

EFFECTIVENESS OF DICTOGLOSS IN CREATING CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Liang Hongmei
South China Normal University

Abstract

Dictogloss is a task based ,communicative teaching procedure . By comparing students use of discourse items and negotiation strategies in dictogloss with that in non dictogloss teacher fronted university English class ,this paper investigate the effectiveness of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies . Results of the comparison demonstrated that the real -world purpose to complete the reconstruction task in dictogloss engaged the students in genuine communication ,providing the students with a lot of opportunities to use discourse items . With this ,the students had opportunities to develop the speech organizing and interactional strategies that are necessary to natural conversation . The study also showed that in order to pool enough information to reconstruct the text ,students in dictogloss had a lot of chances to develop negotiation strategies . By contrast ,in the teacher fronted university English class ,the dominant interaction pattern of “teacher initiation —student response —teacher feedback ” reduced the students to a very passive role of answering questions or carrying out the teacher s instructions and thus deprived them of the opportunity to develop the communication strategies . Based on this ,it can be concluded that dictogloss ,with its real -world purpose to complete the task and its group dynamics ,is more effective than teacher fronted university English class in creating conditions for developing communication strategies .

Key words

dictogloss ;genuine communication ;discourse items ;negotiation strategies

1 .Introduction

Dictogloss ,also known as dicto comp or grammar dictation ,is a task based ,communicative teaching procedure (Wajnryb 1988 ,1989) . With the importance of task based language teaching becoming one of the major focuses of debate and discussion in recent SLA literature ,there has been more recent consideration of applying dictogloss in second language instruction .

The pedagogic rationale for the use of communicative tasks rests in part on the claim that they will help to create conditions to develop learners communicative skills and in part on the claim that they will contribute to their linguistic development (Nobuyoshi & Ellis 1993 :203) . Accordingly ,dictogloss is strongly advocated as an effective method to create conditions for learning grammar and vocabulary (Cele -Murkcia & Hilles 1988 ;Wajnryb 1988 ,1989) . And there have been empirical studies that provide evidence for this aspect of effectiveness (Liang 2004 ;Bao 2007 ;Lu 2008) . Nonetheless ,its potential for developing the learners communicative skills has been an oft neglected area that needs to be explored . In order to shed light on this ,the present research compares students use of communication strategies in dictogloss with that in the non dictogloss teacher fronted university English class ,seeking to investigate (1) how dictogloss creates conditions for developing communication strategies and (2) whether dictogloss is more effective than the non dictogloss teacher fronted university English class in creating conditions for developing communication strategies .

2 . Literature review

2 .1 Dictogloss and its com municative feature

First ,what is dictogloss ?According to Wajnryb (1988 35) ,dictogloss is a teaching procedure that involves dictating a short text at normal speed to the learners . As the text is being read ,the learners jot down familiar words and phrases . Then working in small groups ,the learners pool their “battered texts ” and strive to reconstruct a version of the text from their shared resources . Each group of learners produces their own reconstructed version ,aiming at gram matical accuracy and textual cohesion but not at replicating the originaltext .Finally ,the whole class reconvenes and the groups versions are analyzed and corrected .

Obviously ,dictogloss is different from dictation . Dictation works mainly at the phrase and clause level ,that is ,in dictation the learners have to remember a phrase of several words as accurately as possible .In dictogloss ,however ,the learners have to remember the ideas in a text that is more than a hundred words long and express them in the words of the original or in their own words . The starting point in dictogloss is a whole text ,so its use is consistent with a discourse oriented view of language . With the meaning driven ,form focused potential and its group work feature in the text reconstruction stage , dictogloss fits well into task based instruction .

