

Using Dictogloss Tasks: Attention to Form in a Collaborative Classroom Activity with Female Translation Students at King Saud University

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Abstract

This longitudinal study mainly attempted to investigate the effectiveness of one type of Focus on Form (FonF) language task (i.e. dictogloss) on female Translation university students' grammatical competence. In general, since second language learners experience difficulties with grammatical tenses, these dictogloss tasks (which were developed by Wajnryb (1990) and preformed either with pairs or small groups) were utilized to find out whether their application lead to better performance on grammar tests, particularly in regard to verb tense accuracy. The objective of this study was to examine the effects of using the dictogloss task procedure on female Translation university students enrolled in Grammar (1) at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University (KSU), Riyadh. The study also aimed to survey participants' attitudes and perceptions toward the application of dictogloss tasks. The researcher applied a quasi-experimental design model and survey research. The findings of the study demonstrated that in general, there was no significant statistical difference in verb-tense performance between the three groups' weekly test scores that were immediately administered after presenting dictogloss tasks, but most students, in both experimental groups, expressed satisfaction with the dictogloss task as a whole. It is recommended that future researchers investigate whether and to what extent FonF tasks, such as the dictogloss, are effective for the different proficiency levels for which they are intended to appropriately generalize the findings to other contexts and/or language skills, and identify how instruction and reinforcement can be best designed to promote second language learning.

Key Words: dictogloss, focus on form, FonF, grammar, traditional exercises

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Introduction

Over the years, language instructors in the College of Languages and Translation (COLT) at King Saud University (KSU) have complained about students' language problems, especially about their inability of using tenses correctly, even at the higher levels of the program. Such observations, unfortunately, are not limited to COLT's context, as this appears to be a wide-scale issue faced by many second language instructors.

In accordance, educators are always seeking different approaches and techniques to teaching the language skills since it is of utmost importance to try to remedy these language weaknesses early on in their language studies before they reach monumental proportions which often become irreparable as more and more time passes. When performed appropriately, it has been found in previous literature that using various Focus on Form (FonF) activities – those that integrate both traditional methods of classroom instruction with communicative approaches – have helped in improving some of these language weaknesses.

Motivated by this realization, this study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of one such FonF language task on students' grammatical competence, known in the field as the dictogloss task, in which learners interact with one another to produce a written reconstructed version of a text that has been read to them by the teacher. It is claimed that the dictogloss promotes negotiation of both meaning and form, giving learners a chance to reflect on their own output, in a fun communicative environment during pair and group work (Pica, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of dictogloss tasks in improving verb tense usage among female Translation university majors enrolled in Grammar (1) at COLT, KSU. Further, this study seeks to determine these students' attitudes and level of satisfaction towards the dictogloss procedure.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Are traditional grammar exercises combined with dictogloss tasks (performed by female Translation students at KSU either in pairs or in small groups) more effective than, less effective than, or equally effective as traditional grammar exercises alone in the short-term learning acquisition of English verb tenses?
2. Are traditional grammar exercises combined with dictogloss tasks (performed by female Translation students at KSU either in pairs or in small groups) more effective than, less effective than, or equally effective as traditional grammar exercises alone in the longer-term acquisition of English verb tenses?
3. Will there be a significant improvement in subjects' performance on the culminative verb tense posttest in the experimental groups? And if so, which group will have significantly improved the most?
4. Will students who received verb tense practice using dictogloss in pairs report different attitudes than those using dictogloss in small groups?

Significance of the Study

1. Language teachers might be encouraged to try out a variety of FonF collaborative activities, such as the dictogloss, when teaching any of the other language skills courses.

2. The results expand the theory about this type of collaborative work providing data about using the FonF approach in pair and group work among female university students.

3. More information about collaborative tasks among college students is useful to skills textbooks or syllabi designers who may try to include more integrative FonF tasks.

4. This study has hopefully contributed to the field of second language acquisition and Applied Linguistics in general; and more specifically, the study has shed some light on an area which was not explored in previous empirical studies focusing on dictogloss studies and that is of (a) comparing students' test results of post-traditional exercises only vs. post-traditional exercises and dictogloss tasks, either done in pairs or in small groups, and (b) obtaining students' feedback regarding their feelings and attitudes about doing the dictogloss tasks.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of this investigation involved the study of female level one Translation majors at COLT, KSU. It was also limited to their Grammar (1) course – specifically to only eight English verb tenses. Hence, researchers and practitioners are cautioned not to apply generalizations from this study to populations and contexts that differ from the sample.

