

# IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LISTENING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH DICTATION AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL DEVICE AT SMP NEGERI 1 MAKASSAR

**Tenri Ugi Irianto**

*State University of Makassar, Indonesia*

*tenryu@gmail.com*

## ***Abstract***

*This research aims at finding out whether the use dictation through instructional device can improve students' English listening achievement. This research employs quasi-experimental method which consists of two groups namely experimental and control group. Each group consists of 32 students. The sample is chosen by applying cluster random sampling technique. The instruments of this research are listening test and questionnaire.*

*The data of this research is collected through pre-test and post-test. Pre-test is applied to find out the students' ability before and after treatment. In conducted of this research, the researcher applied dictation as an instructional device. The result of data analysis on pre-test and post-test shows that T-test result is 13.03 and T-table is 2.00 which indicated the students' improvement.*

*Based on the result of research, it can be assumed that the use of dictation can improve students' listening achievement.*

***Keywords: Improving, listening, dictation***

## **A. Introduction**

We are aware that English as a foreign language is a difficult subject for Indonesian

students to learn, because the language has a lot of rules which are different from our language Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian). For example, pronunciation of most English words are not spelled the way are pronounced, while in Indonesian language the student will never find any difficulty in pronouncing or writing down Indonesian words because it correspondences between sounds (phonic) and letters (graphic symbol). The grammatical rules, such as adding an –s ending to pluralize a noun of English words never occur in Indonesian students unable to comprehend easily the language being learned. They have to be trained both in written and oral exercise.

Mastering English involves the four integrated-skills such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, and reading. Listening is still assumed as difficult skill to study. It's not easier to understand meaning is conveyed by directly listening from native speaker or even non-native speaker than understanding meaning through reading a text. No one can understand clearly how listening process happens or how to learn to listen or understand it at once. It seems easy if it is done by listening our own language that is spoken in daily conversation.

One way to improve students' listening skill is through dictation. Sawyer and Silver (in Rahimi, 2008:2) believe that dictation is primarily a learning exercise and only secondarily a testing device. They assert that learner learned to listen, to concentrate, to write down from dictation; he has become familiar with the teacher's particular voice quality; but these abilities are also part of listening language. In acquiring them he has learned some part of his second language.

When listening comprehension was taught in the class, students seemed still face difficulties in listening auto media. It could be seem from the students' score in listening comprehension was still low than the teacher expected. When teacher asked them which factors may hinder them, generally students stated that the rate of conversation was fast enough, the way of speakers spoke was not so clear and students are not familiar with listening. In fact, when they read the text directly, they knew some or they were able to interpret the texts. Wolvin and Coakley (1988) concluded that, both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication.

The situation which brings a foreign language to life in the classroom is provided by gestures, by handling and touching things, by incidents and activities, by pictures, by dramatization, by interesting stories spoken or in print and not least by certain content and games. In these the language is linked with action and is no longer a disembodied thing. (Lee, 1986:2).

Based on the problem above, use dictation as an instructional device is effective since the test can check the students' proficiency in recognizing most of the aspects of English through their listening skill. Therefore, the reasons to developing the students' skill in listening skill through dictation are an inseparable part class activity since the students' need it as supporting activity and closely related to listening activity.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. Listening Comprehension**

#### **a. Teaching Listening strategies**

According to Steven Brown in Teaching Listening strategies (2006:5) two themes will wind through listening strategies. The first is the necessity of supporting students' learning. Listening is a hard job, but we can make it easier by applying what we know about activating prior knowledge, helping students organize their learning by thinking about their purposes for listening, and if speaking is also a goal of the classroom, using well-structured speaking tasks informed by research.

#### **b. Definition of Listening Comprehension**

Anderson and Lynch (2000) define the listening process as "the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli". The receiving and attending to is also called speech perception and refers to the processes of distinguishing phonemes, constructing these into words, recognizing the features of stress and intonation and combining this information to construct the syntax. This is also known as bottom-up processing. Assigning meaning to decoded stimuli is referred to as top-down processing, and involves assigning communicative meaning to the decoded utterances based upon previous knowledge. Top-down processing may also help in filling in gaps in understanding created by recording failures.