According to Wajnryb (1988 ,1989) ,dictogloss is a com municative approach to language teaching in that the group work reconstruction task is crucial to the teaching procedure . As is pointed out by Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993 203) ,com municative tasks help to develop learners com municative skills by enabling learners to activate their linguistic knowledge for use in natural and spontaneous language ,such as when taking part in a conversation . One way in which this is achieved is by developing strategic competence ,defined by Canale (1983) as the verbal and non verbal strategies used to compensate for breakdown in com munication and to enhance the effectiveness of com munication .In dictogloss ,in order to perform the text reconstruction task ,the learners must cooperate with each other .In doing this they need to use language . They must pool their fragments so as to have enough to begin the construction of a text .It is widely believed that to have learners working in pairs or groups providing each other with help would generate useful natural conversation .In other words ,the students language skills in speaking are tested ,strengthened and reinforced by the task of cooperatively reconstructing the text . Students are challenged and encouraged to feel free to speak and contribute with whatever English they are able to produce ,even if their speaking is “broken English ” (Liang 1991) . As a result ,the actual task requires the language of negotiation ,clarification ,discussion ,etc . ,leading to an enormous amount of interaction in the classroom . Therefore ,the potential of dictogloss for developing learners com munication strategies has been noted as a “hidden curriculum ” ,which has nothing whatever to do with the language of the text , but is just as valid (Wajnryb 1988 38) .

2 .2 Group work and communication strategies

Communication strategies have been regarded as a compensatory mechanism meant to repair breakdown in communication (Kasper &Kellerman 1997) . A more general concept of “communication strategy ” proposes that communication strategies involve any attempt to “enhance the effectiveness of communication (e. g. deliberately slow and soft speech for rhetorical effect)” (Canale 1983 ,cited in D rnyei &Scott) . In Wajnryb s eye ,it is the group work text reconstruction task that makes dictogloss potential for creating conditions for developing communication strategies (Wajnryb 1988 ,1989) . Similarly ,a number of researchers agree that group work gives learners the opportunity to learn communication strategies (Ellis 1994 ;Tsui 1995 ;Nation 2000)

In the first place ,group work encourages students to verbalize their ideas even when these are not fully developed and coherent ,thus typically generating “exploratory talk ” ,which is characteristic of a more tentative and less definitive language use ,more vagueness ,more false starts ,more hesitations and stuttering . As Tsui (1995) discovers ,students uses expressions like um ,ah , maybe ,perhaps ,etc .in group discussion . This kind of small words or expressions are referred to as discourse items ,which serve as acts in moves and serve either speech organizing or interactional strategies that are needed in natural conversation (Stenstrom 1994) . According to Stenstrom (1994) ,speech organizing markers serve to

organize and hold the turn and to mark boundaries in the speech . This includes how to begin a conversation ,how to continue a conversation ,how to change the topic ,how to end a conversation and so on . As for Interactionalsignals ,they serve to appeal for feedback ,give feedback ,respond and so on . As Stenstrom puts it ,discourse items are conversational skills that can make the conversation more smooth , more lively ,and more intimate (Stenstrom 1994 67) .

In the second place ,group work provides an opportunity for learners to get exposure to language that they can understand and also language that contains unknown items for them to learn . This gives learners the opportunity to learn negotiation strategies to control input ,i. e. seeking clarification ,seeking confirmation ,checking comprehension ,etc .(Nation 2000) .

2.3 Summary

To sum up ,group work gives learners the opportunity to learn communication strategies in that it provides an opportunity for learners to learn negotiation strategies and to use discourse items that are necessary in natural conversation . In view of this ,there is a strong claim that dictogloss ,with the group-work reconstruction task as the main feature ,is potential for developing communication strategies . All this lays the theoretical foundation for the study of dictogloss . However ,no empirical evidence for this is available in the current literature . Therefore ,the effectiveness of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies is still in lack of empirical study ,which is specified in the following section .

3 . The present study

3.1 Research questions

This study attempts to cast light on the effectiveness of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies by comparing students use of communication strategies in dictogloss with that in the non dictogloss teacher fronted university English class (shortened as UEC) . The research questions that guide the study are as follows :

- 1) How does dictogloss create conditions for developing communication strategies ?
- 2) Compared with non dictogloss teacher fronted university English class (UEC) ,is dictogloss more effective in creating conditions for developing communication strategies ?

3.2 Research design

As Allwright (1984 156) points out ,it is not the content of the lesson that is the basis for learning but the process of classroom interaction that generates opportunities for learning . In line with this ,one of the major sources of impetus for the recent interest in alternative methodologies in language teaching has been a great focus upon the language learning process and the contribution of the learner to that process . Therefore ,the present study was carried out on the basis of the classroom based data of the learning process in dictogloss and that in UEC .

3.2.1 Participants in dictogloss

20 sophomores majoring in computer science participated in the teaching procedure of dictogloss . These students were divided into 5 groups ,with 4 students assigned to each group . However ,only 4 groups recordings remained valid in the end as the recorder for one group broke down in the middle .

