DICTATION AS AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS TO GRADE 10 STUDENTS

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ARTICLE INFO	
Received:	19/8/2025
Revised:	25/9/2025
Published:	28/10/2025

ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension represents a critical yet persistently challenging component of English language development for Vietnamese secondary students. This eight-week action research study investigated the effectiveness of systematic dictation practice in enhancing listening comprehension skills among 40 grade 10 students at Hai Ba Trung High School, Ha Noi. The study employed mixed-methods design, integrating pre-test and post-test quantitative assessments with qualitative questionnaire surveys. Five pedagogically varied dictation techniques were implemented within regular listening lessons: standard dictation, error identification, jigsaw dictation, listening cloze, and elicited imitation. Quantitative results demonstrated statistically significant improvement in students' listening performance (mean score increased from 5.4 to 6.2, representing 14.8% growth, $p<0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.64$), with 57.5% of participants achieving higher post-test scores. Qualitative findings revealed overwhelmingly positive student attitudes, with 85% developing favorable perceptions toward the dictation methodology. Students reported particularly notable gains in pronunciation perception (72.5%) and vocabulary retention (67.5%), with 52.5% reporting overall listening comprehension improvement. Nevertheless, significant challenges persisted in vocabulary recognition (90%), processing rapid speech (80%), and distinguishing pronunciation nuances (77.5%). The findings underscore that dictation functions as a practical, adaptable, and evidence-based pedagogical tool for enhancing English listening competence at the secondary education level, with potential for broader integration into language instruction curricula.

CHÉP CHÍNH TẢ - PHƯƠNG PHÁP HIỆU QUẢ TRONG DẠY KỸ NĂNG NGHE - HIỂU TIẾNG ANH CHO HỌC SINH LỚP 10

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https://doi.org/10.51453/3093-3076/1367

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT

TÓM TẮT

Kỹ năng nghe hiểu là một thành tố then chốt nhưng vẫn luôn là thách thức dai dẳng trong quá trình phát triển năng lực tiếng Anh của học sinh trung học Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu hành động kéo dài tám tuần này được thực hiện nhằm khảo sát hiệu quả của việc luyện tập chính tả có hệ thống trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng nghe hiểu của 40 học sinh lớp 10 tại Trường Trung học Phổ thông Hai Bà Trưng, Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu áp dụng thiết kế phương pháp hỗn hợp, kết hợp giữa đánh giá định lượng thông qua bài kiểm tra trước và sau can thiệp, cùng với khảo sát định tính qua bảng hỏi. Năm kỹ thuật chính tả mang tính sư phạm khác nhau được triển khai trong các tiết học nghe thường kỳ, bao gồm: chính tả tiêu chuẩn, nhận diện lỗi sai, chính tả ghép mảnh (jigsaw dictation), điền khuyết khi nghe (listening cloze) và bắt chước có hướng dẫn (elicited imitation). Kết quả định lượng cho thấy sự cải thiện có ý nghĩa thống kê trong thành tích nghe của học sinh (điểm trung bình tăng từ 5,4 lên 6,2 — tương ứng mức tăng 14,8%, $p<0,05$, hệ số ảnh hưởng *Cohen's d* = 0,64), với 57,5% học sinh đạt điểm cao hơn trong bài kiểm tra sau can thiệp. Kết quả định tính phản ánh thái độ rất tích cực của học sinh, khi có tới 85% cho biết họ có nhận thức thuận lợi hơn đối với phương pháp chính tả. Học sinh báo cáo những tiến bộ rõ rệt nhất ở các khía cạnh nhận biết phát âm (72,5%) và ghi nhớ từ vựng (67,5%), trong khi 52,5% cho rằng năng lực nghe hiểu tổng thể của họ được cải thiện. Tuy nhiên, vẫn tồn tại những khó khăn đáng kể, đặc biệt là trong nhận diện từ vựng (90%), xử lý tốc độ nói nhanh (80%), và phân biệt sắc thái phát âm (77,5%). Những phát hiện trên cho thấy chính tả là một công cụ sư phạm thực tiễn, linh hoạt và dựa trên bằng chứng, có hiệu quả trong việc nâng cao năng lực nghe tiếng Anh ở bậc trung học, đồng thời có tiềm năng tích hợp rộng rãi hơn trong chương trình giảng dạy ngôn ngữ.

