

## Comparative effects of partial dictation and dictogloss on listening comprehension ability of EFL learners

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### Abstract

TEFL teachers and scholars acknowledge the unique characteristics of listening skills and the vital role it plays in language learning and communication. The present study seeks to empirically investigate if partial dictation versus dictogloss has any significant effect on listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. Participants include 60 male EFL learners who were selected via double sampling and after taking the listening pre-test were randomly assigned to two experimental groups (partial dictation versus dictogloss) and a control group. A thorough analysis of the data using paired sample t-test indicated that the partial dictation group slightly outperformed the dictogloss group in the listening post-test and both experimental groups significantly outperformed the control group. The results can have implications for learners, teachers and material developers.

**Keywords:** Dictogloss, listening comprehension, partial dictation, EFL learners, comprehension ability.

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## 1. Introduction

Listening is a challenging skill for many second language learners (Goh, 2014). The conclusion one can logically draw is that the situation must be even harder in an EFL context in which due to lack of day-to-day communication or lesser amount to exposure to English, most of the EFL learners must suffer from inadequate amounts of listening input to construct a viable interlanguage. On the complexity of listening, Oxford (1993) states that listening is a complex problem-solving skill as it does not only involve the recognition of sounds, but the ability to understand words, phrases, clauses and connected stretch of discourse, conditions which can be met if learners are exposed to a considerable amount of meaningful communication non-existing in the EFL context. Therefore, in making sense of spoken language, a single process is not involved and it is more accurate to conceive of a cluster of related processes (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002).

Listening is an active, goal-driven process of making sense of spoken language (Brown, 2001). Listening, along with reading, is a receptive skill. That is, it requires a person to receive and understand the given information. The receptive nature of listening might be a contributing factor in the common misunderstanding among people to consider this skill a passive one (Chastain, 1988). Of course, the downgrading of this *Cinderella skill* is not restricted to EFL, as Vandergrift (2007) put it, but is a fiendish skill to master even in one's own mother tongue, let alone in learning a foreign language. However, contrary to this traditional belief, listening by no means is less challenging than the other productive skills as it inherently requires active engagement. Listeners are required to connect their listening input to the other information they already have. Given the fact that learners combine what they hear with their own ideas and experience (schemata), listening can be envisaged as the creation of meaning in listeners' minds (Nunan, 2003), a daunting task for many if not all EFL learners to varying degrees. Nevertheless, along with this daunting and challenging nature, listening is undeniably a basic component of communication and is regarded by many scholars as a fundamental aspect of oral competence.

To help learners develop their listening skill, teachers should understand how comprehension is achieved and identify factors which might influence successful comprehension among language learners (Goh, 2014). There was a time when listening in language classes was deemed a tool to bolster students' grammar. However, from the 1960s onwards, practitioners have recognised the importance of different methods to boost students' listening comprehension (Field, 2002).

Due to the undeniable significance of listening in successful communication, it is worth investigating different influential factors that play a role in this complex process. From the myriad of listening strategies recommended to boost students' listening comprehension skill, partial dictation and dictogloss have attracted slight attention. In partial dictation, a passage with some deletions is given to the testees, but it is read in complete form (Nation & Newton, 2009). The testees are required to fill in the deleted parts as they hear the passage. Partial dictation is, in fact, an activity between cloze and dictation tasks (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, partial dictation benefits students' listening processes in many different ways: the bottom-up processing at the micro-level is activated. This, in turn, provides more processing storage for information to be passed on for macro-level analysis, thereby activating top-down processing (Brown, 2007).

Dictogloss, on the other hand, is 'a classroom dictation activity where learners listen to a passage, note down key words and then work together to create a reconstructed version of the text' (Nation & Newton, 2009; Vandergrift, 2007, p. 7). Rather than a passive activity, it is claimed that dictogloss engages not only a variety of language areas, but also a large part of listeners' brain (Kadota, 2007). Given this, dictogloss as an active, highly cognitive listening skill activates many different layers of a learner's brain, including the language centre (Hamada, 2012). Equally important in the dictogloss activity is the potential nature of cooperative activity in completion of the task which can involve the related concept of ZPD (Vygotsky, 1986). Because of its myriad effects, dictogloss has long been

adopted as an exercise to boost interpreters' timing, enrich their listening skills and improve their short-term memory skills (Kurz, 1992).