3.2.2 Material for dictogloss

A good dictogloss text is needed in order to implement dictogloss . As Wajnryb puts it (1989) ,the dictogloss text is a tool in a procedure that not only compels learners to activate their knowledge of the target language so as to perform a language task ,but also serves to challenge and extend learners in specific ,specially chosen language areas .“ TV Ban ”(as shown below)is proposed as a good model ,with its tight topic cohesion ,explicit textual cohesion ,well balanced conceptual load or propositional weight ,well balanced lexical load ,structural focus ,and points for extension and challenge (Wajnryb 1989 17) . Furthermore ,the text is claimed to be successful with pre intermediate to intermediate level learners ,who are of similar level to the students in the present study . Thus ,the present research adopted this text

in implementing dictogloss .

TV Ban

A small town in Australia has declared itself the world's first TV free zone . The population of 122 men ,women and children have decided to ban television for a week . Many are determined to keep the plug out permanently . For the present ,some of the people are taking bets to see who cracks first ,and it is feared pre school children may be the first victims .

3.2.3 Data collection

Two kinds of data were needed to fulfill the purpose of the present study ;the classroom based data of dictogloss and the reference data of UEC .

The classroom based data of dictogloss was collected when the author implemented dictogloss with the participants . As mentioned earlier ,the function of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies lies in the group work reconstruction task . In light of this ,the recordings of the groups performing the reconstruction task were collected for the study . When dictogloss was implemented ,each group's 12 -minute discussion at the text reconstruction stage was recorded . Though five groups of students participated in the teaching procedure ,only 4 groups recordings remained valid in the end as one group's recorder broke down in the middle . Then the recordings were transcribed and edited in the same format as that in " Corpora of Middle School English Education " (He 1998) . The following table shows the taggers and their meanings :

Table 1 . Transcription conventions of the recordings

Taggers	Meanings
C T	teacher
C S1	individual student in the group
C SS	a group of students
[]	Chinese words by Pinyin transcription
()	comment
+ +	overlapped speech
-or .	one beat parse ,brief parse less than one beat

There is no punctuation in the transcript and the initial letter of the first word in a sentence is not capitalized with the exception of the proper noun . The student talk in the transcript amounts to 5345 words .

The reference data of the non dictogloss university English class (UEC) were extracted from USCT , one of the sub corpora in the corpora of English education set up by Professor He Anping in South China Normal University . Nearly 15 classes with a quantity of 5345 words of student talk were randomly extracted so that the data could be comparable .

3.2.4 Data analysis

The computerization of the transcript data makes it possible to make extensive use of computer for analysis . The search program Wordsmith tools 3.0 which was composed by Mike Scott and published by the Oxford University Press in 1998 was used for data analysis . It consists of three main tools called Concord , Wordlist and Keywords as well as several other utilities . The tool Concord was used for the present research .

As mentioned earlier ,group work gives learners the opportunity to learn communication strategies in that it provides an opportunity for learners to learn negotiation strategies and to use discourse items which serve speech organizing and interactional functions . In the present research ,students use of discourse items and negotiation strategies are analyzed as signs of students use of communication strategies . The study includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects of analysis . In addition ,analysis is tied to functional interpretations of the students use of language .

1) Analyzing students use of discourse items

Though there are a great number of discourse items and it is hard to exhaust them, the present study investigates the most common ones as listed by Stenstrom (1994: 61), with maybe and perhaps also included. Based on their pragmatic functions, the discourse items in the present study can be classified into two main categories: speech organizing markers and interactional signals, as shown in Table 2. The discourse items that serve to organize and hold the turn and to mark boundaries in the speech are classified as speech organizing markers, such as the initiators, hedges, softeners and call-offs. As for the items that serve to appeal for feedback, give feedback and respond, they are classified as interactional signals, such as the politeness markers, expletives, positives, negatives, responses and appealers.

