

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DICTOGLOSS FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS IN AN ACADEMIC ENGLISH COURSE: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT: Listening to academic lectures poses persistent challenges for EFL learners, particularly in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts where students are expected to process extended discourse and extract key information. This action research investigated the use of Dictogloss as an instructional technique to support the development of academic listening skills among 56 second-year English-majored students at a Vietnamese university. Drawing on qualitative data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, the study explored students' perceived benefits and reported difficulties during Dictogloss tasks. The findings revealed that Dictogloss fostered collaborative learning, promoted strategy use, encouraged learner autonomy, and enhanced comprehension of lecture content. However, students also faced challenges related to note-taking, time constraints, and uneven group dynamics. The study provides pedagogical insights into how Dictogloss can be effectively implemented in academic listening lessons and highlights the importance of scaffolding and group management to maximize learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Dictogloss; academic listening; English for Academic Purposes (EAP); action research; learner autonomy; group work

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale for study

Listening is a key channel of comprehensible input, essential for language learning (Rost, 1994). In English for Academic Purposes (EAP), it plays a critical role, as students must process complex input such as lectures, presentations, and discussions. However, listening instruction has often been overlooked and treated as comprehension testing rather than a teachable skill (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Conventional EAP listening activities, typically multiple-choice exercises based on recorded texts, check comprehension but do little to equip learners with strategies for following extended academic discourse.

The researcher's experience teaching university students in Vietnam confirms that learners struggle with long lectures. Many report difficulty maintaining focus, identifying key information, or making sense of input. These challenges prompted reflection on current practices and the search for alternative methods that actively support listening development.

This study was situated in a second-year EAP course for English majors at a Vietnamese university, designed to improve comprehension of university-style lectures. Students were usually required to take notes individually and complete comprehension questions. To provide a more active alternative, Dictogloss was introduced. Originally proposed as a grammar task (Wajnryb, 1990), Dictogloss has developed into a task-based activity integrating listening, note-taking, group discussion, writing, and reflection. It shifts listening from passive to active, encourages collaboration, and promotes meaningful processing, making it a potentially valuable tool in EAP contexts.

1.2. Scope and research questions

This study explores how university EFL students respond to the use of Dictogloss in lecture listening lessons. Lessons in the second-year EAP course were redesigned to incorporate Dictogloss, with the aim of fostering collaboration, encouraging strategic listening, and supporting deeper comprehension. Rather than measuring outcomes such as test scores, the study adopts a qualitative

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approach focused on learners' perspectives and classroom experiences. It examines both perceived benefits and reported challenges of Dictogloss in a Vietnamese EAP context.

The research is guided by the following questions: 1/How do students perceive the benefits of Dictogloss in terms of engagement, listening strategy use, and comprehension development?; 2/What challenges do students report encountering during Dictogloss tasks?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Academic Listening in EAP Contexts

Academic listening is widely acknowledged as one of the most demanding skills for second language learners, particularly within English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs (Field, 2008). Unlike conversational listening, academic listening requires learners to process extended discourse, often with unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and dense information flow. Effective comprehension depends not only on decoding incoming language in real time but also on recognizing discourse markers, making inferences, and taking concise yet meaningful notes. However, traditional listening lessons in many EFL classrooms often rely on comprehension questions or post-listening exercises, which may fail to foster the strategic competence required for successful academic listening. These limitations have led to growing interest in interactive and integrated approaches that actively engage learners in constructing meaning from authentic spoken input (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021).

2.2. Dictogloss as a pedagogical technique

Dictogloss is a task-based, integrated-skills technique that supports listening development through structured note-taking, peer collaboration, and reflection. Originally designed for grammar instruction (Wajnryb, 1990), it has since evolved into a communicative, meaning-focused task that benefits academic listening, writing, and metacognitive development (Vasiljevic, 2010).