In line with what was mentioned, the dilemmas facing learners and teachers alike are partly attributed to a lack of understanding of what listening contains and how comprehension is achieved (Goh, 2014). As a result, the learners may hold unrealistic expectations of their listening development and the teachers might assume that there is little they can do to teach listening because listening cannot be directly observed and controlled (Brown, 2001). The inevitable consequence might be disappointment on the part of learners and frustration on the part of teachers.

Another equally important problem which hampers comprehension of listening skill in the mainstream educational system is that 'we still tend to test listening rather than teach it' (Field, 2002, p. 246). Attention is mostly paid to the product of listening when it should be paid to the process. Therefore, it is worth spending the time to figure out where and how understanding breaks down (Brown, 2001). However, because process is more difficult to manage, it is usually swept under the educational carpet.

Finally, it can partly and safely be said that at educational centres including language institutes and even at universities where English is taught as a foreign language, listening is taught based on traditional approaches which involve the cliché and shallow technique of pre-teaching of all important new vocabularies in the passage and analysis of the language in the text. Often, this reduces listening activity to merely *listen-and-repeat*.

To address some of the problems mentioned, in this study, partial dictation is proposed as a teaching technique for improving the listening comprehension ability of intermediate EFL learners. Conducting such a study seems to be necessary because using dictation along with a variety of alternative techniques as listening exercises has been recommended in many books about language teaching (e.g., Nation & Newton, 2009), but no research has been carried out to investigate the effect of partial dictation on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, the application of dictogloss is either totally absent or quite rare in most if not all of the English classes. It is, therefore, important for language teachers to look into new listening techniques to help learners boost their listening skills.

### **1.1. The significance and the purpose of study**

Despite the fact that it is taken for granted and it lacks the glamour of speaking skills, listening skills must be regarded as the most frequently used language skill (Morley, 1999; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992), which plays such a vital role in communication (Mendelsohn, 1994) that it is safe to assume that hardly any communication can be accomplished without successful listening as the first step. Therefore, it can be said that, 'Listening is probably the least explicit skill of the four language skills, thus, making it the most difficult skill to learn' (Vandergrift, 2004, p. 1). Likewise, Oxford (1990, p. 205) states that 'listening is perhaps the most fundamental language skill'. The significance of listening in learning a second/foreign language has been highlighted by scholars in the field (e.g., Ferris, 1998; Tagg, 1996).

On the significance of the role of listening in classroom context, Nunan (2003) states that listening ability plays a pivotal role in the ultimate development of other language skills. In the beginning stages of language learning, language learners first have to consciously listen to the words several times before they are able to recognise and pronounce those words (Thanajaro, 2000). Listening can also help students build vocabulary, although a passive one, which, in turn, is such an undeniably important factor in developing language proficiency and improving language usage (Barker, 1971, as cited in Brown, 2001)

Despite the significant and even indispensable role of this taken-for-granted skill, in line with Oxford (1990) and Vandergrift (2007), it must be acknowledged that listening comprehension is a

difficult skill to master even in one's own mother tongue, let alone in acquiring a foreign/second language. Thus, taking the above-mentioned significance into account, it seems essential to develop learners' listening competence as a sine qua non in foreign/second language acquisition.

As a viable attempt to improve listening skill, dictation has been 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 have heard as accurately as possible (Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Nation & Newton, 2009). Partial dictation is used as a technique where learners receive some spoken input, hold it in their memory for a short period of time and then write down what they have heard. This writing is affected by their skills at listening, their command of the language and their ability to hold what they have heard in their memory. Therefore, the advantages of partial dictation are multifarious for second/foreign language learners: the bottom-up processing is activated through partial dictation and through this; more information can be hypothesised to pass on to the macro-level analysis which, in turn, activates top-down processing. All these processes facilitate the input to be recalled and be associated with what has already been stored in the long-term memory (Zakeri, 2014).