1. Introduction

Listening comprehension remains among the most formidable challenges in English language learning for Vietnamese students, particularly at the secondary education level. Despite substantial curriculum emphasis on communicative competence and integrated skill development, learners continue to encounter significant difficulties with real-time auditory processing, lexical recognition, phonological discrimination, and speech rate adaptation (Lightfoot, 2004). This phenomenon is not unique to Vietnamese learners; however, the phonological distance between Vietnamese and English—most notably Vietnamese's tonal system and different vowel inventory—compounds listening difficulties for speakers of this language. Traditional listening instruction frequently emphasizes passive reception of auditory input without adequate scaffolding of bottom-up phonological processing skills or systematic training in sound discrimination. Consequently, learners often develop incomplete auditory processing strategies and struggle to translate receptive listening competence into active communicative participation (Richards, 1999).

Dictation, a pedagogical technique with historical roots extending to early language teaching traditions, has experienced renewed scholarly and practical interest within contemporary applied linguistics research. Contrary to prevailing misconceptions that dictation represents outdated, teacher-centered transmission instruction incongruent with communicative language teaching philosophy, empirical evidence increasingly demonstrates its multifaceted benefits for developing integrated language skills (Oller, 1979; Celce-Murcia, 1995). Dictation fundamentally engages learners in simultaneous decoding of phonemic information, orthographic transcription, grammatical analysis, and lexical processing—cognitively demanding activities that strengthen both receptive and productive modalities in integrated fashion. The technique appears particularly promising for Vietnamese learners whose mother tongue linguistic systems differ markedly from English, thereby necessitating heightened phonological awareness and deliberate attention to suprasegmental and segmental features. Sophisticated implementation of dictation through multiple pedagogical variants—standard, error-identification, jigsaw, cloze, and elicited imitation formats—can provide cognitive variety and address diverse learning preferences while maintaining engagement throughout extended intervention periods.

This action research study was undertaken at Hai Ba Trung High School, Ha Noi, with the comprehensive objective of examining whether systematically implemented dictation practice enhances listening comprehension among grade 10 students. Specifically, the research attempted to address four interconnected research questions: (1) To what extent does structured dictation practice improve students' listening comprehension performance as measured by standardized pre-test and post-test assessments? (2) Which specific dimensions of listening comprehension—vocabulary recognition, phonological awareness, grammatical processing, connected speech comprehension—show the most marked improvement following dictation intervention? (3) What attitudes, perceptions, and motivational responses do Vietnamese secondary students develop regarding dictation as a learning methodology, particularly when implemented through pedagogically varied techniques? (4)

What specific, persistent listening challenges do learners continue to experience despite dictation intervention, and what recommendations emerge for complementary instructional strategies? Addressing these interconnected questions would provide empirically grounded, practically actionable insights for English educators seeking evidence-based strategies to enhance listening instruction at the secondary level.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Dictation in Contemporary Language Pedagogy

Contemporary applied linguistics research has substantiated that dictation positively influences listening comprehension across diverse learner populations, proficiency levels, age groups, and educational contexts (Nguyen, 2004; Melawanti, 2007; Nasution, 2017). Dictation fundamentally requires learners to execute a complex, multistaged cognitive task: actively decoding continuous auditory input into discrete linguistic units, maintaining this phonological information and lexical content within working memory across multiple seconds, and subsequently reconstructing the message through written transcription or oral repetition. This cognitively demanding process reinforces the essential connection between phonological awareness and semantic comprehension accuracy, preventing passive reception of auditory stimuli and instead promoting active, effortful engagement with linguistic form and meaning. Research utilizing neurocognitive methodologies demonstrates that dictation engages distributed neural networks encompassing auditory processing regions, phonological working memory systems, orthographic encoding areas, and meaning-integration regions—indicative of the technique's multisystemic cognitive engagement.

