

'Dictogloss Technique': To surpass the Inferiority in Language Teaching and Learning

UDAY Y

(Research Scholar, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education (RIE) Mysore, Karnataka, India)

(Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Amrita Vishwavidyapeetham, Mysore Campus, Karnataka, India)

Abstract:

Learning the Second language is highly important as it is essential for every aspect and interaction in our daily lives. Every sentence we use has the purpose of enabling second language learners to move beyond vocabulary and grammar to the functional aspect of communication. Being able to communicate with each other establishes bond, identities etc., it's the prime thing to separate humans from other animal species and could drive for better lives. Language is a medium of conveying ideas, thoughts and intentions. Language is a rule- governed system of symbols that allows the users to generate meaning and in the process, to define reality. Language is generally taught, learnt and assessed in terms of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Whether it be for a beginner in learning English language or else even the proficiency gaining aspirer, this 'Dictogloss' would be the best technique that could make one surpass the invisible or hidden fobia or inferiority towards learning English. Hence, this paper provides insights on the emergence the concept of 'Dictogloss', its Definition, Rational, Functions, its stages and operation, its basic stages, advantages and disadvantages, Suggestive Steps, Related Research findings, Educational Implications and Conclusion.

Key words: Language, Dictogloss, Dictation, Technique

1. Introduction: Language is not merely the medium of instruction at all levels of education, it is the medium of growth. It provides capacity for preservation and communication of intellectual life. At higher level, language provides the medium of fresh and free thinking and research. In education it is supposed to communicate knowledge, and in general life it is the instrument to pick up information. We need language to learn, to retain and to recall our knowledge. It is the primary need of the child and any learner. The Oxford Learner's Dictionaries define the term 'Technique' as, "a particular way of doing something practically, especially one in which you have to learn special skills". Out of all the available strategies and techniques in teaching a language irrespective of the subject, dictogloss or dictation is the strategy and technique that occupies the foremost space in learning and teaching a language. Since, it is well know to the common world of learning English that, English learners do possess different kinds of phobia or inferiority, the following explanation could lead one, whether it be the reader or the learner that 'Dictogloss' is the best technique to make them overcome such things.

2. Definition of ‘Dictation’ and ‘Dictogloss Technique’: According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (1995), “dictation is a test in which people have to write down a passage that is read aloud, as a way of helping them to learn a language”. Although dictation in this traditional form helps students learning a language, it has been criticized as a rote learning method in which students merely make a copy of the text the teacher reads without doing any thinking. The origins of dictogloss, which is also called ‘*grammar dictation*’ or ‘*dicto-comp*’ have been developed in Australia. Over the past decade, dictogloss, which Wajnryb (1990:8) developed from dictation, has become well known in English Teaching. Mc Guire has an opinion, “dictogloss is a teaching procedure that involves the speedy dictation of a short text to a group of language students”, (<http://www.jaltpublications.org/tlt/files/97/sep/wajnryb.html>). Petrucione, S., & Ryan, S. (2005:1) state that, “dictogloss is a listening activity in which the learners recreate a short passage spoken by the teacher a number of times”.

3. Meaning of ‘Dictogloss’: Dictogloss is a classroom ‘dictation activity’ where the learners are required to reconstruct a short text by listening and noting down key words, which are then used as a base for reconstruction. Though not found in practice or application the term ‘Dictogloss’ acts as the synonym for the term ‘Dictation’. For example, if the learners are on a discussion of a ‘Sea’, as the term or topic of discussion, the teacher can and will explain the task, and reads a short text on the ‘Sea’ to the class, who just listens to it. The teacher then reads the text again, and the learners will take notes. If the same activity had happened in groups, the learners then reconstruct the text. In such context of the classroom, ‘Dictogloss’ is often regarded as a multiple skills and systems activity. Learners practise listening, writing and speaking either by working individually or in groups and use vocabulary, grammar and discourse systems in order to complete the task.