The results of the current study might prove beneficial for EFL teachers in general and both Iranian English teachers and learners, in particular, by making them aware of the alternative teaching techniques for second or foreign language (L2) listening. The study might provide some insights to materials developers and course books designers and help them design listening materials which will lead to better learning comprehension abilities through the above-mentioned techniques. Given this, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the comparative effect of partial dictation versus dictogloss on listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

### **1.2. Research questions**

Based on the above-mentioned points, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

Q1: Does partial dictation have any significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

Q2: Does dictogloss through paused transcription have any significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

Q3: Is there any significant difference between partial dictation versus dictogloss through paused transcription on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

## **2. Methods and materials**

### **2.1. Participants**

In order to conduct this study, 60 male EFL learners out of 100 learners within the age range of 14–25, studying at Pardis and Shokouh Language Institutes in Tehran, Iran, were selected via double sampling (i.e., a two-stage sampling procedure). The institutes were selected based on the cooperative nature of their managers and students' willingness (e.g., using informed consent) to participate in all phases of the study. All the participants in the study were from Tehran province and Persian was their native language. They had been studying English for at least 3 years. Furthermore, they had never lived in a foreign country, and except English, they have no proficiency in any other foreign language. They were partially homogeneous in socio-economic status based on the information they had provided when registering for the institutes mentioned.

The learners who participated in this study were at the intermediate level of language proficiency. To select a homogeneous sample for the present study, firstly, a *sampling frame* or *target population*

was specified. In the present study, the sampling frame (i.e., almost 400 students) was intermediate EFL students in aforementioned institutes. Secondly, out of these 400 learners, 100 participants were selected conveniently after their briefing, assuring them about the confidentiality of the information they provide during the research and receiving their consent to participate in the present study.

## **2.2. Instrumentations**

In this study, in order to determine the effectiveness of partial dictation versus dictogloss through paused transcription on listening comprehension, a proficiency test, a piloted listening pre-test and a piloted listening post-test were administered at three different phases.

### **2.2.1. Nelson test (Series 400A) as proficiency test**

Nelson English language proficiency test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) consists of 50 multiple-choice items organised in four parts: grammar (two sections), vocabulary and reading comprehension. The time allotted was 40 minutes. The reliability of Nelson proficiency test was reported to be 0.87

### **2.2.2. Listening pre-test**

Before treatment, a researcher-made listening pre-test was administered to the participants to elicit the probable initial differences among them. It consisted of 30 multiple-choice, completion and dictation listening items selected from *Tactics for Listening* for intermediate level by Richards (2011). In order to establish the suitability of the pre-test for the selected participants, it was piloted prior to the main administration. In doing so, 30 young EFL learners who were different from the main sample learners but whose proficiency level were the same as the main sample were asked to take the test. Having amassed the data of the study, Cronbach's alpha formula was employed to calculate the reliability, which turned out to be 0.76, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability of the test.

### **2.2.3. Listening post-test**

After the treatment, a post-test which was piloted in advance ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ) was given to all participants based on the materials or content covered during the treatment or teaching phase. The post-test consisted of 30 multiple choices, completion and dictation listening items selected from materials covered throughout the course.

## **2.3. Materials**

To conduct the present study, the researchers used the following materials: *Tactics for Listening* (Third Edition, developing) written by Richards (2011), *New Headway* (Fourth Edition, intermediate) by Soars and Soars (2013), a series of animated cartoons and selected authentic videos and soundtracks. According to the authors of the materials mentioned, these books were specially designed for intermediate-level students and contained appropriate materials which boosted students' listening comprehension.

## **2.4. Procedures**

In order to conduct this study, the following procedures were implemented. These procedures were divided into four general stages: 1. selection and homogenisation of the participants, 2. pre-test, 3. experimentation and 4. post-test.

