
Effects of Dictation On the Written Word Spelling of Junior Secondary School JSS III Students in Jigawa State

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ABSTRACT: *This study attempted to investigate the effects of dictation on the written word spelling of Junior Secondary School JSS III students in Jigawa state. The study was motivated by the difficulty faced by learners of English as L₂ in spelling of words especially the irregular spelling in their essays. Two research questions were set and answered. The target population was the JSS III students in Jigawa State. The study was conducted in the 2022/2023 academic session. Experimental research design was adopted for the study. 150 students were randomly sampled from two JSS within two senatorial districts in the state and were equally assigned as experimental and control groups. The instruments used were the selected and modified words from JSS course books which were the English words selected and modified from JSS course books which were used for the pre-test and post-test respectively. The research questions were answered in form of table showing the frequency and percentage. The major findings of the study showed that 48% of the participants in the experimental group spelt more irregular words while only 33% spelt the same words in the control group after the treatment. The study recommended that teachers of English as a second language should be trained so that they would be more sensitive to dictation strategies that enable them to teach JSS students to acquire ability of spelling more regular and irregular words.*

KEYWORDS: dictation, word spelling, irregular spelling, teachers of English as second language, JSS students.

INTRODUCTION

Dictation is a long established method of integrating listening with writing skills. It could serve as communicative approach in language lesson for facilitating writing skills such as accurate spelling of words. It is noted by many scholars that, dictation could provide practice in teaching and learning English as a second language ESL. Thus, dictation when properly taught could enhance the writing skills of L₂ learners who are faced with difficulties in writing words and sentences appropriately.

Unfortunately, studies have showed that, dictation suffers great neglect during classroom practice which probably revealed poor quality of writing English in students' scripts (Roper, 1989; JERD, 2010; Mason, 2012 and Sarki 2015). The present research work is inspired by the poor performance of students in written English in their Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE, 2015). Hence, this problem extends to their senior secondary education and beyond.

Although, many researchers have examined various factors responsible for students poor word spelling skills, yet there are evidences that little have been done in the area of dictation and word spelling. Therefore, this study focuses on conducting dictation exercises in order to investigate its effectiveness in facilitating proper word spelling of junior secondary school students. For instance, irregular spelling in omission of inflections, reducing double consonants to single, wrong homophones, omission of silent letters and altering of consonant clusters could be treated through dictation exercise.

Problem Statement

Different instructional strategies in teaching word spelling of English have been applied but still the students achievement is low. Studies have shown that students at upper basic levels are faced with a lot of difficulties in putting down structure of words and sentences into written form. According to Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) Chief Examiner's annual reports that for the past decade there has been lamentations over the poor writing skills of candidates describing them as sub-standard. Thus, the general comments on results from WAEC (2008) showed that the worst performance in English language examinations is recorded in writing components. It is in realization of the above facts that this study investigates the effect of dictation as a strategy for facilitating word spelling as component of writing in Junior Secondary Schools.

Objectives of the Study

The study attempts to find out the effect of dictation on the word spelling of Junior Secondary School students. Specifically, this research intends to investigate:

- 1) Effects of dictation on the regular word spelling of JSS III students in Jigawa State.
- 2) Effects of dictation on the irregular word spelling of JSS III students in Jigawa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the effect of dictation on the regular word spelling of JSS III students in Jigawa State?
- ii. What is the effect of dictation on the irregular word spelling of JSS III students in Jigawa State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Dictation

Dictation has been viewed by many scholars in different ways. According to Vallete (1977) dictation is a process in which some teachers dictates a passage to the student's word by word or phrase after phrase, the students take down and the passage got corrected. Similarly, Mason (2012) called that process as pen and paper dictation and a difficult lesson where the focus is more on accuracy of language.

When it comes to classroom practice, Allen and Johnes (1978) and Williams (1990) believed that dictation is an orthographic practice which simply enable students to respond to spoken stimulus by writing. Baxter and Warrington (1986) described dictation as an activity which involves central processes concerned with retrieving assembling and selecting an orthographic representation.

In the recent times, Wajnryb (1990) writes a book entitled "Grammar Dictation" that focused exclusively on dictation technique known as "Dictogloss" which provides dictation exercises for enhancing different writing skills such as grammatical spellings. Oluikpe (2007) emphasizes that dictation exercises are intended to enable the students to distinguish words clearly which improve their ability to spell different words accurately and write well.

Word spelling during dictation means ability to form an orthographic symbol of the dictated words accurately on paper. Mason (2012) and Bowen (2000) investigated on the relevance of dictation as a natural way to teach spelling especially when learning a new language.

Dictation and Word Spelling

Some scholars such as Houghton and Zorzi (1988), Olson (1994), Perry (2003) and Damain (2003) showed possibility of teaching dictation to improve written word spelling. In addition to that, Mason (2012) claimed that keyword dictation is a strategy for enhancing word spelling that could bring significant result in the intermediate levels. Keyword dictation is a cognitive strategy that enables student to practice the spelling of words in isolation and context.