### c. Factors influencing listening

Many factors can be regarded as influential for listening because they may be suspected, on logical grounds, to affect listening or because they are thought to be relevant, based on parallels found in reading research (Rubin, 1994: 199).

Some of the factors which influence the ease or difficulty of tasks for the L2 listener are a fusion of the type of language heard, the context in which listening occurs and the task or purpose of listening (Anderson and Lynch, 1988, as cited in Rubin, 1994:443). It seems further that text, interlocutor, task, listener and process characteristics also affect listening comprehension.

### d. Cognitive research on listening comprehension

Recent cognitive research has provided us with a better understanding of the listening comprehension process. Understanding spoken language is essentially an inferential process (Rost, 2001). Many researchers in SLA have paid attention to both top-down processing and bottom-up processing in listening comprehension. Top-down processing refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Bottom-up processing, on the other hand, refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Combinations of top-down processing with bottom-up processing of information from the stimulus itself are used.

Thus, it is generally agreed that top-down and bottom -up processes continuously interact to make sense of spoken input (Vandergrift, 2007). For instance, it is possible to understand the meaning of a word before decoding its sound, because we have many different types of knowledge, including knowledge of the world around us. We know what normally happens, and so we have expectations about what we will hear. Moreover, Buck (2001) mentions “while we are listening, we almost always have some hypothesis about what is likely to come next” (p. 3). Significantly, L2 learners, who have limited processing ability with less linguistic knowledge, will depend on their ability to make use of all the available resources to interpret what they hear by top-down processes. Meta cognitive knowledge is useful to develop rapid word recognition ability, because the learners make use of context and other compensatory strategies to make sense of the aural form of a word (Vandergrift, 2006).

## 2. The Concept of Dictation

#### a. Definition of Dictation

Dictation is described as a technique used in both language teaching and language testing in which a passage is read aloud to students, with pauses during which they must try to write down what they heard as accurately as possible (Richards and Platt, 1992). Dictation is used 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 at listening, their command of the language, and their ability to hold what they have heard in their memory. Dictation has been thoroughly examined as a language proficiency test (Oller and Streiff, 1975). As a teaching technique, it helps language learning by making learners focus on phrase- and clause-level constructions. This focusing is accuracy- based. Dictation means the act or process of dictating material another for transcription and the material to dictate (Collins English Dictionary, 2003: 52). Dictation has been a feature of language classroom for hundreds of years. In this final project I will give a clear picture of dictation. It offers the definition of dictation, characteristics of dictation and types of dictation. Dictation is a widely researched genre of assessing listening comprehension. Dictation is useful when well integrated with the learning activities. It is a teaching technique which has proved extremely effective at all levels of instruction. It ensure attentive listening, trains students to distinguish sounds, enables students to learn to transfer oral sounds to written symbols, helps to develop aural comprehension and assists in self-evaluation. Several experts gave their statements about dictations that are very useful for teachers.

In another study, Chun (2010) worked on *Developing Intensive Listening Skills: A Case Study of the Long-Term Dictation Tasks Using Rapid Speech*. This study investigated the effects of dictation of rapid speech on developing listening skills and the impact dictation had on students' listening/speaking ability. Fifty undergraduate TESL program students participated in the research. They were given the opportunity to practice listening through dictation (listening cloze) for the AP news segments twice a week for a period of twelve weeks. They achieved significant gains in terms

of the TOEFL and dictation scores through dictation practice. In addition, three questionnaires completed by the students shed light on how dictation helped them improve listening and speaking skills.

#### b. Characteristic of dictation

Dictation provides activities suitable for a wide range of levels and ages, examples texts for many activities opportunities for students to create their own texts, and a variety of suggested correction techniques. Moreover, it “normally turns out that in any average group of European teachers more than half *do* use dictation either regularly or from time to time in their teaching. Dictation serves the teacher and the students efficiently. It has several characteristics:

Dictation can be used with a class of any size. When the dictation is given, all of the students are working, even in a very large class.

