

Efficacy of Theme-based Listening Materials in English Writing: Focusing on Learner Affectivity

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In the recent age of ‘globalization’ the focus has tended to be on productive skills in foreign language education. It is natural that when we try to communicate with others in English, in addition to receptive skills (input), productive skills (output) are also important to convey our feelings and thoughts. In order to make ourselves understood through language, the language-related input is vital; then we need to acquire sufficient productive skills through it. That is to say, without input, output cannot be possible.

This research attempts to enhance the quality and quantity of input by introducing listening materials into a writing class as one of the activities for input. This leads to writing activities being carried out as output. In this case, the class contents which will be useful for the students in their future careers are adopted. From this perspective, the relevance between listening and writing activities is explored.

BACKGROUND

Regarding second language acquisition, the importance of not only input but also output has been well established. In short, before we convey our messages or ideas to other people, we need to acquire the linguistic knowledge and cultural aspects related to the language. The former (conveying) is called ‘output’ and the latter (acquiring) is ‘input’. Krashen (1985) advocates the Input Hypothesis, in which comprehensible input is not enough and a little more new information should be added; that is represented by the famous phrase ‘*i+1*’. Further, Swain (1985, 1995) advocates the Output Hypothesis, in which he states that while comprehensible input is a necessary condition for second language acquisition, it is not in itself sufficient, with output also playing a major role. In the process in which input transfers to output, appropriate input is required if learners are to be able to produce their feelings and thoughts (output) smoothly.

With regard to the teaching of writing, numerous practical research papers have been written. These include studies on improvement of writing ability through paragraph writing (e.g., Tabata & Ooi, 2012), and research on writing improvement making good use of Japanese, based upon comparative analysis of Japanese and English (e.g., Yamamoto, 2014). Also, Ishikawa (2015) conducted research on leading students to the stage that they get accustomed to paragraph writing in English while making use of CEFR-J and the Eiken Test (STEP Test).

Regarding the writing process, Yamamoto lists the following four items:

1. Thinking about the content of writing (organization of information)
2. Transferring sentence structures
3. Selecting appropriate structures and expressions
4. Using sophisticated expressions

When it comes to practice and research on writing improvement, the teacher needs to recognize when students have not acquired sufficient vocabulary/expressions (input) to convey their messages to others (output) (Yamamoto, 2014; Ishikawa, 2015). Also, Tatsukawa (2015) explored the possibility of using a radio drama to provide input in writing classes, and showed the usefulness of such materials in improving learners' writing ability as well as their motivation to write.

In the present research, students first learned necessary English vocabulary and expressions, using topic-related dialogues through listening, and then did the writing activities. The author expected the method to have a positive effect on learners' affective aspects related to writing, and investigated Japanese university students' perception of English writing with a focus on the effects of using listening materials in a writing class and learners' enjoyment of writing. In this research, which uses listening as a means toward improvement of writing ability, it is expected that introducing useful/interesting listening materials (practical business English) in the writing class and selecting appropriate structures and expressions will be an effective way of getting learners to produce their feelings and thoughts in English. For this reason, in this research the introduction of listening materials into the writing class was attempted in order to increase the amount of input.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Research Objectives

The research objectives are to explore the improvement of learner's affective aspects in English writing by using listening materials in the class. Specifically, below are the research questions:

- (1) Is the writing class using listening materials received favorably by the students?
- (2) Is there a relationship between learners' perception of effects on writing through listening and learners' affective aspects in class?
- (3) Is there a relationship between learners' perception of writing through listening and their perceived English ability?
- (4) How do the students feel about writing or the writing class?

Research Method

Class Content

The content of the first-year writing class, Communication IIA, is described. Regarding the textbook for the class, *Writing Essays* published by Macmillan was used. The textbook explains the fundamental writing process, and students seem to understand the content and be motivated into writing in English. The class was conducted using the following procedure:

- (1) Short test
- (2) Listening activities
- (3) Using the textbook

As for the short test conducted at the beginning of the class, it contains vocabulary, phrases, and useful expressions in a skit students learned in the previous week. Useful expressions and vocabulary which can/will be used in writing were selected from the listening materials.