At the beginning and prior to instruction, the Nelson proficiency test (400 A) was administered to a population of 100 learners in order to make sure that there was no significant difference between the participants and that they were homogeneous in their language proficiency. The participants were informed, in advance, how the study would be carried out in different groups. To account for the homogeneity of the participants, 60 participants, from among the 100 test takers whose scores on the homogeneity test fell one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean

(Mean  $\pm$  SD) were chosen. The participants were divided into three different groups to receive different instructional methods. In other words, the selected participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups (i.e., partial dictation versus dictogloss) and a control group.

It is worth mentioning that APA ethical guidelines for subject selection and participation were observed. To this, informed consent and confidentiality were taken into account. The participants all voluntarily participated in the study and the confidentiality of their identity and performance on the tests were maintained throughout the study and thereafter.

Next, the pre-test was administered to measure the listening comprehension of the participants before receiving the instruction. Following the pre-test, students in the experimental and control groups received the intended instructional material. Participants in the control group received the mainstream usual listening classes in line with the objectives mentioned in the related course books, which included prelistening, listening, carrying out the related tasks etc. In the experimental groups, prior to the instruction and to optimise the cooperativeness and familiarity of the participants, they were informed about the way the instruction would be carried out and the tasks they were expected to carry out. The instruction for this study lasted for seven sessions, 1 hour a session, three times a week, for a period of about 3 weeks. The experimental and control groups were exposed to the same materials, time of instruction and number of sessions. However, two different techniques were applied in the experimental classes.

For students in the first experimental group (i.e., partial dictation), the following steps were taken: Firstly, the students were made aware of the topic of the passage or conversation to give them a chance to activate their background knowledge. Then, they were exposed to the whole oral passage or conversation without any pauses. Second, the written form of the same text designed with blanks for the content or grammatical words, which seemed to be important for completion of the text, was given to the students. Next, the tape was replayed and the students were instructed to listen to the oral passage of the same written text and complete the blanks with the words from the oral passage. In the third stage, they listened again to the whole passage or conversation to check what they had written. After the dictation, they checked their writing with the tape script. For learning purposes and to encourage them to pay more attention, in some treatment sessions, after checking their dictation, the participants were exposed to the tape again and were asked to pay attention especially to their mistakes.

In order to develop partial dictation text, the following four steps were undertaken. First, the transcript was provided to the students. Second, the instructor specified words or expressions that were deleted. The deleted parts were mostly nouns or verbs because the most important part of meaning of a text was supposed to be rendered by nouns and verbs. Third, based on the deleted words, questions (primarily Wh-questions) were designed to guide students on what to expect and focus on. Fourth, phonemic notations of word variations in connected speech (re-syllabification, assimilation, elision and reduction of function words) were supplied in the handouts to both facilitate in-class explanations and raise students' attention on problematic word variations that reportedly impede EFL/ESL listeners' decoding and/or comprehension.

For the participants in the dictogloss group, the following steps were taken: Firstly, in the planning/predicting stage, after introducing the topic of the listening text to the students, the students were asked to write down on a piece of paper whatever they could come up with along with some brainstormed vocabularies and phrases they guessed. Secondly, the teacher played the tape aloud once at a normal speed. The participants were required to listen carefully at this stage. The teacher, then, replayed the tape again at a normal speed and the students were required to take notes. They were instructed to get the meaning of the text instead of writing down every word. Next, the participants were told to collaborate in groups of two or three to reconstruct the text in full sentences. The reconstructed text might have retained the meaning of the original text, but was not necessarily a word-for-word copy of the text played back. After the completion of the text collaboratively, they listened to the tape again and compared what they had done with the tape to see



what aspects of the text they had managed to capture and what aspects they had missed and find out the extent those missed parts affected the intelligibility of the text. Finally, they compared their constructed texts with the transcription and noted the similarities and the differences.

For the participants in the control group, a totally different approach was undertaken. The participants were taught based on the conventional method, still practiced in some institutes in Iran. It included brainstorming before listening, listening and taking note and answering the multiple-choice questions following each passage and checking with their peers. Like the experimental group, this was practiced for seven sessions, each an hour long, for all groups. After the treatment, the listening post-test was administered to all participants.

