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ENHANCING EFL STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH CLOZE DICTATION: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of the cloze dictation technique in improving the listening comprehension of EFL students, focusing on common problems including poor vocabulary identification, trouble capturing crucial information, and lack of focus during listening tasks. Two sets of eleventh-grade students were used in a quasi-experimental design: a control group (n = 35) was taught using traditional listening techniques, while an experimental group (n = 34) received instruction using cloze dictation. Pre-test and post-test listening assessments were used to gather data, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis. The results showed that whereas the control group made no discernible gain (from 58.86 to 56.71), the experimental group exhibited a significant increase, with the mean score rising from 60.44 to 73.38. The Mann-Whitney U test verified a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.006 < 0.05$) because the data were not normally distributed. The findings show that the cloze dictation method successfully improves students' capacity to recognize spoken words, concentrate on important details, and derive meaning from auditory input. Pedagogically, this study highlights the importance of integrating structured and interactive listening activities to promote active engagement and deeper comprehension in EFL classrooms. Practically, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate cloze dictation regularly using varied and level-appropriate audio materials to support students' listening development. Future research is recommended to explore the integration of this technique with other language skills or across different educational contexts to further validate its effectiveness.

Keywords: Cloze Dictation, EFL Listening, Listening Comprehension, Quasi-Experimental Design, Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

Since listening comprehension is the main source of linguistic information in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations, it is an essential part of language learning. According to Nunan (2003), listening is more than just hearing sounds; it is an intentional and active process of deriving meaning from spoken words. This perspective is further supported by Goh and Vandergrift (2021), who argue that listening comprehension involves complex cognitive processes, including attention, memory, perception, and the integration of

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linguistic and contextual knowledge. Recent studies have reinforced this view by demonstrating that listening ability plays a crucial role in developing higher order language skills such as summarizing, note taking, and critical thinking (Nishikawa et al., 2026). Therefore, listening is not only a foundational skill but also a key driver of overall language proficiency.

Even so, listening is still one of the hardest abilities for EFL students to master. Many students have ongoing trouble comprehending spoken English because of things like a small vocabulary, strange accents, quick speaking, and shortened forms. (Jaya et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2025). These challenges are often exacerbated by cognitive overload, as learners struggle to process auditory input in real time while simultaneously attempting to construct meaning. Field (2008) notes that learners frequently focus on decoding individual words rather than interpreting the overall message, which leads to comprehension breakdown. In addition, recent studies highlight that insufficient use of listening strategies, such as predicting, inferencing, and monitoring comprehension, further limits students' ability to process spoken language effectively (Graham, 2017; Liu et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2025). As a result, many EFL learners develop low confidence and anxiety toward listening tasks, which negatively impacts their engagement and performance.

In accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference, English language instruction at the secondary school level in Indonesia places a strong emphasis on the integration of four language skills and seeks to enhance students' communicative ability. Nonetheless, there is mounting evidence that classroom instruction does not adequately foster the growth of listening skills. Listening instruction is often limited to conventional activities such as playing audio recordings followed by comprehension questions, which tend to encourage passive learning rather than active engagement (Burns & Siegel, 2018; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Recent studies conducted in Indonesian contexts reveal that students continue to demonstrate low listening proficiency despite curriculum expectations, indicating a gap between pedagogical approaches and learners' needs (A'R et al., 2025; Akmal et al., 2025). Furthermore, the increasing integration of digital media in education requires learners to develop stronger listening skills, yet many instructional practices have not adapted to these changing demands.

Researchers have increasingly pushed for the adoption of structured, interactive teaching methods that actively involve students in the listening process in order to solve these issues. One such approach is dictation-based learning, which has been re-evaluated in recent years as an effective pedagogical tool. According to Kazazoglu (2013), dictation can enhance learners' listening accuracy, grammatical awareness, and auditory discrimination skills. More recent studies confirm that structured dictation activities can improve learners' ability to process spoken input, particularly when combined with strategy based instruction (Huynh Thi, 2025; Moussaoui, 2025). These findings suggest that dictation is not merely a traditional or mechanical exercise but a cognitively engaging activity that supports language development.

