USING DICTOGLOSS IN AN EFL LISTENING CLASS: CALLING FOR SFL-BASED SCAFFOLDING IN UNDERSTANDING BREAKING NEWS TEXTS

I Putu Ngurah Wage Myartawan

English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Art,
Ganesha University of Education, Singaraja
Jalan Jend. A. Yani 67 Singaraja 81116, Telp. 0362-21541, Fax. 0362-27561
wmyartawan@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini merupakan hasil refleksi selama pelaksanaan penelitian tindakan kelas yang menerapkan *dictogloss* sebagai teknik pembelajaran *listening* interaktif dalam rangka meningkatkan pemahaman mahasiswa terhadap teks *breaking news* dalam mata kuliah *Listening* III. Berdasarkan refleksi terhadap siklus pertama penelitian tersebut, terindikasi bahwa mahasiswa memerlukan semacam *scaffolding* yang dapat membuat mereka secara lebih efektif memahami informasi-informasi penting terkait teks yang didiktekan seperti jenis teks yang didengarkan, fungsi teks, karakter utama yang diperkenalkan dalam teks, poin-poin utama yang diceritakan dalam teks, dan unsur leksikogramatika yang umumnya mencirikan sebuah teks *breaking news*. Menelaah teks yang dikreasi kembali mahasiswa pada siklus pertama penelitian, diinterpretasikan bahwa kurangnya pemahaman terhadap faktor-faktor ini membuat mahasiswa kurang mampu memahami pesan-pesan yang paling penting yang terdapat dalam teks breaking news yang mereka dengarkan. Maka dari itu, pengintegrasian perspektif *SFL* dipandang penting dalam menyediakan *scaffolding* bagi mahasiswa agar mampu secara lebih baik memahami teks *breaking news* dalam siklus kedua penelitian. Artikel ini akan mengulas penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilaksanakan serta *dictogloss* yang digunakan sebagai teknik pembelajaran dalam penelitian tersebut karena mereka memberikan latar belakang bagi tulisan ini. Berikutnya adalah diskusi mengenai pengintegrasian perspektif *SFL* ke dalam penerapan *dictogloss* dalam penelitian yang dilaksanakan. Terakhir, artikel ini menyajikan simpulan dan saran terkait inklusi SFL dalam implementasi *dictogloss* dan teknik pengajaran *listening* lainnya dalam pengajararan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua.

Kata-kata kunci: mendengarkan, *dictogloss, teks breaking news, SFL*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on my reflection concerning the classroom action research (henceforth, CAR) I conducted with a colleague in an EFL listening class using a technique called dictogloss which was aimed at helping the students to improve their understanding in listening to breaking news texts (Myartawan & Utami, 2010). So, my focus in this paper is not much on discussing the research results but rather on the results of my reflection towards the research which called for the need for Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL) account in the implementation of dictogloss in the teaching of EFL listening, particularly when dealing with breaking news texts.

The use of dictogloss in my research was based on a need to have a collaborative work among the students so that the class would become groups of students who would help each other recreate a breaking news text that they had had opportunities to listen to previously, while at

the same time helping each other understand the text they worked on. Based on the results of the pre-test, most of the students in the class where the CAR was carried out belonged to low proficiency students in terms of their listening competence. Therefore, giving chance to the students to collaborate with each other through the implementation of dictogloss was considered an alternative solution to help the students improve their listening ability. Through dictogloss—whose procedures mainly lie on cooperative activities in recreating a text—it was hoped that the students with poor listening ability could learn from their friends with good listening ability not only about how these good students were able to catch the messages but also on how the interpretation of meaning from a subsequence of sounds was done. It was through the steps of collaborative text recreation in the implementation of dictogloss that the poor students were expected to be able to learn the processes through which the good students eventually came to understand the messages conveyed from the breaking news text they had listened to.

After the first cycle was accomplished with a relatively improving listening ability of the overall students, it was revealed, however, that the students needed a scaffolding to help make them more effectively get the main points of a listening text dictated to them like the type of the text heard, the function of the text, the main characters introduced in the text, the main points told in the text, as well as the lexicogrammatical elements commonly shared by breaking news texts. Seeing the students' recreated texts in the first cycle of the study, it was interpreted that a lack of understanding of these elements made the students less able to understand the most important messages contained in the breaking news text they listened to. As such, based on the reflection done, there was a felt need for a discussion of the elements of a text before the students were assigned to listen to the text. Since SFL is the major linguistic theory which specifically focuses on the concept of language as a text more than sentences or grammars (Butt, et al., 2000; Emilia, et al., 2008, citing Hasan, 1996), an account of SFL in the implementation of dictogloss was considered important. As mentioned by Tucker (2011), "SFL seeks to provide students with an appropriate analytical and interpretative framework for the insightful analysis of text and discourse from a social perspective", the integration of SFL perspectives was, therefore, hoped to be able to provide scaffolding for the students to enable them better understand the messages of the breaking news text they would listen in the second cycle of the CAR conducted.

