

Eleventh-Grade Students' Perceptions of Dictation in EFL Classes: Evidence from Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the eleventh-grade students' perceptions of using the dictation technique in English classes at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the researcher collected data from 30 students through an open-ended questionnaire and conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 purposively selected participants. Data were analyzed following Miles and Huberman's interactive model (data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing). The findings show that most students hold positive perceptions of dictation: they find it interesting, challenging in a constructive way, and helpful in improving several language aspects. Respondents reported improvements in listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, spelling accuracy, and pronunciation awareness. They also noted gains in concentration, accuracy, and self-confidence. Common difficulties included the teacher's fast reading speed, unfamiliar vocabulary, limited time for repetition, and trouble distinguishing similar sounds. To cope, students asked for repetitions, expanded vocabulary through self-study and media exposure, and compared answers with peers. The study concludes that dictation remains a relevant, low-tech technique that supports integrated language development when applied with appropriate pacing and pre-teaching of key vocabulary.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English today plays a central role in global communication, education, technology, and professional development. Its position as a lingua franca requires learners, especially students in non-English-speaking countries, to develop adequate proficiency to participate in various academic and real-world contexts. In Indonesia, the importance of English is reflected in its consistent presence in the national curriculum, which aims to prepare students with the communication skills needed in international spheres. As the demand for English proficiency increases, so does the need for teaching techniques that foster effective, meaningful learning.

In recent years, English teaching has also emphasized the use of learning techniques that activate multiple skills simultaneously and strengthen students' cognitive attention, since integrated learning activities are correlated with better learning outcomes [1], [2].

Among the techniques used in English classrooms, dictation has regained attention as a simple yet impactful activity. Although often considered traditional, dictation combines listening, writing, vocabulary recall, grammatical awareness, and spelling accuracy into a single integrated exercise. Previous studies have shown that dictation can sharpen students' sensitivity to sounds, improve concentration, and reinforce sentence structure because learners must listen attentively and reproduce the text accurately [3]–[5]. Research in different contexts also highlights that dictation supports memory retention, grammar internalization, and vocabulary development, while helping students stay focused on the lesson. Furthermore, dictation aligns with input-processing theory, in which learners convert spoken input into written output through attention, memory, and restructuring processes, making it a cognitively demanding learning task rather than mere transcription [6], [7].

However, the effectiveness of a technique cannot be evaluated solely from academic gains. Students' perceptions play an equally important role in determining whether a technique is embraced, resisted, or experienced positively in the classroom. How learners interpret their learning activities influences motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. A technique is only effective if students perceive it as useful, comfortable, and aligned with their learning needs [8]. Scholars further note that when students perceive a learning technique as challenging but meaningful, they are more willing to engage and take risks in learning, resulting in stronger academic resilience [9], [10]. For this reason, exploring students' perceptions of dictation is crucial, particularly in contexts where the technique is still used but rarely examined in depth.

The present study was conducted at Sukma Bangsa School in Sigi, a boarding school established after the 2018 Central Sulawesi disaster. As a relatively new school with a diverse student population, it provides a distinctive environment for investigating how teaching techniques are applied and experienced. Observations indicated that teachers at this school occasionally use dictation to train students' concentration, accuracy, and vocabulary and sentence-pattern understanding. Dictation is usually placed at the beginning or end of the lesson to reinforce previous material, especially in classrooms with limited technological resources. In boarding-school settings, teaching techniques that cultivate concentration, discipline, and precision are highly encouraged, making dictation pedagogically relevant to support the character-based learning model practised in similar institutions [11], [12].

Although dictation is practised, research on how students perceive this technique in schools remains absent. Previous studies conducted in Indonesia and other countries mostly focused on junior high school learners, university students, or experimental outcomes such as listening scores, grammatical accuracy, or vocabulary improvement. Other studies consistently reported positive effects of dictation, but also noted challenges such as difficulty following fast speech and maintaining focus [13]–[15]. Nevertheless, no studies have specifically examined dictation in newly established boarding schools such as Sukma Bangsa Sigi, where the learning environment, student backgrounds, and institutional context differ significantly from those in previously studied settings.

This gap highlights the need to examine how eleventh-grade students at Sukma Bangsa School in Sigi perceive the use of dictation in their English learning process. Understanding their perceptions will not only provide insight into how the technique functions in this particular context but will also offer practical implications for teachers who aim to use dictation more effectively. It may help identify which aspects of the technique students find helpful, challenging, or motivating, and how it can be adapted to support their learning better.