Dictation ensures attentive listening. When the students are doing a dictation, their attention will totally be focused on the exercises.

Dictation gives the students a chance to get practice in the sort of note taking that many courses require. This is a very important part of the students’ needs in using language.

#### c. Types of Dictation

##### 1. According to Michael (2002: 201-206)

As a testing technique, dictation may be given in various types. There are several types of dictation. This is the best known type of dictation.

- a) Standard dictation. This is the best known type of dictation. It requires the examinee to write verbal sequences of material as spoken by an examiner or played back from a recording.
- b) Partial dictation. This is similar to standard dictation, except that the examinees are given a written version of the text (along with the spoken version) in which the written has certain portions left out. The examinees must listen to the spoken material and fill in the blanks in the written version.
- c) Dictation with competing noise. This type of dictation can also be called noise

dictation. The addition of noise in the process of dictation is intended to imitate a natural condition.

- d) Dictation/composition or dicto-comp. In this type of dictation, the examinees are instructed to listen a text, one or more times while it is presented either live or on tape at conversational rate. Then they are asked to write from memory what they have heard.
- e) Elicited imitation. This is similar to dictation in terms of the material presented to the examinee, but dissimilar with respect to the response mode. In this case, the examinee hears the material, just as in standard dictation (and with equal possibilities for variation), but instead of writing down the material the examinee is asked to repeat it or otherwise recount what was said.

2. According to Moody (2001: 137-144)

- a) Fast speed dictation. The teacher reads a passage at natural speed, with assimilation, etc. the students can ask for multiple repetitions of any part of the passage, but the teacher will not slow down her articulation of the phrase being repeated. This activity focuses students' attention on features of fast speech.
- b) Pause and paraphrase. The teacher reads a passage and pauses periodically for the students to write paraphrase not the exact words used. This activity focuses students on vocabulary flexibility, saying things in different ways, and in focusing on meaning as they listen.
- c) Listening cloze. The teacher provides a partially completed passage that the listeners fill in as they listen or after they listen. This activity allows students focus on particular language features.
- d) Error identification. The teacher provides a fully transcribes passage, but with several errors. The students listen and identify the errors. This activity focuses attention on detail by grammatical or semantic.
- e) Jigsaw dictation. Student's works in pairs. Each person in the pair has part of the full dictation. The students read their parts to the other in order to

complete the passage. This activity encourages negotiation of meaning.

Lighfoot (2004: 23) says that dictation exercises are very important, particularly for developing the children's awareness of phonic sounds, and contrary to the popular view of dictation, it can be a lot of fun. We can dictate sounds for the students to write in pictures, bingo birds and treasure maps, and the students can choose which squares to write the sounds in and get points if they choose certain squares. The students can also have worksheet with sounds or words on them, and do activities such as listening to dictated sounds or words, choosing the correct ones on their worksheets. Lightfoot continued that there are several reasons why dictation activities work well in the classroom. From the teacher's point of view, dictation:

- 1) Can be done with any level, depending on the text used
- 2) Can be graded for a multi-level class

For students, dictation:

- a) Can focus on both accuracy (form) as well as meaning
- b) Can develop all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) can be develop if the students do the dictating rather than the teacher.
- c) Give students the opportunity to notice features of pronouncing such as weak forms, linking and elision.

In fact, dictation can be used to decrease preparation time for other activities, such as:

- a) Instead of spending hours making cut-up activities such as matching vocabulary and their definitions, why not give the students blanks slips of paper and dictate the necessary information to them. This also gives the students more listening and writing/spelling practice.
- b) To save time, the class can be divided into two groups and the words/phrases dictated quickly with each group required to write down only half the words given.
- c) Additionally, dictation activities where students compare their versions of the text to the original can increase their ability to notice aspects of language which are sometimes overlooked, as well as mistakes which they commonly make. These might include



common spelling errors, absence of articles or the third person's, etc; the comparison also helps students to become better at identifying errors in their own written work. Mansyursyah (2002: 52) claim that dictation contains a wealth of new techniques to extend the traditional language-learning activity of dictation. The activities range from the traditional focus on spelling and punctuation problems to exercises that emphasize personal attitudes and opinions of both teachers and students. Dictation provides activities suitable for a wide range of levels and ages, example texts for many activities, opportunities for students to create their own texts, and a variety of suggested correction techniques.