Among various forms of dictation, cloze dictation has gained particular attention as an effective technique for improving listening comprehension. In this technique, learners are provided with a written text in which certain words are omitted, and they are required to fill

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in the missing parts based on what they hear. This process encourages learners to engage in both bottom-up processing, such as recognizing sounds and words, and top-down processing, such as using contextual clues to infer meaning. As a result, cloze dictation facilitates deeper cognitive engagement and promotes more effective listening comprehension. This aligns with broader perspectives on listening pedagogy that emphasize guided processing and structured input as essential for comprehension development (Rost, 2015). Research has shown that this technique can enhance learners' ability to identify key information, recognize lexical items, and understand the overall meaning of spoken texts (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021; Pham & Le, 2025).

The efficacy of cloze dictation and comparable methods in enhancing listening abilities has been repeatedly shown by empirical research. When compared to conventional approaches, Mowlaie et al. (2020) discovered that partial dictation greatly enhanced EFL learners' listening comprehension. In a similar vein, Rifai et al. (2025) found that cloze dictation improved students' listening skills in Indonesian secondary schools. Additional studies have shown that dictation-based activities can increase learners' motivation, engagement, and confidence, as they require active participation and provide immediate feedback (Hidayati et al., 2023; Vitriyati, 2021). Furthermore, recent research highlights that combining dictation techniques with interactive learning strategies can further enhance listening outcomes and learner autonomy (Linda et al., 2025; Paris et al., 2024).

Despite these encouraging results, there are still a number of holes in the body of current research. First, a lot of earlier research has used descriptive or pre-experimental approaches, which makes it more difficult to determine the causal linkages between teaching methods and learning objectives. Second, especially in Indonesian EFL contexts, there are still few quasi-experimental studies that directly evaluate the efficacy of cloze dictation with traditional teaching techniques. Third, while previous research has generally reported improvements in listening comprehension, there is limited analysis of how specific listening sub skills, such as identifying key details, recognizing vocabulary, and constructing contextual meaning, are affected by the technique. Moreover, recent studies emphasize the need for context specific investigations that consider learners' characteristics, classroom conditions, and instructional constraints (Huynh Thi, 2025). These gaps indicate the need for more rigorous and contextually grounded research on the effectiveness of cloze dictation.

Although previous studies have reported positive effects of dictation-based activities on listening comprehension, several limitations remain. Many earlier studies relied on descriptive or pre-experimental designs, which provide limited evidence regarding the causal impact of instructional techniques on listening achievement. In addition, only a small number of studies have examined the effectiveness of cloze dictation in Indonesian secondary school contexts using rigorous quasi-experimental methods. Previous research has also tended to focus on general listening achievement without examining how cloze dictation supports specific listening sub-skills such as vocabulary recognition, identification of key details, and contextual interpretation. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by employing a quasi-experimental design in an Indonesian EFL classroom context and by

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providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of cloze dictation in improving students' listening comprehension.

In light of these factors, the purpose of this study is to determine whether the cloze dictation method may help eleventh grade students in an Indonesian secondary school improve their listening comprehension. This study compares the performance of students who are taught using cloze dictation with those who get traditional listening instruction using a quasi-experimental methodology. Pre-test and post-test evaluations allow for a methodical assessment of pupils' development and offer factual proof of the intervention's effectiveness. By doing this, this study hopes to add to the expanding corpus of research on listening instruction and offer insights into successful teaching strategies in EFL settings.

This study is important since it makes both theoretical and practical contributions. By offering actual data from a controlled experimental framework, it theoretically expands on earlier research and resolves methodological issues. Practically, it offers pedagogical implications for English teachers by demonstrating how cloze dictation can be effectively implemented to enhance students' listening comprehension. In addition, the findings of this study are expected to inform future research on the integration of structured listening techniques with other language skills and their application in diverse educational settings.

METHODS

The application of the cloze dictation technique in enhancing students' listening comprehension was investigated in this study utilizing a quantitative approach and a quasi-experimental design. Since a quasi-experimental method, which is frequently employed in educational settings when intact classes are used, enables the researcher to compare the results of two groups without random assignment, it was deemed appropriate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A control group received traditional training, whereas an experimental group received the treatment.

Research Design

A non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test measurements was used in the study. A pre-test was given to both groups to gauge their beginning listening comprehension skills, and following the treatment time, a post-test was given to gauge any progress. While the control group got traditional listening instruction, the experimental group was instructed utilizing the cloze dictation technique. This methodology made it possible to compare the two groups' learning progress and assessed the intervention's efficacy (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Participants and Setting

Eleventh-grade students from a public senior high school in Indonesia participated in this study. The study involved 69 students in total, split into two groups: 35 students in the control group and 34 students in the experimental group. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants based on the current class structure. In educational research, this sampling strategy is frequently employed when random assignment is not practical (Etikan,

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2016). It was anticipated that both groups' learning backgrounds and skill levels were comparatively similar.