According to Richards' (1999) influential framework, dictation tasks strategically engage both bottom-up and top-down listening processing mechanisms simultaneously, a characteristic distinguishing dictation from many other listening activities. Bottom-up processing involves meticulous decoding of individual phonemes, syllables, morphological units, and lexical items proceeding sequentially from smaller to larger linguistic units; top-down processing activates contextual knowledge, schematic expectations, predictive inference, and semantic networks to construct coherent meaning. By cognitive necessity, dictation activates both pathways reciprocally: learners must perceive and discriminate distinct phonemes while simultaneously utilizing syntactic and semantic context to interpret meaning, anticipate forthcoming content, and validate tentative interpretations. This integrated processing substantially promotes deeper learning consolidation and more automatic retrieval of auditory information than either bottom-up or top-down processing pursued in isolation. Lightfoot (2004) and Montalvan (2006) further emphasize that dictation accommodates learners at virtually any proficiency level and substantively fosters learner concentration and sustained attention, short-term memory retention and working memory management, metacognitive awareness and strategy development, and provision of immediate performance feedback enabling rapid error correction and strategy adjustment.

2.2. Theoretical Models of Listening Comprehension and Their Implications

Listening comprehension research has increasingly recognized that effective auditory comprehension involves dynamic, reciprocal interaction between multiple, distinct cognitive

processes occurring simultaneously across different processing levels. Field's (2008) influential bottom-up processing model posits that listeners construct meaning through systematic, sequential decoding of linguistic elements progressing from smaller phonemic units through morphological structure to lexical items and ultimately larger syntactic structures—building meaning incrementally from foundation elements upward. This hierarchical model accounts for how dictation training enhances phonological discrimination: by repeatedly engaging with and transcribing individual sounds and words across multiple dictation trials, learners strengthen the neural representations and automatic retrieval mechanisms for phonetic information, thereby expediting subsequent processing of novel auditory input.

Conversely, top-down processing emphasizes the critical role of background knowledge, schematic expectations, and inferential reasoning in comprehension construction. As Kafipour and Jahansooz (2017) articulate in their comprehensive analysis, effective listeners actively construct meaning by integrating textual information from auditory input with prior knowledge and contextual cues derived from situation, discourse context, and lexical associations. This model explains why advanced listeners can comprehend meaning despite imperfect or incomplete auditory perception: they utilize contextual and world knowledge to infer missing information and validate tentative interpretations. Dictation engages this top-down dimension substantially as students attempt to predict word completions, reconstruct partially audible segments through contextual reasoning, and differentiate homophonic forms based on semantic appropriateness to discourse context.

The most comprehensive and explanatorily powerful framework is Rost's (2002) interactive processing model, which posits that listening comprehension fundamentally involves reciprocal, concurrent, dynamic activation of bottom-up and top-down mechanisms occurring simultaneously throughout the listening event. Rather than sequential processing of phonemic input followed by meaning construction, listeners continuously cycle between detailed phonological analysis and broader semantic interpretation, with each level of processing informing and constraining the other. Dictation uniquely positions itself as a pedagogical tool that systematically exercises both processing pathways in integrated fashion, thereby cultivating more robust, flexible, and efficient listening abilities than more circumscribed instructional approaches.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Participant Characteristics