The present paper, therefore, firstly highlights the CAR conducted to give context to the present paper. What continues is a discussion on dictogloss as a cooperative technique for the teaching of EFL listening used in the CAR. Following this is an account on how SFL could provide scaffolding to help the students better understand the breaking news text they listened to under the implementation of dictogloss. An explanation on how the SFL principles were implemented in the second cycle of the CAR is given along with a reflection on the inclusion of SFL principles in the dictogloss implementation. Finally, conclusion and suggestion on the use of SFL perspectives in the implementation of dictogloss in particular, and other listening techniques in general are provided.

The Classroom Action Reseach

Listening as a subject is very important for learners of English as a second/foreign language for, at least, three reasons. First of all, it gives listening practice for students—a basic function which is related to pronunciation and perception of meaning (Saricoban, 1999). The significance of listening is also due to its role in providing language input to learners in the forms of language use such as the use of vocabulary, grammars, and discourse (Cahyono, 2010). Of the same importance is its role as a medium that can be used by children, teenagers, and adults to obtain knowledge about the world—which

consists of various pieces of information about various aspects of life, values, and many other things—that helps shape their understanding of the world (Saricoban, 1999). Referring to Nunan (1998 as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009) who stated that more that 50 percent of the time spent by students dealing with foreign language is allocated for listening, listening, therefore, should deserve fair attention in an EFL program.

Due to the importance of listening as noted above, a series of listening courses are offered to students of the English Education Department (EED) of Ganesha University of Education (Undiksha), starting from Listening I in the first semester to Listening II in the second semester, and to Listening III in the third semester (*Buku Pedoman Studi Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha*, 2009). An emphasis on the mastery of listening skill along with the other three basic language skills—speaking, reading, and writing—in the earlier semesters is based on an assumption that its mastery will support the students' success in taking more advanced courses in the higher semesters.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and it is believed that for most of the students, listening is a very difficult skill to master. Therefore, if not treated in an effective and interesting way, the image that listening is a difficult lesson will become a mental-block (Beare, 2008) for the students, especially those with poor listening ability, in their learning of English. However, based on the preliminary study conducted in the class under study, that is, Class IIIC of EED, Undiksha, in the Academic Year 2010/2011, it was found that the Listening III class was conducted in a traditional listening instruction which was mainly characterized by a passive learning process. In this traditional fashion, students were firstly asked to listen to the language input, that is, the listening material in the form of cassette or MP3 file which presented the voice of a native speaker of English. They, then, should memorize the information in their short-term memory. Finally, the students were required to do a follow-up activity aimed at testing their comprehension such as answering comprehension questions, filling in the blanks, and writing down what they have heard.

The passive listening instruction tended to create boredom and reduce students' enthusiasm. It also proved to result in ineffective learning as indicated by the results of the pre-test which revealed that the students' mean was 53.85 out of 100 which was below the success indicator set in the study, which was 70.00. The worse was that 87.5% students in the class under study obtained scores less than the success indicator. It seemed that the passive listening instruction could not facilitate the students to learn optimally, provide opportunities for them to understand their problems, and finally help them attend and solve their problems when listening to a text.

Based on the nature of the problems revealed from the preliminary observation and pre-test, it was argued that the students would learn listening better if they were given opportunities to interact and cooperate with each other. Through sharing, the students could learn and ask for help from each other whenever they found problems to better understand the text they listened to. Interactive activities would facilitate negotiation of meaning among the students, which according to the cooperative learning theories related to language learning, can increase the amount of comprehensible input—an important factor in the success of second language acquistion (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). Since dictogloss is an interactive and cooperative technique for teaching listening, it was decided that dictogloss was employed in the research to overcome the problems faced by the students in their listening class.