Research Instrument

This study's main instrument was a listening comprehension test with two sections: cloze dictation items and multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice section assessed students' general understanding of spoken texts, while the cloze dictation section required students to fill in missing words based on the audio input. This combination of test formats allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of listening comprehension, including both global understanding and detailed information processing (Field, 2008).

By matching the test items to the curricular standards and learning objectives, content validity was developed to guarantee the instrument's quality. Additionally, the test's reliability was taken into account by keeping the pre-test and post-test formats, levels of difficulty, and scoring methods consistent.

Before the instrument was administered, content validity was evaluated through expert judgment involving two English education lecturers and one experienced English teacher. The experts reviewed the suitability of the test items with the curriculum objectives, listening indicators, and students' proficiency level. Revisions were made based on their feedback to ensure clarity and appropriateness. In addition, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha through a pilot test involving students outside the research sample. The reliability coefficient was categorized as acceptable, indicating that the instrument consistently measured students' listening comprehension.

Data Collection Procedure

There were multiple phases to the data collection process. Initially, the experimental and control groups were given a pre-test to assess their listening skills. The treatment was administered over four educational sessions after the pre-test. The cloze dictation approach was used to teach the experimental group throughout the therapy phase. This involves listening to audio texts and filling in the blanks in written sections. In contrast, the control group was given traditional listening education, which involved listening to audio recordings and then responding to comprehension questions.

During the treatment sessions, the experimental group participated in structured cloze dictation activities. Students first listened to an audio recording without interruption to understand the general meaning. Afterward, they listened to the recording several times while completing missing words in a partially deleted transcript. The teacher then discussed the answers with the students, clarified unfamiliar vocabulary, and provided feedback on pronunciation and meaning. Meanwhile, the control group completed conventional listening activities consisting of listening to recordings and answering comprehension questions without dictation tasks.

A post-test was given to both groups at the conclusion of the treatment session in order to gauge the students' listening comprehension following the intervention. The pre-test and

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post-test served as a foundation for statistical comparison between the two groups and made it possible to quantify learning improvements.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the gathered data. Students' performance on the pre-test and post-test was summarized using descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and standard deviations. Inferential statistical analysis was used to see if the experimental and control groups differed significantly.

The Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test, was used to compare the two groups' post-test results because the data did not satisfy the assumption of normal distribution. When comparing two independent groups with non-normally distributed data, the Mann-Whitney U test is suitable (Pallant, 2020). A significance level of 0.05 was established. A statistically significant difference between the groups was shown if the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating that the students' listening comprehension was significantly impacted by the treatment.

Ethical Considerations

The entire study process was conducted with ethical issues in mind. Students gave their consent to engage in the study, which was approved by the school administration. The researcher made sure that participant identities were kept private and that the information gathered was used only for study. Furthermore, there was no danger or disadvantage associated with the treatment given to the experimental group.

RESULTS

Based on the examination of pre-test and post-test results from both the experimental and control groups, the study's conclusions are presented in this section. The analysis's main objectives are to characterize students' performance, spot trends in change, and ascertain whether there are statistically significant changes between the groups following the intervention.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of students' listening comprehension scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Experimental	Pre-test	34	60.44	16.20	30	95
Experimental	Post-test	34	73.38	14.85	50	100
Control	Pre-test	35	58.86	14.97	30	85
Control	Post-test	35	56.71	13.82	30	80

Both groups began with comparatively similar listening comprehension capabilities, according to the descriptive results. In the pre-test, the experimental group scored an

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average of 60.44, whereas the control group had a marginally lower average of 58.86. The two groups' initial differences were negligible, indicating that their baseline listening skills were comparable.

The experimental group's performance significantly improved following the treatment, with the mean score increasing to 73.38. This is a 12.94-point improvement. The control group, on the other hand, did not improve; rather, their mean score dropped by 2.15 points to 56.71. These findings imply that whereas traditional training did not provide quantifiable improvements, the intervention had a favorable impact on the experimental group.

In terms of score distribution, the experimental group demonstrated a shift in both minimum and maximum scores. The minimum score increased from 30 to 50, indicating that lower-performing students improved after the treatment. Additionally, the maximum score increased from 95 to 100, showing that high-performing students also benefited from the intervention. The standard deviation dropped from 16.20 to 14.85, indicating a slight decrease in score variability and a more stable level of student performance.