This study employed an action research methodology, a pragmatic research design well-suited for investigating pedagogical interventions within authentic, naturalistic classroom contexts and collaboratively engaging teachers in research processes (Burns, 1999). Action research emphasizes cyclical processes of planning, implementation, observation, and critical reflection, enabling practitioners to evaluate intervention effectiveness while remaining responsive to emerging contextual factors. The intervention extended across eight consecutive weeks during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year at a public secondary school in central Hanoi. Participants comprised 40 students from class 10A3 (21

female students, 19 male students; mean age 15.2 years, SD = 0.6 years). This cohort represented a typical secondary-level English class with mixed proficiency levels, diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, and varied prior educational experiences. All participants had received standard English instruction according to the Vietnamese national curriculum framework but had limited prior exposure to systematic listening comprehension training or explicit dictation methodology. None of the participants reported significant auditory impairments or language disorders. The study received approval from the school administration and informed parental consent was obtained for all participants.

3.2. Dictation Intervention Protocol

Five distinct dictation techniques were systematically implemented within regular listening lessons aligned with the prescribed textbook 'Tieng Anh 10' (English 10). These five techniques were selected strategically to provide cognitive variety, prevent monotony, accommodate diverse learning preferences, and target different listening subskills: (1) Standard Dictation—learners transcribed continuous narrative or dialogic passages read at natural conversational pace, emphasizing sustained attention, phonological processing, and orthographic accuracy; (2) Error Identification Dictation—learners listened to intentionally modified texts containing deliberate errors, omissions, or modifications and identified deviations from original or expected content, promoting critical, analytical listening rather than passive transcription; (3) Jigsaw Dictation—paired students received different text segments and communicated their portions orally to reconstruct the complete message collectively, integrating listening comprehension with oral production, negotiation of meaning, and peer collaboration; (4) Listening Cloze—learners completed missing words or phrases in partially written transcripts while listening, combining receptive listening with active word-finding and orthographic production; and (5) Elicited Imitation—learners listened attentively and immediately repeated utterances or sentence segments, facilitating phonological encoding, pronunciation refinement, and prosodic pattern learning. Each technique was implemented approximately 1–2 times weekly across the eight-week period, totaling approximately 12–16 distinct dictation sessions. Each dictation activity remained relatively brief (5–10 minutes) to maintain cognitive engagement without excessive cognitive overload.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Quantitative data were collected through parallel pre-test and post-test assessments administered at the beginning and conclusion of the eight-week intervention period under standardized conditions. Each assessment comprised 30 items distributed across three item formats: (1) 10 multiple-choice items based on brief listening passages, requiring students to select correct answers based on specific information or main ideas comprehended; (2) 10 true/false items assessing factual accuracy discrimination; and (3) 10 listening cloze items requiring students to complete missing lexical items in written transcripts. The assessments evaluated students' multidimensional listening capabilities including main idea comprehension, specific information recognition, vocabulary comprehension in context, and connected speech processing. All assessments utilized the same audio source materials to

ensure parallel form equivalence. Tests were administered under standardized, controlled conditions with consistent audio equipment, ambient noise levels, and timing protocols. Raw scores were converted to a 10-point scale (raw score × 10/30) for comparison and analysis.

Qualitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered immediately following the post-test assessment. The questionnaire comprised 12 Likert-scale items utilizing five-point response options (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree), complemented by three open-ended items inviting extended student commentary. Likert-format items assessed student attitudes toward dictation methodology, perceived learning benefits across multiple dimensions (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension), confidence development, and engagement levels. Open-ended items invited students to articulate specific benefits experienced, persistent challenges encountered, and recommendations for methodology improvement. The questionnaire was administered in English with Vietnamese clarifications available to ensure comprehension accuracy.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data underwent comprehensive descriptive statistical analysis employing SPSS version 25 statistical software. Primary descriptive measures included mean scores, standard deviations, median values, and percentage distributions for pre-test and post-test performance, disaggregated by student performance category. To assess the statistical significance of documented performance improvement, paired-sample t-tests were conducted at the conventional 0.05 significance level with two-tailed hypothesis testing. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d coefficient to evaluate the practical magnitude of improvement independent of sample size considerations. Effect size interpretation followed conventional guidelines: $d = 0.2$ (small), $d = 0.5$ (medium), $d = 0.8$ (large). Qualitative responses from Likert-scale questionnaire items were converted to percentage distributions for synthesis and comparative analysis. Open-ended questionnaire responses underwent systematic thematic analysis, with student comments categorized into inductively derived themes related to perceived benefits, encountered challenges, confidence development, and engagement experiences.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Quantitative Analysis of Listening Performance