Literature Review

Since the Focus on Form (FonF) approach constitutes a rich area of enquiry, the following literature review will shed light on its theoretical background, as well as the conceptualization and actual implementation of the dictogloss task in a classroom situation.

The Focus on Form (FonF) Approach in Grammar Pedagogy

After the rising popularity, then slow decline of the immersion communicative approach in the 1970s which advocated the exclusive use of meaning-focused activities in language classrooms with no focus on grammar (Nassaji&Fotos, 2004), it became clear that the this methodology was insufficient for the development of target-like proficiency (Mayo, 2002). It is true that learners in immersion programs are able to convey meaning in their second language but as Swain (2001) states, they normally do so with nontarget-like morphology and syntax in spite of years of exposure to second language (L2) input.

This realization has led to a revival of more focused grammar teaching (Ellis, 2016; Nassaji&Fotos, 2004; Pica, 1997; &Storch, 2002). According to Park (2004), this enthusiasm is the result of an effort to strike a balance between traditional approaches which emphasize accurate production of L2 forms, and the communicative approach which focuses on meaningful communication in real contexts. The culmination of this has come to be known as Focus on Form or (FonF) (Long, 1997). Long specifically contrasts this idea with traditional grammar instruction, which he calls Focus on Forms (FonFs), where “specific linguistic forms are taught directly and explicitly” (Ellis, 2016, p. 405).

In a discussion on how to implement FonF in the classroom, Ellis (2002), after reviewing 11 articles on FonF instruction, concluded that the FonF approach can contribute to the acquisition of implicit knowledge. Furthermore, he pointed to two factors that appear to influence its

success: (1) the choice of the target structure and (2) the extent of the instruction. Ellis maintains that a FonF approach which involves extensive instruction aimed at simple noticeable structures is more likely to succeed. In the same vein, more recently Arabgary and Izadpanh's (2016) study found that their FonF group acquired the explicit plural -s but not the less salient copula be.

Armed with an understanding of the basic concept of FonF and a desire to put it into effect, the question now is, how should a teacher proceed? Murray (1994) states that classroom interaction in which learners work together in small groups has played a major role in communicative second language teaching for over fifteen years. Indeed, a number of studies have demonstrated the potential pedagogical advantages of small group work over whole class instruction.

According to Murray (1994), among these advantages are: "a greater quantity of learner practice opportunities, a more individualized pace of instruction, increased personal investment leading to higher motivation, and a positive affective climate" (p. 1). Further benefits of small group or pair work are discussed by (Mayo & Pica, 2000). They state that most learners tend to welcome the change of classroom format that interactive activities offer, causing learners' communicative competence to improve in terms of both fluency and communication strategies since such collaborations often resemble face-to-face interaction that naturally occurs outside the classroom.

Jacobs and Young (2004) also agree that collaborative learning offers opportunities for helping students work together more effectively, however, they are also careful to point out that collaborative learning is much more than just putting students together in groups and asking them to work together. Instead, there are several principles which educators need to be familiar with in order to be able to understand what is exactly involved in helping groups succeed, such as individual accountability which "is the feeling among group members that each has responsibility for the group's success" (p. 118).

A Collaborative FonF Output Task: The Dictogloss Task

One way to create a collaborative situation in the L2 classroom context is through the use of dictogloss, a classroom procedure initially introduced by Wajnryb in her 1990 book *Grammar Dictation*. According to its author, during the small group interaction and co-reconstruction of passages, the students come to notice their grammatical strengths and weaknesses and then try to overcome these weaknesses when attempting to co-produce the text (Nassaji, 2000).

Sullivan and Caplan (2004) explain that dictogloss is an activity where the teacher reads out a short passage twice at normal speed to the class. The first reading is to get the students orientated to the topic without writing down anything. When the teacher reads the text for the second time, students take down key words and phrases. After that, the students are put in groups. Within a set time, the group members share their notes and reconstruct the passage, aiming at both grammatical accuracy and textual cohesion. The different groups then take turns to present their versions of the text to the whole class. These various reconstructed texts are analyzed and corrected by all the students with their teacher's assistance.

