Improving the English Writing Mechanics: A Study on Tenth-Grade Libyan Students in Malaysia Using the Dictogloss Technique

Maruwan Alshireedi, Zurina Khairuddin

Faculty of Languages & Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 21300 Gong Badak, Terrangu, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: zkzurina@unisza.edu.my

Abstract
Writing mechanics are vital for gaining English language proficiency; however, certain students have faced difficulties with multiple domains, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure, particularly tenth-grade Libyan students in Malaysia. In this context, the dictogloss technique efficiently improves the English writing mechanics through a collaborative language-learning approach, involving students in recreating a sentence after listening, thus fostering active involvement and creative thinking. This article aims to evaluate the impact of writing mechanics on Libyan tenth-grade students' English Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency utilizing the dictogloss technique, applying a quantitative quasi-experimental design, and an independent t-test analysed through descriptive statistics using SPSS software version 25. This article utilized pre-test and post-test structures to collect data from 43 Libyan students across 5 Libyan secondary schools in Malaysia, divided into an experimental group that received writing instruction through the dictogloss technique over 8 sessions. In contrast, the control group adhered to the conventional grammar translation method. The result of dictogloss technique showed a significant improvement in the writing mechanics of the experimental group compared to the control group. The experimental and control groups had poor writing mechanics before the intervention, but the experimental group showed considerable improvement in punctuation and other mechanic domains after the intervention. This study helps academics find new ways to teach writing in international and diverse national settings to increase English language acquisition and academic success.
Keywords: Dictogloss Technique, Libyan Students, Tenth-Grade, Writing Mechanics

Introduction
Libya's native language is Arabic, and English is considered a foreign language. In recent years, English has become increasingly important in Libya (Boufarrag, 2021). However, Libyan students often struggle to produce and understand key aspects of the language (Alhadi, 2023). They tend to think in Arabic when speaking or writing in English, due to the significant

differences between the two languages in terms of alphabet, sounds, vowel patterns, punctuation, articles, and writing styles (Rajab, 2021). These challenges reflect the wider difficulties Libyan students face in learning English as a foreign language (Abdullah & Albelazi, 2022). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a compulsory subject in Libyan secondary schools, but Arabic remains the primary language of communication in the classroom (Hadia, 2020). The increasing importance of English around the world, linked to globalisation and its impact on education, the economy, and healthcare, has led to an increased demand for English language learning (Zein, 2019). Despite this, many Libyan students still struggle to acquire the four basic language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking (Al-obaydi & Al-mosawi, 2019).

In particular, writing is one of the most complex skills for EFL students, requiring the development of both productive and generative skills (Nuruzzaman et al., 2018). English language teaching in Libyan schools aims to promote critical thinking and encourage different perspectives, whether traditional or modern teaching methods are used (Al-obaydi & Al-mosawi, 2019). However, societal attitudes towards English language learning remain a challenge and contribute to the ongoing difficulties Libyan students face in improving their language proficiency (Nuruzzaman et al., 2018). Certain students have faced difficulties with multiple domains, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure, particularly tenth-grade Libyan students in Malaysia. The study of Fathia (2024), identified difficulties in writing such as punctuation marks challenges. As Mohammed et al (2020), verified Libyan students with learning and encounter problems in writing, such as capital letters and punctuation marks. According to Abied et al (2021), and Dewi (2021), many teachers have noted that students have spelling difficulties in writing.

The lack of effective teaching techniques is one of the major challenges in implementing mechanical writing effectively. Teaching techniques used in Libya are often outdated, with teachers relying heavily on traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Alhadi et al., 2023). The lack of innovative teaching methods and techniques also hinders classroom engagement. According to (Hadia, 2020), Libyan classrooms often lack the active teaching strategies needed to create a dynamic learning environment. Active engagement, as highlighted by (Alfadhil, 2023), plays a crucial role in enhancing learners' learning by helping them achieve success. However, the use of collaborative learning techniques in Libyan classrooms is minimal, largely due to teachers' attitudes, experiences, and behaviours, which prevent the implementation of more interactive methods (Fathia, 2024). To address these issues, teachers need to adopt more effective strategies and develop instructional materials that better suit the needs of students (Mehdi, 2018). In response to this gap, the current study aims to provide a more effective technique to improve the writing mechanisms of Libyan tenth-grade students in Malaysia. There are three main scopes in this study. First, it focuses on tenth-grade Libyan students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Libyan schools in Malaysia. Second, the sample consists of 43 Libyan students in secondary schools in Malaysia. Finally, the study was conducted exclusively in five Libyan schools located in the religions of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

