

EXPLORING ENGLISH MAJORS' PERCEPTIONS AND THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF DICTATION IN ENHANCING LISTENING SKILLS AT HANOI METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *This study explores the perceptions of third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University regarding the use of dictation as a method to improve their listening skills. Listening is a crucial component of language learning, and dictation exercises have long been recognized as an effective tool for enhancing listening abilities, particularly for non-native English learners. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this research examines how students perceive dictation, how frequently they engage with it, and the challenges they face in utilizing this technique. The findings suggest that while students generally view dictation as a valuable tool for improving focus, vocabulary recognition, and pronunciation, they face significant challenges such as dealing with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and time constraints. The study also highlights the inconsistency in applying dictation practices, as many students rely on entertainment-based materials rather than academic content, which limits the potential effectiveness of their practice. These insights are expected to provide educators with a deeper understanding of how dictation can be more effectively integrated into language learning curricula, offering practical recommendations for improving listening instruction at Hanoi Metropolitan University and other educational contexts.*

Keywords: *Dictation; English; foreign language; Hanoi Metropolitan University; instruction; listening skills; perceptions.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the four essential language skills, and it plays a critical role in language learning. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, developing strong listening skills is key to both academic and professional success. Listening not only helps learners comprehend spoken language but also enhances their ability to engage in meaningful conversations, which is vital in daily communication, lectures, and even international settings. Listening skills are also one of the basic but necessary subjects in the curriculum of English language students at Hanoi Metropolitan University. One effective method to improve listening skills is dictation. Dictation, as an active listening exercise, enables students to focus on both the sounds and structures of language, thereby promoting greater retention and comprehension. It allows learners to pay close attention to the speaker's pace, pronunciation, and the intonation of sentences, which can often be challenging, especially for learners whose native language differs significantly from English. Dictation exercises thus become an indispensable tool in listening practice, helping learners strengthen their ability to decode spoken language, a skill that is often overlooked in traditional language teaching methods.

This research aims to explore the application of dictation as a method to improve listening skills among third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University (HNMU). The study will focus on understanding how students perceive dictation and how effectively they utilise it to

enhance their listening abilities. By investigating the use of dictation in their listening practice, the research will provide insights into whether this technique can help overcome common challenges such as the speed of speech, unfamiliar accents, or limited vocabulary. Additionally, the study aims to identify the benefits of dictation in fostering a deeper understanding of spoken English, allowing students to better prepare for international certification exams and enhance their language skills for future career opportunities in the global workforce.

Through this research, the paper will also evaluate students' perspectives on dictation as a tool for improving their listening skills. It will examine how this method can be integrated into self-study practices and how it might influence other areas of language learning, including speaking and writing. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insights into how educators can utilize dictation to make listening practice more engaging and effective for students. By sharing these insights, the study will propose recommendations to enhance language education and encourage the adoption of dictation as a practical and enjoyable exercise to support students' language acquisition. Ultimately, the research aims to inform best practices in language teaching, not only at HNMU but also in broader language education contexts.

2. CONTENT

2.1. Research Questions

1. How do third-year English majors perceive the effectiveness of dictation as a tool for enhancing listening skills?
2. In what ways is dictation currently integrated into listening skills practice among third-year English majors at HNMU?
3. What challenges do students commonly encounter when engaging in dictation tasks to enhance their listening skills?

2.2. Literature Review

Listening is considered one of the most fundamental skills in language acquisition, serving as the basis for developing other language abilities such as speaking, reading, and writing. According to Underwood (1989), listening is an active process involving attention and meaning extraction from auditory stimuli. The skill encompasses a variety of aspects, including sound recognition, vocabulary understanding, and interpreting the speaker's intentions within a sociocultural context (Vandergrift, 1999). Listening is often emphasized in early language learning, as it offers cognitive, affective, and communicative advantages. However, despite its importance, many learners struggle with mastering listening due to challenges such as limited vocabulary, fast speech, unclear pronunciation, and environmental factors like noise (Mahmud, 2024). As a result, enhancing listening skills requires addressing these difficulties, which can be alleviated by improving cognitive abilities and motivating learners (Thompson, 2007).

One effective method for improving listening skills is dictation, which has been widely studied for its impact on language learning. Dictation involves learners transcribing spoken material, thus strengthening their listening, memory, and understanding of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. This practice not only improves listening comprehension but also aids in the development of writing and spelling skills (Cooke & Leis, 2018). There are several types of dictation activities, including traditional dictation, partial dictation, and running dictation, each of which serves different educational purposes. For instance, running dictation encourages teamwork and communication while practicing listening, as students work in groups to dictate information from one person to another.