According to Jacobs and Small (2003), the procedure is an integrated skills technique for L2 learning in which students are encouraged to focus some of their attention on form and that all four language skills are involved – listening (to both the teacher reading the text and to the groupmates discussing the reconstruction), speaking (to group mates during the reconstruction), reading (notes taken while listening to the teacher, the group’s reconstruction, and the original text), and writing (the reconstruction). Furthermore, Linden (1994) indicates that dictogloss, which involves writing from memory, is a powerful technique for learning the spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word patterns.

A useful tip is brought up by DeFilippo and Sadow (2006). They state that when the students’ texts are being compared to the original text, teachers should point out the differences and praise students for expressing themselves in a different way. More recently, Li, Zhu, and Ellis’s (2016) study in fact revealed that immediate – as opposed to delayed – post-dictogloss feedback resulted in learners increased and accurate usage of the targeted past passive tense. Indeed, dictogloss can further heighten students’ motivation to learn if teachers reward task completion with simple rewards which can be “in the form of materials such as grades, award certificates, sweets or simply a word of praise, a handshake or a round of applause or the right to choose a topic for the next dictogloss activity” (Sai, 2004, p. 7).

Storch (2002) calls attention to the fact that classrooms will no longer be monopolized by teachers in the classroom. According to the author, one of the best features of dictogloss tasks is that they can be used at different stages of any lesson across the curriculum. It is encouraged that teachers create dictogloss passages from local newspapers, the Internet, or any other source from which they can choose a timely topic and easily adapt it to the level of their students (DeFilippo&Sadow, 2006; & Ma, 2004).

To be sure, recently, studies have shown great feedback from learners who have participated in dictogloss tasks. HeeJeong (2015) reports: “DICT [dictogloss] task group students positively changed their perceptions and understanding as well as their attitudes towards the English instruction given” (p. 2288). Additionally, learners participating in dictogloss have noted how much they welcomed being given ample chance to practice the 4 language skills, and how “giving and receiving peer feedback” (p. 12) made them realize what they had learned and what they needed to improve on (Stewart, Rodríguez, & Torres, 2014).

Empirical Studies Focusing on Dictogloss Tasks

The effectiveness of dictogloss in promoting L2 grammar knowledge has been empirically examined in several studies; however, the most notable of these studies are those conducted by Merrill Swain and her colleagues (Kowal& Swain, 1994; LaPierre, 1994; Swain &Lapkin, 1998; and Lapkin, Swain, & Smith, 2002, as cited in Swain, 2001), primarily carried out in French immersion program contexts in Canada.

Swain (2001) reports that results from two decades of research suggests that though immersion students are able to understand much of what they hear and read in the L2 language, most research has clearly demonstrated that students did not develop native-like proficiency in French. As a result of this study, and numerous others as well, Swain and others have examined

the effect of using activities, such as the dictogloss task, which encourage students to simultaneously focus on meaning and language form.

These investigations have looked at a variety of subject populations and included tests of various kinds. For example, in one study, Kowal and Swain (1994, as cited in Swain, 2001) tried using dictogloss tasks in grade 7 and 8 immersion classes, and found that they elicited reflective talk about the language of the text they were reconstructing. LaPierre (1994, noted by Swain 2001) also studied grade 8 early French immersion students over a period of about a month. It was hypothesized that when learners reflected on the language they produced (metatalk) to complete the dictogloss task, that metatalk may be a source of second language learning.

A few years later, Swain and Lapkin (1998), carried out research similar to that of LaPierre's, however, it differed in that two tasks were employed; namely, dictogloss and a jigsaw story construction task, using a pretest/posttest design. One goal of the study was to see if one type of task led students to focus on form with greater frequency than the other. It was found that approximately 90% of the reflexive verbs used by the dictogloss students were correct (as opposed to 60% via the jigsaw task), which illustrates the importance of the dictogloss in providing grammatically accurate input. Later, further positive results for dictogloss were also documented in a similar study (Lapkin & Swain, 2000).