Literature Review
Shayakhmetova et al (2020), argue that writing is a means of communicating messages, ideas, and emotions through well-organized and logical sentences. Yanti (2018), and Yasti et

al (2019), emphasize its role in communication, using symbols to convey meaning and connect ideas, particularly in today's tech-driven environment where written communication complements oral interaction. Yusnita (2022), and Suprapto et al (2022), discuss the writing process, which includes exploring, structuring, and revising thoughts iteratively. Martinez (2020) highlights that this process enhances cognitive skills, verbal expression, and idea transmission while following grammatical rules. Zaki (2022), view writing as a complex communication system involving authors, messages, language symbols, and readers. Brown (2001), describes it as a series of deliberate actions requiring specialized skills in idea generation, organization, content revision, and language refinement.

Zaghwani (2019), points out that writing is more than converting speech to text; it involves transforming internal thoughts into written form. Sarwat et al (2021), say writing as both a process and a product, promoting diverse idea generation among learners. Hadi et al. (2021), see that writing as encompassing a range of skills including grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Khan (2020), argues that proficiency in writing requires exploring and categorizing existing knowledge, transforming ignorance into enlightenment. Shouran (2021), underscores writing's importance in language acquisition, enabling learners to experiment with sentence construction and longer compositions. Abbas & Syarif (2021), stress writing's role in producing grammatically accurate and culturally appropriate essays, involving aspects like vocabulary and punctuation. Dhanapal et al (2022), advocate for developing coherence, cohesion, and mechanics for effective writing. Yusnita (2022), links effective writing to the ability to articulate thoughts verbally and communicate information.

Mechanics Writing
Farfar (2023), categorizes writing problems into issues with capitalization, punctuation, organization, grammar, coherence, frustration, and spelling. Pangaribuan & Manik (2018), identify similar problems, such as phonetic errors, grammar mistakes, and interference from the first language. Masoud & Alrbsh (2016), note that students often make mistakes in English writing. Sakkir et al (2022), report that common errors include capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Al-oudat (2017), attributes spelling errors to factors such as first language interference.

The writing mechanics include literacy - spelling, vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, punctuation, and paragraph construction (Britt, 2019). The rules of written language, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, are referred to as mechanics (Knicl, 2020). According to Fitriani et al (2019), showed some conventions that fall under the category of writing mechanics: Spelling: Proper spelling is important in conveying a message clearly and accurately. Misspelled words can lead to confusion or make the writing appear unprofessional. Grammar: Grammar rules provide a framework for constructing sentences that convey meaning clearly and correctly. Grammatical errors can also lead to confusion or make the writing appear unprofessional. Punctuation: Punctuation marks, such as commas, periods, and colons, are used to clarify the meaning of a sentence and help the reader understand the writer's intended tone and emphasis. Capitalization: Capital letters are used to begin sentences, proper nouns, and titles. Proper use of capitalization is important in conveying meaning and adhering to style conventions. Formatting: The way a piece of writing is formatted can affect its readability and clarity. Formatting conventions include things like paragraph indentation, margins, line spacing, and font size.

Dictogloss Technique

Dictogloss is a technique originally developed by Ruth Wagenreb in 1990. It is a classroom activity in which students listen to a passage write down keywords and then work together to reconstruct the text in their own words (Syafei et al., 2023). The term "dictogloss" is divided into two parts: "dicto" which means dictation and "gloss" which refers to paraphrasing or interpreting the text (Hai & Hanh, 2020). This technique provides an effective way for teachers to give feedback and build on learners' contributions in a natural way (Jose, 2022). It combines individual work with group collaboration and with students first listening and taking notes independently before working together to reconstruct the text. This collaborative task provides a clear focus and specific objectives as pointed out by (Aminatun et al., 2021).