Next, regarding listening materials, since the aim of the activities is also to improve listening ability, they are carried out in the form of blank-filling exercises. The topics students learned are as follows:

1. Honing conversation skills (1) - (4)
2. Animal companions (1) - (4)
3. Money and happiness (1) - (4)

These seemed a little difficult for freshmen at university, but the author chose the topics which he felt were the most interesting from the Business English Program. Surely, given that students enter the world of employment after graduation, it would seem to be meaningful to learn those topics. In order to relieve learner feelings that it is a high hurdle, sufficient time to check new vocabulary and expressions is provided. In short, after listening twice or three times, they look up new words and idioms in the skit (Appendix 1). For this purpose, students are required to bring their (electric) dictionaries to class every lesson. After checking and memorizing the meanings of the words, they start filling in the blanks again. This time they feel it is easier to do the fill-in-the-blank activity. At the end of the listening activity, all students in the class confirm the answers for the blanks. Then, the textbook is used for students to learn how to write essays and to practice writing.

The aforementioned procedure is used every week, and in one 90-minute lesson students do not have enough time to write an essay even though they can practice simple writing. Therefore, students are assigned to write one essay every four lessons based upon each of the three listening topics. For example, after the first theme ‘Honing conversational skills’ (1) to (4) is finished, they write an essay related to the theme. They can then decide on any title for the essay if it is related to the theme. When writing it, they can make use of the vocabulary and English expressions they learned. By doing so, the receptive skills students have gained through the listening materials are expected to transfer to productive skills. In the lesson following the essay writing, they have time for peer review. Students exchange their essays in pairs and make some comments on their partner’s essay, mainly regarding the content. If they notice grammatical errors or wrong usage of the words, they give their opinions or ideas freely. Then they rewrite their essays and submit them to the teacher in the following week.

Method

The research subjects were 32 freshmen from the Faculties of Science and Applied Biological Science. The students’ average TOEIC test score was 487 points. At the end of the semester (15 weeks), a questionnaire (6-point Likert scale) was administered to explore learners’ perception of the writing (class) through listening (Appendix 2). After that, the collected data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-moment.

TABLE 1. Classification of Items and Internal Consistency (Cronbach’s α)

Category	Classification	Item	Cronbach’s α
C1	Listening materials	3, 4, 5	.841
C2	Effect on writing	8, 9, 10	.781
C3	Essay writing	12, 13, 14	.686
C4	Peer review	15, 16, 17, 18	.778
C5	Enjoyment of activities	1, 7, 12, 15	.710
C6	Attitudes toward writing	19, 20, 21, 22	.848
C7	Topics	24, 25, 26	.602

The questionnaire items were classified into seven categories based upon the content of each questionnaire. As for the classification, the scores of reliability were relatively high, since the range of Cronbach's Alpha was from .848 to .686, except for C7 (Table 1); therefore, the reliability of scales are almost all considered acceptable in this paper. Regarding C7, the data result needs further examination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question (1)

Research question (1) "Is the writing class using listening materials received favorably by the students?" is discussed.

First, describing the items related to listening materials, on the whole the materials used in class were received favorably by students (Table 2). Specifically, Questions 3-5 show the very high numerical values, $M=4.5$ or 4.53 . Furthermore, regarding positive and negative responses, Table 3 shows that over 90% of the students felt that it was useful to improve listening ability (Q3), and more than 80% of them responded positively to the introduced listening materials (Q4 & Q5). This implies that introducing listening materials is very useful. Regarding Q2 (Difficulty in listening), 90% of them felt it was difficult. As for that point, it is expected that one of the reasons is the unfamiliarity of the business English context, and another reason is that there are a large number of business English-related words and phrases.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Analysis of Each Item