On the other hand, the control group's score distribution did not significantly improve. The highest score dropped from 85 to 80, while the minimum score stayed at 30. The standard deviation dropped little from 14.97 to 13.82, suggesting a slight decrease in variability without a corresponding rise in mean performance. The disparity in learning outcomes between the two groups is further highlighted by these trends.

Normality Test

To ascertain if the data satisfied the presumptions necessary for parametric statistical analysis, a normality test was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Table 2 displays the findings.

Table 2. Results of Normality Test (Shapiro–Wilk)

Group	Test	Sig.
Experimental	Pre-test	0.004
Experimental	Post-test	0.009
Control	Pre-test	0.000
Control	Post-test	0.000

All significance results fall below the 0.05 threshold, as Table 2 illustrates. This suggests that the pre-test and post-test data for both groups are not regularly distributed. As a result, the normalcy assumption needed for parametric tests is not met. To guarantee the validity of the results, a non-parametric statistical test was used for additional analysis based on this outcome.

Mann–Whitney U Test

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The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if the experimental and control groups differed statistically significantly. Table 3 displays the findings.

Table 3. Mann–Whitney U Test Results (Ranks)

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Experimental	34	41.20	1400.80
Control	35	29.85	1044.75

According to the findings, the experimental group's mean rank (41.20) was greater than that of the control group (29.85). This implies that, on average, pupils in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group on the post-test. The experimental group consistently outperformed the control group throughout the dataset, as evidenced by the difference in mean rank. Further statistical results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test Statistics

Statistic	Value
Mann–Whitney U	380.000
Z	-2.756
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006

The Mann-Whitney U test yielded a significance value of 0.006, below the alpha threshold of 0.05. This finding suggests that the post-test performance of the experimental and control groups differs statistically significantly. The direction of the difference is further supported by the negative Z value (-2.756), which shows that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of scoring.

Overall, the statistical analysis shows that students who got teaching using the cloze dictation approach outperformed those who received traditional instruction in terms of listening comprehension. The proof of the intervention's efficacy is strengthened by the consistent improvement seen in the descriptive statistics and corroborated by inferential analysis.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study offer compelling proof that students' listening comprehension is much enhanced by the cloze dictation method. In contrast to the control group's stasis, the experimental group's post-test scores significantly increased, suggesting that structured and participatory listening instruction is essential for improving students' comprehension of spoken language. This result implies that the kind of instructional support given during listening exercises has a significant impact on listening improvement rather than just exposure.

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The effectiveness of the cloze dictation technique can be explained through its alignment with cognitive models of listening comprehension. Listening is widely understood as a complex process involving the interaction of bottom up and top-down processing (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). In this study, cloze dictation required students to decode phonological input while simultaneously using contextual cues to reconstruct missing information. This dual processing demand appears to have strengthened learners' ability to integrate linguistic input with prior knowledge. Unlike conventional listening tasks that often separate comprehension from processing, cloze dictation situates learners directly within the listening process, requiring continuous attention and real time decision making. This may explain the more substantial gains observed in the experimental group.

The technique's enhanced level of cognitive involvement is another significant component that contributes to its success. When using cloze dictation, students must actively anticipate, track, and confirm what they are hearing. Metacognitive regulation, which has been found to be essential for effective listening comprehension, is intimately linked to these processes (Cross, 2011; Graham & Santos, 2015). By participating in these activities, students actively create meaning in addition to receiving input, which improves comprehension and memory. The results of this study provide credence to the idea that active student participation should be prioritized above passive information reception in listening teaching.

The study's conclusions align with earlier empirical research on dictation-based methods. According to Mowlaie et al. (2020), students who completed partial dictation exercises showed noticeably better listening comprehension than those who had traditional teaching. Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2023) reported that dictation activities improved students' ability to identify detailed information and enhanced overall listening performance. In the Indonesian context, Vitriyati (2021) also demonstrated that dictation-based instruction increased students' listening achievement and classroom participation. These findings collectively reinforce the conclusion that structured listening tasks can effectively support comprehension development.

The significant improvement in the experimental group may also be explained by the interactive and scaffolded nature of cloze dictation activities. Through repeated exposure to spoken input, students were encouraged to focus on phonological recognition, vocabulary identification, and contextual prediction simultaneously. This finding supports the theory of active listening proposed by Vandergrift and Goh (2021), which emphasizes that comprehension develops more effectively when learners actively process linguistic input rather than passively receive information. Furthermore, the collaborative feedback process during dictation activities may have strengthened students' confidence and reduced listening anxiety, factors that are frequently associated with improved listening performance in EFL classrooms.