Dictogloss is an integrated skill-learning technique where the basic procedure of this technique is that students work together to create a repeat version of a text that they had listened to (Al-obaydi & Al-mosawi, 2019). It is called integrated skills because dictogloss not only trains students' writing skills but other language skills as well, such as listening, reading, and speaking (Dista, 2017). In dictogloss, the text is read two or three times as fast as normal. Students write down keywords and then try reconstructing their context from their understanding of the text and notes. Rebuilding the entire text dictated by their observations requires students in the groups to discuss and retrieve their knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, language, and text, and they should also try to organize their observations well into paragraphs of order in which the reconstructed version will be coherent and have close meaning to the original text. Then they analyse and correct the work of their friends (Shofiyah, 2015).

As Amalina (2018), identified four basic stages in the dictogloss technique: preparation, dictation, reconstruction, and analysis and correction. These stages have been further detailed in Jose's study (2023), he explained these stages in detail: In the preparation stage, the teacher selects appropriate material, introduces the topic and relevant vocabulary, organises students into groups, and gives clear instructions, often including warm-up activities, such as discussing the topic and vocabulary. In the dictation phase, the teacher reads a short text twice at a natural pace; on the first reading, students listen carefully and on the second, they take notes on key vocabulary and phrases. In the reconstruction stage, students work in groups to reconstruct the text using their notes. Finally, in the analysis and correction phase, students check and correct the texts they have reconstructed, comparing them with the work of other groups and then with the original text, which the teacher reveals only after their analysis.

Dictogloss as one of the techniques that can be used in learning writing brings some advantages when implemented. Dictogloss facilitates an increase in learners' awareness of the use of the target language in their writing (Azmoon, 2021). Students are encouraged to direct part of their attention to form, using all four language skills at all stages (Ardiansyah, 2020). As a collaborative task to raise awareness of form, dictogloss contributes significantly to writing development. Another method with similar characteristics is processing instruction, which proves remarkable in teaching writing accuracy (Azmoon, 2021). dictogloss assists students in improving the text construction and seeking different alternatives to reconstruct a passage on what they have learned (Kurniawan, 2017).

Methods

Research Design

The study used a quasi-experimental quantitative design. (Sugiyono, 2019)explains that this design includes an experimental group and a control group. In this article, two groups were used. The experimental group received writing instruction through the dictogloss technique for 8 sessions, and the control group followed the conventional grammar translation method.

Sample and Population

This study used a purposive sampling method that is particularly suitable for small samples or populations, as noted by (Mazahreh, 2021). The use of this method was justified by the unique nature of the case, where the total population of interest was relatively small. Specifically, the study focused on all Libyan Grade 10 students studying in Libyan schools in Malaysia. According to Gall et al., (1996), a minimum of 15 participants per group is required for comparisons in experimental research, a guideline echoed by (Cohen et al., 2020). The total population for this study consisted of 43 students aged 15-17 years. These students were divided into two groups: the control group of 22 students and the experimental group of 21 students.

Instruction and Procedure

Arikunto (2002), defines an instrument as a tool or device used by researchers to collect data. This study used pre- and post-writing tests as data collection instruments. Both the experimental and control groups completed a pre-intervention test and a post-intervention test. The pre-test aimed to assess the basic writing mechanics of the students in both groups. After the pre-test, the experimental group received instruction through the dictogloss technique. This intervention consisted of eight sessions of 45 minutes each, which were conducted according to the regular school schedule. Each session focused on improving writing mechanics using the dictogloss method. Meanwhile, the control group received instruction using the conventional grammar translation method (GTM) without any intervention. After the intervention, both groups took the post-test, and the results analysed to assess the effectiveness of the dictogloss technique in improving writing mechanics.

Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data for this study was collected through pre- and post-writing tests. As Alomer (2021), explains, quantitative research emphasises objective measurement through mathematical, statistical, or numerical analysis. The data was analysed using the independent samples t-test in SPSS version 25, with descriptive statistics to summarise characteristics such as sample size and mean scores. This analysis compared pre-and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups to assess the effect of the intervention on improving writing mechanics. According to Mishra et al (2019), the independent samples t-test compares means between two independent groups. In this study, the independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores on the pre-test and post-test between the experimental and control groups. Figure 1 below illustrates the process of data analysis.
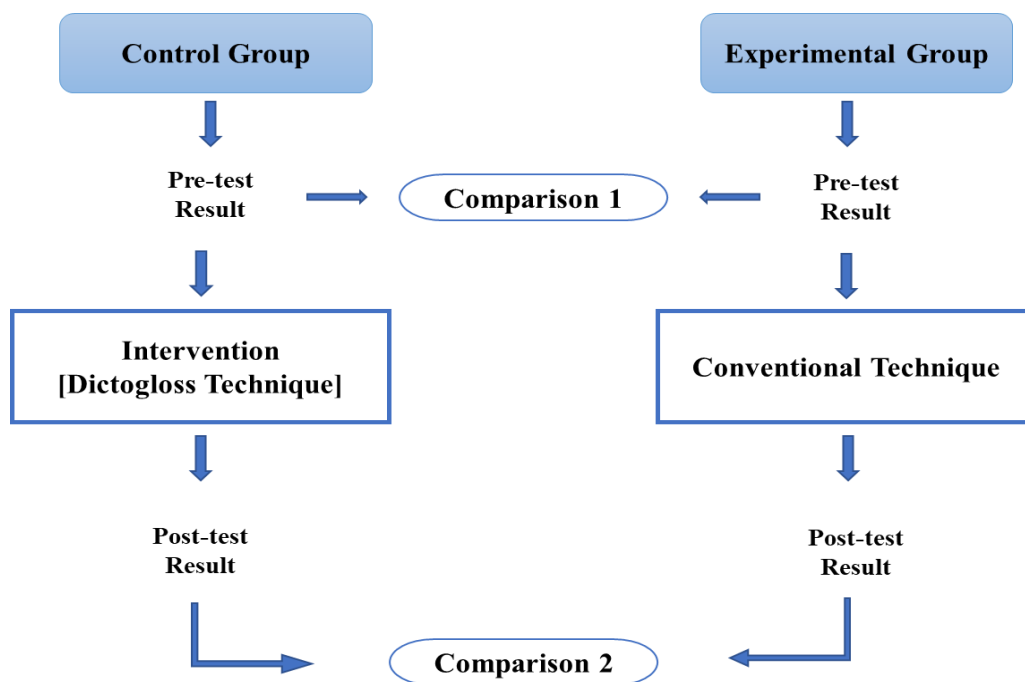
Fig. 1. Data Analysis Process

Results

The Effect of the Dictogloss Technique Intervention: Pre and Post-Tests between the Experimental and Control Groups

To address the research questions - (1) "Are there statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the pre-writing test between the experimental group and the control group?" and (2) "Are there statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the post-writing test between the experimental group and the control group?". - The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. "There is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the pre-writing test between the experimental group and the control group".
2. "There is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the post-writing test between the experimental and control groups".

An independent samples t-test was used to test these hypotheses. According to Mishra et al (2019), an independent samples t-test compares the mean scores of two independent groups. Before conducting the t-test, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to assess the students' writing mechanisms based on the pre-test and post-test results.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including sample size and mean scores, were used to analyse the students' writing mechanisms. Table 1 shows the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups before the dictogloss technique intervention. Table 2 shows the post-test scores of both groups after the dictogloss technique intervention.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistic in the Pre-test of the Control and Experimental Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Scores	Control group	22	4.613	2.329
	Experimental group	21	4.952	1.967

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the pre-test scores, comparing the control group (22 participants) with the experimental group (21 participants). The control group achieved an average score of 4.613, while the experimental group achieved an average score of 4.952. These results demonstrate no statistically significant differences in the average pre-test scores between the two groups.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistic in the Post-test of the Control and Experimental Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post-test Scores	Control group	22	5.272	2.223
	Experimental group	21	7.857	1.205

As shown in Table 2, the control group achieved a mean post-test score of 5.272, while the experimental group achieved a significantly higher mean post-test score of 7.857. This indicates a statistically significant difference in mean post-test scores between the control and experimental groups.

Independent Sample T-test: Pre and Post-Tests between the Experimental and Control Groups

Pre-intervention scores of students from both the control and experimental groups were analyzed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in mean pre-test scores between the two groups.

Table 3

Independent Sample T-test: the Pre-Test between Control and Experimental Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control G	22	4.6136	2.3295	.4966
	Experimental G	21	4.9524	1.9679	.4294

Table 3 shows the independent sample statistics comparing the mean pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups. Both groups had similar mean scores, with the control group scoring 4.613 and the experimental group scoring 4.952. These results indicate no statistically significant difference in the mean pre-test scores between the two groups.