Research supports the effectiveness of dictation in enhancing listening skills. Studies show that students who engage in dictation exercises often demonstrate significant improvements in their listening abilities. Yonezaki (2014) found that high school students who practiced dictation regularly showed higher scores in listening tests compared to those who did not. Similarly, Kiany & Shiramiry (2002) observed that elementary learners who practiced dictation outperformed others in listening comprehension tests. Dictation also benefits learners by promoting focus, discipline, and concentration, as students need to pay close attention to the spoken material and transcribe it

accurately (Saragih et al., 2022). This approach is effective across different levels of language proficiency and can be tailored to suit various learner needs.

Despite its advantages, dictation can be stressful for some learners, particularly when they face fast speech rates, unfamiliar accents, or difficult vocabulary. Some students may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to keep up, which can hinder their progress (Podhorská, 2022). Moreover, dictation requires considerable concentration, and if students lose focus, they may miss parts of the text, reducing the effectiveness of the activity. Time constraints in the classroom also pose challenges, as students often struggle to complete dictation tasks within the limited time available (Saragih et al., 2022).

The perception of dictation as a learning tool varies among students. While some view it as an outdated and boring method, others find it beneficial for improving their language skills. Studies show that when dictation activities are applied creatively, students tend to enjoy them and perceive them as effective for enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Podhorská, 2022). For example, the use of dictogloss, a type of dictation where learners reconstruct a text based on keywords, has been shown to increase student engagement and improve listening comprehension (Ngo & Le, 2020). Furthermore, dictation helps learners develop patience, perseverance, and the ability to focus, which are essential qualities for successful language learning.

Overall, dictation is a powerful tool for enhancing listening skills and overall language proficiency. While it may pose some challenges, its benefits in improving listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation are widely recognized. By understanding the different types of dictation and the contexts in which they are applied, teachers can effectively use this method to support students in their language learning journey. Additionally, further research into students' perceptions of dictation can provide valuable insights into how to optimize its use in language classrooms.

2.3. Research methods

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the perceptions of third-year English majors regarding dictation as a tool for improving listening skills, its practical application, and the challenges students encounter. The quantitative component of the study utilizes a Likert scale and a multiple-choice survey, common tools in survey research, to measure students' attitudes toward dictation and its effectiveness in enhancing their listening abilities. The survey gathered measurable data regarding students' agreement or disagreement with specific statements about dictation. The qualitative aspect includes open-ended questions to gain deeper insights into students' opinions and the difficulties they face when engaging in dictation activities. The integration of both methods allows for a comprehensive understanding, offering both statistical data and detailed perspectives. The general premise of mixed-methods research is that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a more thorough understanding of complex issues than either method alone (Creswell et al., 2007).

The participants in this study were required to engage in dictation as part of their self-study listening practice, using any available resources. They were asked to maintain a diary after each session in March 2025, reflecting on their experience. Following the completion of these activities, participants provided honest feedback through a survey conducted on Google Forms. After reviewing the feedback, incomplete or irrelevant responses were excluded, resulting in 50 valid responses that were analyzed using Google Forms to create various charts and tables for the data presentation.

The study focused on third-year English majors from four different classes at Hanoi Metropolitan University. A total of 50 participants, both male and female, from these classes were selected due to their extensive background in listening skills, having completed 11 credits in relevant listening courses, including both basic and advanced levels. This ensured the participants had a solid foundation in listening skills, as well as prior exposure to dictation exercises. Thus, these students were deemed ideal candidates to provide valuable feedback on the use of dictation in language learning.

Data collection involved a well-designed survey instrument developed to meet the study's objectives of exploring students' perceptions of dictation as a tool for improving listening skills. The development process included a review of relevant literature on dictation and listening skills to ensure that the questions aligned with the study's focus. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative data, with 21 multiple-choice and Likert scale questions designed to measure students' attitudes, usage, and perceived effectiveness of dictation. Additionally, two open-ended questions were included to collect more detailed insights regarding the challenges faced by students and their suggestions for improvement.

The survey was distributed to participants on March 31st. It employed a Likert scale to assess students' perceptions of dictation as a listening tool, with responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In addition, open-ended questions provided students with an opportunity to share their experiences and insights in greater detail. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions in total, with 21 multiple-choice questions and 2 open-ended questions. The first section of the survey gathered background information, while the second section explored the practical application of dictation activities. The third section examined students' perceptions of dictation, and the fourth section focused on the challenges they encountered. The final section consisted of open-ended questions aimed at providing a deeper understanding of students' perspectives.