Noteworthy is Kuiken and Vedder's (2002) paper which investigated the effect of interaction between L2 learners during a dictogloss task on the acquisition of the passive form. They focused on whether acquisitional gains would be better if students worked alone or in small groups during the text reconstruction phase of the dictogloss procedure. Although the quantitative analysis of their data did not demonstrate any significant statistical gain, the qualitative analysis revealed that interaction often stimulated noticing, which led to forming new linguistic structures. Abbasian and Mohammadi's (2013) analysis also found mixed results when applying dictogloss to writing: "It can enhance their organization and mechanics but not content, language usage and vocabulary of EFL learners" (p. 1371).

While many studies focused on investigating dictogloss and/or jigsaw tasks, Yeo (2002) took a slightly different direction. In Yeo's study, dictogloss is compared with an input enhancement technique in which the targeted language form is enhanced with bold and large letters. The results indicated that the dictogloss group outperformed the input enhancement group in learning English participial adjectives.

In addition to examining the impact of different FonF tasks, some started realizing the need to investigate whether and to what extent collaborative dialogues are effective for different proficiency levels. Lapkin, Swain, and Smith's (2002) posttest data provided evidence that learning is assisted by multiple opportunities in a meaningful context, especially for higher-proficiency pairs. Fortune's (2005) collaborative writing task experiment also showed that advanced learners used metalanguage much more often than their intermediate counterparts. Along the same line, Shin, Lidster, Sabraw, and Yeager (2016) additionally found that "low-level students paired with high-level partners benefited most" (p. 366).

Conclusion

Indeed, the efficacy of dictogloss tasks in promoting L2 grammar knowledge has been empirically examined in many contexts; however, there are no studies to the best of the researcher's knowledge that had assessed the value of such tasks in the Middle East. Hence, motivated by the continued growth of research on the effect of dictogloss tasks on students' grammatical competence, this study explores its effectiveness in a Saudi context which is important for establishing the generalizability of the technique. Furthermore, the majority of past studies investigating the dictogloss technique were conducted with pre-university/college students. As such, applying the dictogloss with university students becomes pertinent to get an insight into whether such tasks work with students at this level.

This study also sheds some light on two other previously unexplored areas: (a) comparing students' test results of post-traditional exercises only vs. post-traditional exercises and dictogloss tasks, either done in pairs or in small groups, and (b) getting students' satisfaction feedback. Teachers in a Saudi context need to know whether activities like the dictogloss can be successfully used for reinforcing various language items, within different skills courses, and most importantly, whether female university students enjoy doing dictogloss more in small groups or pairs and how they truly feel about the dictogloss procedure in general.

Methodology

Research Design

This longitudinal study draws on primary data collected from 3 groups enrolled in Grammar (1) at COLT, KSU over a period of 3 months. The research approach was a hybrid of two approaches: (a) quasi-experimental research since it was not feasible to randomly assign subjects to treatments – in more specific terms, this type of design is considered as a non-equivalent control group design since even though the subjects were not randomly assigned to groups, there still was a control or comparison group, and (b) survey research. The study comprised of four stages. In the first stage, a pretest was distributed to all the 3 groups. The second stage was the experimental period whereby the treatment was implemented with 2 groups (i.e. dictogloss done in pairs and in small groups). The third stage involved the 3 groups of students doing the posttest and in the final stage, the two experimental groups were surveyed by completing an attitude questionnaire in class.

Subjects

The population of this study is female Translation students at COLT, KSU. The study began with approximately 121 subjects; however, due to missing data from irregular attendance of some subjects, it was narrowed down to 106 subjects as following: Group A (n = 40), Group B (n = 36), and Group C (n = 40). The experimental groups (B & C) included 76 subjects who studied eight tenses and did traditional-type textbook exercises as well as doing the dictogloss in pairs in Group B, and in groups of four in Group C. Meanwhile, the 40 subjects in control Group A studied the same eight verb tenses without undergoing dictogloss treatment; they only did the traditional-type exercises found in their textbooks.

Material

Nine dictogloss texts were prepared while taking into consideration the topics of each text, their level of difficulty, their length, and their internal cohesion, hence, the vocabulary used in these passages was of an appropriate level for level 1 students. The first text was used for the

training session in week one and the eight other texts were utilized during the eight-week experimental period (See *Figure 1*).