### 3. Results and discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the comparative effect of partial dictation versus dictogloss through paused transcription on listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners. This section presents the results of the analysis of the data obtained from two experimental groups (i.e., partial dictation versus dictogloss) and a control group through a pre-test and a post-test. For this purpose, paired samples *t*-test and ANCOVA statistical procedure were used, but as using ANCOVA requires checking the normality assumptions, first these assumptions were checked.

#### 3.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the participants' pre-test and post-test scores in the two experimental groups and the control group are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the two experimental groups and one control group**

		<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewedness	Kurtosis
The partial dictation group	Pre-test	20	14	17	15.35	1.039	0.133	-1.069
	Post-test	20	16	20	17.80	0.894	0.432	1.037
The dictogloss group	Pre-test	20	13	15	13.90	0.718	0.152	-0.880
	Post-test	20	15	19	17	1.123	-0.247	-0.823
The control group	Pre-test	20	12	15	13.75	0.966	-0.219	-0.817
	Post-test	20	13	16	13.95	0.887	0.607	-0.246

Table 1 shows the groups' descriptive statistics in the pre-test and the post-test. Based on Table 1, the mean score of the partial dictation group's pre-test was 15.35, which changed to 17.80 in the post-test. On the other hand, the mean score of the dictogloss group's pre-test was 13.90, which changed to 17 in the post-test. The mean score of the control group's pre-test was 13.75, which changed to 13.95 in the post-test.

#### 3.2. Normality of distribution of test scores

The distribution of scores for dependent variables should be normal for each value of the independent variable. To check this assumption, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests were run. Table 2 shows the results of Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests.

**Table 2. Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk test for normality of the distribution of the data**

	Kolmogorov–Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro–Wilk		
	Statistic	N	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	0.113	60	0.056	0.977	60	0.303
Post-test	0.094	60	0.200	0.967	60	0.105

Table 2 shows that the  $p$ -values for both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests exceed the critical value (0.05), indicating the normality of the distribution of the data.

### 3.3. Homogeneity of error variances

To check the homogeneity of variances, Levene’s statistic was used. Levene’s statistic tests the assumption that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups. This is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Levene’s test of equality of error variances**

Test	F	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig.
Pre-test	2.668	2	57	0.078
Post-test	1.051	2	57	0.356

As displayed in Table 3, the results of Levene’s test were not significant for the pre-test ( $F = 2.668$ ,  $\text{Sig} = 0.078$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and the post-test ( $F = 1.051$ ,  $\text{Sig} = 0.356$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Based on these results, it can be concluded that there were no significant differences between the variances of the groups.

### 3.4. Homogeneity of regression slopes

This assumption was checked by measuring the interaction between the group and the covariate (pre-test).

**Table 4. Tests of between-subjects effects**

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	188.346 <sup>a</sup>	5	37.669	65.820	0.000
Intercept	7.459	1	7.459	13.033	0.001
Group	2.020	2	1.010	1.764	0.041
Pre-test	23.133	1	23.133	40.420	0.181
Group <sup>b</sup> pre-test2	1.756	2	0.878	1.535	0.225
Error	30.904	54	0.572		
Total	16,063.000	60			
Corrected total	219.250	59			

The data in Table 4 show that the values obtained were found to be  $\text{Sig} = 0.225$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This means that there was a linear relationship between the pre-test and the post-test scores.



### 3.5. Linearity of slope of regression lines

This assumption is checked by drawing a scatter plot graph. Figure 1 shows that there was a linear relationship between the pre-test and the post-test scores which is an indication of the fact that the assumption of linearity of regression lines was also held.