Table 4

Independent Sample T-test: the Post-Test between Control and Experimental Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control G	22	5.2727	2.2239	.4741
	Experimental G	21	7.8571	1.2056	.2630

Table 4 shows that the mean scores of the control and experimental groups in the post-test were different, as the mean score of the control group was (5.272), while the mean score of the experimental group was (7.857). These results indicate statistically significant differences in the mean post-test scores between the two groups.

Independent Sample T-Test: Pre-test and Post-test Between the Control and Experimental Groups

Students' scores in both the control and experimental groups were analysed before and after the intervention to determine if there was a significant difference in mean pre-test scores between the two groups.

Table 5
Independent Sample T-test: Pre-test Between Control and Experimental Groups

		Leven's Test for Variances' Equality		Means' Equality T-test					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Equal Variances Assumed	.634	.430	-.514	41	.610	-.3387	.6591	-.6700	.9925
	Equal Variances on Assumed			-.516	40.417	.609	-.3387	.6565	-1.6653	.9878

Table 5 shows the independent samples t-test results comparing the mean pre-test scores between the control and experimental groups. The p-values exceed the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis (H0) is not rejected and that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores between the control and experimental groups.

Table 6
Independent Sample T-test: Post-test Between Control and Experimental Groups

		Leven's Test for Variances' Equality		Means' Equality T-test					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Equal Variances Assumed	9.609	.003	-4.705	41	.000	-2.5844	.5493	-3.6938	-1.4750
	Equal Variances on Assumed			-4.766	32.670	.000	-2.5844	.5422	-3.6880	-1.4807

Table 6 shows that the p-value (0.00) is less than the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). This indicates a statistically significant difference in the mean post-test scores between the control and experimental groups. The results show that the dictogloss intervention had a significant effect on the experimental group, demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention in improving students' writing mechanics.

Discussion

To answer the research question "Are there statistically significant differences in the mean pre-test scores between the experimental and control groups?", an independent t-test was conducted to compare the students' writing mechanisms. The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the pre-test scores between the two groups, with the p-value exceeding the significance level of 0.05. This finding indicates that the experimental and control groups had similar writing mechanisms before the intervention. Specifically, the mean score of the control group was 4.0, while the mean score of the experimental group was 4.952, confirming that both groups had similar levels of writing mechanisms before the intervention of the dictogloss technique. These results show that the experimental group provides an appropriate comparison for assessing the impact of the intervention, leading to a reliable assessment of the intervention's impact by comparing post-test scores.

In response to the research question "Are there statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the post-test between the experimental and control groups?", the post-test results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. With a p-value of less than 0.05, the analysis confirmed statistically significant differences between the two groups, showing a significant effect of the dictogloss technique intervention on students' writing mechanics. Specifically, the control group had a mean score of 5.272, while the experimental group had a higher mean score of 7.857, an improvement of about 2.60 points over the experimental group. This difference shows the effectiveness of the intervention in improving students' writing mechanics, especially language accuracy, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

These findings are consistent with studies by Pertiwi et al (2018), and Tsuraya (2022), who also observed superior post-test performance in experimental groups using the dictogloss technique. Furthermore, other studies in different contexts support the effectiveness of dictogloss in improving students' writing skills. The technique improves individual and group learning by promoting critical thinking and increasing student autonomy as it encourages active engagement in the learning process. In addition, dictogloss facilitates idea generation and simplifies writing, creating an engaging and meaningful learning experience (Abdurrahman, 2022; Alsamadani, 2022; Yusnita, 2022; Hassan et al., 2023; and Syafei et al., 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study show that the dictogloss technique had a positive effect on improving the writing mechanics of Libyan tenth-grade students. The pre-test result confirmed that the experimental and control groups had similar writing mechanics before the intervention, suggesting that any subsequent improvements could be attributed to the dictogloss technique. In contrast, the post-test results show a significant improvement in writing mechanics in the experimental group compared to the control group, highlighting the effectiveness of the dictogloss technique in improving language accuracy, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling. These results underline the potential of the dictogloss technique as a valuable teaching tool for improving students' writing mechanics. The results of this study suggest that integrating dictogloss into the curriculum could be an effective technique for improving students' writing mechanics, especially in environments where traditional methods

have fallen short. Consequently, educators in Libya and similar contexts should consider implementing dictogloss to improve students' writing mechanics.

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