Table 2 . Discourse items in the present study

Functions		Lexical items
Speech organizing	initiators	actually, anyway, now, ok, well
Markers — serve to organize and hold the turn and to mark boundaries in the speech	hedges	I think, maybe, perhaps, sort of, well
	softeners	I mean, you know, you see, well
	call-off	ok
Interactional signals — serve to appeal for feedback, give feedback, respond and so on	politeness marker	please
	expletives	God, Goodness, Gosh
	positives	mhm, yes, yeah
	negative	no
	responses	ah oh, ok, quite, really, right, sure, all right, I see, that's right, well
	appealers	is it, isn't it, right, ok, you know, you see

With the help of the tool Concord, the lexical items in Table 2 can be easily retrieved for further analysis. It should be noted that many of the lexical items in the table do not always serve as discourse items. Referring to Andersson (2001), Holker (1991, cited and translated in Jucker 1993) and Schiffrin (1987), we set up the following criteria for identifying discourse items:

- A discourse marker has to be syntactically detached from a sentence;
- It does not affect the truth conditions of an utterance;
- It does not add anything to the propositional content of an utterance;
- It is related to the speech situation and not to the situation talked about;
- It has an emotive, expressive function rather than a referential, denotative, or cognitive function.

2) Analyzing students use of negotiation strategies

Negotiation strategies occur in meaning negotiation whereby the learner requests the interlocutor to clarify problem utterances and thus render them comprehensible (Ellis 1994: 273). The three most important negotiation strategies suggested by Long (1983) are clarification request, confirmation check and comprehension check.

— A clarification request is a request for further information or help in understanding something the interlocutor has previously said. Clarification requests are usually fulfilled by wh-questions like “what’s the meaning of?” , “how do you spell?” , “I don’t know.” , “I forget” , “I’m not quite sure about” or “huh” in rising tone. In the present research, the repetition request is also classified as the clarification request.

— A confirmation check is the speaker’s query as to whether or not the speaker’s (expressed) understanding of the interlocutor’s meaning is correct. It is realized by repeating or paraphrasing what the previous speaker said with a rising intonation or by saying “so are you saying?” , “is it?” , etc. Alternative questions with “or” also fall into this category.

— A comprehension check is the speaker’s query of the interlocutors to see if they have understood

what was said . This is fulfilled by such expressions as “ do you think so ? ” , “ do you know ? ” , “ can you remember ? ” , “ is that so ? ” , or “ ok ? ” , “ right ? ” in the rising tone .

With the above as the guideline , we carried out a pilot study of the expressions of negotiation strategies . It was found that the expressions that served as negotiation strategies contained one or more than one of these linguistic features : any more , @ , else , is that , mhm , ok , or , rising tone , how , what , who , forget , know , remember , think , sentence , sure , then . Therefore , these linguistic features were determined as the search words to retrieve negotiation strategies . The criterion to judge the expressions of negotiation strategies is that a non understanding or communication breakdown took place in the interaction .

4 . Results and discussion

4 .1 Students use of discourse items in dictogloss and UEC

Table 3 . Students use of discourse items in dictogloss and UEC

Functions		Lexical items	Frequency in dictogloss	Frequency in UEC	
Speech organizing markers	initiators	now	7	0	
		ok	11	0	
		well	3	0	
		I think	21	7	
	hedges	maybe	39	9	
		perhaps	18	0	
		I mean	1	0	
	softeners	you know	3	0	
		call off	ok	6	0
	Interactional signals	politeness marker	please	4	0
positive			yes / yeah	36 / 21	114 / 12
responses		mhm	1	0	
		negative	no	32	42
		responses	ah	19	0
			oh	31	6
			ok	24	0
			right	3	0
			that s right	3	0
			appealers	isn t it	1
		right	2	0	
ok		8	0		
you know		1	0		
Total			295	190	
type / token ratio			1 / 12 . 8	1 / 31 . 7	

From Table 3 , it is shown that students in dictogloss used much more discourse items than the students in UEC , not only in terms of tokens but also in terms of types . 295 tokens of discourse items could be found in the student talk in dictogloss whereas only 190 occurred in that of UEC . As far as types are concerned , 23 types of discourse items were used by the students in dictogloss , with 9 being speech - organizing markers and 14 interactional signals . In UEC , however , only 6 types were used . As a result , the type / token ratio in dictogloss was much greater than that in UEC , 1 / 12 . 8 versus 1 / 31 . 7 .