So far, decades of research on various immersion programs have shown that although students develop both excellent listening and reading comprehension skills even at early grade levels, and although they are able to get their meaning across in the immersion language, even at intermediate and higher grade levels they often do so with non-target-like morphology and syntax. What can be done pedagogically to move immersion students toward more native-like proficiency in the immersion language; will be the thought for a while in this regard.

4. Rationale: Swain (1995) has argued for the importance of output in immersion programs and also has argued that several functions of output may have an impact on accuracy in the immersion language, or may push students along in their interlanguage development. He had also described three functions of output of ‘Dictogloss’ as an activity. The three functions of output (Swain, 1995) are: a) Noticing b) Hypothesis formulation and testing and c) Metatalk. The brief explanation of these three functions is as follows.

- a) **Noticing:** Noticing is a technique, in which, a form used in input must be consciously noticed in order for it to be acquired. The act of noticing needs to occur during language production, that is, while they are

attempting to use the target language. The activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to recognize consciously some of their linguistic problems. Researchers have noted the importance of learners' noticing the "gap" in their interlanguage that is noticing the difference between what they want to say and what they are able to say.

- b) **Hypothesis formulation and testing:** It is a technique, in which, the learners may use language production as a way of trying out new language forms and structures as they stretch their interlanguage; they may use their output to test what works and what doesn't.
- c) **Metatalk:** Is a technique, in which, the learners use language to reflect on language use. It's a surfacing of language used in problem-solving, for cognitive purposes. Metatalk produced in the context of making meaning may serve the function of deepening the students' awareness of forms and rules and the relationship of those forms and rules to the meaning they're trying to express.

This "dictogloss" has also been proposed as a procedure that encourages students to reflect on their own output (Wajnryb, 1990). Kowal and Swain (1997) and Swain (1998) report on the dictogloss technique and studies that have been conducted with 8th grade French immersion learners.

Dictogloss is considered a multiple skill and system activity with a focus on communicating meaning and correct use of grammar (Wajnryb, 1990). It is an excellent way of practicing grammar and vocabulary as learners work on combining meaning and form. Wajnryb (ibid, p.5) has written that Dictogloss is a relatively recent procedure in language teaching, and different from language dictation. He emphasizes the difference between Dictogloss, where learners are listened to a short text read to them at normal speed and reconstruct it in small groups until it has the same meaning as the original text dictation, it is the thing where learners only write down what's just been read by the teacher or just been heard from the audio source.

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, pp.2-4). Jacobs and Small (ibid) reported in their study that Dictogloss does not always have to involve writing sentences and paragraphs. Learners can do other activities based on what the teacher reads to the man and asks them to do. For instance, they can complete a graphic organizer in which the facilitator finds or writes a description of a drawing that includes relevant details about vocabulary and concepts of the topic. The authors explained that during the task, first, learners listen to the description and do a drawing based on what they heard; second, they compare their productions with their partners and make a composite drawing per pair and then finally compare their drawing with the original one. Several studies have considered some stages that describe Dictogloss as an innovative strategy to learn a second language.

The 'Dictogloss' technique, its stages and operation can be briefly understood through the below given table:

Table 1: The 'Dictogloss' Technique, its Stages and Operation, Execution or Functioning

| Sl. No | Steps | Students | Teachers |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Preparation | Vocabulary study to prepare for the test. Discuss the topic (Predict Content and Vocabulary etc.,) | |
| 2 | Listening for Meaning | Listens to the whole text | Reads the text at normal speed |
| 3 | Listening and Note taking | Take notes listing key words | Reads again at normal speed |
| 4 | Text reconstruction in groups | Works in groups to reconstruct an approximation of the text from notes | Helps or scaffolds groups and offers guidance |
| 5 | Text Comparison between Groups | Compares groups' version of the text. Pay attention to the points of usage that emerge from discussion | Facilitates class comparison of versions from different groups. Facilitates discussions and corrections of errors |

5. Five Basic Stages in Teaching –Learning Process: In addition to the above stated, Shak (2006, p.49) 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:

- a) **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.
- b) **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.
- c) **Activity stage:** this is when learners work together in small groups to recreate texts based on what they remember of what they heard.
- d) **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.
- e) **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, pp.7-9) 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.

