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Increased Accuracy in Dictation by Korean College Students When Using the Korean Alphabet

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not the use of the Korean alphabet increased the accuracy of English sentences Korean university students produced in dictation. The students were divided into three categories, beginning, intermediate, and advanced, based on the listening comprehension scores of a practice TOEIC test. The total population of 120 students were divided into two groups, control and experiment. In the first testing, the experiment group transcribed the English utterances on a practice TOEIC tape into phonological writing in Korean and then later changed the Korean writing into English words and sentences. In the second testing, the control group became the experiment group and used the Korean alphabet in transcribing the English sounds. Statistically significant differences were found in the improvement of accuracy in dictation when the Korean alphabet was used, especially for the beginning and intermediate students. By using the Korean alphabet as the phonological representation of the sounds, the students in the experiment group produced more accurate English words than the control group who went directly from the English utterances to writing in English. Statistically significant results were not produced for the advanced students. The significance of the present study relates to the need to add to the paucity of available data on the use of the Korean alphabet in teaching listening comprehension.

[dictation/phonological writing in Korean, 받아쓰기/한글로 음운 받아쓰기]

I. INTRODUCTION

The fifty years of English education in Korea have resulted in so-called 'mute English.' That is to say, even after years of study most Koreans still are unable to communicate in English. From elementary school to college, students study English from the third grade through college. Still, most of them have great difficulty in carrying out even rudimentary conversations. The reason may lie in the ineffective approach the educators take in teaching English.

Most Korean students have low levels of listening and speaking skills. Even though most students know enough grammar and vocabulary, Korean students' inability to communicate effectively probably arises from a lack of training in listening comprehension.

Of the four language skills, listening is the most frequently used language skill (Morley, 1999; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in (Devine, 1982). Adults spend in communication activities 45 percent to listening, 30 percent to speaking, 16 percent to reading, and only 9 percent to writing (Rivers & Temperly, 1978). Listening is prerequisite to developing other language skills: it comes before speaking, reading, and writing. An examination of the realities of first and second language acquisition reveals that immediate oral practice is not recommended for developing both receptive and productive aural and oral competence in a second language. In fact, delaying oral production may be preferable until the learners feel they are "ready" (Devine, 1982; Gary, 1975; Gilman & Moody, 1984; Krashen, 1981; Park, 2002; Ringbom, 1992; Rivers & Temperly, 1978; Wolvin & Coakley, 1988).

The listening-first approach was pioneered by Postovsky (1974, 1975), who demonstrated advantages in delaying oral practice at the beginning of foreign language learning. Postovsky contended that intensive oral practice is not productive in the initial phase of instruction and should be delayed until the student is better prepared for the task, until he/she has learned to understand the spoken language. Other scholars have also advocated a listening-first approach to language instruction (Asher, 1972; Asher, Kusudo, & de la Torre, 1983; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Omaggio Hadley, 1993; Winitz, 1981; Winitz & Reeds, 1973). Krashen has also argued that early emphasis on speaking is not

only wasteful, in that it takes up time that could be more productively spent on providing input, but also can be harmful. Forcing the learner to say things before he/she has acquired the necessary language rules creates anxiety and encourages errors, which might be difficult to eliminate later (Krashen, 1985).

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Dictation allows the teacher to learn what the students have heard or have missed in the listening, evaluate their knowledge of linguistic forms, and teach the students accordingly. Some of the reasons for using dictation given by are: (1) The students are active during the exercise. (2) The students are active after the exercise. (3) Dictation leads to oral communicative activities. (4) Dictation fosters unconscious thinking; dictation tends to occupy only a part of the students' minds (Davis & Rinvolucri, 1988).

Dictation could be a means by which the students demonstrate they have gained understanding in what they have heard. Exercises for listening comprehension could be more effective if they are constructed for a specific task. The students should be required to do something in response to what they hear that will demonstrate their understanding (Dunkel, 1986; Ur, 1984).

The effectiveness of dictation is supported by Krashen's Monitor Theory, which hypothesizes that adults have two independent systems for developing ability in second languages, subconscious language *acquisition* and conscious language *learning*, and that subconscious acquisition appears far more important (Krashen, 1981). Lee found that dictation may result in promoting listening comprehension (Lee, 1998).

There is further support for dictation. Kowal and Swain were interested in leaners' internalization of linguistic knowledge and used a method called "dictogloss," a variation of dictation, in their research in a French immersion content-based instruction. They found that dictogloss was an effective task for making students aware of language form and function (Kowal & Swain, 1994). They contended that dictogloss is a contemporary approach to learning grammar, language forms, structures, and patterns and promotes negotiation of meaning as well as negotiation of form (Wajnryb, 1990).