The typical Dictogloss cycle includes four stages: 1/Preparation: Introduction of topic and key vocabulary; 2/Listening and note-taking: Learners listen twice to a short academic passage and record key ideas; 3/Collaborative reconstruction: Learners work in groups to reconstruct the text based on their notes; 4/Comparison and reflection: The reconstructed version is compared with the original transcript for feedback and metalinguistic discussion.

Dictogloss is particularly well-suited to lecture-based EAP contexts, as it engages learners in both bottom-up processing (e.g., decoding sounds and words) and top-down processing (e.g., using prior knowledge and predicting meaning) (Prince, 2013).

2.3. Conceptual frameworks

This study draws on a set of interrelated theoretical frameworks that inform both the pedagogical rationale for using Dictogloss and the analytical constructs for data collection. Three primary frameworks—Task-based Language Teaching (Ellis, 2003), Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and the Interactive Model of Listening (Vandergrift, 2007)—guided the conceptualization of engagement, strategy use, and comprehension.

Metacognitive Theory (Vandergrift, 2003) and perspectives on Cognitive Load and Affective Filter (Sweller, 1998; Krashen, 1982) further provided insights into learners' cognitive and emotional responses. From these frameworks, five constructs were derived (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of analytical constructs, their theoretical bases, and alignment with Research Questions

Construct	Theoretical basis	Focus	Alignment with RQ
Engagement	Task-based Language Teaching (Ellis, 2003); Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978)	Behavioral and social engagement during tasks (e.g., participation, collaboration, scaffolding)	RQ1 – Perceived benefits
Listening Strategy Use	Metacognitive Theory (Vandergrift, 2003); Interactive	Use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (e.g.,	RQ1 & RQ2 – Benefits &

	model of Listening (Vandergrift, 2007)	planning, monitoring, inferencing, note-taking)	challenges
Comprehension Development	Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001); Interactive model of listening; TBLT; Dictogloss task cycle (Wajnryb, 1990)	Depth of understanding, application, and evaluation of input via group reconstruction and reflection	RQ1 – Perceived benefits
Challenges	Affective Filter Theory (Krashen, 1982); Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1998)	Affective or cognitive barriers (e.g., anxiety, input difficulty, overload, time pressure)	RQ2 – Perceived challenges

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative action research design within an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at a Vietnamese university. The aim was to explore students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of integrating Dictogloss into lecture-based listening instruction, with focus on engagement, strategy use, and comprehension.

Action research was chosen because it allows teacher-researchers to refine practice through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Burns, 2010). The design followed Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) model (Figure 1). The teacher acted as both instructor and researcher, implementing ten Dictogloss-based lessons and documenting classroom processes.

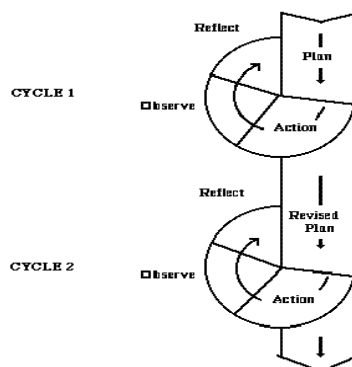


Figure 1. Kemmis and McTaggart's Action Research Model (1988)

The study did not test hypotheses or measure discrete outcomes, but sought to interpret learners' experiences and provide pedagogical insights. Data were collected through observation notes and semi-structured interviews, offering evidence of cognitive, social, and affective responses to Dictogloss.

3.2. Context and participants

The research was carried out over eight weeks in two second-year EFL classes (Class A and Class B, 28 students each) in a core EAP course focusing on lecture comprehension, note-taking, and spoken responses. Dictogloss tasks replaced traditional comprehension activities in selected sessions.

All 56 students participated in the intervention, with observation notes recorded each session. Afterward, 12 students (six per class) were selected for semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling to represent differences in listening proficiency, gender, and participation styles. This ensured a range of perspectives while acknowledging the context-specific nature of the findings.

