



Effect of Dictation on Upper Basic Education Students' English Language Writing Skill in Billiri LGA, Gombe State

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Abstract

This study was on the effects of dictation on upper basic education students' English language writing skill in Billiri LGA, Gombe state. The study was guided by two research questions and the quasi-experimental research design involving two groups (Dictation and the other Non-Dictation) was used. The population of the study comprised upper basic education students of public Secondary Schools in Billiri LGA from a sample of 127 students from two intact classes selected by the simple random sampling technique to participate in the study. One validated instrument tagged: Upper Basic Education Dictation Writing Skill Test (UBEDWST) with reliability coefficient of 0.81 was used to collect data. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation statistics and computed by the aid of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23). The results obtained showed students exposed to dictation had improved spelling ability and achieved more in writing skill. The study concluded that dictation can positively influence Upper Basic Education Students' Spelling and writing skill. The study recommended that Upper Basic Education students should be introduced to dictation activities in English language classrooms by their teachers to enhance their spelling ability and texts formation. Also, teachers of English language should make dictation a basic part of their teaching of writing and essay development. The paper recommends that teachers of English language should adopt dictation strategies such as dicto-comp and split dictation by exposing their students to interact and discover ways of constructing different sentences.

Keywords: Dictation, Writing Skill, English Language, Upper Basic Education

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Introduction

English is one of the most commonly used languages of the world. It is the language of wide coverage and has become the language used in many fields, including business, politics, science, technology, and entertainment, to name but a few. Moreover, it is the language of global advertising and the most-used language of the internet, accounting for more than half of all websites. Many people see English as a gateway to get access to a broader range of information, connections, and opportunities (Timayi, 2015). Therefore, the role of English language in the academic world cannot be overemphasized.

This role has made many countries including Nigeria not only declared English as their

official language but also adopted it as the language of teaching and learning. Nigeria has continued to make deliberate efforts towards the effective study of English by developing the language curriculum and making policies as a multi-lingual country. In Nigeria's educational system, the English language is a compulsory subject and a medium of instruction after the Lower Basic Education (LBE) (FGN, 2014). The implication is that all aspects of the school curriculum expose the Nigerian students to English language after the LBE. Consequently, students' ability to learn and exhibit desired learning outcomes depends to a great extent on the effectiveness of the language's teaching and learning activities as piloted by the teacher.

The teacher of English language is saddled with the responsibility of teaching the four basic skills of writing, listening, speaking and reading. Writing is very important for a learner of the language to master in a proficient manner to be able to communicate daily in it (Olaofe, 2013; Komang, Nyoman, Ni-Made, 2013). Moreover, writing is an important aspect of communication that provides people with an opportunity to articulate ideas and synthesize perspectives in a persuasive manner that is independent of time and space constraints (Hann *et al.*, 2014; Timayi, 2015).

It is expected that by the end of middle and high school years, students should possess a level of writing skill and competence that will help them express their complex thoughts and understanding of critical information (Graham & Perin, 2007; Ruiz-Funes, 2015). However, written English is an area which students at all levels of education have been observed to have problems with especially in countries such as Nigeria where English is a Second Language (L2); this is because writing is a complex language activity that incorporates thought processes, feelings, and social interactions (Timayi *et al.*, 2016).

The ability to write in English in Nigeria is crucial as it contributes to a learner's proficiency in the language. Abdullahi (2010) asserted that lack of the knowledge of spoken and written English language in the Nigerian children may result in their being maimed or disqualified linguistically to participate fully in societal and national affairs.

Although English language enjoys a pride of place in all facets of Nigerian life and has been taught and learnt for several decades in the school system. The performance of students in the subject has become a malady evidenced by poor performance in both terminal and standardized examinations (Joseph & Joshua, 2010). Many methods such as lecture, bottom-up and top-down, guided writing etc have been used to enhance students' writing skill but have not been successful either due to application or due to implementation. Consequently, there is the need to try out other method such as using dictation.

Dictation is a writing activity that involves writing down what someone says or reads



out as it is being said or immediately after it is said. The use of dictation as a valuable language teaching and learning technique has gone through a long history and has been used for centuries all over the world. Dictation ensures attentive listening, concentration and teaches students to write from it. It equally trains students to distinguish sounds and helps them learn punctuation and develop oral comprehension. Dictation exercises are old-fashioned as audio-lingual in a novel way, not only to teach listening and writing but also as a tool to teach pronunciation (Blanche, 2004; Kazazoglu, 2012). Sawyer and Silver in Kazazoglu (2012) identified four (4) types of dictation. They are: phonemic item dictation, phonemic text dictation, orthographic item dictation and orthographic text dictation.