4 .1 .1 Students use of speech organizing markers in dictogloss and UEC

Of the speech organizing markers , the hedges I think and maybe occurred in both dictogloss and

UEC ,but with a much greater frequency in dictogloss . These two hedges were used to modify what was said so as to avoid being blunt and help avoid com mitment . In addition to this ,the students in dictogloss also used many other speech organizing markers like now , well , ok , perhaps , I mean and you know . With these items ,they were likely to develop different speech organizing strategies . For example ,they learned to mark the transition between stages in the discourse and between topics ,as represented by their use of the initiators now , well and ok ;they learned to plan what was being said ,as represented by their use of the softeners I mean and you know ;they learned how to prompt a conversational closing ,as represented by their use of the call off ok .

Much more detailed information about this is shown in Table 4 . In UEC ,however ,no such items can be found in the student talk .

Table 4 . Speech organizing markers in dictogloss

Lexical items & functions	Examples
Initiators (now , well , ok) — marking the transition between stages in the discourse and between topics	(1) C S1 well the second sentence C S2 I don t catch it 6s
Hedges (I think , maybe , perhaps) — modifying what is said ,so as to avoid being blunt ,and help avoid com mitment	(2) C S1 the last sentence means ,do you know what s the meaning of pre school children C S3 pre school @ pu . pupil C S1 the . the . the children before the age of entering school -children @ perhaps stay at . at the kindergarten or . @ I m not quite sure about it . perhaps the children . who stays @ . but do not reach the age of going to school ((syll 3))-the kids perhaps ...
Softeners (I mean , you know) — planning what is being said	(3) C S1 first - -and the I mean a population of one hundred and twenty men and women are said that the residents in that town -are going to ban TV for a week ,they are they are going they are going not to watch TV for a week
call off (ok) — prompting a conversational closing	(4) C S2 the first —victim C S1 victims —victims C S2 victims —oh that s all . ok

4.1.2 Students use of interactional signals in dictogloss and UEC

From Table 3 ,it can be seen that students in dictogloss used much more types of interactional signals (13 types) than the students in UEC (4 types) . However ,it is also noticeable from table 3 that the items yes/yeah and no occurred much more frequently in the student talk in UEC than in dictogloss . Therefore ,a case study is made of yes/yeah and no .

Firstly ,in UEC ,excluding the 4 cases of yes/yeah that occurred in a dialogue from the textbook , only 4 cases (3.3 %) were used by the students to indicate approval of what the teacher meant . For the other cases of yes/yeah and all the cases of no ,they served as positive or negative answers to the teacher s yes/no questions wherein no information gap existed between the teacher and the student ,as shown in (5) and (6) .

(5) C T ... will you think that there will be a snake ?
C S yes
C T ok .so you are rich in imagination ...

(6) C T ... did Albert Einstein ever win Nobel prize -
C S no -
C T no -nobel prize -{nuo bei er jiang} -did he ever win Nobel prize in his lifetime

C S no
C T no -ok

As a result ,the student gave the answer with yes or no ,and waited for the teacher s evaluation without giving any further information .In Widdowson s words (1981) ,this kind of interaction is “false communication ”.In view of this ,the items yes/yeah and no did not serve any interactional function .

As regards yes/yeah and no in dictogloss ,the case study shows that they were used by the students to indicate approval or disapproval of what the interlocutor meant ,as shown in (7) and (8).

(7) C S3 no no no .just declare
C S2 yes declare

(8) C S1 has banned TV
C S2 for a week
C S1 + for a week +
C S3 + for a week +
C S2 mh
C S1 for -no no no -decide to ban the TV for a week

What is noteworthy is that the students usually continued to contribute his or her own piece of information or opinion after yes/yeah and no . According to Stenstrom (1994 :111) ,conversation is a continuous give and take . Only one word yes/yeah or no may be felt to be insufficient for the conversation to run smoothly ,so some kind of addition may be needed . In this case ,yes/yeah and no served as “uptakes ” and thus served the interactional function .

As mentioned above ,students in dictogloss used much more types of interactional signals than the students in UEC . With these items ,they had more opportunity to develop different interactional strategies . For example ,they learned how to indicate politeness ,as represented by their use of the politeness marker please ;they learned how to indicate approval ,as represented by their use of mhm , ok ,right and that s right ;they learned how to signal acceptance of what the interlocutor said as a valid contribution to the conversation ,as represented by their use of ah and oh as uptakes ;they learned how to invite feedback and make the listener involved ,as represented by their use of the appealers isn t it , ok ,right and you know . A clearer picture of this is presented in Table 5 .

