

استخدام تكنيك الاملاء-الانشاء في تطوير الاداء الكتابي لطلبة المرحلة المتوسطة في العراق

م. م. كاظم محمد موسى الشمري

جامعة بابل/ كلية التربية الاساسية

## Using Dicto-Comp Technique in Developing Iraqi EFL Intermediate School Students' Performance in Writing Skill

Kadhim M. Musa AlShammari

University of Babylon / College of Basic Education

[kadhim.alshimmary@student.uobabylon.edu.iq](mailto:kadhim.alshimmary@student.uobabylon.edu.iq)

### Abstract

This study attempts to explore the impact of using Dicto-Comp technique on developing Iraqi EFL intermediate school students' performance in writing skills

To achieve the purpose of this study, a two-month experiment was conducted using the pre-test, post-test and control- experimental groups design. The population involved the second-year at males middle schools in the downtown area of Kerbala at the academic year (2018-2019). Two groups were randomly selected from Mumen-Qureish intermediate school for males to represent the sample of the study. One of these groups, with (33)students, was randomly assigned to be the experimental group (taught with the use of Dicto-Comp technique) and the other, with (32)students, was assigned to be the control group (taught by the prescribed method).

**Keywords:** Dicto-Comp, Technique, EFL, Writing Skill.

### المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة التعرف على اثر استخدام تكنيك Dicto-Comp على تطوير أداء طلاب المدارس المتوسطة في

اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارات الكتابة.

ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، أجريت تجربة لمدة شهرين باستخدام تصميم مجموعات الاختبار القبلي ، والبعدي ، والضابطة

التجريبية. مثل مجتمع البحث طلبة السنة الثانية في المدارس المتوسطة للبنين في محافظة كربلاء للعام الدراسي (2018-2019).

تم اختيار مجموعتين عشوائياً من مدرسة مؤمن قريش المتوسطة للبنين لتمثيل عينة الدراسة. إحدى هاتين المجموعتين ، ضمت

(33) طالباً ، تم تعيينها عشوائياً لتكون المجموعة التجريبية (التي تدرس باستخدام تكنيك Dicto-Comp) والأخرى ، مع (32)

طالباً ، تم تعيينها لتكون المجموعة الضابطة (تدرس بواسطة الطريقة المقررة).

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

تكنيك الاملاء-الانشاء، تكنيك، اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية، مهارة الكتابة

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

Writing skill is important to be mastered to maintain good communication with other people. English teaching and learning processes in the class should involve teaching writing skills correctly to help students build their ability and Competence in written language( Palmer et al.,1994:.1).

As an active skill, writing requires production more than recognition. It involves higher-level skills of organizing and planning and lower-level skills of word choice, punctuation, and spelling, among others. The learners are asked to master the skill not only in collecting ideas and organizing them but also in expressing them in a readable text.

Despite the importance of writing in human life, it is noted that a large number of students suffer from apparent weakness in different stages of language learning. It is assumed that students at

the end of high school should be able to talk about any subject in line with their lives, needs, or feelings; this means simply ready to write in most of the creative and functional topics (Harper 2015:58).

Some approaches are used to teach writing as a productive skill, which poses some challenges to the learners. Dicto-Comp technique is one method of teaching writing which has become more familiar in recent years, so writing plays a significant role in the academic programs and future professional lives of students.

This study deals with the Dicto-Comp technique as one of the important techniques in teaching writing skills.

The Dicto-Comp technique is a cross between dictation and Composition. This technique aims to help learners focus on language accuracy in a task-based, interactive way. This technique includes the following characteristics (1) Student arrangement – which proceeds from individuals to the whole class. (2) Information distribution – students collaborate to collect their knowledge and skill by accessing the same source of information and (3) Student focus – focus on meaning and accuracy in language, which can target a particular language feature.

### 1.2 Aims

- The present study is intended to explore the effect of using the Dicto-Comp technique on intermediate school students' performance in writing skills.
- It intends to find out the development of using the Dicto-Comp technique in the experimental group.

### 1.3 Questions of the study:

The study aims at answering the following questions:

1. Is there a statistical difference between the performance of the experimental group using the Dicto-com technique and that of the control group using the prescribed method of teaching?
2. Does the use of the Dicto-com technique help students in writing?

### 1.4 Limits

The present study is limited to:

- a. Iraqi EFL 2nd intermediate students.
- b. The academic year of 2018-2019.
- c. Dicto-Comp technique.