### **C. Research Method**

In this research, the researcher used the quasi-experimental design with two groups pre-test and post-test. It used two groups, one receives treatment (dictation method) and the other groups receives non dictation or what we so called the conventional one (one way center method). Both groups are given pre-test and post-test. The pre-test is done to find out the prior knowledge of students while post-test is done to find out the influence of using Dictation in teaching English listening. The population of this research is the second year students of SMP Negeri 1 Makassar, South Sulawesi Province in academic year 2014/2015. The total number of the classes is ten, namely VIII-A, VIII-B, VIII-C, VIII-D, VIII-E, VIII-F, VIII-G, VIII-H, VIII-I. The populations are 320 students. The sample is selected by using cluster random sampling technique. The researcher took two classes as sample; they are VIII-A and VIII-J. That is consist 32 students.

In collecting data, the researcher applied two kinds of instruments. They are writing test and questionnaire. The data were collected through three steps. Those steps are pretest, treatment, posttest. The quantitative data were analyzed statistically through SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) version 17.0.

### **D. Findings and Discussion**

The findings of the research deal with (1) The Improving of Students' Listening Skill Before and after the Treatment and (2) The Students' Motivation.

## 1. The Improving of Students' Listening Skill Before and after the Treatment

### a. The Classification of the Students' Listening Score in Pretest and Post test

In this part, the researcher presented the students' pretest and post test scores of listening to see its frequency and percentage.

The frequency score and the percentage of the students' listening level in pretest can be seen in the following table.

Table 1 The Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Listening Skill in Pretest.

Classification	Range of score	Control Group		Experimental Group	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	96-100	0	0	0	0
Very good	86-95	0	0	0	0
Good	76-85	0	0	0	0
Fairly good	66-75	1	3.1	1	3.1
Fair	56-65	5	15.7	6	18.7
Poor	36-55	22	68.7	20	62.5
Very poor	00-35	4	12.5	5	15.6
<b>Total</b>		32	100	32	100

Table 1 shows that most of the students' listening level in both control group and experimental group were categorized as poor at the beginning where 4 students (12.5%) in control group and 5 students (15.6%) in experimental group were in very poor category. 22 students (68.7%) in control and 20 students (62.5%) in experimental group were in poor, 5 students (15.7%) in control group and 6 students (18.7%) in experimental were fair category, 1 student (3.1%) in control and 1 student (3.1%) in experimental group were in fairly good

category and no one of both groups was on good or very good category.

The result on the table shows that most of the students have the same level on listening; they were poor before they were taught with dictation for experimental and conventional for control group. While after treatment, the post test score on students' listening skill improve and percentage of the students' score for the control and experimental groups, it can be seen on the table below:

Table 2 The Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Listening in Post test.

Classification	Range of score	Control Group		Experimental Group	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	96-100	0	0	0	0
Very good	86-95	2	6.2	6	18.7
Good	76-85	2	6.2	11	34.4
Fairly good	66-75	9	28.2	6	18.7
Fair	56-65	10	31.2	12	37.5
Poor	36-55	9	28.2	3	9.4
Very poor	00-35	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		32	100	32	100

The table also shows that the students' achievement in control group and experimental group improved. In control group, the score of the students tend to spread from fair to fairly good category. There were 2 students (6.2%) in very good category, 2 students (6.2%) were in good, 9 students (28.2%) in fairly good, 10 students (31.2%) in fair, and 9 students (28.2%) in poor category. Unlike for the experimental group, the students' scores were spread dominantly in fair to good category. No one of students was categorized as excellent. There

were 6 students (18.7%) categorized as very good, 11 students (34.4%) categorized as good, 6 students (18.7%) categorized as fairly good, 12 students (37.5%) categorized as fair, and 3 students (9.4%) were still in poor category.