Last night, while I was doing my homework, Angela called. She said she was calling me on her cell phone from her biology classroom. She said that the professor was at the front of the hall lecturing while she was talking to me. I couldn't believe that she was making a phone call during the lecture. I asked what was going on. She said her biology professor was so boring that several of the students were actually sleeping in class. When Angela told me she was not satisfied with the class, I mentioned that my biology professor was quite good and suggested that she switch to my class.

Figure 1. Sample text used in the dictogloss procedures focusing on the past progressive tense (*Verb Tenses*, 2004)

Instruments

Two instruments were selected to collect data for each of the four dependent variables; fill-in-the-blank tests were used for research questions 1, 2 and 3 (See *Figure 2*.), whereas a questionnaire was used for 3 (See *Figure 3*.). Instruments are explained below in relation to the collected data.

The Past Progressive Tense

Name: _____ Group: _____ Score: ____/10

Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the simple past or past progressive forms of the verbs in parentheses. (½ point each)

Min: Look at this photo. That's how my apartment (*look*) _____ right after the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake.

Bob: That's terrible. What (*you, do*) _____ when the earthquake (*strike*) _____?

Min: I (*sleep*) _____. It (*happen*) _____ early in the morning.

(Note: The rest was removed due to space limitations)

Figure 2. Weekly test sample used in the dictogloss procedures focusing on the past perfect tense (Fuchs & Bonner, 1995, p. 12)

- 1. Ruminative pretest and posttest.** These were designed to have exactly the same 10 fill-in-the-blanks format. These items tested the same set of eight verb tenses in order to assure that they were equivalent enough to be reliably used to compare the subjects' performance at the beginning and end. Both tests were of the same difficulty level, however, they did have different content to eliminate the retention effect in the posttest. Pretests yielded no significant statistical difference between the three groups at the beginning of the study at the $p > .05$ level [$F(2, 113) = .084, p = .919$] (as shown in Table

1), which meant that the final carminative verb tense posttest would show whether the dictogloss, in general, had longer-term effects or not.

Table 1
Mean averages of subjects' pretest scores out of 10

Control Group A (n = 40)	Experimental Group B (n = 36)	Experimental Group C (n = 40)
2.22	2.19	2.32

2. **Weekly verb tense tests.** These were administered during the experimental period to all three groups immediately after the subjects finished the dictogloss activity, on a weekly basis after finishing the exercises in their textbooks. Each of these eight fill-in-the-blanks tests assessed only one verb tense each week depending on the tense that was taught, and thus used in the dictogloss, that week (See *Figure 2*). The weekly tests were crucial in assessing the immediate or short-term effect of the dictogloss.

Tests Validity and Reliability

Two kinds of validity were considered. First, content validity – each of the culminative verb tense pretest/posttest, and eight other verb tense tests consisted of items aimed at assessing the eight verb tenses with equal weighting of scores assigned to each item/blank. Given that all the tests sufficiently covered the entire body of content that was intended to be measured, it can be assumed that content validity was achieved. In addition, all tests in this study also have face validity. All 10 tests were shown to three experienced Grammar teachers at COLT and all of them confirmed the face validity of these tests.

Regarding reliability, the two tests, that would later be used as the pretest and posttest for this study, were piloted with a sample (n = 35) of level 1 Grammar students at COLT who were not involved in any way with the experiment. Parallel forms reliability was calculated for the scores of the two tests in order to determine how similarly the two test forms functioned. A reliability coefficient of 0.738 was calculated on the scores of the two measures taken by the same group of subjects which indicates that the participants' responses to the two instruments were generally reliable.

3. **Students' Attitude Questionnaire.** The type of response scale employed in the questionnaire used in this study was the Likert five-point scale. In writing the items of the questionnaire, the investigator followed Rodger and Brown's (2002, p. 143) suggestions on writing good survey items. The first six items focused on students' overall level of satisfaction with dictogloss, while the last four concentrated on eliciting their opinions about certain procedures (See *Figure 3*). After the questionnaire was written, it was given to three of the researcher's colleagues and tested for face validity.