Therefore, this study investigates students' perceptions of dictation as a teaching technique in English classrooms at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi. Rather than measuring effectiveness quantitatively, the study focuses on exploring students' experiences, interpretations, and responses to dictation within their actual learning environment. The findings are expected to enrich the existing literature on dictation, especially in under-researched educational contexts, and to contribute to improving language-teaching practices that are more relevant, contextualized, and aligned with students' authentic learning experiences.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how eleventh-grade students perceived the use of dictation in their English learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand participants' views, experiences, and meaning-making processes within natural classroom settings, which is essential when investigating attitudes and perceptions [16]. The qualitative approach also supports in-depth interpretation of meaning in real learning environments rather than in controlled experimental settings [17]. Qualitative descriptive design is widely used in educational research because it provides rich, straightforward descriptions of participants' viewpoints without manipulating variables [18]. This design is also considered appropriate for perception-based research because it focuses on presenting participants' experiences as they naturally occur [19]. The study focused on describing students' reflections without manipulating any variables, making the descriptive model the most appropriate framework for this research.

The research was conducted at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, a boarding school located in Kaleke, Dolo Barat, Central Sulawesi. Data collection took place during the academic semester from August to October 2025, allowing sufficient time to administer questionnaires and conduct follow-up interviews. The participants were 30 eleventh-grade students, including 15 from the Regular class and 15 from the Bilingual class. All students participated in the open-ended questionnaire, while eleven students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. The selection of interview participants was based on gender balance, language proficiency, and classroom engagement to ensure varied and meaningful insights. Purposive sampling enables researchers to select participants who can provide the most relevant information according to the research focus [20]. It is also frequently used in qualitative educational research because it ensures the representation of diverse student characteristics and learning backgrounds [21].

Two instruments were used to obtain the data: an open-ended questionnaire and interview guidelines. The questionnaire consisted of eleven descriptive items that encouraged students to express their opinions, experiences, perceived benefits, and difficulties related to dictation. Because the items required narrative responses rather than scaled responses, the instrument was well-suited to capturing detailed and nuanced perceptions. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted to deepen and clarify information emerging from the questionnaire. A voice recorder was used during the interviews to ensure accurate transcription of students' responses. Semi-structured interviews are widely applied in perception-based qualitative studies because they allow flexible follow-up questions while retaining consistency across themes [22].

The data collection procedure began with the distribution of the questionnaire to all participants, followed by the selection and interviewing of the ten purposive participants. After all responses were gathered, both questionnaire answers and interview recordings were transcribed, read repeatedly, and organized for analysis. Classroom observations conducted earlier in the data collection period were also used to supplement and contextualize students' written and spoken responses. Triangulation of instruments strengthens research credibility because the convergence of several data sources provides a more accurate and dependable interpretation [23].

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [24]. During data reduction, the researcher examined, selected, and coded meaningful information related to the study's focus, including students' attitudes, perceived benefits and challenges, and suggested strategies for completing dictation tasks. Irrelevant or repetitive information was removed to maintain clarity. The reduced data were then organized into narrative displays that grouped students' responses into thematic categories. Quotations from the participants were included in the narrative presentation to illustrate their viewpoints. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by examining the consistency between questionnaire and interview findings. Repeated checks against the raw data ensured that interpretations accurately reflected students' actual expressions rather than the researcher's assumptions. Recent qualitative studies show that the Miles & Huberman model supports rigorous meaning-making by its iterative verification, which helps reduce researcher bias [25].