According to Stenstrom (1994 :113) ,the interactional signals are just like lubricants and play a crucial role in a smooth interaction . However ,rare cases of this kind can be found in UEC .

Table 5 . Students use of interactional signals in dictogloss

Lexical items & function	Example
Politeness marker (please) — indicating politeness	(9) C S4 will you please . will you please read read the first sentence again . slowly
Positive (mhm , yes/yeah) — indicating approval	see (7)
Negative (no) — indicating disapproval	see (8)
Responses (ah , oh , ok , right , that s right) — ok , right , that s right indicated approval while ah , oh served as uptakes signaling acceptance of what the interlocutor said as a valid contribution to the conversation	(10) C S1 I know but I think - @at present . or for present C S3 for the present . yeah that s right (11) C S3 yeah maybe it is who will crack first . who will crack first C S2 ah take bets to see . who will be the . who will be cracks first . and the . and the school children

Lexical items & function	Example
Appealers (isn't it, ok, right, you know) — inviting feedback and making the listener involved	(12) C S2 declare itself . right (rising tone) C S1 that's right

4.1.3 Interpretation of the difference in the students' use of discourse items in dictogloss and UEC

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that dictogloss is more effective than UEC in creating conditions for the students to use discourse items. This can be explained by the fact that in dictogloss, the small group work left the students to take on the responsibility of managing talk and determining the direction of the discussion themselves. In other words, the students had to determine how to start a conversation, how to take up a turn, hold a turn, yield a turn, and how to end a conversation, etc. As a result, the students gained a lot of chances to use discourse items which served either speech-organizing or interactional functions.

In UEC, however, it was the teacher who determined the direction of talk. According to Barnes (1976, cited in Tsui, 1995), this kind of lockstep teaching typically generates "final draft talk". What follows is a typical example that is extracted from UEC.

- (13) C T ...OK now let's look at it and here the author raises a lot of examples to show -people like or dislike a certain kind of food simply because of [@] it is a taboo in their culture and tell me the examples here the first one the author talks about what -
C SS India
C T pardon - what is it . . India in India . in India what is it .
C SS the sacred cows
C T yes cows are regarded as a sacred thing right cows (blackboard work for 5s) sacred {hen shen sheng de niu shi zhong shen sheng de dong xi} sacred cows and others any others . { hai you mei bie de } in other culture - { hen kuai de sao yi yan na li }
C SS in America
C T yeah -in America - people do not eat - dogs (blackboard work for 7s) and other any others . { hai you mei bie de } ..
C S pork
C T yes pork eating pork ...

In the above example, whatever was expressed was a final product presented for evaluation and thus the learners confined themselves to an "interactional core" in the discussion, as shown by the words in bold. In this way, the students failed to use the "discourse lubricants" such as topic introducers and various kinds of supportive and amplifying moves.

4.2 Students' use of negotiation strategies in dictogloss and UEC

4.2.1 Comparative analysis of students' use of negotiation strategies in dictogloss and UEC

Table 6. Students' use of negotiation strategies in dictogloss and UEC

Negotiation strategies	Frequency in dictogloss	Frequency in UEC
Clarification request	55	3
Confirmation check	149	3
Comprehension check	8	0
Total	212	6

Results demonstrate that there is a sharp contrast between dictogloss and UEC in the students' use of negotiation strategies. As shown by Table 6, students in dictogloss used a large number of negotiation strategies, 212 cases altogether. In UEC, however, only 6 cases of negotiation strategies occurred in the student talk. What's worse, the 3 cases of confirmation check in UEC were part of the dialogue in the textbook read aloud by the students. In other words, only 3 cases of negotiation strategies occurred in UEC. The rarity of negotiation strategies in UEC can be explained by the dominant interaction pattern of

“teacher initiation —student response —teacher feedback ” in the teaching process . With this kind of interaction pattern ,the students were reduced to a very passive role of answering questions and carrying out the teacher's instructions and thus deprived of the opportunity to develop the negotiation skills ,just as shown in (13).