Additionally, to insure its comprehensibility to all students, the researcher gave the questionnaire to five (Level 1) students who were entirely uninvolved in the experiment. A proper explanation was given to these students who understood the whole questionnaire except

for two words which were later adjusted. And since this questionnaire was developed for the present study, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha which was calculated to be .79, with a range of item-total correlations from .65 to .81, almost all of which are above the acceptable level of 0.70.

Students' Attitude Questionnaire									
Please rate each statement by marking the box below the number according to the following scale:									
1 = Strongly Disagree		2 = Disagree		3 = Neutral		4 = Agree		5 = Strongly Agree	
	Statement	1	2	3	4	5			
1	I feel that the dictogloss activity was enjoyable in general.								
2	I feel that doing the dictogloss activity has given me more confidence to talk with others in English.								
3	I wish we had done a dictogloss activity for all the grammar forms we took this semester; not just for the eight verb tenses.								
4	I feel that the dictogloss activity has improved my learning process.								
5	I wish more teachers would try out the dictogloss activity in other skills courses.								
6	I wish the teacher had spent more time on doing dictogloss activities and less time doing the exercises in our textbook.								
7	While doing the dictogloss activity, my partner(s) and I talked in English most of the time.								
8	While doing the dictogloss activity, I was able to find out what grammatical forms I still didn't know well.								
9	The length of the texts that were read by the teacher was suitable.								
10	The length of time that we were given to complete the reconstruction of the text was enough.								

Figure 3. Students' Attitude Questionnaire

Results

The scores retrieved from the eight tense tests, the pretest, and the posttest were used for comparing the differences between the 3 groups to see whether or not there was a significant difference between treatment groups (B & C) and the control group (A). Statistical computations were conducted using the *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* 11.5 for Windows. The alpha-level of significance $p < .05$ (95% confidence) was determined prior to data collection and was used throughout the study. Mean score differences were considered significant whenever the p-values obtained in the calculations were more than $\alpha = .05$.

Research Question One

Research question one poses: Are traditional grammar exercises combined with dictogloss tasks (performed by female Translation students at KSU either in pairs or in small groups) more effective than, less effective than, or equally effective as traditional grammar exercises alone in

the short-term learning of English verb tenses? Descriptive analyses as well as a series of one-way between-groups ANOVAs with Tukey tests were used to investigate any statistically significant differences in the weekly verb tense test findings of the control and experimental groups.