Once the students have performed the listening task in dictation, the reading of the text should provide visual reinforcement for the listening process. The main concern about using reading in conjunction with listening is that the written forms may lead to faulty hypotheses about the sounds of the utterances. However, this can be prevented by making sure that the students have always had a chance to hear the material presented aurally before being given a chance to read it. Presumably, sufficient listening should be given to imprint the sound image before being giving the learners a chance to make a faulty guess from the written form (Gary & Gary, 1981).

There is a lack of research investigating the effectiveness of using the Korean alphabet[1] to improve listening comprehension. Although the Korean alphabet effectively transfers sounds into written phonetic symbols, many teachers discourage its use for fear that it may somehow hamper the students' ability to learn English.

III. METHOD

1. Research Questions

This study was designed specifically to answer these questions.

1. What was the accuracy rate in listening comprehension for Korean students taught by the traditional method?
2. What was the accuracy rate in listening comprehension for Korean students taught by the use of the Korean alphabet method?
3. Did using the Korean alphabet reduce the number of errors in dictation, thereby increasing the accuracy in listening comprehension of the university students as reported by the research?

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1) The Korean writing system, called "Hangul" is a system of symbols expressed in a set of consonants and vowels. Hangul was created by King Sejong of Yi Dynasty in the 15th century for the purpose of educating the illiterate populace. Prior to the invention of Hangul, books had been written only in Chinese characters. Consequently, the commoners, women, and those who were not members of the elite class who could not read or write Chinese characters were in fact denied access to education.

2. Subject

The present study's population consisted of 120 university students ranging from freshmen to seniors in the School of International Business and Area Studies (SIBAS) program at Pusan University of Foreign Studies. The participants were drawn from the entire population of about 140 students from six English classes of the program.

3. Design

When students hear the English utterances in a dictation and attempt to transcribe the sounds into English, they invariably think of the words which they already know and are familiar with. Since they do not possess sufficiently large vocabulary, they tend to think of the familiar words that sound similar to the words in the dictation. By using the Korean alphabet as the phonological representation of the utterances, the students can transcribe the sound into Korean words without a bias or a preconceived notion and then transfer the Korean written words into appropriate English words and sentences more accurately. The Korean alphabet merely functions as a bridge from the sound to a written description in Korean.

Part I of the Listening Comprehension of a practice TOEIC test was used for dictation. The results of the dictation were compared between those students who received the treatment and those who did not.

4. Procedures

1) The population of 120 students was divided into two groups of 60, each with the following breakdown: three classes were control and the other three experiment.

- 10 students with low (L) test scores
- 40 students with medium (M) test scores
- 10 students with high (H) test scores.

Low scores ranged from 0 to 200, medium scores from 201 to 300, and high scores from 301 to 495 (495 being the perfect score). The testing was done in

March 2001 during a regular class as part of the class exercise.
2) The next step was to administer dictation from the audiotape of the listening comprehension part of a practice TOEIC test to both control and experiment groups. For Test I, Group A served as the control and Group B as the experiment group.

The following test instructions were used and provided to all participants in the present investigation:

(1) The students first listened to the audiotape.
(2) The Experiment Group (Group B) transcribed the sounds into Korean writing, using the Korean alphabet.
(3) The Control Group (Group A) did not use the Korean alphabet. The participants were instructed to transcribe the sounds directly into English words and sentences.
(4) The Experiment Group transposed the written words in Korean into English words.
(5) The instructor wrote the correct sentences on the board.

After the first test was completed, another TOEIC listening test (Test II) was used to measure the accuracy of the first test's results. For Test II, Group B served as the control and Group A served as the experiment. The procedures for Test II were the same as for Test 1. Table 4 on the following page provides a breakdown of the number of study respondents in each of the two groups: control and experiment. As indicated, there was a total of 60 participants in each group.

5. Statistical Procedures

The first two research questions, as stated in the previous section of this chapter, are descriptive by design and hence descriptive statistics were used. The third research question, however, is an inferential question and was therefore analyzed by using analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures. The sample was divided into two groups: control and experiment. The dependent variable was the number of errors on the TOEIC test. The

repeated measures were Tests I and II. The independent variables included the levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) and the groups (experiment and control). The assignment of the 120 students was made into two groups, 60 students in each, was made in order for the two groups to be equal to each other. By having a large middle group (intermediate students), the data are symmetrical and have a normal distribution.