In dictogloss ,on the contrary ,the removal of authority in small group work made the students treat the task as a collaborative problem solving activity . In order to pool enough information to reconstruct the text ,the students had to initiate the negotiation with their peers ,which rendered them lots of chances to develop negotiation skills . As shown in (14) ,S3 successfully obtained the meaning of TV free zone with two clarification requests (in italics)

- (14) C S3 I m not @ not be sure about the . the TV free (hesitate)
 C S1 TV free zone
 C S3 TV free zone what s the word
 C S1 TV free zone means an area . an area or place . @ with people who could stop watching TV . @they could live without TV set .they could live without watching TV —so that @ TV . there s no TV program and they don t watch watch TV in that in that zone . people in that area . or in that zone don t watch TV at all —that means a TV free zone

4.2.2 Interpretation of students' choice of negotiation strategies in dictogloss

Though empirical studies (Linnell 1995 ; Pica et al . 1989) show that clarification requests lead learners to modify their initial output more than confirmation checks do ,and confirmation checks had the highest frequency in dictogloss in the present study ,accounting for 70 % of the total . This may be explained by the time pressure . In order to obtain enough information to complete the task as soon as possible ,the students frequently confirmed their understanding by repeating a word or phrase of the utterance ,modifying or finishing their peers' utterance in a rising intonation ,rather than ask for clarification which would take a longer time to formulate . In fact ,literal repetitions in confirmation checks could precisely locate the problem source and the students could get a clear idea of the part of utterance that needed modification . For example :

- (15) C S4 TV free zone
 C S1 TV free TV free zone —for a . for a week for a week (rising tone) 5s
 C S4 for a week

With a confirmation check (in italics) ,S1 managed to have the information he needed confirmed . In spite of this ,this kind of short confirmation checks might cause problems . They could be regarded as confirmation of the word ,and the question could be also easily ignored and easily responded to with only yes or no ,as illustrated by the following example :

- (16) C S2 it is feel . @feeling or feel
 C S4 fear
 C S2 fear
 C S4 a noun
 C S1 fear (spelling)
 C S4 fear (spelling)
 C S2 fe (spelling)
 C S4 ar (spelling)
 C S2 ar (spelling) -it is fear (rising tone)
 C S1 yes
 C S2 it is fear . what s the meaning
 C S1 be afraid
 C S4 [kong pa shi ba]
 C S2 free . feel
 C S1 fear . fear . not free
 C S4 maybe
 C S2 fear . it is fear

S2 couldn't understand "fear", yet her confirmation check was taken as simply a confirmation for its form and was responded to with the spelling of it. Then S2 used a clarification request "what's the meaning". Only after this did she get the meaning of the word. So clarification requests were more effective in getting something clarified. In the present study, clarification requests were the second frequent negotiation skill used by the students in the present research. Whatever strategy the student used, it was a result of their real-world purpose to complete the task.

5. Conclusion and implication

Results from the present study demonstrate that dictogloss, with its real-world purpose to complete the task and its group dynamics, is much more effective than the teacher-fronted university English class in creating conditions for developing communication strategies. The main findings can be summed up as follows:

(1) The real-world purpose to complete the task in dictogloss engaged the students in genuine communication wherein they had greater freedom to speak and had a lot of opportunities to use discourse items as a native speaker would. In the teacher-fronted university English class, however, the lockstep teaching confined the students to the "final draft talk", leaving them with little chance to use the "discourse lubricants". In terms of this, dictogloss created much better conditions for the students to develop speech-organizing and interactional strategies that are necessary to natural conversation.

(2) In order to pool enough information to reconstruct the text, the students in dictogloss used a large number of negotiation strategies. In the teacher-fronted university English class, however, the dominant interaction pattern of "teacher initiation — student response — teacher feedback" reduced the students to a very passive role of answering questions or carrying out the teacher's instructions and thus deprived them of the opportunity to develop the negotiation skills.

Previously, the ways to teach communicative skills were usually done separately and respectively for listening, speaking, reading and writing, which was manipulative and could not develop true communicative abilities, as there is precious little carry-over from single item drill to free use of the language. As a result, many students who can completely repeat classroom dialogues are unable to speak in real or meaningful contexts. Dictogloss, however, is a method of integrating the language activities to develop the students' ability in handling language interactions appropriately with the individual competence each student has. In this respect, dictogloss should be of great value in developing communication skills. However, it should be noted that the potential of dictogloss for developing communication strategies is not so obvious as its potential for learning linguistic knowledge. It is a "hidden curriculum" (Wajnryb 1989). Therefore, before implementing dictogloss, the teacher should encourage the students to discuss in English and provide the students with the most common expressions and strategies that are necessary to natural conversation. Only in this way do the students have some kind of idea about how to communicate with each other in the discussion and thus develop the communication strategies.