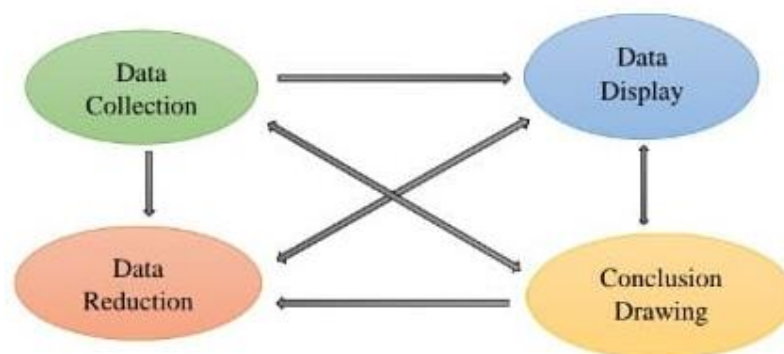


Figure 1. Components of Qualitative Data Analysis by Miles and Huberman

Throughout the entire process, the credibility of the findings was maintained through data triangulation between questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Dependability was supported by systematically documenting each stage of data collection and analysis, while confirmability was reinforced by preserving raw data, transcripts, and coding notes. These steps ensured that the study's findings were grounded in trustworthy and systematically processed qualitative evidence.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's results and an integrated discussion of the findings. The data were obtained through open-ended questionnaires distributed to 30 students and semi-structured interviews with 11 students. The results are explained narratively and supported by direct excerpts from students' responses to provide a clear, scientific interpretation.

3.1. Results

The findings of this study reveal that the eleventh-grade students at Sukma Bangsa School in Sigi generally hold positive perceptions of the use of the dictation technique in English learning. From the open-ended questionnaire and interviews, many students described dictation as enjoyable, challenging, and "membuat lebih fokus saat belajar." One respondent stated, "Lebih menarik karena lebih mudah saat belajar... listening saya jadi semakin baik... pengucapan saya awalnya terbelit-belit tetapi karena adanya dikte, saya tahu cara pengucapan yang benar" (Respondent 13). Another student emphasized its motivational effect, saying, "Teknik dikte itu bagus karena dapat melatih kefokuskan dan ketelitian... menarik karena menambah motivasi saya untuk belajar lagi" (Interviewee 1). These positive impressions support previous findings, such as those reported by Khoiriyah [14], who observed that students often perceive dictation as an engaging activity that improves their attention and participation.

Students also reported several learning benefits, particularly in listening proficiency. They mentioned that dictation trained them to listen more carefully to pronunciation, stress, and intonation. As stated by one participant, "Teknik dikte sangat membantu... menambah kosakata serta memperbaiki pronunciation" (Respondent 26). Another added, "Menarik karena teknik ini melatih listening dan membantu untuk IELTS & TOEFL" (Respondent 15). This perception aligns with earlier studies, which suggest that repeated dictation practice improves listening accuracy and sound discrimination [15]. Moreover, interview data indicate that students gained confidence when encountering external listening assessments. One interviewee explained, "Ketika ada tes listening seperti IELTS atau TOEFL, saya jadi lebih mudah memahami maksudnya" (Interviewee 5).

Vocabulary enrichment also emerged as a major outcome of dictation activities. Almost all students reported learning new words they had never encountered before, such as opportunity, impression, strengths, advertisement, and neatly. Reflecting this, Respondent 6 said, "Sangat membantu karena banyak sekali kosakata baru yang saya dapatkan." These findings align with the argument that dictation supports vocabulary development by exposing learners to contextualized lexical input [26].

Another key benefit perceived by students is improvement in spelling and pronunciation. Many participants stated that listening while writing helped them become aware of letter-sound relationships. One respondent explained, “Awalnya saya tidak tahu ejaannya, tapi setelah di dikte berkali-kali saya dapat mengetahui ejaannya” (Respondent 6). Similarly, students felt that pronunciation improved because they repeatedly heard accurate examples from the teacher, as expressed by Interviewee 11: “Pronunciation meningkat karena bisa meniru cara guru bicara.”

In addition to linguistic gains, dictation helped students develop focus, concentration, and confidence. Respondent 28 noted, “Teknik dikte membuat penulisan harus lebih teliti... kita juga harus fokus dan percaya diri.” This sense of achievement was repeated by others, such as Respondent 24, who stated, “Saya merasa senang ketika bisa menulis dengan benar sesuai yang didengar.” Some previous studies have also noted that dictation increases learner attentiveness through the simultaneous listening-and-writing process, consistent with the present findings [5].

Nonetheless, students also faced several challenges. The most frequently reported difficulty was the teacher’s reading speed, which many felt was too fast, leading them to miss certain words. As one respondent shared, “Guru kadang membaca terlalu cepat jadi saya ketinggalan menulis beberapa kata” (Respondent 21). Another challenge was unfamiliar vocabulary, which confused students when writing down words they had never heard before, as described by Respondent 12: “Saya tidak tahu harus menulis apa kalau katanya sangat tidak familiar.” Limited repetition time and difficulty distinguishing similar sounds also emerged, especially among students with lower listening proficiency.