### 1.5 Procedures

- a. Selecting a sample of the second intermediate school students, who are divided into two groups: control group and experimental group.
- b. Constructing a pre-test and a post-test reviewed by experts to ensure its validity; and calculating its reliability and item analysis.
- c. Constructing a questionnaire for the teacher.
- d. Teaching writing skill to the control group by using the conversational method and using the Dicto-com technique to teach the experimental group.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Concept of Writing

Writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language (Chastain, 1988: 244).

Olshtain (2001: 12) defines writing as the mental work, which involves inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into sentences and paragraphs that will be clear to readers. Writing can be described as the process of documenting thoughts and experiences. It

is viewed as a communicative social activity through which one can communicate a variety of messages to a close or distant known or unknown reader(s).

Writing remains the commonest way of examining student performance in English. All public examinations include a Composition. It is tangible that parents and students can see what has been done and what has been achieved. So, it has a high 'face validity' (Long and Richards, 1987:102).

Freeman (2000: 101) states that writing plays two distinct but Complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising texts) to accomplish a variety of goals (such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence). Second, it is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge. It acts as a tool for learning the subject matter. Students' writing can provide useful evidence of success and failure of confusion and errors, and the teacher can diagnose general problems based on such written work (Long and Richards, 1987: 7-16).

### 2.1.2 Types of Writing

Hudelson (1989: 55) and Mahmoud (1997: 73) divide writing into three categories.

#### 1. Expressive writing:

This type of writing reveals the person as an individual and focuses on his feelings, emotions, and ideas. Examples of expressive writing are diaries, journalism, and personal narratives.

#### 2. Poetic writing:

This refers to the type of writing that uses artistic or literary aspects of language to produce certain genres, e.g., stories, poems, jokes, and songs.

#### 3. Transactional/ Expository (informative/ persuasive) writing:

This type focuses on writing to get things done. The writer writes clearly for an audience and needs to describe, explain, argue, address, summarize, or answer questions. Examples of this type of writing are reports and summaries (Millrood, 2001: 134-142).

### 2.1.3 The Principles of Teaching Writing

Tang (2006:107) applies some principles for developing writing skills in teaching writing and how they can be applied in a Chinese ESL classroom:

1. Raise Students' Awareness
2. Students have Ideas
3. Read to Write
4. Teach the Process of Writing
5. Create a Learner-Centered Classroom in Active Communication.

### 2.1.4 Types of Writing Skills

Palmer (1986:7) analyzes the skills attached to writing under five titles:

A) Graphical or visual skills: 1. Writing graphemes (letters of the alphabet). 2. Spelling. 3. Punctuation and capitalization. 4. Format (such as the layout of a letter or a shopping list).

B) Grammatical skills: These refer to the pupils' ability to use a variety of sentence patterns and constructions successfully.

C) Expressive or stylistic skills: They include the pupils' ability to express precise meanings through various styles.

D) Rhetorical skills: They refer to the pupils' ability to use cohesive linguistic devices. The elements of rhetoric are treated under five headings: invention, arrangement, diction, memory, and delivery.

E) Organizational skills: These skills are concerned with organizing pieces of information into paragraphs and texts. This involves the sequencing of ideas and the avoidance of irrelevant information.

### 2.1.5 Teachers Role in Writing Lessons

To help students become better writers, teachers have some tasks to perform. Harmer (2004: 41-42) discusses five tasks a teacher can do before, during, and after the student's writing. They include the followings:

1. Demonstrating: Students should be aware of writing conventions and genre constraints in specific kinds of writing, so teachers have to be able to consider these features.
2. Motivating and Provoking: Teachers should motivate, help, and, provoke students to get ideas, excite them with the value of the task and persuade them on what fun it can be.
3. Supporting: teachers need to be supportive in writing lessons and help students overcome difficulties that students face in writing.
4. Responding: Teachers should react to the content and construction of a piece of writing supportively and make suggestions for its improvement.
5. Evaluating: When evaluating students' writing, teachers can point out the positive points, the mistakes that students make and, may award grades.

### 2.2 Dicto-Comp Technique

Dicto-Comp is a cross between dictation and a Composition (Wajnryb, 1990). It refers to learners' focus on language accuracy in a task-based, interactive way. It is an excellent way of practicing grammar and vocabulary as learners work on a combination of meaning and form.