Beyond general improvement, the present study also reveals that cloze dictation benefits learners across different proficiency levels. The increase in minimum scores in the experimental group suggests that lower achieving students were able to improve their performance through structured listening support. This finding is particularly important in

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EFL contexts, where learners often struggle with limited vocabulary and difficulty recognizing spoken forms. Cloze dictation provides repeated exposure to target language forms while guiding learners' attention to specific linguistic elements, thereby facilitating incremental learning. Previous studies have shown that structured listening activities can enhance learners' ability to process spoken input and improve comprehension performance (Milliner & Dimoski, 2021; Mowlaie et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

In addition to cognitive benefits, the technique may also influence affective factors such as motivation and confidence. Listening is often perceived as a difficult and anxiety inducing skill among EFL learners (Nguyen et al., 2025). The structured nature of cloze dictation, combined with its interactive format, may reduce anxiety by providing clear tasks and immediate feedback opportunities. When learners are able to successfully complete listening tasks, their confidence increases, which in turn enhances their willingness to engage in future listening activities. This positive cycle of engagement and achievement may have contributed to the improved performance observed in the experimental group.

The control group's lack of development, on the other hand, emphasizes the shortcomings of traditional listening training. Conventional methods frequently place more emphasis on comprehension tests than on improving listening abilities. Without enough assistance throughout the listening process, students are usually given questions after they have finished listening. According to Flowerdew and Miller (2005), these methods fall short in developing the strategic and cognitive abilities necessary for good listening. Additionally, recent studies show that passive listening exercises may not foster meaningful learning, especially when students are not exposed to much real-world spoken language (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). These worries are empirically supported by the study's results, since the control group showed no discernible improvement.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study highlight the importance of incorporating structured and interactive techniques into listening instruction. Cloze dictation offers a practical approach that can be easily implemented in classroom settings without requiring advanced technology. It can also be adapted to different proficiency levels by adjusting the complexity of the text and the number of missing elements. Furthermore, the technique can be integrated with other instructional strategies, such as pre listening activities and post listening reflection, to create a more comprehensive learning experience. This aligns with recent recommendations that emphasize the integration of multiple listening strategies to enhance learner outcomes (Graham & Santos, 2015).

Notwithstanding this study's advantages, a number of limitations should be noted. The results may not be as applicable in other settings because the sample was restricted to pupils from a particular school. Furthermore, the treatment's brief duration might not adequately capture its long-term impacts on listening development. It is advised that future studies look into the effects of cloze dictation over long periods of time and in various educational contexts. To increase cloze dictation's efficacy in contemporary learning environments, more research may examine how it might be integrated with digital resources like interactive applications and audio platforms.

This study concludes by offering empirical proof that the cloze dictation approach is a successful teaching method for enhancing listening comprehension in EFL settings. The

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method provides a thorough approach to listening teaching by encouraging active participation, assisting cognitive processing, and addressing both verbal and affective elements of learning. These results add to the expanding corpus of research on successful listening teaching and offer useful advice for educators looking to raise students' listening proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how well EFL students' listening comprehension is enhanced by the cloze dictation technique. The results suggest that when compared to students who received traditional training, children who were taught utilizing the cloze dictation approach shown a considerable improvement in their listening performance. This suggests that planned and participatory listening exercises are crucial for improving students' comprehension of spoken language.

The results suggest that the cloze dictation technique facilitates both detailed listening and overall comprehension by engaging learners in active processing of auditory input. Through this technique, students are required to focus on specific linguistic elements while simultaneously constructing meaning, which contributes to more effective listening development. In addition, the improvement observed across different levels of student performance indicates that the technique can support a wide range of learners.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights the importance of incorporating active and structured listening techniques into classroom instruction. English teachers are encouraged to use cloze dictation as an alternative strategy to improve students' listening skills, particularly in contexts where learners experience difficulties in recognizing spoken words and understanding contextual meaning. The technique can be adapted to different proficiency levels and integrated with various types of listening materials to enhance learning outcomes.

Despite these contributions, the study's short treatment duration and comparatively small sample size limit its applicability. It is therefore advised that future studies look on the long-term efficacy of cloze dictation and its use in various educational settings. To provide a more thorough knowledge of this technique's potential in EFL learning, additional research may examine how it might be integrated with digital tools or other language skills.

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