Dictogloss as a Technique for Teaching EFL Listening

Dictogloss is an interactive technique of teaching listening which was developed firstly by Ruth Wajnryb in 1990 (Herrell & Jordan, 2004; Nation & Newton, 2009). In general, the technique involves students listening to a text read

fluently at a normal speed and repeated by the teacher. First, the students just listen—not write anything—to the text read by the teacher. Next, the reading is done again for twice or more (depending on the difficulty level of the text) and the students individually write down as many as possible the words from each of the reading. Third, the students work in pairs and work together to recreate the text. Two pairs are then combined to make a new group where the students reconstruct the text again as best as they can. In the reconstruction step, the point is not to recreate exactly the same text as the original one; Rather, the main point is to maintain the same information as in the original text (Vasiljevic, 2010). Finally, the students are required to think critically to review the texts they created by comparing them with the original text (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). From the steps of implementing dictogloss, it is clear that the students not only practice their listening skill but are also involved in a cooperative interaction with their friends to recreate and evaluate the text.

According to Burk (2001), in order to be able to understand spoken language, the listener should have sufficient knowledge of the language (phonemes, words, sentences, and discourse as meaningful units, as well as stress and intonation), knowledge of the world, and contexts of communication which consist of co-text and context of situation. Vasiljevic (2010) stated that, for beginners, listening to understand the linguistic input is the main goal, but as their listening ability improves, meaning-based activities are getting more important, and for dictogloss, direct meaning comprehension—as apposed to inferred meaning comprehension—is more appropriate (Vasiljevic, 2010).

As with the listening material used, Vasiljevic (2010) suggested that the listening material appropriate for dictogloss procedure is that which contains uninterrupted speech such as academic lectures or stories rather than dialogues because transactional texts such as stories are much easier to reconstruct than interactional texts such as dialogues. It is also suggested that the text used is no longer than two minutes in length and it is better to use prepared listening passages than the authentic ones for authentic material tends to be fast in speed, contains difficult language, and has varied situations, different voices, and frequent overlaps that are difficult to identify, except for advanced learners.

Vasiljevic (2010) mentioned that as a technique for teaching listening, dictogloss has some advantages. First of all, dictogloss is an effective way of combining individual and group work so as to enable a wide access for peer learning and peer teaching to occur. Secondly, analysis and correction while creating the text in the pair and group work enables students to make hypotheses of the language they use, providing a practice for them to see their strengths and weaknesses in producing language. Thirdly, discussion in the pair and group work facilitates the improvement of students' communicative competence as far as they are required to use English, not their mother tongue. Fourthly, dictogloss fosters students' autonomy in learning since during the process, the students are dependant more on their friends rather than on their teacher. Fifthly, comparing the text created and the original text can help foster students' vocabulary development. Finally, working in pairs and groups can lower students' anxiety towards their teacher in learning.

The use of dictogloss as a technique for the teaching of listening in the research was also due to the positive results of the application of dictogloss reported by some previous researchers (Wajnryb, 1990 as cited in Herrell & Jordan, 2004; Parianingsih, 2008; Wilson, 2003 as cited in Vandergrift, 2008). A study by Ruth Wajnryb (1990 as cited in Herrell & Jordan, 2004) revealed that dictogloss successfully increased motivation of elementary level students in listening narrative texts. Likewise, a study done by Parianingsih (2008) proved that dictogloss could improve junior high school students' participation and achievement in listening instructions. Meanwhile, Wilson (2003 as cited in Vandergrift, 2008) found

that comparing the text created and the original text could improve students' perceptual processing skills because they could understand their own problems in comprehending a text, attend to the causes for their errors, and finally evaluate the errors. For the present research, dictogloss was used to improve the students' listening ability in understanding breaking news texts.

Reflection on the First Cycle: The Need for SFL-based Scaffoding in the Implementation of Dictogloss

After the implementation of dictogloss, an improvement of the students' mean score was noted in the post-test I ($\bar{x}$ = 73.22). My focus in this paper, however, is not on the mean score, but more on the students' learning process, that is, their effort to understand the text, which was reflected from how they worked on recreating the text with their friends.

In the first cycle, in the first two teaching sessions, the teacher read the text for the students. However, for the remaining session, the students listened to an audio file instead of the teacher's voice. The length of time for each reading by the teacher was just two to three minutes because the breaking news text used was relatively short. Therefore, it seemed that the students had no chance to successfully write down all the words that they heard. Consequently, it was apparent that the poor students—which represented the majority of the students—felt confused in selecting which words from the dictated text they should take note on, eventually making them only able to write down a few words from the text they listened to. It seemed that most of the students could not successfully capture the main messages of the original text, so that they could not decide on the most important words they should write down in their notes.