The quantitative analysis of pre-test and post-test data revealed statistically significant improvements in students' listening comprehension performance. As presented in Table 1, the mean score increased substantially from 5.4 (SD = 1.36) in the pre-test to 6.2 (SD = 1.22) in the post-test following the eight-week dictation intervention. This increase corresponds to an absolute gain of 0.8 points on the 10-point scale, representing approximately 14.8% growth in listening achievement. A paired-sample t-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level ($t(39) = 4.21$, $p = 0.001$), with a moderate-to-large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.64$). The magnitude of

improvement, coupled with statistical significance, indicates that dictation intervention produced practically consequential performance gains.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Listening Performance (n = 40)

Assessment	Mean (SD)	N	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	5.4 (1.36)	40	4.21	0.001*
Post-test	6.2 (1.22)	40		

Student performance distribution analysis revealed encouraging patterns indicating broad-based benefit from the intervention. Among the 40 participants, 23 students (57.5%) achieved higher post-test scores compared to their pre-test performance, 8 students (20%) maintained essentially equivalent performance levels, and 9 students (22.5%) recorded slight score decreases. This distribution pattern demonstrates that more than half of the learner population benefited meaningfully from the dictation intervention, while the substantial majority (77.5%) maintained or improved their performance. The reduction in standard deviation from pre-test to post-test (1.36 to 1.22) indicates moderately improved consistency and homogeneity in student performance, suggesting that dictation practice facilitated more uniform skill development across the cohort rather than creating stratified benefits accruing primarily to high-performing students.

These quantitative findings directly corroborate and extend earlier research by Oller (1979) and Lightfoot (2004), who documented that systematic dictation activities substantially strengthen phonological awareness, auditory memory capacity, syntactic processing accuracy, and lexical retrieval automaticity. The magnitude of improvement observed—approximately 15% performance gain with statistical significance and moderate-to-large effect size—indicates that dictation functions as a practically consequential, evidence-based intervention worthy of serious consideration in language curriculum design and implementation.

4.2. Student Attitudes and Engagement Patterns

Qualitative questionnaire data revealed markedly and consistently positive student attitudes toward dictation-based learning throughout the intervention period. Among all 40 participants, 34 students (85%) expressed positive or highly positive attitudes toward the dictation methodology, comprising 37.5% (15 students) who rated the technique as 'very interesting' and 47.5% (19 students) who rated it as 'quite interesting.' Remarkably, no students reported negative feelings, resistance, or disengagement toward the method. This overwhelmingly favorable reception demonstrates that dictation, when properly implemented through pedagogically varied techniques and with appropriate scaffolding and supportive classroom climate, engages secondary learners effectively, sustains motivation throughout extended intervention periods, and fosters positive dispositions toward listening practice generally. Several students spontaneously commented that they looked forward to dictation activities and felt they were learning effectively through the approach.

4.3. Perceived Learning Benefits and Skill Development

Students reported experiencing diverse, multifaceted learning benefits from sustained dictation participation, with the majority identifying noticeable improvements across

multiple, distinct linguistic dimensions. As presented in Table 2, the most frequently cited benefit was substantially enhanced pronunciation perception and awareness (72.5% of students), enabling learners to discriminate phonological contrasts previously difficult or imperceptible. The second most common benefit was vocabulary enrichment and retention (67.5% of students), suggesting that contextual vocabulary exposure through dictation contributed to expanded lexical knowledge. Notably, 57.5% of students reported developing enhanced grammar awareness and syntactic understanding, while 52.5% reported overall listening comprehension improvement. This multidimensional benefit profile substantiates Brown's (2004) theoretical proposition that well-designed, integrative pedagogical activities foster cross-skill transfer and facilitate more holistic language development than isolated, single-skill-focused instruction emphasizing one component in isolation from others.