Wajnryb (1990) argues that Dictogloss or Dicto-com is a relatively recent procedure in language teaching, which is different from language dictation. He emphasizes making the differentiation because, in Dicto-Comp, learners listen to a short text read out to them at normal speed, which they reconstruct in small groups until it has the same meaning as the original text. In contrast with dictation where learners only write down what is read by the teacher or audio source.

Dicto-gloss can be considered as a strategy, technique, task, or procedure since it has steps and intended aims as well. This procedure has some aims introduced by Wajnryb (1990). It aims to provide an opportunity for learners to use their productive grammar to create texts. It aims to encourage learners to find out what they do and do not know about English. This is realized in the attempts to reconstruct the text and in the subsequent analysis of those attempts. Further, it aims to upgrade and refine the learners' use of the language through a Comprehensive analysis of language options in the correction of the learners' approximate texts. Such a strategy deals with developing grammar learning. Wajnryb (1990). indicates that learners should pay attention, particularly in the reconstruction stage, to maintain as much information as possible from the original text using their notes and prior knowledge and produce an English sound text as it should be grammatically accurate and textually cohesive (Rashtachi & Khosroabdi, 2009).

The use of Dicto-Comp involves students' attention to language skills including writing, reading, speaking and listening and enhances learner's independence, collaboration, the integration of curriculum, variety, thinking abilities, and Complementary assessment techniques (Jacobs & Small, 2003).

Jacobs and Small (2003) state that Dicto-Comps do not need to include drafting sentences and paragraphs. Rather, students can do other forms of activities according to what the teacher reads to them. For example, a graphic organizer could be completed in which the facilitator finds or writes a drawing's description involving the related details about the topic's lexical items and concepts.

Dicto-Comp, as an innovative strategy to learn a second language, has been considered in previous studies.

Moreover, Shak (2006) investigating children using Dicto-Comp to focus on five basic stages (listening, noticing, activity, checking, and writing) stated that it could be utilized in the process of teaching and as in the followings:

- 1) Listening stage: Storytelling and whole-class discussion are used to prepare students for the topic.
- 2) Noticing stage: it is used when learners take notes after listening to a text at normal speed for a second time.
- 3) Activity stage: it is utilized n learners collaborate in small groups to draft the text for the lesson.
- 4) Checking stage: it usually analyzes and Compares the learners' writing drafts in a whole-class context to check whether they are on the right track or not.
- 5) Writing stage: it is particularly utilized to provide learners with the opportunity to individually write a similar text and illustrate their understandings about the reading.

Meanwhile, Wajnryb (1990) provides details of the four stages of Dicto-Comp highly utilized in teaching listening. These stages include preparation, dictation, reconstruction, analysis, and direction. When teachers utilize, the Dicto-Comp instructive stage is used. The students need to be given clear instructions about the target and be organized into groups before the dictation commences. The primary purpose in this stage is by exploiting the warm-up activities in each lesson; students are familiarized with the known and unknown vocabulary of the text they will be hearing, which makes learners more receptive to listening in the next stage by utilizing this kind of vocabulary-centered in the dictation stage, learners are supposed to listen to a text twice. First, they are not permitted to take any keywords; nevertheless, Kondo et al.,(200) point out during the first reading, while learners are instructed to understand the summary of the text, they are not allowed to take notes of any kind. In the second listening, which is called in the reconstruction stage, the learners would take notes about the topic content, which was already prepared for the class as a useful instrument to arrange the text. Learners and teachers collaborate through the reconstruction stage. In this way, while learners check the grammar, textual cohesion, and logical sense of the versions of their texts, some possible grammatical errors are provided by the teacher monitoring the activity and pointing out these problems without giving any actual language input. Each teacher uses his individualized preferred style to prompt learners to Compare the different versions and discuss the language choices they made in the analysis and correction session stage. Some examples of this stage involve: the blackboard is used where learners' texts are drafted to be seen and discussed by the peers, an overhead projector, a text copied from the original one to be analyzed by the whole class. It is imperative to note that learners do not see the original text until their versions are analyzed.