- a) **The preparation stage:** It is the stage which 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.
- b) **The dictation stage:** In this 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.
- c) **The reconstruction stage:** During this 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.
- d) **(d) and (e) - The analysis and correction session stage:** 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. Some examples of the different ways to conduct the analysis and correction step include: using the black/white-board where learners' texts are written for all to see and discuss, using an overhead projector and copying the original text to be examined to the whole class. It is important to clarify that the original text should not be read by the learners until their own versions have been analyzed.

6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Dictogloss:

According to Vasiljevic (2010, pp.45-46) Dictogloss has some advantages as follows:

- a) 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.
- b) 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 makes use of verbal and written confirmation and clarification.
- c) 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.

- d) 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.
- e) 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 misunderstandings. Furthermore, the nature of the reconstruction task forces students to listen carefully to other students' input, providing additional opportunities for listening practice.
- f) The reconstruction task also promotes the acquisition of second language vocabulary. Students need to recall the meanings and the written form of vocabulary items introduced at the preparation stage. In addition, students may need to use new words to form complex sentences, and the teacher can direct the attention of the learners to the target language.
- g) The reconstruction task can be used to raise the awareness of the students to patterns in the target language. Those facilitate the ability of students to understand and manipulate patterns of textual organization and should make them more sensitive to discourse markers and other cohesive ties in the English as a Second Language that they are learning to acquire.
- h) Working in small groups reduces students' anxiety as they only have to perform in front of a small audience. They may also feel more relaxed and confident when they share ideas that represent a group rather than themselves.
- i) Dictogloss can build students' motivation in "co-operative" (co-operative and competitive) activities. It offers a sense of togetherness, self-confidence and responsibility so they should feel comfortable when doing the activity. Also the competition in the closing activities offers chances for the students to prove and to show their individual ability.

Besides the advantages of Dictogloss above, there are also some disadvantages of Dictogloss as set out by Alderson (1997, p. 365) as follows:

- a) Dictogloss takes a lot of time to apply well in the teaching-learning processes.
- b) It may not be so effective with lower level learners.
- c) If the dictation is not recorded on tape, the test will be less reliable, as there will be differences in speed of delivery of the text by different readers.
- d) The dictation is in fact written passages that are read out aloud so Dictogloss does not help students to understand the difference between oral and written language.

- e) The exercises can be unrealistic if the text used was created to be read aloud rather than spoken in dialogue.

Dictogloss has been used in language learning for many reasons. However, the use of Dictogloss has always had two sides; advantages and disadvantages. The worst disadvantage is that learners unfamiliar with this teaching technique may want to write down every word dictated. Moreover learners may be reluctant to discuss and/or correct their texts with other groups.

7. Suggestive Steps for the follow up of Dictogloss: These are the few suggestive steps for follow up for the teachers and students:

- a) Model the steps of the process with students prior to having them co-construct a dictogloss on their own.
- b) Create a short passage that embeds a particular grammatical form you wish to emphasize. It should be a form that students know well but that is often produced inaccurately by students. Try to incorporate a majority of vocabulary that students know.
- c) Review difficult or possibly unknown vocabulary that appears in the dictogloss.
- d) Provide a short (3-5 min.) review lesson on the grammatical form being emphasized.
- e) Read the dictogloss through once at a normal speed, asking students to listen carefully.
- f) Read the dictogloss a second time, and encourage students to jot down notes.
- g) Have pairs of students work together for approximately 20-25 minutes to reconstruct the dictogloss, reminding students that they should try to write their text so that it will be as close to the original as possible in grammar and content. Kowal told her students that the original sense of each sentence needed to be present and the reconstructed sentences had to be as grammatically accurate as the students could manage, but the words and phrases didn't have to be identical to the ones in the original passage. During this time students form hypotheses and test them, using available resources such as dictionaries and verb reference books. The activity should also encourage noticing and, ideally, metatalk.
- h) Select at least one student example and use it to engage in whole-class discussion with particular focus on the grammatical form emphasized. The students' co-constructed texts should be compared with the original dictogloss.