Despite these obstacles, students employed several strategies to overcome the difficulties. Many asked the teacher to repeat the sentences, while others increased their vocabulary learning, listened to English songs or videos, and collaborated with friends to compare answers. Respondent 27 explained, “Saya bicara ke guru kalau bisa diulangi kalimatnya,” while Interviewee 8 shared, “Saya belajar kosa kata dan sering mendengarkan lagu-lagu bahasa Inggris.” These coping strategies illustrate students’ initiative and growing autonomy. Overall, the results indicate that dictation offers meaningful linguistic and cognitive benefits while encouraging active and independent learning.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study provide strong support for the growing literature on the pedagogical value of dictation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. The positive perceptions reported by students in this research align with Nation and Newton’s argument [27] that dictation sharpens learners’ attention to linguistic details, particularly the relationship between spoken and written forms. Many students in this study reported increased focus, improved awareness of pronunciation, and greater motivation responses that directly reflect Nation’s theoretical emphasis on dictation as a high-attention learning task. The student statements such as “Teknik dikte melatih saya untuk fokus” and “Saya jadi lebih teliti dan percaya diri” illustrate how this technique engages learners cognitively and emotionally.

The findings also align with empirical studies such as those by Le et al. [15] and Khoiriyah [14], which found that dictation enhances listening comprehension through repeated exposure to spoken input. In the current study, students frequently reported that dictation helped them identify pronunciation patterns and understand spoken English more easily, even in external tests such as IELTS or TOEFL. Their remarks, including “Ketika ada tes listening saya jadi lebih mudah memahami,” reinforce the notion that dictation creates a bridge between classroom practice and real listening assessments. This direct connection between learners’ lived experiences and prior research strengthens the validity of the present findings.

Vocabulary development emerged as another major benefit, closely aligning with Agustina’s finding [26] that dictation promotes incidental vocabulary learning. Students in this study reported learning a variety of new words, showing that dictation exposes learners to useful lexical items in meaningful contexts. When students shared statements such as “Banyak kosakata baru yang saya dapatkan,” it reflected exactly what earlier research has argued that dictation strengthens lexical retention through repetition and contextual cues.

Pronunciation and spelling improvements reported in this study further support Ulfa et al.’s [13] findings, which noted that dictation enhances learners’ phonological and orthographic awareness. Students’ comments, such as “Awalnya saya tidak tahu ejaannya tetapi setelah di dikte berkali-kali saya tahu,” demonstrate that repeated listening-writing cycles help students internalize correct forms. This connection between sound and spelling is one of the central learning mechanisms highlighted in previous research.

The challenges identified fast reading speed, unfamiliar vocabulary, limited repetition, and difficulty distinguishing similar sounds, are also widely reported in earlier studies. Agustina [26] and Saragih et al. [5] note that these difficulties are common in EFL dictation due to learners’ developing listening proficiency. The repeated complaints from students, such as “Guru kadang membaca cepat sekali” or “Saya bingung kalau katanya tidak familiar,” match the typical obstacles documented in those works. As previous researchers have suggested, such challenges do not undermine the usefulness of dictation but indicate the need for instructional adjustments, including slower pacing, controlled repetition, and vocabulary scaffolding.

The strategies used by students in this study asking for repetition, expanding vocabulary independently, listening to English input outside class, and collaborating with peers, illustrate a shift toward learner autonomy. This is particularly important because it shows that dictation not only teaches linguistic skills but also encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Such behaviours align with the principles of supportive learning environments emphasized by Creswell [16] regarding participant-centred qualitative approaches.

Overall, the findings reinforce the conclusion that dictation remains an effective and pedagogically relevant technique for improving students’ listening, vocabulary mastery, spelling accuracy, and pronunciation in contemporary EFL classrooms. When connected with students’ own experiences, “Saya lebih fokus,” “Saya belajar banyak kosakata,” “Saya terbiasa mendengarkan,” the discussion clearly shows that dictation supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning. While challenges exist, they are manageable

and consistent with those recognized in prior studies, confirming that dictation is a valuable and meaningful technique for eleventh-grade learners at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, it can be concluded that, overall, the students have positive perceptions towards the use of the Dictation technique. They described it as an interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful learning activity that encourages them to pay attention, stay focused, and actively participate in class. Dictation was perceived not as a monotonous task but as a dynamic and interactive practice that combines listening, spelling, and thinking skills. Students viewed it as both a challenge and an opportunity to improve their English proficiency.

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