By using both quantitative and qualitative data, this research offers a holistic approach to understanding how dictation impacts listening skill development, along with identifying the challenges students face and the potential for further improvements in its application.

2.4. Results and discussions

2.4.1. Practical application of Dictation Method

The survey results demonstrate how Hanoi Metropolitan University's third-year English majors utilise the dictation method in enhancing listening skills. Students' engagement with dictation practice varies significantly.

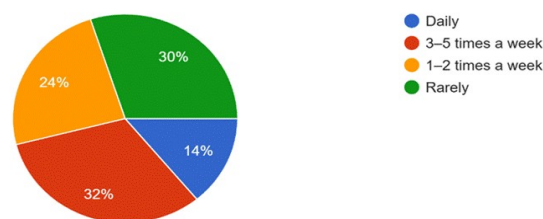


Chart 1. How often students engage in dictation exercises

As shown in the chart, just 14% practice daily, while 32% do so 3–5 times weekly. Another 24% practice 1–2 times per week, and a substantial 30% rarely practice. This means only 46% (combining daily and 3–5 times weekly practitioners) maintain regular practice (at least three times weekly). The discrepancy between intention and action highlights a common challenge: despite recognizing dictation's benefits, most students have yet to develop a sustained, disciplined routine with this method.

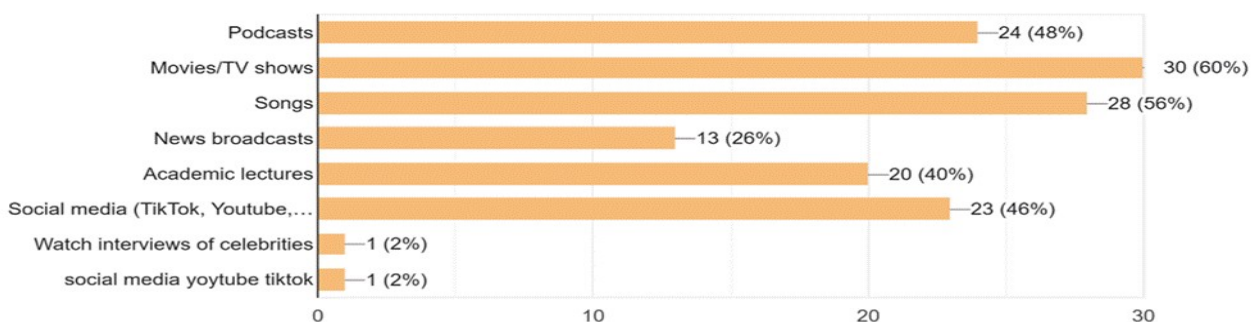


Chart 2. Listening materials are commonly used by students.

According to the data in Chart 2, students primarily use movies (60%), songs (56%), and podcasts (48%) for dictation practice, while only 26% rely on academic lectures. This indicates a clear preference for entertainment-based materials: while these resources may help improve vocabulary, pronunciation, or offer enjoyment, they lack academic substance, which undermines the objective of enhancing academic listening skills in a university setting. Without proper guidance on selecting suitable learning materials, listening practice may become misdirected, ultimately diminishing its long-term effectiveness.



Chart 3. How students usually carry out dictation

According to Chart 3, 38% of students opt for the "listen and write immediately" method, 38% choose "listen and write," and 24% follow the approach of "listen and repeat multiple times before writing." This data clearly shows that students are using the dictation method in their self-study according to their individual learning styles and current language proficiency. However, the lack of a standardized approach or clear guidelines leads to inconsistent learning activities and fails to fully utilize skills such as sentence structure analysis, recognizing connecting words, or providing immediate feedback on spelling errors—key components for developing academic listening skills.

For example, students who listen and write immediately may improve their processing skills but are more likely to make errors due to the absence of structured pauses or playback controls. Those who first listen to understand and then write require a higher level of language proficiency, which not all students possess. Meanwhile, listening multiple times before writing can improve accuracy, but does not align well with the fast-paced listening required in exams or real-life communication. Each method has its advantages and drawbacks, but the lack of pedagogical guidance can cause students to get stuck in a strategy that impedes optimal progress.

Moreover, the tendency to use dictation with listening materials primarily intended for entertainment creates another issue: students may prioritize enjoyment over language analysis. While movies or songs can motivate students, without a clear goal—such as listening for specific information, analyzing sound connections, or mastering grammatical structures—dictation may become a mere "fun copying" activity rather than an effective tool for skill development.