Table 2. Student-Reported Perceived Learning Benefits (n = 40)

Perceived Learning Benefit	Percentage of Students (%)
Pronunciation improvement	72.5
Vocabulary acquisition	67.5
Grammar awareness	57.5
Overall listening comprehension	52.5

4.4. Ongoing Challenges in Listening Comprehension

Despite overall positive outcomes, substantial performance gains, and favorable attitudes toward dictation, students articulated significant, continuing challenges in specific dimensions of listening comprehension. Table 3 summarizes the prevalence of reported persistent difficulties. Vocabulary recognition emerged as the most formidable continuing challenge, with 90% of students acknowledging ongoing difficulty in identifying unfamiliar or contextually ambiguous lexical items during authentic listening contexts. Processing rapid speech rates presented substantial difficulty for 80% of students, indicating that while dictation enhanced listening capacity generally, learners retained challenges with naturally accelerated, conversational speech patterns. Additionally, distinguishing pronunciation nuances, accent variations, and phonological contrasts challenged 77.5% of learners despite pronunciation improvements reported above. These persistent challenges, notwithstanding dictation intervention, highlight the inherently multifactorial, complex nature of listening comprehension and suggest that isolated pedagogical techniques, while beneficial, require strategic supplementation with complementary instructional approaches addressing vocabulary breadth and depth, gradual speech-rate acceleration, systematic accent exposure, and contextual listening practice.

Table 3. Student-Reported Persistent Listening Comprehension Difficulties (n = 40)

Reported Listening Difficulty	Percentage of Students (%)
Unfamiliar vocabulary recognition	90,0
Rapid speech rate processing	80,0
Pronunciation distinction and accent variation	77,5

4.5. Student Qualitative Reflections and Metacognitive Development

Open-ended questionnaire responses and informal student remarks provided illuminating insights into participants' subjective learning experiences, cognitive strategy development, and metacognitive awareness evolution. Numerous students reported enhanced listening concentration and attentional control as primary benefits. Representative comments included: 'Dictation helps me concentrate more when listening—I have to focus on every word carefully, not let my mind wander.' Another student reflected, 'It trains my ears to catch pronunciation better, especially vowel sounds I always miss before.' These observations indicate developing metacognitive awareness, with students becoming increasingly conscious of specific listening strategies, attention regulation mechanisms, and personalized difficulty areas requiring targeted effort. A third respondent noted, 'Sometimes the speaker is too fast, but doing this task many times makes me feel more confident.' This reflection suggests that repeated dictation exposure promotes gradual confidence development, reduced listening anxiety, and increased willingness to engage with listening materials—psychological factors instrumental to sustained listening improvement and motivation maintenance. Students' spontaneous articulation of learning processes and strategy development indicates substantial gains in metacognitive awareness accompanying the documented performance improvements.

5. Discussion

5.1. Alignment with Cognitive-Processing Frameworks

The empirical findings obtained in this study elucidate and substantiate the cognitive mechanisms through which dictation facilitates enhanced listening development when examined through contemporary cognitive-processing frameworks and neurolinguistic research. Rost's (2002) interactive processing model provides particularly robust explanatory power for understanding the observed results. Dictation intrinsically requires dynamic, reciprocal, simultaneous engagement of bottom-up phonological decoding and top-down contextual inference throughout the listening event. As students listen and transcribe dictated passages, they continuously and recursively cycle through phonetic segmentation and decoding of individual sound units, lexical item identification and retrieval from long-term memory, activation of semantic networks and contextual associations, and validation of tentative interpretations against discourse context and world knowledge. This reciprocal activation of complementary processing pathways promotes deeper, more durable learning consolidation, faster automatic retrieval processes, and more flexible application of listening strategies than either modality could achieve independently or sequentially.