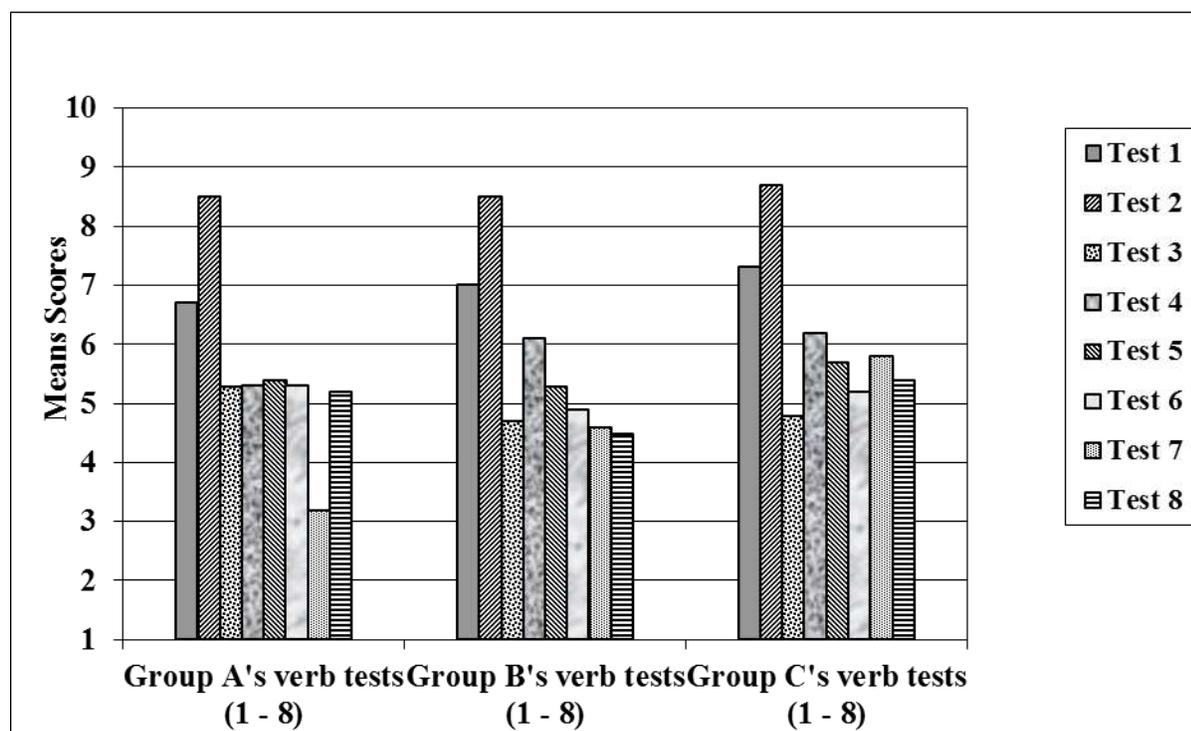


Figure 4. Means scores of all subjects in verb tests (1-8)

An overall look at the results (*Figure 4.*) reveals that group C's means scores were the highest for most of the verb tense tests as this was the case in six out of eight tests. This indicates that students who did traditional grammar exercises coupled with dictogloss in small groups achieved slightly better scores than those who only did traditional-type grammar exercises and/or dictogloss in pairs. Also noteworthy is that the differences in means scores were not significantly different for all the groups, with the exception of the statistical significance of mean scores found for verb tense test seven.

Research Question Two

Are traditional grammar exercises combined with dictogloss tasks (performed by female Translation students at KSU either in pairs or in small groups) more effective than, less effective than, or equally effective as traditional grammar exercises alone in the longer-term acquisition of English verb tenses?

To answer the second question, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of dictogloss done in pairs or in small groups on verb tense test scores (out of 10) as measured by the one-week delayedculminative verb tense posttest. Both experimental groups B and C surpassed control group A by a mean difference of (.5) (See Table 2). However,

there was no statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in test scores for the three groups [$F(2, 113) = 1.04, p = .35$].

Table 2
Means of students in groups A, B, & C for the posttest

	Group A ($n = 40$)	Group B ($n = 36$)	Group C ($n = 40$)
Mean	3.0	3.5	3.5
Standard Deviation	1.9	1.7	1.6

Research Question Three

Research question three poses: Will there be a significant improvement in subjects' performance on the culminative verb tense posttest in the experimental groups? And if so, which group will have significantly improved the most? The degree of improvement in verb tense usage was determined by subtracting the values at pretest from those at posttest. Subjects in experimental Group B (in pairs) had an overall mean change of 1.31, whereas Group C (in small groups) had an overall mean change of 1.18.

Although the improvement in performance from the pretest to the posttest for both groups is evident, what still remained to be seen is whether the differences between the pre-/post-test for the groups were significant and attributable to the different post-lesson practice methods. Thus, paired-samples t-tests compared the mean score of the posttest with that of the pretest at the beginning of the experiment in both groups, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Pre-post test paired-samples t-test results within Groups B and C

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Group B ($n = 36$)	-3.85	35	.000
Group C ($n = 40$)	-3.49	39	.001

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$

The t-test analysis for Group B showed that the increase in the means between the posttest ($M = 3.5, SD = 1.7$) and the pretest ($M = 2.1, SD = 1.5$) was statistically significant ($t = -3.85, df = 35, 2$ -tailed $p < .000$). The eta squared statistic (.29) indicated a large effect. As for Group C, the t-test analysis showed that the increase in the means between the posttest ($M = 3.5, SD = 1.6$) and the pretest ($M = 2.3, SD = 1.5$) was statistically significant ($t = -3.49, df = 39, 2$ -tailed $p < .001$). The eta squared statistic (.23) indicated a large effect. One can conclude from the findings that, indeed, there was a significant improvement in subjects' performance on the culminative verb tense posttest in the experimental groups. In addition, it can be said that Group B achieved a slightly higher significant difference than did Group C.