Regular and Irregular Words Spelling

Several scholars believe that during dictation activities the spelling difficulties affect writing execution. Hatfield and Petterson (1983) and Shallice (1981) emphasized that the major impairment during writing responses in a dictation class is that the orthographies and phonological correspondences are characterized by highly inconsistent relationships.

However, Barry (1994) observed the following difficulties in relation to spelling process during dictation exercises:

- a. Students make substantial changes;
- b. Students have problems with discipline specific terms; and
- c. Students become bored with mere spelling of words compared to doing several activities with them.

Moreover, the study conducted by Delattre and Barry (2006:) found that during a dictation task participants spell more regular words than irregular ones. They regard the irregular word as spellings containing low probability such as the homophones, clusters, double consonants, inflection, etc. Ellis (1982) proposes two models of processing spelling production as follows:

- a. Lexical route that retrieves spellings of known words from a memory store of word-specific knowledge; and
- b. Non lexical (assembled) route which guarantees spellings of irregular and arbitrarily spelt words as in /yot/ spelled as yacht.

Nevertheless, Hotopf (1980) observed that the dual route models interact at some level in normal spellers. Unlike the lexical route of spelling, the assembled route spelling have great influence on poor spelling of words. For instance, Ellis (1979) pointed out that assembled spelling plays some role in writing as in free composition

Samples of Spelling Errors in Upper Basic Level Examination

- a. Omission of inflectional suffixes such as -ed, -s, -est, etc. which can carry grammatical information and are often missed in learners' written work. For example, omission of '-ed' past tense marker as in:

'happend' instead of 'happened'

'has fail' instead of 'has failed' (JERD 2010, Eyisi 2004, Elsie 1998).

- b. i. Reducing double consonant to single as in:

'inteligent' instead of 'intelligent'

- ii. Wrong homophones as in:

'loan' instead of 'lone'

'roads' instead of 'rodes'

- iii. Omission of silent letters as in:

'Wenesday' instead of 'Wednesday'

'Nemonia' instead 'Pneumonia'

In a nutshell, dictation activities could be conducted to increase the ability of students to write words properly. For example, word spelling could be practised through 'keyword' dictation or 'studied dictation' which is an adoption of a procedure suggested by Mason (2012). The

technique enables students to learn spelling of words through keyword dictation by performing several exercises in a group.

The present study believed that using the keyword dictation could provide better practice in the spelling of words. For example, a passage could be dictated with the target words underlined (such as -ed, -s, -er, endings) in which students work in group to study and use the words in sentences. At the end of the dictation, the teacher assesses and corrects their exercises. After the correction students submit their scripts and the lesson concludes with guiding students to practise the spelling of the studied words again so that they can write them correctly.

Those activities could enhance internalizing the grammatical items because the students have got adequate interaction with the words. In view of that, Delattre and Barry (2006) proposed that students should listen to a dictated target word and write it down three times but spelling errors on the first written production should be given much attention as they might affect auditory recognition of the target words.

Barriers to effective dictation lesson

Dictation is a communicative activity conducted for learners in which they listen attentively in small groups and react by writing words and sentences. Harmer (2004) observed that in a dictation class there are some barriers which include:

- A. Poor mastery of oral communication by a teacher;
- B. Low conception of sound features by students;
- C. Multicultural classroom that make students demanding for repetition of dictated words.

In addition to that, Nigerian Association of Administration and Planning (2022) stated several factors like noise, personal, emotional, previous knowledge and lack of basic facilities as barriers capable of making ineffective classroom communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants for this study were Junior Secondary School students drawn, from two schools in the two senatorial districts. These included JSS Ringim from Jigawa West Political Zone and Dutse Model International School in Jigawa Central Zone respectively. A total number 150 out of 1,470 students were selected randomly and divided into two groups: Control and experimental. Thus, there were 75 participants in both groups and there were also mixed of males and females in the two groups. The experimental group were engaged to treatment exercises for six weeks after pre-test which were conducted once every week.

Testing Materials

The testing materials for this study were thirty item multiple – choice Dictation Achievement Test. The test items were words which comprised both regular and irregular spelling that occur frequently in the JSS English Course books. The selected words were dictated to the students by proficient English teachers in the selected schools. The thirty items will be used for both pre and post tests.

Procedure for Data Collection

The following procedures were followed in collecting the data for this study:

- a. Administrating pre- test for both control and experimental groups. They took the same test which ended for 45 minutes. The test dwelt on dictation exercises related to regular and irregular words spelling formations.
- b. The researcher selected the experimental group for six weeks training of one hour per week. The treatment guide focused on teaching the participants variety of spelling formations of both regular and irregular words.
- c. The researcher splited the participants into manageable groups comprising mixed ability groups and taught them the dictation procedure on spelling practice.
- d. The dictation activities include underlining target spelt words on their worksheets then students collaborate their written exercises with other groups and correction of errors was done at the end.
- e. After the six weeks' period of instruction for the treatment group the post – test was administrated to both experimental and control groups. They were monitored by two research assistants. The scoring was one mark per each item. Three categories of high, middle and low scores were assigned for the data analysis.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Analysis of the data collected for this study was carried out using descriptive method of analysis in which the results of the finding were presented in tables showing frequencies and their corresponding percentages.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the effects of dictation on the regular word spelling of JSS III students in Jigawa State?