3.3. Intervention Procedure

The 15-week course included a Dictogloss intervention lasting from Week 2 to Week 11 (ten lessons in total). Week 1 was orientation, and Week 12 was used for interviews and reflection.

Each lesson followed the standard four-stage Dictogloss procedure (see Section 2.2), using 6–8-minute lecture excerpts from *Cambridge Academic English – Upper-Intermediate* (Thaine, 2012). Texts were selected for topic relevance, lexical density, and discourse complexity, approximating authentic lectures. One, for example, discussed English as a global language.

Aligned with the action research model, the intervention involved:

- *Planning*: preparing vocabulary support, prompts, and group tasks;
- *Implementation*: conducting Dictogloss lessons with collaborative reconstruction;
- *Observation*: recording participation and difficulties using observation notes;
- *Reflection*: refining scaffolding, pacing, and grouping in response to patterns observed.

This cyclical approach enabled flexible responses to student needs and promoted strategy use in real classroom conditions.

3.4. Data collection instruments

Two qualitative instruments were used: observation notes and semi-structured interviews, both aligned with the study's conceptual framework (Section 2.3).

Observation notes: During Weeks 2–11, the teacher-researcher used a semi-structured checklist to document indicators such as time-on-task, peer interaction, note-taking, and signs of difficulty. Notes combined systematic records with reflective commentary.

Semi-Structured Interviews: In Week 12, a purposive sample of twelve students was interviewed using an open-ended protocol covering engagement, strategy use, comprehension, and difficulties. Questions encouraged students to elaborate on personal experiences, collaboration, and metacognitive reflections. To ensure participants' anonymity, all student names appearing in the interview excerpts and classroom examples are pseudonyms.

The design of both instruments was informed by TBLT, SCT, Metacognitive Theory, and Affective Filter Theory.

3.5. Data Analysis

Interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization, coding, searching for patterns, reviewing, defining themes, and reporting with illustrative excerpts.

Manual coding was conducted line by line. Codes were clustered into categories reflecting student experiences and observable behaviors. Themes were derived from both interviews and observation notes. A sample of the codebook is shown below:

Table 2. Sample Codebook for Thematic Analysis

Code	Definition	Example from data	Theme
Peer scaffolding	Evidence of support among students during group reconstruction	"When I didn't catch a word, I could refer to the notes taken by others." – <i>Lacy</i> (Interview); collaborative reformulation observed in Group B, Session 4	Collaborative learning
Note-taking challenge	Difficulty in recording key points while listening	"I have problems taking notes quickly while listening." – <i>Drake</i> (Interview); students pausing playback or requesting repetition noted in Sessions 2 and 5	Challenges in strategy use

Triangulation across interviews and observational field notes helped strengthen the credibility of the findings by confirming or contrasting emerging patterns across sources. Discrepancies between stated perceptions and classroom behavior were noted and used to refine the interpretation of themes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The findings of this study revealed several key themes emerging across both data sources: semi-structured interviews and classroom observation notes. These themes shed light on students' perceived

benefits and reported challenges related to their experiences with Dictogloss in academic lecture listening lessons.

Table 3. Perceived Benefits of Dictogloss in Academic Listening Lessons (RQ1)