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Q1	4.06	1.01	32	Q14	4.38	0.87	32
Q2	4.88	1.1	32	Q15	3.66	0.9	32
Q3	4.53	1.11	32	Q16	4.22	1.07	32
Q4	4.53	1.02	32	Q17	4.28	1.2	32
Q5	4.5	1.11	32	Q18	3.41	0.98	32
Q6	4.13	1.01	32	Q19	4.03	1.03	32
Q7	4.34	0.87	32	Q20	4.22	1.04	32
Q8	4.53	0.95	32	Q21	3.81	1	32
Q9	4	1.08	32	Q22	3.84	0.95	32
Q10	3.66	1.07	32	Q23	4.38	0.91	32
Q11	3.91	1.12	32	Q24	4.34	0.9	32
Q12	4	1.19	32	Q25	4.41	1.07	32
Q13	4.81	1.03	32	Q26	4.53	0.72	32

Next, it was asked whether the introduced specific topics were suitable for the writing tasks. It was found that more than 80% of the students felt positive about the introduced topics ($M=4.38$). The numerical values of those topics are: Honing conversation skills ($M=4.38$), Animal companions ($M=4.34$), Money and happiness ($M=4.53$); all topics were received favorably. In particular, the topic Money and happiness was received favorably by more than 90% of the students (Table 3). This implies that the teacher needs to take into account learners' interest and select the topics to be introduced carefully. The results show that the importance of class content should be recognized anew.

TABLE 3. Positive and Negative Responses for Each Item

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Agree	75	90.6	90.6	84.4	84.4	84.4	87.5	90.6	75	71.9	71.9	68.8		
Disagree	25	9.38	9.38	15.6	15.6	15.6	12.5	9.38	25	28.1	28.1	31.3		
Item	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24.1	24.2	24.3
Agree	93.8	87.5	65.6	81.3	78.1	56.3	84.4	84.4	81.3	75	84.4	84.4	87.5	96.9
Disagree	6.25	12.5	34.4	18.8	21.9	43.8	15.6	15.6	18.8	25	15.6	15.6	12.5	3.13

Furthermore, learners' perception of the writing class which uses listening materials is described. On the whole, students tended to receive it favorably. Specifically, as shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the following items are:

- Q7: I enjoyed writing by use of listening materials ($M=4.34$),
- Q8: It is effective to improve writing ability ($M=4.53$),
- Q9: It has become easier to write the content by using the listening materials ($M=4$),
- Q10: Using listening materials motivated me to write in English ($M=3.66$),
- and Q11: Writing by use of listening materials motivated me to study English ($M=3.91$).

The results can mean that students thought the writing class to be useful. Especially, Table 3 shows that more than 80% of them were positive toward the listening materials introduced in class, and that they feel it was an effective way of improving writing ability.

The learners' response to the writing class was more favorable than expected. This method contributes a lot to writing improvement, and at the same time it is useful for the development of listening ability.

Research Question (2)

In this section the relationship between learners' perception of efficacy of writing through listening and other categories is analyzed and discussed, using the Pearson product-moment.

First, as shown in Table 6, there was a strong correlation between learner perception of efficacy on writing through listening and their perceived English ability (vocabulary/listening/expressions) ($r=.75$). Also, it was found that there was a moderate correlation between learners' perception of efficacy on writing through listening and perception of writing essays/peer review ($r=.54$; $r=.57$, respectively). Moreover, their perception of efficacy on writing through listening had a moderate correlation with enjoyment of the writing class ($r=.54$).

The above-mentioned results suggest that conducting the writing class in which listening materials were used positively and following these up with writing activities can lead to improvement of English ability and enhance enthusiasm about writing English sentences.

TABLE 4. Descriptive Analysis (Categories)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
C1	4.44	.71	32
C2	4.09	.78	32
C3	4.40	.81	32
C4	3.89	.81	32
C5	4.02	.73	32
C6	3.98	.83	32
C7	4.41	.64	32

Also, it was found that there was a moderate correlation between writing through listening materials and enjoyment of the whole class ($r=.54$). As mentioned in Research Question (1), all the topics introduced in the writing class were received favorably and they made the writing class enjoyable. Furthermore, it can be said that carrying out the writing class using listening materials effectively has led to students' increased writing motivation and improvement of writing ability.