The score distribution for control group and experimental group on listening skill in post test shows the difference from the pre test. After conducting the treatment to both of the groups, it showed an improvement but in the experimental group which applied dictation gave higher improvement than the conventional teaching. It means that dictation is effective to improve students' listening skill.

b. The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students' Listening skill.

As it has stated above that after tabulating the frequency and the percentage of the students' score, the researcher calculated the mean score and standard deviation of the students' score in pretest then compared them with posttest score. Before the treatment, the students were given pretest to know the students achievement on listening skill. Furthermore, the purpose of the tests were to find out whether the students' scores were stable and constant or not and then conducting posttest to find out the students' improvement in learning listening through dictation. The standard deviation was mean to know how close the scores to the mean score. In the table below, the researcher presented the mean score and standard deviation of the students' listening level both experimental and control group in pretest and post test.

Table 3 The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Students' listening in Pretest and Post test.

Groups	Mean score		Standard deviation	
	Pretest	Post test	Pretest	Post test
Control	46.78	64.13	9.53	10.68
Experimental	45.75	76.19	10.12	8.47

Table 3 indicates that there were difference of students' score and standard deviation of students' listening skill. The data analysis shows the students' mean score for both group experimental and control was average or it classified as fair. The students' mean score of

pretest for control was 46.78 with standard deviation 9.53 and in experimental was 45.75 with standard deviation 10.12. However, after applying treatment, the students' listening skill improved. It is proved by students' mean score in post test; in experimental group were 76.19 and in control group 64.13. Even though, the students' mean score improved in post test, but the students' score in experimental was greater than control group or  $76.19 > 64.13$ . It means that, the use of dictation is effective to improve students' listening skill.

#### c. Test of Significance (t-Test)

The hypotheses were tested by using inferential analysis. In this case, the researcher used t-test (testing of significance) independent sample test, that is, a test to know the significance of difference between the result of students' mean scores in pretest and post test.

Assuming that the level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05, the only thing which is needed the degree of freedom (df) = 64, where  $N - 2 = 62$  is 2.000. This means that if the result of computed SPSS 17 t-test is less or same as 2.000,  $H_0$  (Null Hypothesis) is accepted. In contrast, if the result of t-test is more than 2.000,  $H_0$  is rejected. Below are the T-Test results in pretest and posttest in term of literal, inferential, and critical:

Table 4 The Probability Value of T-Test of the Students' Achievement on Listening Skill in Pretest and Posttest

	T	2 Tailed Value	( $\alpha$ )	Remarks
Pretests Experiment and Control Groups	0.419	0.57	0.05	There was No Different
Control Posttest and Experimental Posttest	5.003	0.00	0.05	Significantly Different

The result of data analysis as summarized in table 4.4 on pretest of control and experimental group, the researcher found that the Probability value (0.57) is higher than the level of significance at t-table (0.05) and the degree of freedom 62. The data also showed that the t-count value was smaller than t-table ( $0.419 < 2.000$ ). It indicated that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was rejected and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was accepted. In the other word, there was no significant difference between the students listening skill in pretest before the

treatment. After treatment, the researcher found that the Probability value (0.00) was smallest than the level of significance at t-table (0.05) and the degree of freedom 62. The data also showed that the t-count value was higher than t-table ( $5.003 > 2.000$ ). It indicated that the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. In the other word, there was significant difference between the students listening skill in posttest after giving the treatment through dictation. It means that the application of dictation in teaching can increase the students' listening skill.

Based on the data above, the researcher concluded that the data of posttest as the final result gave significant improvement. It can be summarized that the use of dictation was able to give greater contribution in teaching listening or the use of dictation in teaching listening was effective.

## 2. The Students' Motivation

The questionnaires were distributed to the students to know their interest toward dictation in teaching listening. The students' score interval of questionnaires can be shown in table 4.5.