When asked why they could not select the main messages from the original text, the students mentioned that given a relatively short time, they felt confused to decide which sentences contained important messages of the original text. They said it was hard for them to determine the important messages from the text while trying to get what the text mainly talked about, the order of events in the text, and the persons mentioned in the text. At the same time, they felt like being burdened to be able to successfully get as many words as possible from the text in order to be able to recreate the text. In addition, they said that they should also need to memorize some grammars used in the text.

During the process of text recreation, both in pairs and groups of four, it was apparent that the students worked cooperatively with each other. The discusion within group was mainly on whether the messages they got from the text were shared by the other members of the group and where was the difference, if any. The discussion also evolved around the more appropriate lexical item and grammar to be used so that it fitted the meaning they wanted to express. Even though there was an increase in the participation of the less proficient students, a dominant role was still held by the more proficient learners in the process of reconstructing the text. The main messages that would be written in the recreation of the text used to be initiated and contributed by the more proficient learners.

After analyzing the results of the groups' recreated texts by the end of each teaching sessions in cycle I, most of the texts missed some important messages contained in the original text. One obvious thing noticed was the missing of some important words in their recreated texts. They mentioned that they had their attention divided between understanding the main idea of the text and capturing as many words as possible, while at the same time they had to remember some main messages in the text. Therefore, they insisted on the need for having some guidance prior to the listening of the text to help them concentrate better in the attempt to understand the text. They also mentioned the need to have a review of new or difficult vocabulary used in the text to help them get the main points of the text. In short, it could be inferred that they wanted to

have an overview of the elements of the text type they would listen to because this would be important in the process of understanding the text as well as when recreating the text in pair or group.

The students' comments on what they considered important in their listening instruction to make them better able to understand the text and recreate it reminded me of the concepts of SFL that underlie genre-based instruction implemented in primary and high schools in Indonesia: before being able to produce a text, students should master the knowledge about the elements of the text. It reminded me of the importance of register and genre in producing a certain type of text. As stated by Butt, et al. (2000), it is easier for learners to create a certain type of text when they know the general meaning to be realised as well as lexicogrammars to be used—in the sense that they know the register of the text; and it is easier for students to create a certain type of text appropriately when they know its structure (genre). In the same way, it is much easier for learners to understand a breaking news text when they know the elements (register and genre) of this kind of text. By the same analogy, then, it would be hard for the students, for instance, to understand and later on, recreate the text entitled "The Year 2007 to be the Hottest after" if the students did not know the purpose of the text, the lexical items used in the text such as the word/s Britain's Meteorological Office , El Nino, fluctuation, rate, southern hemisphere, adverse weather, etc., the grammatical features used like present tenses, reported speech, relative pronoun (with or without the omission of "that"), etc., and the structure of a breaking news text such as this.

The consideration for SFL perspectives into the implementation of dictogloss into the research was done by adding up an additional step at the very beginning of the dictogloss procedure, which aimed at providing some scaffolding for the students before they listened to the text. This scaffolding was done firstly through activating students' schema related to the topic of the listening text by giving some questions related to the topic as well as some lexicogrammar-related questions (via discussion or a small quiz). The second form of the scaffolding was a review of the genre of the breaking news text—which includes lead, key events, and quotes (Macken-Horarik, 2002, as cited in Emilia, et al., 2008)—so that the students would be more mentally prepared in listening to the structure of the text they would have. In additon, to focus the students attention during the listening process, they were given some pre-listening questions which asked such questions as:

1. What is the text about?
2. What is the purpose of the text?
3. Who are the persons/parties mentioned in the text?
4. What are the main events/things discussed in the text?

The provision of SFL-based scaffolding is in line with Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000) who called for the need for teaching students the conversational structures, options, as well as expressions used in the English text (in their example, telephone conversation) they will listen to because this can facilitate them in their learning. In the same vein, Burk (2001) contended that in understanding a listening passage, in addition to linguistic knowledge, learners should also have sufficient knowledge of the world and the context of communication which includes co-text being parts of the text before and after the part being processed, and context of situation being social situation and non-verbal information that influence around which communication takes place. Awareness of these three kinds of knowledge—not only linguistic elements of a text type but also the world knowledge (awareness of the topic discussed in relation to students' world knowledge) and context of communication (awareness of social factors that determine the purpose and structure of a text)—is barely needed in order to successfuly understand a listening text, or recreate a certain type of text as a production practice in language learning.

An overview of a text type prior to the

actual listening activity is, in fact, a reasonable thing to do in the implementation of dictogloss since there is a step in dictogloss procedure where the students work in group to recreate the text. It is in this recreation stage where SFL fits to be implemented. Since SFL aims to provide an appropriate analytical and interpretative tool to enable the students to do an insightful analysis of text and discourse from a social perspective (Tucker, 2011), an overview of the text the students will deal with in their listening lesson from the insight of SFL has a sound basis to do before the process of recreating the text itself is conducted.