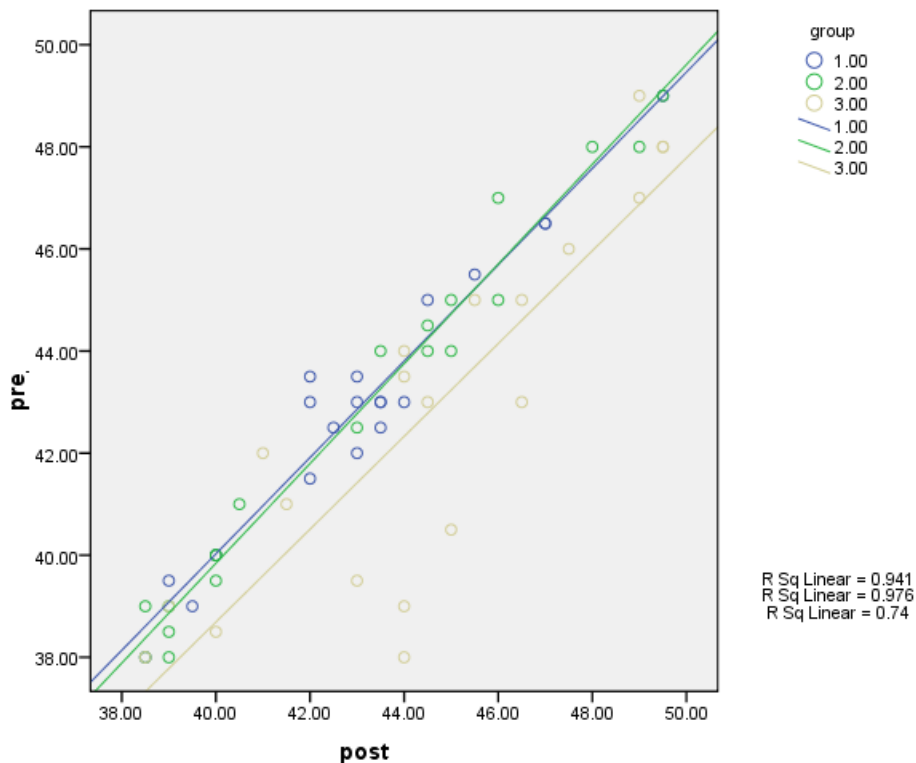


Figure 1. Linear relationship among regression lines

Having checked the normality assumptions, the researcher then proceeded to test the research hypotheses.

### 3.6. Analysing the research hypotheses

#### 3.6.1. Testing the first research hypothesis

With regard to the first research hypothesis (i.e., converted to the null hypothesis stating that partial dictation does not have any significant effect on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners), the descriptive statistics showed that there was a difference between the pre-test ( $M = 15.35$  and  $SD = 1.039$ ) and the post-test scores ( $M = 17.80$  and  $SD = 0.894$ ) in the dictation group with regard to listening comprehension. In order to analyse whether this difference was meaningful or not, the paired samples  $t$ -test was utilised. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Paired samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test**

	Paired differences					<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% Confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Dictation group	-2.45	0.887	0.198	-2.865	-2.034	-12.352	19	0.000

Based on the results presented in Table 5, it can be concluded that with the 95% confidence there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the participants between the pre-test and the post-test in the dictation group ( $t = -12.352$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Based on the results presented in Table 5, a significant change was observed in the post-test scores in comparison to the pre-test scores. Hence, the first research hypothesis was rejected.

### 3.6.2. Testing the second research hypothesis

With regard to the second research hypothesis, (i.e., converted to null hypothesis stating that the dictogloss through paused transcription does not have any significant effect on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners), the descriptive statistics showed that there was a difference between the pre-test ( $M = 13.90$  and  $SD = 0.718$ ) and the post-test scores ( $M = 17$  and  $SD = 1.123$ ) in the dictogloss group with regard to the listening comprehension. In order to analyse whether this difference was meaningful or not, the paired samples *t*-test was utilised. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Paired samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test**

	Paired differences					<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% Confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Dictogloss group	-3.100	0.852	0.190	-3.498	-2.701	-16.267	19	0.000

Based on the results presented in Table 6, it can be concluded that with the 95% confidence there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the participants between the pre-test and the post-test in the dictogloss group ( $t = -16.267$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the second research hypothesis was also rejected.