Overall, the data suggest that while students have actively embraced dictation as a self-study method, its application remains unsystematic, lacking clear direction and heavily relying on improvisation. The main challenges include irregular practice frequencies, the use of non-academic listening materials, and gaps in pedagogical strategy. Without targeted interventions from instructors—such as providing sample materials, clear practice procedures, and post-practice feedback—dictation is unlikely to develop into a sustainable learning habit, even if students recognize its potential value.

2.4.2. Students' perceptions and challenges

Based on survey replies, students have initially perceived dictation as a viable self-study method. However, for it to evolve into a long-term and effective learning tool, learners must cultivate consistent study habits. Throughout this process, factors such as awareness, emotions, prior experiences, and practical challenges play a crucial role in shaping students' dedication to this method.

Table 1. Students' perception of dictation as a learning listening method

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Dictation helps me focus better when listening to spoken English	24%	36%	22%	14%	4%
2. Dictation improves my ability to recognize and understand spoken words and new vocabulary	16%	42%	24%	14%	4%
3. Dictation helps improve my spelling, punctuation, and grammar	24%	34%	26%	10%	6%
4. Dictation is an effective tool to develop listening skills	20%	44%	24%	8%	4%
5. I feel more confident in my listening skills after doing dictation exercises	28%	32%	30%	8%	2%
6. Dictation activities are enjoyable and engaging	24%	38%	26%	10%	2%
7. I prefer dictation over other listening practice methods (e.g., multiple-choice, gap-fill)	24%	30%	32%	12%	2%

As shown in Table 1, students generally have a very positive view of dictation. A notable 64% of students believe that dictation helps to improve listening skills, which are vital for language acquisition. Additionally, 60% feel that it enhances concentration during listening, a key skill for effectively processing information. Furthermore, 58% report improvements in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, emphasizing dictation's role in supporting productive language skills. In terms of engagement, 62% of students find the method enjoyable, which is essential for maintaining consistent study habits. Moreover, 60% of students feel more confident after practicing dictation, highlighting its beneficial psychological effect on learners.

However, despite these overwhelmingly positive perceptions, learning behavior has not been consistently sustained, as discussed in the previous section. This presents a paradox: positive perceptions do not necessarily translate into lasting behavior. To address this issue, it is important to explore the challenges students face during the practice process, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' challenges in practicing the dictation method

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I find dictation activities difficult to remember all the words	12%	28%	40%	18%	2%
2. Fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary make dictation difficult for me	8%	38%	34%	18%	2%
3. I lack of time to complete the dictation activities.	16%	42%	26%	10%	6%
4. I find dictation difficult in understanding accents.	20%	41%	25%	10%	4%

According to the data, 61% of students reported difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents, a linguistic challenge that can be hard to manage during self-study. Additionally, 58% stated that they lacked sufficient time to complete dictation, reflecting the overall pressure of academic studies and suggesting that without proper organization, dictation can become burdensome. Furthermore, 46% of students struggled with fast speaking speeds and challenging vocabulary, while 40% found it difficult to recall the entire listening content. These findings indicate that dictation demands high levels of language processing and memory, particularly for learners who lack a strong foundation in listening skills.

The relationship between practice frequency and progress in listening skills is further highlighted in students' open-ended responses. Of the 43 students who answered the open-ended question, 58% directly confirmed that dictation helps them understand spoken language more accurately, enhancing their ability to concentrate, distinguish sounds, and match the speaking pace. Students mentioned that dictation trains their brains to actively engage with spoken language and recognize speech accents. They believe this method helps them improve listening comprehension and understand fast speech or natural conversations: "Dictation trains my ear to catch pronunciation, intonation, and connected speech" (P12), "It helps me keep up with real-life conversation speeds" (P27), "Dictation improves my attention to detail and forces me to focus closely" (P11). This indicates that dictation acts as a tool to "sharpen the auditory senses."

However, it is important to note that dictation will not be effective if it is not implemented correctly or does not match the learner's needs and proficiency level. Some students reported that even after listening multiple times, they still struggled to write accurately or became confused when faced with fast speech: "It's difficult to keep up with the audio, especially when the speech is too fast" (P03), "I have to pause the audio too many times to catch up with everything" (P12), "Fast speech and unfamiliar accents make dictation difficult for me" (P18). This indicates that dictation is truly effective only if the learner adopts the right approach, receives proper guidance, and practices consistently in a controlled environment. On the other hand, for learners who tend to think holistically (global learners), this method may be seen as too detailed, lacking a broader perspective or interaction, which could lead to a decrease in motivation: "Sometimes I feel like I don't have motivation to continue with dictation" (P27), "Dictation is boring, especially when there is no immediate feedback" (p15).