Reflection on the Second Cycle

The addition of SFL-related scaffolding activities to activate the students' schema in relation to the text they would listen to at the beginning of the dictogloss implementation seemed to make the students have a sense of purpose and focus when they listened to the text—which, in the second cycle, was in the form of audio file. Based on the interview with some students, the students said that schema activation of the text structure enabled them to better anticipate the up-coming messages that would come into their mental perception. Discussion of difficult vocabulary was said to be able to avoid them from spending time and attention to just particular lexical items which were difficult and new for them, so that they could have more focus on grasping the meaning conveyed in the text, which was also helped by the understanding of the grammars typically used in the text being discussed. Furthemore, they stated that having some scaffolding questions helped the students to mainly focus on the main messages of the text, which helped them separate important messages from the less important ones. This, in turn, could make them have more concentration to take note on important words from the listening text, which would become the main ingredients for them in the step of recreating the text.

From the students' activities during the second cycle, it was apparent that they became more confident in writing down as many words as possible from the listening text they heard. Now, they had more words in their notes and the words were mostly important lexical items in the text. During group work of recreating the text, all individual members of the groups had better contribution, and within the members of each group, some arguments concerning which meanings were possible with the use of particular words and certain grammatial items were often heard. The results of the groups' recreated texts showed a dramatic improvement as proven from the existence of more important messages they could successfully wrote in the recreated texts. During the class discussion when comparing the recreated texts among the groups, there was encouragement from most of the students to give comments, corrections, as well as suggestions to the other groups' texts. It indicated an increase in their confidence with regard to their listening ability.

The good result from the learning activities was also supported by the results of the post-test II which showed that the students' mean score increased to 79.47 which was above the success indicator 70.00. Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of SFL-based scaffolding in the implementation of dictogloss could help improve the students' understanding of breaking news texts in their listening instruction in the cycle II of the research.

To know the students' responses toward the use of dictogloss and also the integration of SFL-based scaffolding at the beginning of the listening instruction using dictogloss, a questionnaire was distributed to the students who were 32 altogether. The results of the questionnaire revealed that 100% students said that they liked listening instruction because of the implementation of dictogloss technique. All students stated that they liked having interaction with their friends in the listening instruction using dictogloss. Furthermore, 93.75% students agreed that they felt challenged with the text reconstruction activity from a listening text they listened to. Re-

lated to the use of SFL-based scaffolding in the implementation of dictogloss, 93.75% students contended that they liked the pre-listening activities because the activities could help them better understand the text they would listen to. To the statement "through the implementation of dictogloss, the listening instruction becomes much easier" (item 2), 78.13% students indicated their agreement. Compared to the other items, this item obtained the least percentage. It indicated that the students still felt that listening was a difficult activity for them, confirming the shared belief that for the EFL students, listening is the most difficult skill among the four basic language skills. Above all, the results of the questionnaire confirmed the finding from the interview and the observation on the students' learning activities that dictogloss with the SFL-based scaffolding could help the students to improve their listening ability to understand breaking news texts and that most of them have positive response towards the implementation of dictogloss and the integration of SFL-based scaffolding in their listening instruction.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In the first cycle of the classroom action research that I counducted with a colleague, it had been showed that the interactive and cooperative power of dictogloss as a technique for teaching listening was able to improve the students' listening ability to understand breaking news texts. However, it was also indicated that there was a felt need for scaffolding on the elements (register and genre) of the text type the students would listen, in this case, the breaking news text, to give sense of purpose and focus for the students in doing the steps of listening instruction under the dictogloss implementation. It was so since there was an indication that a lack of understanding of these elements made the students less able to understand the most important messages contained in the breaking news text they listened to. In the second cycle, the integration of SFL-based scaffolding in the implementation of dictogloss was

able to better improve the students' listening ability compared with that in cycle I, lending support to the importance of an overview of the elements of a text type from SFL perspectives before the students proceeded to listening to the text.

Therefore, it is suggested that English teachers teaching listening using dictogloss allocate some of their teaching time to provide an overview of the elements (register and genre) of a particular text type they assign their students to deal with. This suggestion could be further expanded to any listening technique since activation of students' schema concerning the register and genre of a particular text type would activate their knowledge of language, knowledge of the world, and context of communication which are very important for them in their listening process.

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