necessary by circulating among the groups. The teacher can observe and interact with a greater number of students and assist them with the problems they may encounter with the language or the content in addition to linguistic feedback, the teacher could also discuss with the students on how interaction among group members could be modified to make it more effective. Learners correct and analyze their texts by writing their versions on the board and comparing this with the work of other groups. The students' versions are then compared to the original text, one sentence at a time. Feedback through peer correction and discussion is then encouraged. Learner errors are noticed exposed and discussed.

## 2. Using Dictogloss in a Listening Context

Buck (2001) states that listening requires the use of both systematic and schematic knowledge in order to interpret the discourse, the listener must have a sufficient knowledge of language system as well as general knowledge of the world. Initially listening activities are designed to give the learner practice in identifying correctly different sounds, sound-combination and intonation patterns. As learners proficiency increases meaning based activities become more important. Meaning-based activities can be divided into two broad categories.

- (1) Activities that assess direct meaning comprehension \_ understanding of surface information of facts that are explicitly stated in the input text
- (2) Those that measure inferred meaning comprise implicit understanding and drawing inferences from input text. The information required is not stated and the listener must go beyond the surface information to see other meanings such as speaker intentions or attitude towards a topic, relating utterances to other social and situational contexts. Dictogloss listening procedure falls into the first category. Dictogloss has different procedures and objective from the traditional dictation that students recreate a dictated text word for word. In Dictogloss, learners are expected to retain the gist of the short text, and then apply their own linguistic and grammatical knowledge to form a parallel text.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives of the study are to explore how dictogloss enables learners to notice the gap between their present language competence and target competence. This can be achieved by;

- 1- learners comparing their notes with their peers.
- 2- learners comparing group generated version of the text to the original version.
- 3- looking at how the class responds to the dictogloss procedure and determining whether learners are engaged and enjoying the learning process
- 4- learners are motivated to correct their errors.
- 5- trying to establish if the procedure raises student consciousness of their ability and how they react

## 4. Procedure

The study used twenty B. A. ED (Hausa) level one all male students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria as respondents to see the effectiveness of using Dictogloss in listening comprehension. The rationale for using this group of students is that the procedure can only work well with older students since it is a relatively new strategy for teaching listening comprehension. They might be able to absorb, sort and access the content better than younger learners.

An adaptation of Harwood's (2008) strategy is used for the study. Two texts, *Oliver Twist* read on the first day and 'The Voyages of Simbad' was read to the students on the second day. In the warm-up step, the texts were read at normal speed without students taking notes. They were asked to concentrate on the general content flow of what was read. The texts were read again at a slower speed, then students were asked to write down the most important details and things they think they would be asked to recall in order to reconstruct the text. Then the whole texts were read at a normal speed allowing the students to look at their notes but not to alter anything. At the reconstruction stage, they were asked to add or remove from the notes they had already made. Students were paired into groups of two to compare their notes for analysis and correction to help each other with details they had missed.

The students were not expected to come out with perfect reconstructions based on their listening. It was more of an activity about listening training as overall performance and proficiency. Only the result of the second test was processed. This was to allow students to get used the procedure. The results are presented in a bar chart below in table 1

## 5. Results

The chart shows 14 students scored one mark for the first question, four students scored point five and two students got two marks. In the second section, twelve respondents fully included the phrase, six got .5 and two scored 0. Sixteen students scored one point in the third section; four students scored .5. none scored 0. Ten students scored one point, four got .5 and seven scored 0. In section five, 14 students scored one point, three students scored .5 and three others scored 0. From the rest of the result it can be seen that the percentage of those that scored point one was higher than those with .5 and 0 respectively. This shows that although the strategy was a relatively new one the students benefited from it and proved that the method could be used to teach listening comprehension and for cooperative learning. The students' result was favourable possibly because they had practice with the first text.