6. Data Collection and Analysis

Listening test scores to identity SIBAS students were obtained from the department. The students were segregated into three categories, beginning, intermediate, and advanced. The categories were based on the listening comprehension scores of the TOEIC test scores. The designation of the students to the control and experiment groups was made by dividing the six classes in half: three classes were control and the other three experiment.

IV. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Three research questions were posed by the study. The research was designed specifically to answer these questions. Each is re-stated below in a separate subsection, followed by statistical analysis, testing, and discussion. Results, as presented in table and graph form, are discussed within the text.

1. Question 1

The first question of the study asked, "What was the accuracy rate in listening comprehension for Korean students taught by the traditional method?" Table 1 on the following page displays the descriptive statistics for the first and second testing. The statistics were displayed for the three comprehension levels, High, Medium, and Low. Included were minimum and maximum accuracy scores, means, and standard deviations.

As indicated, the Low comprehension group produced an average accuracy score of 61 for both testings in which students were taught by the traditional

method. The Medium comprehension group averaged 75, while the High comprehension group recorded an average score of 93. The total group produced a mean accuracy score of 75.7 for the first testing using the traditional method and 76.5 for the second. It was clear from the descriptive analysis that there were differences between and among the three levels within the two groups of the study.

TABLE 1

TOEIC Descriptives for Traditional Method Group by Comprehension Level

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	n
Testing I	46	99	75.7	11.0	60
High	85	99	92.3	5.0	10
Medium	64	85	75.4	5.4	40
Low	46	75	60.7	11.0	10
Testing II	48	98	76.5	11.0	60
High	89	98	93.5	3.3	10
Medium	62	87	76.1	5.6	40
Low	48	73	61.1	8.1	10

TABLE 2

TOEIC Descriptives for Korean Alphabet Method Group by Comprehension Level

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	n
Testing I	58	98	82.5	8.5	60
High	90	98	94.3	2.6	10
Medium	67	93	82.1	5.5	40
Low	58	82	72.1	8.1	10
Testing II	58	99	83.4	8.8	60
High	89	99	95.6	2.8	10
Medium	70	92	83.3	5.4	40
Low	58	82	71.8	7.5	10

The statistics are displayed in Table 2 for the three comprehension levels,

High, Medium, and Low. Included are minimum and maximum accuracy scores, means, and standard deviations using the Korean alphabet method. As indicated, the Low comprehension group produced an average accuracy score of 72, as compared to the Medium comprehension group which averaged an accuracy score of 82 for the two testings. Again, the High comprehension group recorded the highest accuracy score. Specifically, this group averaged 95 for the two tests.

2. Question 2

The second question of the study asked, "What was the accuracy rate in listening comprehension for Korean students taught by the Korean alphabet method?" Again, the statistics are displayed for the three comprehension levels for both groups in both test treatments. Table 2 on the following page presents the descriptive statistics for the first and second testing.

3. Question 3

The third question of the study asked, "Did using the Korean alphabet reduce the number of errors in dictation, thereby increasing the accuracy in listening comprehension of the university students as reported by the research?"

Table 3 on the following page displayed the results of the 2-way ANOVA for the first testing. The results indicated that there were significant differences in English comprehension scores among the three levels of comprehension and also between the control (traditional method) and the experiment (Korean alphabet method) groups for the appropriate degrees of freedom (df). Differences were significant at the probability level of .01 for group and for comprehension level. For the group, comprehension level interaction, the difference was significant at the .05 level of probability.

As indicated in the table listing, the High comprehension group scored the highest in both the control and experimental groups, while the Medium comprehension level scored in the middle for both the control and experimental groups. As expected, the Low comprehension group scored the lowest in both the control and experimental groups, but still showed an improved difference

with respect to the use of the Korean alphabet method versus the traditional.

Another interesting finding resulted from the statistical analysis. The experimental group scored an average of 6.8 points higher than the control group. For the High comprehension group, the difference between the control and experimental groups was two points, for the medium group about seven points, and for the low group about 11 points, as indicated in the lower half of the table listing.