### 3.6.3. Inspecting the third research hypothesis

With regard to the third research hypothesis, (i.e., converted to the null hypothesis stating that there is not any significant difference between the effects of partial dictation versus dictogloss through paused transcription on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners), the descriptive statistics showed that there was a difference between the control group, dictation group and the dictogloss group with regard to listening comprehension. In order to assess whether this difference was meaningful or not, the ANCOVA analysis was utilised. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Tests of between-subjects effects**

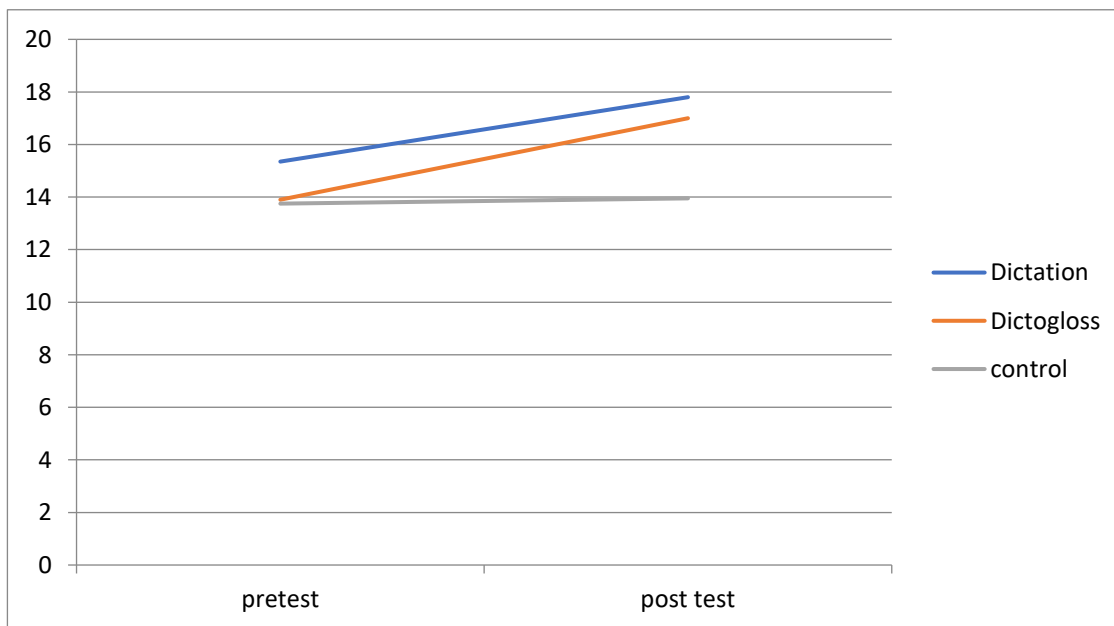
Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	186.589 <sup>a</sup>	3	62.196	106.641	0.000
Intercept	10.374	1	10.374	17.788	0.000
Group	97.648	2	48.824	83.713	0.000
Pre-test	21.489	1	21.489	36.845	0.082
Error	32.661	56	0.583		
Total	16,063.000	60			
Corrected total	219.250	59			

Based on the observed results, it can be concluded that there was a meaningful difference between the three groups ( $F = 83.713$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, it can be stated that the treatment had a significant impact on the experimental groups.

The value power of the test ( $1-\beta = 0.99$ ) showed that ANCOVA analysis was able to reject the null hypothesis. To locate the place where the treatment was more effective, *post-hoc* Bonferroni was run, the results of which are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8. Pair-wise comparisons (Bonferroni) for the groups' performance in listening comprehension**

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>
Dictation	Dictogloss	-0.169	0.290	1.000
	Control	2.781 <sup>b</sup>	0.299	0.000
Dictogloss	Dictation	-0.169	0.290	1.000
	Control	2.950 <sup>b</sup>	0.242	0.000
Control	Dictation	-2.781 <sup>b</sup>	0.299	0.000
	Dictogloss	-2.950 <sup>b</sup>	0.242	0.000



**Figure 2. The three groups' mean pre-test and post-test scores**

With reference to Table 8, it can be observed that there was a meaningful difference between the control and the dictation group ( $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, there was a meaningful difference between the control and the dictogloss groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). There was no meaningful difference between the dictation and the dictogloss group ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the dictation technique was found to be slightly more effective than the dictogloss strategy instruction on learners' listening comprehension.