8. Research findings on the dictogloss technique: Kowal and Swain (1997) have found evidence of noticing, hypothesis-testing, and metatalk when using the dictogloss technique with 8th grade French immersion students. The teacher using this technique found that students often focused on more than just the grammatical aspect being emphasized. They discussed grammatical aspects but also orthographic and semantic issues. The pair work and whole class discussion afterwards did promote student discussion about the links between meaning and form in relation to the composing process. A follow-up study (see discussion in Swain, 1998) showed that when students, through dialogue, reached a correct solution (that

is, the problem they discuss is solved correctly), there was a strong tendency for them to perform accurately on a posttest on that item 1 week later. Similarly, when students co-constructed an incorrect solution, they tended to be inaccurate on the posttest given a week later. In other words, students tend to “stick with” the knowledge they had co-constructed collaboratively. Such results strongly suggest that when students reflect consciously on the language they are producing, this (ie., Dictogloss) may be a source of language learning.

9. Implications for teaching: The following are the educational implications of ‘Dictogloss’, that if followed, in the field of Education and Language Education, it promotes:

- a) Value of collaborative work for second language learning
- b) Carefully consider the task characteristics; not just any task will elicit metatalk
- c) A task that elicits metatalk from one group of learners may not do so from another group; this may be due to the level of learners’ proficiency, the age of the learners, etc.
- d) Familiarity with the task procedures is key; teacher modeling and role-playing of the activity is useful because students tend to remember their incorrect solutions, it is critical to provide students with feedback. So the teacher needs to be available during collaborative activities and attend to the accuracy of the final product.

10. Conclusion: Dictogloss is a technique that can be used in language teaching that has some advantages when it is implemented. It can be summed up that Dictogloss is beneficial to be implemented in the teaching-learning process as it provides opportunities for learners to learn as individuals and in groups while using critical thinking, it also promotes the autonomy of learners which makes them less dependent on the teacher for learning as they also learn to depend on their peers to get or gain knowledge, it includes writing activities which can assist learners to identify what they can do well and what they need to improve on and offers an alternative way for assessing the ability of students. Despite sparing and holding on or longing with the fear of learning English, this technique helps the learner, the one, to surpass any such kind of inferiority as to begin with one’s learning English.

References:

Diane Tedick (2001). Dictogloss Procedure

Dista , M. D. (2017) Using Dictogloss to Improve Listening Comprehension, English Education Journal (EEJ), 8(2), 149-163

Gunes Firdevs: Effects of Dictogloss as a Collaborative Writing Activity on Students’ Perceptions and...

Imene, AIT HAMOUDA (2016). An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Dictation as a Technique in Developing Learners' Listening

Onovughe, Graceful Ofodu. Olubunmi Temitope Ogunjemilua (2018) Dictogloss Strategy and Listening Comprehension Performance of Secondary School Students, International Journal of Education and Research, Vol. 6 No. 6

TutyAlawiyah (2015). The Effectiveness of Dictogloss Method on Listening Skill of Narrative Text at Tenth Grade Students of Ma Al Iman Adiwerna Tegal

Parya Habibi1, Azadeh Nematizadeh* and Sharmin Habibi (2012). The role of listening comprehension in dictation, Indian Journal of Science and Technology, Vol.5 No.8

Rahimi , Mohammad (2008). Using Dictation to Improve Language Proficiency Mohammad, The Asian EFL Journal, Volume 10, Number 1

Retnowaty (2011). The Effectiveness of Dictogloss Technique to Improve Students' Skill in Writing Narrative Text, Journal Pendidikan Dan Humaniora

Stansfield W. Charles (2016). A History of Dictation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing, The Modern Language Journal , Vol. 69, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 121-128

Yihsiang Kuo (2010). Using Partial Dictation of an English Teaching Radio Program to Enhance EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension, Asian EFL Journal. Professional Teaching Articles. Vol. 47