TABLE 3

ANOVA Results of the First Testing

Source	df	MS	F
Group	1	909.00	26.07**
Comprehension Level	2	3633.82	104.24**
Group xLevel	2	110.50	3.17*
Error	114	34.86	
Variable	M	SD	n
Traditional Method	75.7	11.0	60
High	92.3	5.0	10
Medium	75.4	5.4	40
Low	60.7	9.3	10
Korean Alphabet	82.5	8.5	60
High	94.3	2.6	10
Medium	82.2	5.5	40
Low	72.1	8.1	10

*p< .05 **p< .01

Table 4 on the following page displayed the results of the 2-way ANOVA for the second testing. As with the first testing, there were significant differences among the levels of comprehension and between the control and experimental groups for the appropriate degrees of freedom (df). Also, again similar to the first testing, the low group showed the greatest difference between the control and experimental groups. For group and comprehension level, as shown in the table, the differences were statistically significant at the .01 level of probability.

To illustrate the listening differences for the total sample population group, graphs were computer-constructed. As shown in Figure 1 on the following page, there was a larger difference between the control and experiment groups at the low comprehension level than the other two levels, medium and high.

TABLE 4

ANOVA Results of the Second Testing

Source	df	MS	F
Group	1	888.89	27.95**
Comprehension Level	2	3956.58	124.14**
Group xLevel	2	94.58	2.97
Error	114	31.80	
Variable	M	SD	n
Traditional Method	76.5	11.0	60
High	93.5	3.3	10
Medium	76.1	5.6	40
Low	61.1	8.1	10
Korean Alphabet	83.4	8.8	60
High	95.6	2.8	10
Medium	83.3	5.4	40
Low	71.8	7.5	10

Note. *p< .05 **p< .01

Figure 1

Comparison of the *First* Testing TOEIC Scores for the Group Using Traditional Methods with the Group Using the Korean Alphabet Method

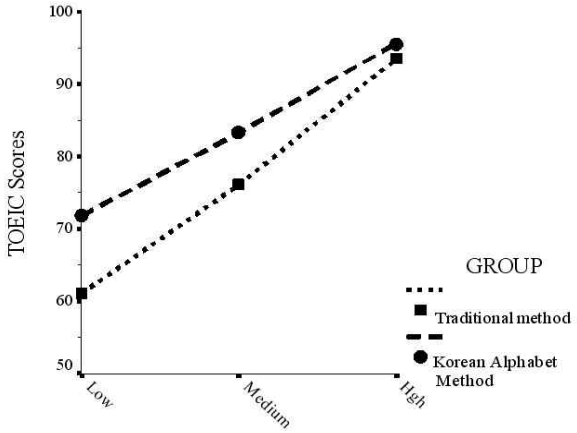

Figure 2

Comparison of the *Second* Testing TOEIC Scores for the Group Using Traditional Methods with the Group Using the Korean Alphabet Method

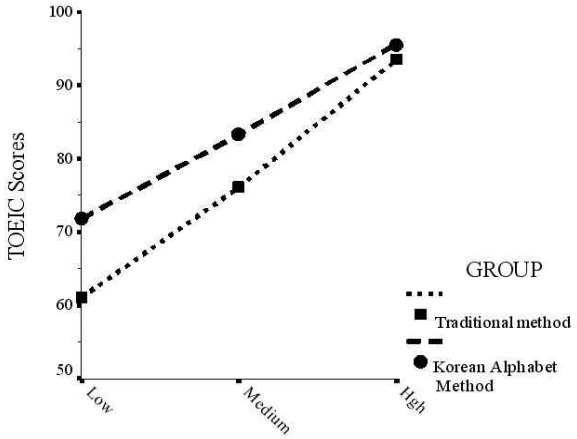

Figure 2 presented similar information, but pertained to the second testing of TOEIC scores. Specifically, it compared scores of the second testing for the group using traditional methods with the use of the Korean alphabet method. Again, results indicated that the Low group achieved much better scores by using the Korean alphabet method as compared to the Medium and High groups. From the analysis it may also be concluded that using the Korean alphabet did increase the accuracy in listening comprehension.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of the present study support the argument for a new direction in teaching and learning English. While extensive research exists on EFL teaching methods, very few have been conducted specifically on Korean students, and no research has been done on the teaching of listening comprehension using the Korean alphabet. This study has investigated two approaches in teaching listening comprehension and compared the traditional method to the method using the Korean alphabet as an intermediary step.

The implications of the results of this study for Korean college students and teachers are as follows. The traditional method may no longer be the best method of instruction. The fact that Korean students continue to have great difficulty with the usage of English imply that a change in the teaching method may be needed. By employing the new method, specifically the Korean alphabet methd, the Korean college students will be able to develop their listening skills more effectively. However, more research is needed to provide additional validation.

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예시언어(Examples in): English
적용가능 언어(Applicable Languages): English
적용가능 수준(Applicable Levels): College

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