Dictation improves writing skills and has been presented in many forms through the years in reading, listening, grammar, and writing classes (Mohammed, 2009). It is also used as an assessment procedure, writing practice and as a listening practice. Moreover, dictation has can serve as a communicative approach in language lessons for facilitating writing skills such as accurate spelling of words, sentence construction and paragraph formation. These makes dictation activities a means to developing the ability for manipulating language items like grammar, structural elements and mechanical accuracy which enable the students to communicate on their own ideas through writing.

Writing is a process of thinking by generating ones' ideas and in turn organizing them into written form. It can also be a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and to analyze and classify any background knowledge. Unarguably, it is a medium of communication that provides the writer an opportunity to articulate ideas and synthesize perspectives in a persuasive manner that is independent of time and space constraints (Hann *et al.*, 2014; Timayi, 2015). The study adopts the dictation technique popularly known as Dicto-comp propounded by Wishon and Burks (1968).

The dicto-comp provides students with ideas, language items, and text organization so that they can focus on the skill aspect

such as writing. The procedures in Dicto-Comp include, prior to dictation, during dictation and last step (correction phase). The present study draws from the Dicto-comp through the utilization of its procedures in the teaching of dictation and writing skill among the upper basic education students.

Studies have shown that dictation suffers great neglect during classroom practice which probably revealed poor quality of written English in students' scripts (Jigawa Educational Resource Department [JERD], 2010; Thulasi *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, dictation has been linked to the development of vocabulary, grammar, text building and ability to spell words correctly (Yanti *et al.*, 2018). Dictation as an activity in language learning has been found to impact on the proficiency of students in the four aspects of language (Ezenwosu, 2011). Dictation has also been found to positively improve students' spelling in writing ability and motivates them into becoming independent in learning writing (Büyükkiz, 2014; Zakiyah & Husniah, 2017). In Sarki (2015) it was observed that dictation had significant effects on sentence and paragraph components of written English.

The present study believes that dictation can serve as a cognitive process which learners need to practice the different language skills so that they can improve their performances in using the components of written English. The study determined the effects of dictation on upper basic education students' writing skill in Billiri LGA Gombe State.

Statement of the Problem

English language teaching and learning especially at the secondary school level has been a concern to teachers, students, parents and stakeholders in Nigeria. This because it is the recognized medium of communication in the administration of government, businesses and the medium of instruction through which learners acquire knowledge and skills at all levels of education in Nigeria. Concerns for malady of poor achievement of upper basic education students in the subject and quest for solution has been documented in many studies such as Joseph and Joshua (2010) and Timayi *et al* (2016) amongst others who reported that students' weakness and lack of proficiency



in English language skills especially in writing contributes to the problem. This could have resulted from students' poor background knowledge of correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, poor listening comprehension and inadequate writing skills witnessed in Gombe state as evidenced by failures in standardized examination such as the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) which they are required to pass in order to proceed to senior secondary school. Many factors have been indicted for this problem. They include inadequate teaching and learning materials, teaching methods, the school system, apprehension and anxiety for writing among others. Teachers are reported to use mostly the conventional method (chalk talk) in English language lesson delivery among upper basic education students. This method has not given the desired achievement. Consequently, this study examines the effects of dictation on upper basic education students' writing skill in Billiri LGA Gombe State.

Objectives of the study

- i. Determine the effect of dictation on upper basic education students' spelling skill.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of dictation on upper basic education students' writing skill.

Research Questions

- i. What is the difference between the spelling skill of upper basic education students exposed to dictation and those not exposed to it?
- ii. What is the difference between the writing skill of upper basic education students exposed to dictation and those not exposed to it?

Methodology

The quasi-experimental research design was adopted for this study. This involves two groups (Dictation and Non-Dictation). The population for this study comprised Upper Basic Education² students of the public Junior Secondary Schools in Billiri LGA. There are thirty-three (33) Government Junior Secondary Schools (GJSS) in Billiri LGA with an enrolment of 3,219 students which comprised of 2,134 male and 1,085 female students (MOE Gombe State, 2021). Two schools and two respective intact classes were sampled from the 33 schools



using the simple random sampling (balloting) [SRS] method. The sample for the study was taken as 127 Upper Basic Education 2 students. The justification for this lies in the Central Limit Theorem which

states that for an experimental research of this nature, a minimum of thirty students ($N \geq 30$) is required (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Sambo, 2008). Table 1 shows the distribution of population and sample.