6. Limitations

Based on the classroom-based data, the present study provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies. Nevertheless, the study is still limited in some ways that necessitate future research.

First, for lack of recorders and because of the large amount of work that was required to transcribe the recording, the present research only involved 20 participants (with 16 being valid in the end). We are still unsure what effect will be achieved with a larger population of students, and whether the same effect will be achieved with students of different proficiency levels.

Second, the effectiveness of dictogloss in creating conditions for developing communication strategies in the present research is only limited to one time of implementation. Its long-term effect on the development of communication strategies still remains unknown.

References

- Aijmer ,K .1996 . Discourse Markers as Conversational Routines . Singapore :Longman .
- Allwright ,R .1984 . The importance of interaction in classroom language learning . *Applied Linguistics* 5 /2 : 156 -171 .
- Andersen , G . 2001 . Pragmatic Markers and Sociolinguistic Variation . Amsterdam /Philadelphia : John Benjamins .
- Bao ,D .J .2007 . A study of the correlation between dictogloss and EFL acquisition . *Foreign Language and literature* 1 :34 -39 .
- D rnyei ,Z . & Scott , M . L . 1997 . Communication strategies in a second language : Definitions and taxonomies . *Language Learning* 47 /1 :173 -210 .
- Ellis ,R .1994 . *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* . Oxford :Oxford University Press .
- He A . P .1998 . *Copora of Middle School English Education* . Guangzhou :Guangdong Audio-video Teaching Material Press .
- Jucker ,A . H .1993 . The discourse marker " well " :Arelevance theoretical account . *Journal of Pragmatics* 19 / 5 :435 -452 .
- Kasper ,G . & Kellerman ,E .1997 . *Communication Strategies : Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* . Harlow :Addison Wesley .
- Liang ,H . M .2004 . An empirical study of dictogloss . *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching Journal* 4 .
- Liang ,J . H .1991 . Meaningful approach to teaching English using the dictogloss method . *ELT Newsletter* 10 : 117 -121 .
- Linnell ,J .1995 . Negotiation as a context for learning syntax in a second language . Unpublished doctoral dissertation ,University of Pennsylvania ,Philadelphia .
- Lu ,Y .2008 . Function of dictogloss in gram mar teaching . *Testing Weekly* 8 :82 -83 .
- Nation ,P .2000 . *Creating Adapting and Using Language Teaching Techniques* . Oxford :Oxford University Press .
- Nobuyoshi ,J . & Ellis ,R .1993 . Focused communication tasks and second language acquisition . *ELTJournal* 47 /3 :203 -210 .
- Pica ,T . , Holliday ,L . , Lewis ,N . & Morgenthaler ,L .1989 . Comprehensible input as an outcome of linguistic demands on the learner . *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 11 /1 :63 -90 .
- Schiffrin ,D .1987 . *Discourse Markers* . Cambridge :Cambridge University Press .
- Stenstrom ,A . B .1994 . *An Introduction to Spoken Interaction* . Harlow :Pearson Education .
- Thornbury ,S .1997 . Reformulation and reconstruction :Tasks that promote " noticing " . *ELTJournal* 51 /4 : 326 -335 .
- Tsui ,B . M . A .1995 . *Introducing Classroom Interaction* . London :Penguin Group .
- Varonis ,E . M . & Gass ,S . M .1985 . Non-native /non-native conversations :A model for negotiation of meaning . *Applied Linguistics* 6 :71 -90 .
- Wajnryb ,R .1988 . The dictogloss method of language teaching :A text-based ,communicative approach to gram mar . *English Teaching Forum* 26 /3 :35 -38 .
- Wajnryb ,R .1989 . Dictogloss :A text-based approach to teaching and learning gram mar . *English Teaching Forum* 27 /4 :16 -19 .
- Widdowson ,H .G .1981 . English for specific purposes :Criteria for course design . In L . Selinker ,E . Tarone & V . Hanzeli . (eds .) . *English for Academic and Technical Purposes : Studies in Honour of Louis Trimble* . Rowley ,MA :Newbury House .1 -11 .