The documented improvements in pronunciation perception (72.5% of students reported substantial gains) align directly and predictably with Field's (2008) bottom-up processing model, which emphasizes the critical importance of accurate, detailed phonological decoding as foundational to comprehension. Dictation, by repeatedly exposing learners to and requiring active transcription of individual phonemes, syllabic structures, and connected speech phenomena (such as linking, assimilation, elision), provides intensive training in

phonological segmentation, discrimination, and feature detection. Vietnamese learners, whose native language exhibits phonological systems substantially different from English—particularly Vietnamese's tonal system, vowel inventory, and consonant clusters—benefit particularly from this systematic, explicit phonological exposure and analysis. Similarly, the documented vocabulary acquisition benefits (67.5% of students reported improvements) corroborate Kafipour and Jahansooz's (2017) emphasis on top-down contextual processing and schema-based comprehension: as students infer meaning from partial or ambiguous auditory information and contextual cues embedded within dictated passages, they engage cognitive mechanisms and mnemonic processes that solidify and expand lexical understanding substantially beyond decontextualized, isolated vocabulary instruction approaches that lack authentic meaning-making contexts.

5.2. *Pedagogical Implications for English Language Teaching*

The evidence from both quantitative performance improvements and qualitative attitude data substantiates implementation of systematic dictation within English language curricula at the secondary education level. Several evidence-based pedagogical recommendations emerge from this research: First, teachers should integrate dictation regularly but strategically—brief, well-designed dictation activities (5–10 minutes) positioned deliberately within listening lessons consolidate new vocabulary, reinforce sound recognition, strengthen working memory for auditory information, and provide immediate practice without inducing excessive cognitive load or learner frustration. Second, pedagogically sophisticated implementation requires employing varied dictation formats. Alternating systematically between standard dictation, error identification activities, jigsaw formats, listening cloze exercises, and imitation tasks sustains student motivation throughout extended intervention periods, accommodates diverse learning preferences and cognitive styles, prevents pedagogical monotony, and targets distinct linguistic subskills comprehensively. Third, post-dictation metacognitive reflection and guided error analysis amplifies learning effectiveness substantially. Structured discussions following dictation completion enable learners to analyze common transcription errors, compare alternative interpretations of ambiguous segments, identify challenging phonological patterns causing perception difficulties, and explicitly articulate evolving listening strategies and attention mechanisms.

Fourth, strategic integration of communicative and interactive elements enhances engagement and meaning-making. Pair-based and small-group dictation formats (particularly jigsaw dictation) encourage meaningful interaction, peer negotiation of meaning, collaborative problem-solving, and oral communication practice, thereby balancing form-focused accuracy development with communicative, meaning-focused practice aligned with contemporary communicative language teaching philosophy. Finally, instructional materials must be carefully calibrated to learners' current proficiency levels and developmental readiness. Text complexity, speech rate, speaker accent familiarity, contextual scaffolding, and cognitive demand should be continuously adjusted and progressively increased to maintain optimal challenge—sufficient to promote growth

without exceeding learners' frustration thresholds or creating disengagement. Teachers must maintain detailed awareness of individual student listening development and adapt material difficulty accordingly, providing differentiated instruction when learner heterogeneity requires varied pacing and challenge levels.