### 2.2.1 Features of Dicto-Comp Technique

- **Student arrangement** –arranged from individuals to pairs to groups to the whole class
- **Information distribution** – students collaborate to share their skill and knowledge, making sure to have the same access to the information
- **Student focus**-meaning and language accuracy are focused as; can focus on special language characteristics
- **Language modes** – speaking, writing, listening
- **Peer teaching** – if different abilities/knowledge students collaborate, the more advanced students can teach the others
- **Challenge** – while students listen to the passage only twice, they need to use their knowledge of language to rewrite it

### 2.2.2 Procedure of Dicto-Comp Technique

1. The teacher selects a short text suitable for his students (approximately five sentences).
2. The teacher prepares the students for the text by:
  - focusing on the topic (for instance: by predicting or brainstorming from a picture)
  - teaching the required content vocabulary

- Ensuring that students understand the task and are arranged in their group seats.
3. The teacher reads the text out at a normal speed while the students just listen.
  4. While the teacher reads it again at normal speed, pausing between sentences, students take notes of key content vocabulary.
  5. Using their notes, the students collaborate in groups of four to redraft the text. They should intend to write a text containing the information heard, which is not exactly what they heard. Since they are not able to remember each word, they need to utilize their knowledge of the language to finish the task.
  6. At this stage, the teacher circulates and quietly encourages students to correct minor errors that are not treated as the grammar focus of the exercise.
  7. Focusing on the major grammatical points, students Compare the reconstructions with the original text and discuss differences as a whole class. This is achieved by writing the first sentence from each group on the board and discussing it before moving on to the next sentence. (Nation, 1989, p. 91 – Back writing)
  8. The teacher selects or writes a text suitable for students based on the followings:
    - language (grammar and vocabulary )
    - length and Complexity (for example, a short, familiar story for young children, more Complex factual text as appropriate; 3–5 sentences is generally long enough)
    - students’ interest and background knowledge.
 (Jacobs & Small, 2003) (Read, 1996)

### 2.2.3 A Comparison between Dicto-Comp and Dicto-Gloss

“DictoComp” as a remarkable break away from both the traditional dictation and the traditional Composition is a variation of dictation. A 100 words paragraph is read at normal speed, which may be repeated many times, but always at normal speed. The students need to try their utmost to remember what they have heard as accurately as possible. If the level of the class is elementary, some keywords or even a brief outline may be written on the board. Students may be encouraged to work in groups or individually. The main goal is to reproduce the text as closely as possible to the source, which is the “Dicto” part; in the “Comp” part, the students can add their own words whenever they find it necessary. Writing a resume or stating the most important ideas is not the goal. This is a note-taking exercise without using the notes, which provides practice in writing, spelling, oral Comprehension, and short-term memory. To concentrate on keywords or phrases of the text and pauses and emphasis that might provide hints to the meaning, students are advised not to take notes. Without interference from the process of writing, the students focus on the mental process of listening. Not only does an exercise like this provides a welcome change of pace, but it also provides a way of grouping the more advanced or fluent students in a separate group to avoid their becoming the ones who write for the group and instead encourages them to be creative. The Dicto-Comp is “an experienced technique (which) reduces the cognitive load of a task by preparing the learners well before they do the task... The preparation provides the learners with ideas, language items, and text organization so that they can focus on the skill aspect, which in the case of the Dicto-Comp, is writing”.

The pioneer of the variation known as the “Dicto-gloss” is Ruth Wajnryb, who has written extensively on this subject, which has been adapted by teachers all over the world. This, in contrast to the dicta-Comp, entails note-taking in which the teacher reads a short text of three to five sentences at normal speed. The students should take notes, followed by working in groups, they should try to reconstruct the text following the model, but not necessarily exactly reproducing it. By working together, they indicate to each other the words or phrases some of which may be stuck on, they negotiate and reformulate. Each group then presents its version for discussion. For beginning students, some words may be written on the board beforehand, and some explanation was given; for

more advanced students, no words are provided and so the Dictogloss becomes an exercise in an authentic note.

### 3. Procedures and Methodology

The following pages present a detailed description of the procedure that is followed to achieve the aims of the study and verify their null hypotheses.

#### 3.1 Experimental Design

The design of this experiment includes the selection of two groups randomly. Both groups are submitted to a pre-test and afterward, the group work technique (independent variable) is implemented with the experimental one only, i.e., the control one was taught by the conventional method. A post-test was administered to both groups to compare the scores of the pre-test, post-test on the dependent variable (short stories), and determine whether or not there is any statistical significance of the difference between both groups.

### 3.2 Population and Sample Selection

#### 3.2.1 Population

The study population is the second-grade students at the secondary schools for males in the city center of Kerbala Governorate, during the academic year of (2018-2019).

#### 3.2.2 Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was selected from Mumen- Qureish Intermediate School, where 73 students were divided into two groups of A and B. While section A was randomly selected as the experimental group, section B was assigned to be the control group. The experimental and control groups included 36 and 37 students, respectively. After the initial exclusion of the repeaters in each group, the number of students has become (33) in the experimental and (32) in the control groups (see Table 1).