Table 1: Performance of Students on the Effects of Dictation on Regular Words Spelling for Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre- tests			Post- test		
	Category	Freq	%	Category	Freq	%
A. Experiment	High	20	26.3%	High	22	29.3%
	Middle	24	32%	Middle	37	49.3%
	Low	31	41.3%	Low	16	21.3%
	Total	75	100%		75	100%
B. Control	High	18	24%	High	18	24%
	Middle	19	25.3%	Middle	30	40%
	Low	38	50.7%	Low	27	36%
	Total	75	100%		75	100%

The results in table 1 above revealed that the pre-test performances of both groups were low. The frequency showed that 31 students representing 41.3% in the experimental group and 38 students representing 50.7% in the control group scored low marks respectively.

However, the post-test results showed that differences exist in the percentage scores of the students taught using dictation exercises (experimental) and that of control group in regular words spelling test. The calculated average scores indicated that 37 students representing 49.3% in the experimental group scored higher than the students in the control group which showed 30 students representing 40%. The results implied 9.3% difference in favour of the experimental group which to some extent revealed the effectiveness of dictation exercises on the regular words spelling improvement.

Research Question Two: What is the Effect of Dictation on the Irregular Words Spelling of JSS III Students in Jigawa State?

Table 2: Performance of Students in the Effect of Dictation on Irregular Words Spelling for Experimental Group and Control Group.

Group	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	Category	Frequency	%	Category	Frequency	%
A. Experimental	High	5	6.7	High	19	25.3
	Middle	23	30.7	Middle	36	48
	Low	47	62.6	Low	20	26.7
	Total	75	100	Total	75	100
B. Control	High	4	5.3	High	14	18.7
	Middle	18	24	Middle	25	33.3
	Low	53	70.6	Low	36	48
	Total	75	100	Total	75	100

Table 2 above indicated that during the pre-test both groups performed very low in the irregular words spelling exercises. The results showed that 53 students representing 70.6% in the control group got low scores while 47 students representing 62.6% also scored low. However after the dictation exercises the average scores for the experimental group was 33.3. The analysis above revealed a difference of 15 percent between the two groups (experimental and control) after the treatment activities. The performance in table 2 above further demonstrated that the dictation exercise has impact on the irregular word spelling skills improvement as a result of the average score difference in favor of the experimental group.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study investigated the effects of dictation on the written word spelling performance of the students of selected JSS students. The result from table one revealed that the students in the experimental group who were exposed to the treatment exercise using dictation performed higher than the control group who were not exposed to the treatment. The average score difference of 9.3 implied that, the students taught using dictation exercise performed slightly better than the control group in the regular word spelling practice. This result confirmed the previous findings of Delattre and Barry (2006) and Sarki (2015) which showed that during dictation task students spell more regular words than irregular ones.

The outcome of the research question two showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group who was not taught irregular word spelling through dictation method. The average score of the experimental group was better than that of control group after the treatment which indicated 48% and 33.3% respectively. This finding is contrary to Shallice (1981) and Hatfield and Petterson (1983) which showed that during dictation exercises the spelling difficulties affect writing execution.

CONCLUSION

This study found out that dictation exercises have implications on the word spelling performance of Junior secondary school students in the two selected senatorial zones in Jigawa state. It is possible to conclude that dictation practice has provided skills of regular word spelling to the students. The study further showed that the effects of dictation on irregular words spelling could enhance creativity, critical thinking and interest among JSS students which could subsequently enhance better written English achievement. Moreover, it is importance to stress that dictation strategy could support the students' ability to spell different words properly and write well. Overall, all the possibilities of dictation strategy for improving word spelling of students may not be a reality if its application remained negligible by teachers of English as a second language.

Recommendation

In view of the findings above, this study came up with the following recommendations:

1. Dictation exercises should be introduced at the middle basic education level. For example primary four pupils could be exposed to simple dictation exercises.
2. Teachers of English at primary and secondary schools should improvise dictation exercises through participatory activities. Such as giving small group tasks on words spelling practice.
3. Teachers of English as L₂ should be trained professionally on effective use of language skills in order to enhance implementation of dictation strategies in JSS classrooms.
4. Adequate planning and funding of language training at the Nigeria basic education by government and the other stakeholders should be given prominence. For instance, providing the needed facilities, equipment and resources for the smooth conduct of dictation exercises.
5. The junior secondary certificate examination (JSCE) bodies should include word spelling questions in the JSS placement English examination. For example: choose an appropriate word from A,B,C or D and fill in the blank space:

- i. Polio _____ is free for all children
 - a. imunization
 - b. immunization
 - c. imminization
 - d. iminization

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