5.3. *Study Limitations and Contextual Factors*

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment when interpreting and generalizing these findings. First, the study comprised a single school setting with one intact classroom cohort (n = 40), limiting generalizability to broader Vietnamese secondary student populations or international contexts. Second, the eight-week intervention period, while adequate for documenting initial improvement patterns, remains relatively brief for assessing long-term retention or sustained skill development following intervention completion. Third, the study lacked a control group receiving alternative instruction, preventing direct comparison of dictation effectiveness relative to other listening methodologies. Fourth, audio materials and speaker characteristics (native English-speaking voice, relatively clear pronunciation, moderate speaking pace) may not fully represent the broad range of English varieties and authentic listening contexts students will encounter. Fifth, the pre- and post-tests, while parallel in content and format, were administered identically without counterbalancing or alternate forms, potentially introducing practice effects or test familiarity influences. Finally, student attitudes and self-reported benefits, while positive, were measured via self-report questionnaires potentially subject to social desirability bias or demand characteristics. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable evidence for dictation effectiveness within this particular context and comparable secondary education settings.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This action research study provides empirically grounded evidence that systematic dictation practice constitutes an effective, practically implementable methodology for enhancing English listening comprehension among Vietnamese secondary students. Quantitative results documented statistically significant performance improvements (mean gain of 0.8 points on 10-point scale, representing 14.8% growth, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's d = 0.64), sustained by overwhelmingly positive student attitudes and demonstrated learning gains across multiple linguistic dimensions, particularly pronunciation perception (72.5% positive change) and vocabulary retention (67.5% positive change). The implementation of pedagogically varied dictation techniques—standard, error identification, jigsaw, listening cloze, and elicited imitation—successfully accommodated diverse learner preferences and cognitive styles while maintaining engagement throughout the eight-week intervention period. The high percentage of students maintaining or improving performance (77.5%), combined with reduced performance variability (standard deviation decreased from 1.36 to 1.22), indicates that dictation benefits span the ability range rather than privileging only advanced learners.

Dictation's unique pedagogical strength resides in its capacity to simultaneously develop receptive and productive language capabilities, integrate multiple processing mechanisms (phonological, syntactic, semantic) in coordinated fashion, facilitate metacognitive

awareness development, and engage learners in authentic, meaningful language interaction. Rather than constituting isolated, form-focused practice disconnected from meaningful communication or at odds with communicative language teaching philosophy, pedagogically sophisticated dictation represents an integrative, communicative-responsive instructional approach aligned with contemporary language education theory and practice. The persistent challenges students encountered—vocabulary recognition difficulty (90%), rapid speech processing challenges (80%), pronunciation discrimination difficulty (77.5%)—highlight that while dictation substantially improves listening competence, it functions optimally as one coordinated component within a comprehensive, multifaceted listening development program. Complementary instructional strategies addressing extensive vocabulary building, gradual acceleration of listening speech rates, systematic accent and variety exposure, and contextual listening tasks in varied discourse domains remain necessary for comprehensive listening competence development.

Recommendations for practitioners implementing these findings include: (1) incorporating dictation systematically within secondary English curricula at regular intervals, allocating approximately 5–10 minutes per lesson; (2) employing pedagogically varied dictation formats strategically to sustain engagement and address multiple listening subskills; (3) implementing post-dictation metacognitive reflection sessions and guided error analysis; (4) integrating communicative, interactive elements through pair and group dictation formats; (5) calibrating material difficulty and speech rate to learners' current proficiency and adjusting incrementally; and (6) supplementing dictation with complementary listening development strategies addressing persistent vocabulary, rate, and accent challenges. Future research directions include: comparative investigations of dictation versus alternative interactive listening methodologies (shadowing, task-based listening, extensive listening); longitudinal studies tracking sustained retention of listening improvements beyond intervention completion; examination of dictation effectiveness across different proficiency levels, age groups, and L1 backgrounds; investigation of optimal dictation frequency and duration; and exploration of technology-enhanced dictation delivery (computer-assisted instruction, mobile applications). Extended intervention periods and larger sample sizes with control groups would further strengthen empirical conclusions regarding dictation's efficacy and optimal implementation parameters in diverse educational contexts.

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