Theme	Evidence from Students	Evidence from Observation	Interpretation
Collaborative learning	“Doing group work helps me feel less anxious and more involved.” (Phoebe) ; “We used to do pair work before but just to compare answers... group work made lessons exciting.” (Harry) ; “It depends on who I work with, but overall interaction made listening more interesting.” (Tina)	Week 2: Leo shared his initial notes, Tina asked Harry for additions → turn-taking. Groups raised voices debating word choices during reconstruction. Week 5: Group C clapped when they agreed on a difficult phrase. Week 9: Group B negotiated sentence structures until all nodded in agreement.	Group work increased interaction, reduced anxiety, and made lessons more engaging, though outcomes depended on group composition.
Skill integration	“Reconstructing the text helped me improve my speaking skills.” (Mia) ; “We used writing for notes, reading to check ideas, and speaking when discussing.” (Vincent) ; “This improved not only listening but also writing and speaking.” (Tina)	Week 3: Students showed excitement when presenting reconstructed texts; atmosphere became heated during group discussions. Week 4: several students moved from reading notes to paraphrasing orally. Week 7: Group 4 produced a written summary and then used it as a script for oral presentation.	Dictogloss fostered integration of multiple skills, motivating learners and making listening more meaningful.
Learner autonomy	“When I didn’t catch a word, I could refer to others’ notes.” (Lucy) ; “The correction stage was exciting—we argued about who got the correct information.” (Leo) ; “Comparing my notes with the original text helped me remember better.” (Natalie)	Week 2: in group 4, students debated interpretations without asking the teacher. Week 5: one student underlined missed phrases and asked peers about cleft sentences. Week 11: Students compared notes first before turning to the transcript.	Students relied less on the teacher, engaged in peer scaffolding, and reflected on personal strengths and weaknesses, enhancing autonomy.
Deeper comprehension	“I had to use my notes to create a meaningful text, which made me understand more deeply.” (Claire) ; “Pre-listening vocabulary and questions made it easier	Week 4: Students reflected aloud on missed ideas. Week 6: Groups underlined complex structures and discussed why they were difficult. Week 7: Group 2 drew a diagram to reorganize main points. Week 10: Several	Dictogloss encouraged repeated listening, reflection, and focus on both meaning and

	to understand later.” (Tony) ; “This was better than old methods, as I retained more information.” (Harry)	students highlighted cause–effect connectors in the transcript and checked if they had captured them.	language, leading to deeper comprehension.
Strategy use	“Dictogloss trained me to notice key words, unlike multiple-choice tasks.” (Leo) ; “When I applied this strategy to inference questions, I got more correct answers.” (Vincent) ; “It helped me focus on signal words.” (Phoebe)	Week 2: Students used arrows and underlines to mark cause–effect relations. Week 5: one student suggested his group list “keywords” before reconstruction. Week 9: Students revisited notes after replay, underlined key words, and checked with peers.	Students developed new strategies, particularly focusing on key words, improving comprehension and transfer to other tasks.

Table 4. Reported Challenges of Dictogloss in Academic Listening Lessons (RQ2)

Theme	Evidence from Students	Evidence from Observation	Interpretation
Note-taking difficulties	“It’s distracting trying to take notes and listen at the same time.” (Drake) ; “I focused on one phrase and missed the next.” (Tiffany) ; “I tried to write full sentences, and that slowed me down.” (Hazel)	Week 2: Many students still wrote long phrases despite instructions to focus on keywords. Week 4: Several students paused their pens mid-sentence and missed subsequent information. Week 7: Some groups requested repetition because their notes were incomplete.	Students lacked training in efficient note-taking, causing high cognitive demand and reduced processing of lecture content.
Cognitive overload & time pressure	“It was stressful trying to remember everything correctly.” (Drake) ; “Sometimes I felt nervous when I couldn’t contribute.” (Nancy) ; “I felt overwhelmed when we had to discuss too quickly.” (Lisa)	Week 4: Groups rushed reconstruction and left gaps. Week 6: Students sighed and exchanged anxious looks when the text was more complex. Week 9: Several groups asked for more time to finalize their drafts. Week 11: A few students admitted skipping details just to keep up.	The task demanded simultaneous listening, note-taking, and reconstruction, overloading working memory (cf. Sweller, 1998). Despite this, many students acknowledged gradual improvement.
Uneven group dynamics	“If partners’ skills are poor, it doesn’t help much.” (Tina) ; “Sometimes I ended up doing most of the talking.” (Vincent) ;	Week 3: in several groups (2,5,7), one student dominated while peers contributed little. Week 4: some students hesitated until another read notes aloud. Week 9: Rotating roles improved participation, but stronger	Group composition influenced effectiveness; stronger students sometimes carried tasks, but overall,