Table 1: Distribution of Population and Sample

S/No	Name of School	Status	Population	Sample
1	GJSS, Billiri Central	Experimental	235	65
2	GJSS, Tal	Control	128	62
Total			363	127

One instrument: Upper Basic Education Dictation Writing Skill Test (UBEDWST) was used to collect data for the study. UBEDWST is a two sectioned instrument for dictation and writing skill of Upper Basic Education Students. It was developed by the researcher from four (4) short passages for dictation on stories and vocabulary development within the JSCE standard. Section A is on bio data of the respondents such as name of school and age. Section B contains four (4) short passages for dictation.

UBEDWST was validated by experts in English education from the Department of Arts Education, University of Jos. The reliability of UBEDWST determined using the test re-test method and correlated to give a rho value of 0.81(81%) when subjected to the Person Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. Each passage was in UBEDWST was scored out of 25 marks (15 marks for correct spellings and 10 marks for punctuations). Accordingly, a total of 100 marks is obtainable for the four dictation passages.

The treatment lasted for six weeks (6) in the experimental group. The students were treated to exercises on dictation which covered areas such as spelling practice,

subject and predicate, clauses coordination, clause subordination, order of events and text assembling using sentence connectors. Passages were given that cover the contents per week and each passage took a minimum of 40 minutes.

The students in the control group were taught the same topics using the conventional method (chalk-talk) but without dictation. After six-weeks' treatment, a posttest was administered on both the experimental and control groups.

The scores obtained from the UBEDWST were used to compute descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation to answer the research questions. This was done through the computer software 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23)' for accurate computations.

Results

The results obtained for the study are presented as follows:

Research Question One

What is the difference between the spelling skill of upper basic education students exposed to dictation and those not exposed to it?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Spelling Skill of Upper Basic Education Students

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Dictation	65	37.17	7.54	25.26
No Dictation	62	11.91	4.84	

Table 2 revealed that the post spelling skill mean score of students exposed to dictation is 37.17 with a standard deviation score of 7.54. Also, the post spelling skill mean score

for the Non-Dictation group is 11.91 with a standard deviation score of 4.84. Clearly, the post spelling skill of the Dictation Group was better. This means that dictation had



Bega, H. J., Moses, D. H. and Molta, M. G. impacted the spelling skill of students exposed to it.

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Research Question Two

What is the difference between the writing skill of upper basic education students exposed to dictation and those not exposed to it?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Writing Skill of Upper Basic Education Students

Group	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
Dictation	65	12.68	46.43	33.75
Non Dictation	62	13.08	21.24	8.16

From Table 3, students in the Dictation group were observed to have a mean pretest score of 12.68, mean posttest score of 46.46 and a mean gain of 33.75. The Non Dictation group on the other hand had a mean pretest score of 13.08, mean posttest score of 21.24 and mean gain of 8.16. Clearly, the Dictation group who were exposed to dictation performed better than the Non Dictation group who were taught using the conventional method. Therefore, the writing skill of Upper Basic Education students can be influenced when exposed to dictation.

Discussion

From Table 2, it was observed that the post spelling skill mean score of students exposed to dictation improved due to the treatment. This tallies with the findings of Ezenwosu (2011) and Buyukikiz (2014) who observed that dictation is effective at improving the spelling skill level of students when exposed to it. In addition, Zakiyah and Husiah (2017) asserted that dictation develops the spelling skill of students need for text development generally. This they attribute to their listening skill and less spelling mistakes.

From Table 3, students in the Dictation group were observed to have gained more than the Non Dictation group on writing skill when exposed to dictation. This confirms that of Buyukikiz (2014) and Sarki (2015) who reported that dictation improves writing fluency among students. They observed that students treated with dictation had better writing proficiency than those taught with the traditional method. In particular, Adel and Heshemain (2015) noted that students exposed to dictation were more accurate in their writing. Hence, dictation influences students writing skill and text development.

Conclusion

The findings of the study, which was based on the descriptive statistical analyses of data collected, shows that dictation enhances the spelling skill of Upper Basic Education students who were exposed to it. Moreover, students exposed to dictation were found to have improved in their writing skill. This means that dictation influences the writing skill of students. This is because with dictation, students improve their sentence (and paragraph) construction and vocabulary development. Moreover, dictation brings about an overall language proficiency and improvement in writing ability which comes with practice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Upper Basic Education students should be introduced to dictation activities in English language studies by their teachers to enhance their spellings ability and texts formation. This will also expose them to many passages, new words and reduce grammatical errors in their writing.
2. Teachers of English language should make dictation a basic part of their teaching of writing and essay development. Teachers should improvise dictation activities through participatory activities such as group task.
3. It is also recommendable that teachers of Upper Basic Education English language can adopt dictation strategies such as the Dicto-comp and split dictation by exposing their students to interact and discover ways of constructing different sentences.



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