Table 5: The Percentage of the Students' Motivation toward Dictation

Interval Score		Category	Motivation toward Dictation	
			F	%
85 - 100	5	Very high	29	90.63
65 - 84	4	High	3	9.37
40 - 64	3	Moderate	0	0
0 - 39	2	Low	0	0
Total			32	100

The data of the students' interval score based on the questionnaire in table 4.5 indicates that the use of dictation in teaching listening was very motivated to the students, it shows that 29

students (90.63%) felt strongly positive, 3 students (9.37%) of the students felt positive, and none of the students felt neutral, negative and strongly negative.

Table 6 The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of The Students' Motivation

	Mean	Standard deviation
Dictation Technique	89.56	4.42

Further analysis showed that the mean score of students' motivation toward dictation in teaching listening was 89.56 which were categorized as *very high motivated*.

Relating to the data collected through the pre-test and post test it is shown that the students' listening through dictation as an instructional device was very good. It is supported by the rate percentage of the students' pre test and post test. After giving the treatment for experimental group no one students got an excellent, 6 students (18.7%) got very good classification, 11 students (34.4%) got good classification, 6 students (18.7%) got fairly good, 12 students (37.5%) got fair classification, and 3 students (9.4%) got poor classification. The data shows that the result of the rate percentage of the students' post test is higher than pre test before giving treatment. Because when before treatment the researcher gave students motivation and exercise in the form of pre test and there was still some students who do not know the dictation, some of them have just see the question, and leave the paper. However, after treatment with explained the listening comprehension and gave some examples of pronunciation of word and have students listen carefully and attention on features of slow speech, so that when the researcher provide exercise in the form of post test of students has increase, the students has already understand about the material listening comprehension.

Based on the result of the t-test, the researcher found that there was significant difference between the result of pre test and post test and also the value of t-test is greater that the t-table. It mean that there was a significant difference result of the pre-test before and after teaching and learning process by using dictation as an instructional device, so that null hypothesis (H0) is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. The researcher used of dictation can improve students' listening comprehension. One advantage of dictation is may speeds up the listening process. Also, give students the opportunity to notice features of

pronunciation such as weak forms, linking, and elision.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the second year of SMPN 1 Makassar have a very good listening comprehension, after learning dictation as an instructional device, so the research has finished in the post test. A more conventional activity, yet one of particular importance for our students, involves listening to a recorded text and transcribing it verbatim. The recording can be controlled at will stopped and replayed and revisions, made to any portion of the transcription. When the student has completed it, the full transcript of the actual text is displayed along with the students' rendition, line by line in a parallel fashion, in contrasting colors, allowing for a quick visual comparison of the two. In addition, any key words or expressions which have been preselected by the instructor for their significance and which could serve as a basis for scoring and rating student performance are highlighted, in the student's version.

The questionnaires were distributed to the students to know their interest toward dictation in teaching listening. The data of the students' interval score based on the questionnaire in table 4.5 indicates that the use of dictation in teaching listening was very motivated to the students, it shows that 29 students (90.63%) felt strongly positive, 3 students (9.37%) of the students felt positive, and none of the students felt neutral, negative and strongly negative. Further analysis showed that the mean score of students' motivation toward dictation in teaching listening was 89.56 which were categorized as *very high motivated*.

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that learning English by using listening through dictation need preparation. It is easy to do, and can be used in almost every class of second grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Makassar. Students often complain at first, but when dictations are used regularly, they get used it and actually watching their score improve. It is provided by the result of pretest (45,75) and post test (76,19). The data shows that the result of the rate percentage of the students' post test is higher than the pre-test before giving treatment. At level of significance, t-test value is 13.03 while the table is 2.00, where  $13.03 > 2.00$ . It means that there is significant difference



between the pre-test and post-test of students in using dictation as an instructional device, and also it means that null hypothesis (H0) is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means that the use of simple present tense through using be can increase students' understanding in listening comprehension. Dictation has always been a rather controversial activity in the language classroom. In spite of its limitations, dictation is still in favor as a teaching device at some stages of language teaching. Some language practitioners view dictation negatively, believing that it hardly teaches anything, but it may have some value as a testing device, although there are other testing devices that are more effective. Despite its benefits, currently dictation is not widely used in teaching English mainly because some language practitioners consider it teacher-centered and old-fashioned.

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