What do students find difficult in listening?: Analysis of students' performance on dictation with English monologue and dialogue texts

Lauwereyns, Shizuka Sakurai (Victoria University of Wellington, Kurume University)
Yokoo, Satoko (Kurume University, Kyushu Sangyo University)

Dictation has been used for centuries, and its values as an integrative language learning tool have been discussed (e.g., Davis & Rinvolucri, 2002; Kuo, 2010; Takeuchi, 1997; Watanabe, 2009). However, the effectiveness of types and frequency of dictation exercises has not yet been thoroughly studied. The present study investigates university students' performance on partial dictation, based on English monologues and dialogues (about 100 word per a text), and compares three groups of learners who received different numbers of dictation sessions during one semester. Group 1 (N=22) received approximately 30 dictation sessions in total over 15 weeks. The learners took a 15-minute dictation exercise during a class twice a week (once for monologue and once for dialogue). Group 2 (N=22, for monologue only) and Group 3 (N=16, for dialogue only) received 15 dictation sessions. It was found that students' performance in Group 1 improved over time both on monologue and dialogue dictations. Group 2 (monologue only) also showed improved performance over time, but Group 3 (dialogue only) did not. When we compare text types, more improvement was found in monologue dictation than in dialogue (p<0.001) for Group 1. Questionnaires were also administered to investigate students' attitude toward listening and dictation activities. Most students reported that they are weak on listening and word segmentation. Approximately 90% of participants find dictation exercises helpful and wish to continue them. It is noteworthy that 95% of learners think that it is helpful to know, in advance, the number of words deleted from the text for transcription. However, based on the error analysis, some learners struggle in dealing with the discrepancy between what they perceive in listening and the numbers of words they are supposed to hear.

Shizuka Sakurai Lauwereyns (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is currently a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and teaches English at Kurume University (part-time).

Satoko Yokoo (MA in applied linguistics, Sheffield University) has taught English at several vocational and language schools in Japan. She currently teaches part-time at Kurume University, Kyushu Sangyo University, and a few other institutes.