	“Even if others didn’t help, it was better than working alone.” (Lisa)	students still led reconstructions. Week 11: Group B balanced better after explicit teacher reminders, though uneven input persisted.	learners still preferred groups for reduced pressure and interaction.
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Overall, students perceived Dictogloss as enhancing collaboration, skill integration, autonomy, comprehension, and strategy use. However, they also reported challenges related to note-taking, cognitive load, and group imbalances. These findings highlight both the pedagogical potential and the limitations of Dictogloss in Vietnamese EAP listening contexts.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the pedagogical potential of Dictogloss in EAP listening classrooms. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Vasiljevic, 2010; Prince, 2013), Dictogloss promoted collaboration, strategy use, autonomy, and deeper comprehension. What this study adds is evidence from a Vietnamese tertiary context, where students traditionally accustomed to teacher-centered methods showed positive responses to interactive, learner-driven tasks.

Collaborative learning emerged as a particularly strong affordance, confirming claims by Wentzel (2009) that peer interaction fosters engagement. In this study, group work reduced anxiety and encouraged hesitant learners to contribute, aligning with Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and extending previous findings (Storch, 2013) to large, mixed-ability classes. Importantly, this finding also reflects local classroom culture: Vietnamese students often rely on collective support and feel more comfortable sharing responsibility in groups than in teacher-fronted activities (Ngo & Le, 2020).

Dictogloss also supported learner autonomy and multi-skill development, echoing Benson (2013). By reconstructing texts, students engaged in metacognitive reflection and developed transferable strategies, moving beyond passive comprehension tasks noted in earlier critiques of EAP listening pedagogy (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). This shift is particularly significant in Vietnam, where previous studies have noted learners’ limited self-regulation and heavy dependence on teacher guidance (Mai, 2014).

Nevertheless, challenges persisted. Note-taking difficulties and cognitive overload reflected issues described in Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1998) and previous classroom studies (Siegel, 2015). Students’ tendency to transcribe verbatim mirrored long-standing practices in Vietnamese lecture settings, where success is often associated with accurate recording rather than selective listening. Unequal group dynamics also emerged, consistent with local findings that Vietnamese learners may hesitate to challenge peers or assume leadership roles due to cultural norms of deference (Mai, 2014). These context-specific constraints underscore the need for explicit scaffolding of collaborative skills and strategic listening.

By demonstrating how Dictogloss can address entrenched habits of passive listening and hierarchical group interaction, it suggests that with careful scaffolding, the technique can bridge the gap between teacher-led traditions and learner-centered approaches, enhancing both engagement and comprehension in lecture listening.

5. Reflection and Pedagogical Implications

This section reflects on how Dictogloss functioned in practice and what adjustments proved necessary in the Vietnamese EAP context. Observations and interviews highlighted both promising outcomes and persistent challenges, leading to several implications for teaching.

- Supporting listening and managing cognitive load:

Students often struggled to capture key ideas quickly, reflecting limited exposure to selective notetaking strategies. Templates and abbreviations introduced during the intervention gradually improved confidence, but more systematic training—such as staged practice with shorter texts and explicit instruction in identifying keywords—would further reduce overload and shift attention from

verbatim writing to meaning-focused listening. Dense input also created stress and lowered participation; shorter or segmented passages sustained engagement more effectively. Sequencing tasks from simple to complex, combined with pre-listening prediction and vocabulary support, appears essential to maintain engagement without overwhelming learners.

- *Fostering collaboration and learner autonomy:*

Group work increased interaction but uneven participation persisted, with stronger students often dominating while quieter peers withdrew. Regrouping and rotating roles helped but did not fully resolve the imbalance. These challenges suggest that collaboration in Vietnamese classrooms benefits from explicit structures such as peer checklists or progress tracking to embed accountability. At the same time, learners valued greater responsibility, though excessive independence in early sessions caused hesitation. A staged release of responsibility—strong guidance at first, followed by prompts encouraging self-direction—enabled students to take initiative while still feeling secure.