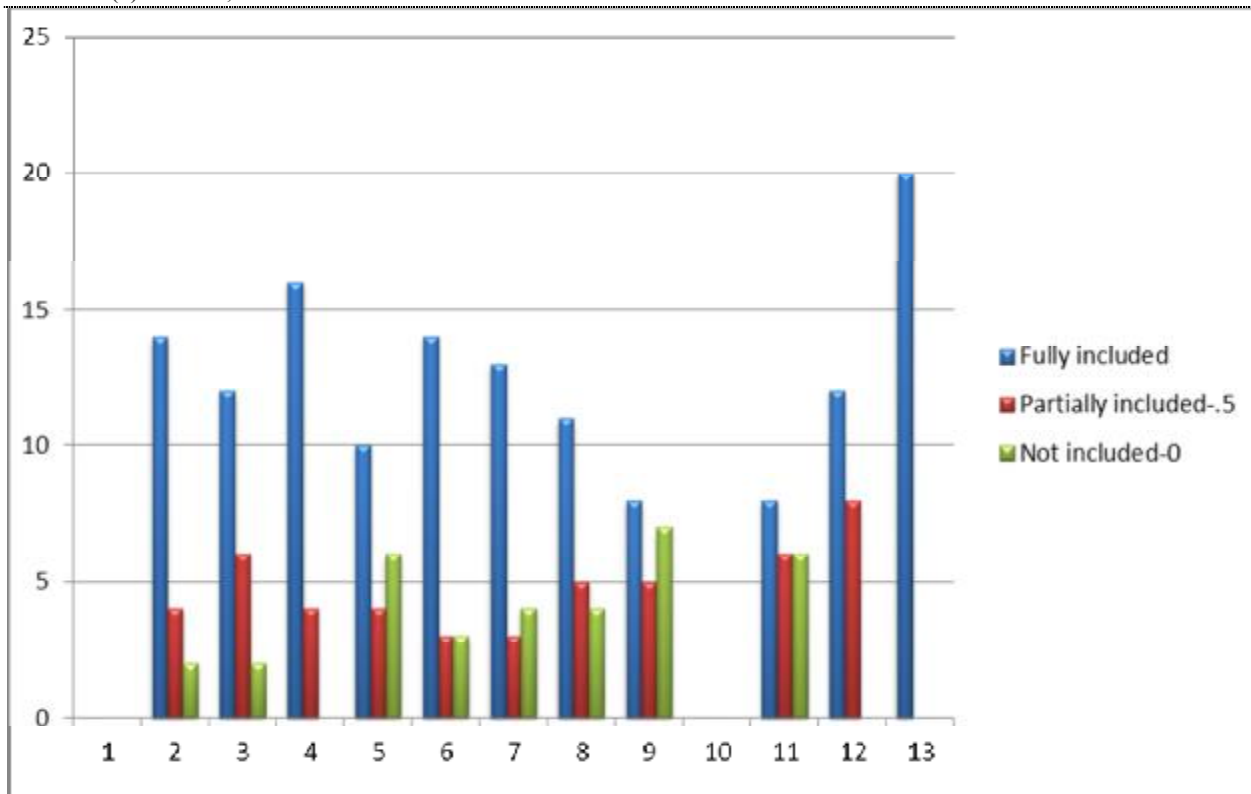


Figure 1. The Student's Scores

The students were able to notice the gap between their present competence and target competence. Although the texts were simple stories meant for secondary school level, some students were not able cope with challenge offered by the strategy. This did not deter them from wanting to continue with the next stage. The students readily compared their notes with others even though they knew the work was below standard.

The students showed interest in continuing with the procedure because they felt it would assist them in bridging the gap between their present and target competence. They insisted the procedure if continued would help in getting them good marks in their Basic Grammar class. This can be a motivating factor in making them want to continue practicing with dictogloss. At first they were shocked at their performance because they did not expect to find some words difficult to write. Eventually they accepted the fact that they needed more practice using English language since it is the official language in Nigeria.

## 6. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from this research is that it is an effective way of teaching listening comprehension to second language learners. Dictogloss helps students in cooperative learning. The students can get used to working with peers without inhibition. Therefore learning becomes fun. Knowing that one's classmates are not better than him can be a motivating factor in striving hard to achieve better grades. If used effectively in the classroom, dictogloss can help the students to become independent learners.

### 6.1 Recommendations

The dictogloss model offers several potential advantages over other models of teaching listening comprehension. This is because it combines individual and group activities effectively. Teachers should try to use the model in the classroom so that they could have cooperative activities which help students learn from their peers.

Dictogloss offers various opportunities for follow-up activities that would allow both teacher and students to compare both versions and discuss language choices. This can motivate students to do better in the classroom.

The paper recommends the use of recording from good models for the dictogloss sessions so as not to confuse students with irregular productions from teachers with L1 interference. Teachers should also encourage discussions on the subject matter to evaluate the strength of the student's arguments and opinions.

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## Appendix

Table 1: Ideas included in the reconstruction

Fully included 1mark	Partially included-.5	Not included-0	Ideas from the text
14	4	2	Once upon a time years years ago in Baghdad
12	6	2	There lived a porter named Sinbad
16	4	-	As he was passing a palace one day, he saw a bench he thought he could rest
10	4	6	But curiosity got the better of him and, slipping through the entrance
14	3	3	He went into the garden. To Sinbad it was like heaven.
13	3	4	Everywhere there were flower beds, gushing fountains and palm trees,
11	5	4	In whose shades many gentlemen were strolling, while pages served them with cakes and drinks.
8	5	7	Sinbad couldn't help exclaiming aloud: "well, I never! Here I am, worked to the bone, poor and always hungry
10	4	6	While other lucky men never carry burdens, but enjoy good food and drink.
8	6	6	And yet, we're Allah's sons! What a world of difference between me and these people who live here."
12	8	-	Sinbad had barely stopped speaking when one of the pages came across to him and said:
20	-	-	"Come with me. My master wishes to speak to you."

### The Seven Voyages Of

#### Sinbad the Sailor

Once upon a time years and years ago in Baghdad there lived a porter called Sinbad. As he was passing a palace one day, he saw a bench in the great doorway and thought he would rest on it. So he put down his load, and was about to sit down when curiosity got the better of him and, slipping through the entrance he went into the gardens. To Sinbad it was like heaven.

Everywhere there were flower beds, gushing fountains and palm trees, in whose shade many gentlemen were strolling, while pages served them with cakes and drinks. Sinbad couldn't help exclaiming aloud:

"Well I never! Here I am, worked to the bone, poor and always hungry while other lucky men never carry burdens, but enjoy good food and drink. And yet, we're all Allah's sons! What a world of difference between me and the people who live here." Sinbad had barely stopped speaking when one of the pages came across to him and said:

"Come with me. My master wishes to speak to you.