2.4.3. Summary of findings

This study aimed to explore third-year English majors' perceptions and the use of dictation as a tool for improving listening skills at Hanoi Metropolitan University (HNMU). Using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from open-ended responses, the research offered a comprehensive view of how students perceive and apply dictation in their language learning.

The findings revealed that most students viewed dictation positively, believing it improved their listening comprehension, focus, and ability to recognize spoken words. Many also appreciated its role in enhancing vocabulary retention, grammar understanding, and pronunciation. However, despite these positive views, dictation was rarely incorporated into formal instruction, and students mainly practiced it independently using entertainment materials like songs and movies. This lack of structured integration into the curriculum limited its full potential.

Students faced challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar accents, difficult vocabulary, and time constraints, which hindered regular dictation practice. The absence of feedback also left many unsure about their performance. Despite these issues, over half of the participants expressed a strong interest in continuing dictation, suggesting its potential as a sustainable practice when guided properly.

Another key finding was the confusion between dictation and "listen and repeat" exercises, highlighting the need for clearer instruction. Overall, while dictation is widely seen as beneficial, its inconsistent application in classrooms, lack of feedback, and unclear definition hinder its effectiveness. To maximize its potential, educators should incorporate dictation systematically, offer feedback, and ensure clear understanding of its purpose in language learning. This research emphasizes the need to better integrate dictation into the curriculum, especially in Vietnam's EFL context, where authentic language exposure is often limited.

3. CONCLUSION

This study highlights a critical yet often overlooked aspect of language learning in Vietnam's EFL context. While communicative and task-based learning methods have gained traction, foundational skills like listening comprehension continue to pose challenges. The findings emphasize the value of practical, low-cost, and adaptable techniques like dictation, particularly in

settings where learners have limited exposure to natural English input. By rethinking dictation as a skill-integrated strategy, educators in Vietnam can help bridge the gap between passive exposure and active language processing. Additionally, promoting student autonomy through structured yet flexible activities like dictation aligns with the country's shift toward learner-centered education.

This research contributes to the ongoing discussion about modernizing and re-contextualizing traditional methods for today's EFL learners. It reaffirms the pedagogical value of dictation while stressing the importance of structured support and thoughtful implementation. By focusing on student perceptions and practical challenges, this study provides valuable insights for curriculum developers, language teachers, and learners alike. Ultimately, the findings advocate for a more balanced, research-driven approach to listening instruction—one that combines innovative methods with time-tested practices to equip Vietnamese learners with the skills needed for global communication.

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TÌM HIỂU NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH VÀ VIỆC ỨNG DỤNG THỰC TIỄN KỸ THUẬT CHÉP CHÍNH TẢ TRONG VIỆC NÂNG CAO KỸ NĂNG NGHE TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THỦ ĐÔ HÀ NỘI

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này khám phá nhận thức của sinh viên năm ba chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội về việc sử dụng phương pháp chép chính tả để nâng cao kỹ năng nghe của họ. Kỹ năng nghe là một thành phần quan trọng trong việc học ngôn ngữ và các bài tập chép chính tả từ lâu đã được công nhận là công cụ hiệu quả để cải thiện khả năng nghe, đặc biệt đối với người học tiếng Anh không phải là bản ngữ. Thông qua phương pháp nghiên cứu kết hợp, kết hợp cả dữ liệu định lượng và định tính, nghiên cứu này xem xét cách sinh viên cảm nhận về việc chép chính tả, tần suất sử dụng và các thách

thức họ gặp phải khi áp dụng kỹ thuật này. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy mặc dù sinh viên nhìn nhận chép chính tả là một công cụ có giá trị trong việc cải thiện khả năng tập trung, nhận diện từ vựng và phát âm, nhưng họ gặp phải những khó khăn đáng kể như tốc độ nói nhanh, giọng nói không quen thuộc và giới hạn thời gian. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra sự thiếu nhất quán trong việc áp dụng phương pháp chép chính tả, vì nhiều sinh viên chủ yếu sử dụng tài liệu giải trí thay vì nội dung học thuật, điều này làm giảm hiệu quả của việc luyện tập. Những phát hiện này dự kiến sẽ cung cấp cho các giáo viên cái nhìn sâu sắc hơn về cách tích hợp phương pháp chép chính tả hiệu quả vào chương trình giảng dạy, từ đó đưa ra các khuyến nghị thực tế để cải thiện giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tại Trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội và các bối cảnh giáo dục khác.

Từ khóa: Chép chính tả; tiếng Anh; ngoại ngữ; HNMTU; hướng dẫn; kỹ năng nghe; nhận thức.