- *Strengthening analysis, feedback, and adapting materials:*

Transcript comparison was consistently valued, yet students struggled to judge whether their notes captured the main ideas. Teacher guidance, such as checklists highlighting content points and connectors, helped redirect attention beyond surface features, while peer discussion promoted reflection on missed details. With such scaffolds, the correction stage became an opportunity for metacognitive growth rather than a mechanical check. Material selection also influenced effectiveness: lexically heavy texts distracted students from main ideas, whereas passages with clear discourse structures (cause–effect, problem–solution) facilitated comprehension. Aligning Dictogloss texts with course themes, pre-teaching difficult vocabulary, and extending tasks into summaries or oral reports helped create stronger links with EAP objectives and encouraged transfer of strategies to authentic lecture listening.

7. Conclusion

This study confirmed that Dictogloss is a valuable technique for EAP listening instruction. By promoting collaboration, strategy use, and learner autonomy, it provided a more engaging alternative to traditional comprehension tasks. Students reported deeper understanding, better strategy awareness, and greater confidence in group settings.

At the same time, challenges such as note-taking difficulty, cognitive load, and uneven group dynamics highlighted the importance of scaffolding and careful sequencing. Adjustments such as explicit note-taking training, structured group roles, and guided reflection activities improved classroom outcomes.

Overall, Dictogloss proved adaptable and effective for fostering active engagement in Vietnamese tertiary EAP classrooms. Beyond listening, its task-based and integrative features suggest potential applications for teaching speaking, writing, and summarizing. While further studies are needed on long-term effects, combining qualitative insights with quantitative measurements (e.g., listening tests, strategy questionnaires) to assess the effectiveness of Dictogloss on learners' academic performance, the findings position Dictogloss as a meaningful complement to conventional EAP listening pedagogy.

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Nhận thức của sinh viên về kỹ thuật Dictogloss nhằm phát triển kỹ năng nghe trong học phần Tiếng Anh học thuật: Một nghiên cứu hành động

Tóm tắt: Việc nghe hiểu các bài giảng học thuật luôn là một thách thức đối với người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ (EFL), đặc biệt trong bối cảnh Tiếng Anh học thuật (EAP), nơi sinh viên được kì vọng phải xử lí các diễn ngôn kéo dài và rút ra ý chính. Nghiên cứu hành động này khảo sát việc sử dụng kỹ thuật *Dictogloss* nhằm hỗ trợ phát triển kỹ năng nghe học thuật cho 56 sinh viên năm thứ hai, chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Dựa trên dữ liệu định tính thu thập từ quan sát lớp học và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc, nghiên cứu phân tích những lợi ích mà sinh viên cảm nhận cũng như những khó khăn họ gặp phải khi tham gia các nhiệm vụ Dictogloss. Kết quả cho thấy *Dictogloss* thúc đẩy học tập hợp tác, khuyến khích sử dụng chiến lược, tăng cường tính tự chủ của người học và nâng cao khả năng hiểu nội dung bài giảng. Tuy nhiên, sinh viên vẫn gặp thách thức liên quan đến ghi chép, hạn chế về tốc độ xử lí thông tin và sự mất cân đối trong mức độ tham gia nhóm. Nghiên cứu đồng thời đề xuất một số gợi ý sư phạm về cách triển khai *Dictogloss* hiệu quả trong các giờ nghe học thuật, nhấn mạnh vai trò hỗ trợ của giảng viên và quản lí nhóm nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả học tập.

Từ khóa: Dictogloss; nghe học thuật; tiếng Anh học thuật (EAP); nghiên cứu hành động; tự chủ người học; làm việc nhóm.