Figure 2 shows that the dictation and dictogloss group performed better in the post-test in comparison to the control group.

#### 4. Discussion

Regarding the first research question, which aimed at exploring whether partial dictation has any significant effect on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, a significant change was observed in the students' post-test scores in comparison to that of the pre-test ( $t = 12.352$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that partial dictation had a significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners.

This finding is in line with those of many other researchers (e.g., Buck, 2001; Hughes, 1989; Nation & Newton, 2009) who concluded that partial dictation can be incorporated as a rigorous listening instruction technique to boost learners' listening comprehension. One plausible explanation might be considering the fact that shadowing training seems to give the participants a chance to identify and successfully connect the phonemic sound to its corresponding meaning which seems to have assessed the participants' listening while they were listening. Gradually, throughout the treatment sessions, the participants seem to have developed, although partially, the ability to somehow automatise phonological ability and learn to focus on missing parts. This, in turn, can be hypothesised to make it easier for them to follow the text and/or to get its main points, and hence through rehearsal they might have improved their processing capabilities.

Considering the second research question, which aimed at exploring whether dictogloss through paused transcription has any significant effect on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, the paired  $t$ -test results revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the participants between the pre-test and the post-test in the dictogloss group ( $t = -17.84$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings are in line with those of others, including Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010), Goh and Taib (2006) and Vandergrift (2002), indicating that dictogloss through paused transcription had a significant impact on listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners. This can be explained in the light of the fact that by means of dictogloss through paused transcription, the students could have mastered the ability to actively engage in monitoring, controlling and arranging listening inputs. This, in turn, could be conducive to triggering noticing among language learners. Noticing is a widely accepted concept in SLA research and plays a pivotal role in uptake and long-term acquisition (Schmidt, 1990, 1994). Based on Schmitt and Frota's (1986) concept of *noticing the gap*, learners could have consciously observed how their interlanguage differs from that of the target form and paid attention and *notice* the subtle aspects of given input in order to subsume it in their interlanguage.

Another theoretical concept which can play a role in dictogloss can be the role group work or cooperative learning plays, a concept which has attracted the attention in the field of SLA or FLA (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Cote, 2006; Long & Porter, 1985). According to these authors, one of the viable sources of feedback which can be used in the class is the peer feedback rather than teacher feedback due to some affective filters (Krashen, 1982) present in the teacher feedback but not in the peer feedback. On the other hand, as stated in McCafferty, Jacobs and Iddings (2006) and Berg (1999), the peer pair does not have to constitute one expert and one novice, as stated in Vygotsky's (1986) classical notion of ZPD, but even if both of the peers are novice the act of negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996) can have its positive effect and collaboratively, as assumed to be the case in dictogloss, the peers can accomplish a task neither of them can do alone. The requirement for this task

accomplishment although seems to be their familiarity with the procedure of cooperation and provision of feedback which seems to worth the effort.

Finally, regarding the final research hypothesis which sought to explore whether there was any significant difference between the effects of partial dictation and dictogloss through paused transcription on listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, the results of the Bonferroni test displayed that dictation technique was found to be slightly better and the participants in the shadowing group outperformed other participants. This can be explained by virtue of the fact that through dictation training, the participants improved their skill in processing the amount of phonemic input. Furthermore, the activation of previously learned items (i.e., schema) through dictation practice might have accounted for the slightly higher scores of the dictation group. During dictation, because the knowledge of the target passage has already been activated, students were not only able to undertake bottom-up processing, such as identifying incoming phonological information, but also top-down processing, such as guessing which word would come next.

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