Testing Question Four

The fourth research question poses: Will students who received verb tense practice using dictogloss in pairs report different attitudes than those using dictogloss in small groups? To answer this question, the Students' Attitude Questionnaire (Figure 3.) was used to gather data from both experimental groups upon completion of the treatment period. SPSS was used to

calculated percentages for showing how often each response was chosen and a series of Chi-Square tests for independence to determine whether a relationship existed between the frequencies of responses of both experimental groups. The significance of these tests are reported as a p-value, where p is less than or equal to .05 is considered to be significant.

Due to the limitations of space in this article, the 10 figures are not presented, however the analyses results demonstrated that, for the most part, students expressed positive reactions towards statements 1 – 6 which aimed at finding out their levels of satisfaction with the dictogloss. As for statements 7 – 10 that sought to find out students' attitudes towards certain dictogloss procedures, it was found that students reacted negatively to two statements (i.e. statements 7 and 8).

Since no other research, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, had investigated students' attitudes and satisfaction with dictogloss, the findings of this questionnaire could not be evaluated against other similar questionnaires. However more recently, Gallego's (2014) study surveyed learners on their perceptions about the dictogloss task and found that "most students found it both useful and effective for learning" (p. 33).

Discussion

This study's primary aim was to investigate whether traditional grammar exercises coupled with dictogloss, in pairs or small groups, was more effective than, less effective than, or as effective as traditional grammar exercises alone for improving verb tense performance on tests. By investigating three different grammar approaches simultaneously, factors contributing to the success or failure of each approach could be identified and compared.

Though this study did not find dictogloss to be significantly more superior to traditional grammar exercises within a 10-week intervention period, it seems fairly clear from the way students behaved during the dictogloss tasks, together with their answers on the attitude questionnaire, that dictogloss is just one of the many tasks for creative and reflective teachers to adopt since it promotes collaborative dialogue by motivating learners to engage in lively and realistic verbal interaction.

Reasons for this negative finding could include that learners may have had a difficult time focusing on both the events taking place in the dictogloss texts and the targeted verb forms, as was expressed by several students in the form of voluntary comments on the satisfaction questionnaire. This explanation is supported by VanPatten's claim that beginning learners find it difficult to focus on meaning and form at once (VanPatten, 1990, as cited by Tragant & Munoz, 2004). This suggests that we should try more overt techniques to draw learners' attention to a linguistic item(s) through possibly more oral emphasis (i.e. pronouncing the verbs with a louder tone of voice, or stressing their pronunciation).

Nonetheless, it is extremely necessary for researchers to investigate whether and to what extent FonF tasks, such as the dictogloss, are effective for the different proficiency levels for which they are intended to appropriately generalize the findings to other contexts and identify how instruction and reinforcement can be best designed to promote L2 learning. In conclusion, while aware of a number of issues that need to be addressed in further research, no doubt,

dictogloss is a useful addition to both teachers' and researchers' repertoires for focusing students' attention to a rich variety of linguistic items during meaningful interaction.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings from this study did not statistically confirm what has been largely found by other dictogloss-related studies (Mayo, 2002; & Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005) that differences in the types of treatments lead to differences in language learning, and that raising learners' awareness of specific L2 forms facilitates acquisition to a certain extent. In fact, the results of this study seem to agree, to a large extent, with the minority of studies which found no significant difference in their subjects' language performance, such as those found in the studies of (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002) and (Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013).

Nonetheless, the results of this study did indicate that subjects who received dictogloss in small groups showed the most short-term improvement on the weekly tests, and those who received dictogloss in pairs showed the most longer-term improvement on the posttest. This clearly shows that both experimental dictogloss groups outperformed the control group, though not in a statistically significant sense.

As for learner attitudes towards dictogloss, in general, participants reported satisfaction in the current study, nevertheless, both dictogloss groups expressed mixed attitudes towards dictogloss procedures, more specifically it appeared that during the reconstruction phase, learners had no way of knowing which grammatical forms they still didn't know well while trying to solve the fill-in-the-blanks items, as indicated in the results for statement 8. Therefore, the claim that learners explore the accuracy and extent of their own linguistic knowledge in a dictogloss task (e.g. Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005; & Yeo, 2000) was not supported in this study.

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