**Table (1) The Study Sample**

Group	Section	Students' number before exclusion	Students' number after exclusion
Experimental	A	36	33
Control	B	37	32
Total		73	65

### 3.3 Equivalence of the Sample Subjects:

Some variables, including students' age (measured in months), parents' educational level, and students' scores in English in the first-course examination of the same academic year, which might affect the experiment outcomes, were controlled to equalize the two groups.

The two groups were equivalent in all variables at a time when all external and internal variables that may affect the experimental design had been controlled.

### 3.4 The Application of the Test

#### 3.4.1 The Final Administration of the Pre-test

The pre-tests Comparing the scores of the students' performance in the pre-test with those in the post-test were conducted on both the experimental and control groups on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2019.

### 3.4.2 The Post-test

The post-test was administered on both groups on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. The same pre-test procedures of the scoring scheme, validity, pilot study, item difficulty, item discrimination, and reliability were repeated in conducting the post-test. To ensure the validity of the post-test, a jury of fifteen specialists in applied linguistics and TEFL reviewed the test and made some modifications.

## 4. The Results

At the end of the experiment and to fulfill the aim of the study and answer its questions, the data of the pre-test and post-test are statistically analyzed. It should be noted that this analysis is undertaken to decide whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test and post-test.

### 4.1 Comparison of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-test Scores

The results obtained from the post-test on both groups show that the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-test are (38.00) and (22.75), respectively, which means that the experimental group performance in the Dicto-com technique is better than that of the control group.

The T-test formula for two independent samples is used to see whether the difference between the two groups is significant or not. The result shows that the Computed T-value of the post-test is (5.422), while the tabulated T-value is (2). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups at (0.05) level of significance and under (63) degrees of freedom (see Table 2).

**Table (2) T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Post-test**

Group	No	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					CTV	TT V	
Experimental	33	38.00	13.75	63	5.422	2	0.05
Control	32	22.75	8.11				

### 4.2. Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Control Group

Concerning the control group, the mean scores of the pre-test are (23.125), while those of the post-test are (23.593). The one-sample T-test formula is used to find out whether there is any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores or not. The result shows that the Computed T-value is (20.712), whereas the tabulated T-value is (2). This means that there is a slight difference between them, i.e., the post-test is slightly higher than the pre-test (see Table 3).

**Table (3) T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Pre-test and Post-test for the Control Group**

Test	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of Significance
					CTV	TT V	
Pre-test	32	23.125	9.061	62	20.712	2	0.05
Post-test	32	23.593	9.122				

### 4.3 Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group

Concerning the experimental group, the pre-test and post-test mean scores are found to be (21.515) and (38.000), respectively. The one-sample T-test formula is exploited again to determine



whether or not there are any signs of difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The calculated T-test is found to be (15.454), whereas the tabulated one is (2). This denotes that the pre-test and post-test are significantly different at (0.05) level of significance and under (63) degrees of freedom. Namely, the post-test of the experimental group is much better than the pre-test as in Table 4.

**Table (4) T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Pre-test and Post-test for the Experimental Group**

Test	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of Significance
					CTV	TTV	
Pre-test	33	21.515	12.949	64	15.454	2	0.05
Post-test	33	38.000	13.756				

### Discussion of the Results

Building upon the results of the study, it has been figured out that there is a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups. Concerning the post-test, the mean score of the experimental group is (38.00), whereas that of the control group is (22.75). This indicates that the students' performance of the experimental group is significantly better than that of the control group.

It has been concluded that the Dicto-comp technique, which is employed to teach the second intermediate students of the experimental group, is considered more effective, useful, and favorable to teaching writing than the conventional one.

### Conclusions

In light of the empirical evidence shown in this study and concerning the researcher's observations throughout the experiment, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Teaching writing skills through the use of the Dicto-comp technique has a significant effect on developing the general ability of second-year intermediate students.
2. In terms of psychology, using the Dicto-comp technique in teaching writing motivates students and creates an atmosphere of enjoyment and interest that makes them breaking the routine.
3. The use of the Dicto-comp technique provides students with the experience they need for social development.
4. Through the Dicto-comp technique, the students have proved to be more autonomous because they are given sufficient chances to use the foreign language themselves without direct control of the teacher.
5. Dicto-comp technique makes low-level students engaged in the class activities and gives them more chances to get more information and explanation from their group members.

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