TABLE 5. Correlative Relationship between Categories

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
C1	1	0.75**	0.62**	0.64**	0.68**	0.72**	0.53**
C2		1	0.54**	0.57**	0.54**	0.64**	0.51**
C3			1	0.42*	0.71**	0.60**	0.39*
C4				1	0.65**	0.68**	0.57**
C5					1	0.76**	0.65**
C6						1	0.72**
C7							1

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Research Question (3)

In this section, Research Question (3): "Is there a relationship between learners' perception of writing (class) through listening and English ability?" is discussed, referring to Table 6.

First, there was a moderate correlation between learners' perception of listening materials and the TOEIC ® Test results ($r=.52$). It is considered that introducing listening materials has made learners aware of the improvement of listening ability. Also, through introduction of listening for writing essays, they feel that they have enriched their vocabulary and knowledge of English expressions (Table 6). Although there is not necessarily a direct causal relationship, there is a possibility that the introduction of listening materials resulted in a good effect on the test results.

Next, it was found that the TOEIC ® Test results had a moderate correlation with enjoyment of listening materials ($r=.42$). Likewise, it is considered that listening introduced in the writing class contributed to the enjoyment of the class.

When describing other categories, especially activities in the writing class, Category 3 (Essay writing) and Category 5 (Attitudes toward writing) had a weak correlation with the TOEIC ® Test results ($r=.36$; $r=.30$). Compared with listening materials, they had a lower correlation with the test results. This will be because the TOEIC ® Test mainly consists of vocabulary, listening, and reading, and the content of the test is not related to writing.

TABLE 6. Correlative Coefficient between Each Category and TOEIC ® Test Scores

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
TOEIC	0.52	0.34	0.36	0.19	0.40	0.30	0.32

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Research Question (4)

In this section learners' perception of the writing class is discussed based on the free comments. The following research-related items, Essay writing using listening materials and English ability improvement, are discussed.

TABLE 7. Free Description: Essay Writing by Use of Listening Materials

Responses	N
Could use phrases I learned in listening activities (and express myself)	7
Useful for writing improvement	2
Easy to grasp the flow of writing	2
Could learn effectively	2
Very good method (writing through listening)	1
Listening was difficult	4

TABLE 8. Free Description: English Ability Improvement

Responses	N
Improved listening ability	5
Improved writing ability	5
Could enrich vocabulary	4
Listening materials were useful for writing.	3
Improved English ability a little	1
Easy to memorize the expressions	1
Could learn English expressions	1

First, regarding Essay writing by use of listening materials, the No.1 response was 'I could use phrases I learned in listening activities (and express myself)' (7 students). Also, there were two students who wrote the following comments: "It was useful for writing improvement", "It was easy to grasp the flow of writing" and "I could learn effectively". One student highly rated this method used in writing. Then, with regard to English ability improvement, five students wrote the following comments: "I could improve listening ability" and "My writing ability improved". Moreover, there were four students who described the comment: "I could enrich my vocabulary".

As a result, it can be said that the above-mentioned items support the results of the quantitative analysis in the former sections. In other words, the method conducted in this practical research (writing through listening) is an effective/useful way of motivating students to write in English and to improve their writing ability.

CONCLUSION

This research explored the efficacy of using listening materials as input on writing (class), and the following points were clarified.

First, on the whole, the listening materials used in class were received favorably by students. Specifically, more than 80% of the students were found to have a positive response to the introduced listening materials. It was found that, regarding learners' perception of the writing class, students evaluated the class positively, with over 90% approving of the method of writing through listening, believing it to be effective for writing improvement. This indicates that by taking into account learners' interest and carefully selecting topics to be introduced in class, students will have positive attitudes toward writing.

With regard to the relationship between writing by use of listening and students' perceived English skills, the results showed that the writing method had a strong correlation with elements of their perceived English ability (vocabulary, listening, and English expressions). Furthermore, the method correlated moderately with enjoyment of the English writing class. It shows that there is a possibility that introducing listening materials into writing and linking them to writing activities improves their English ability, enhances their enthusiasm for writing, and develops writing ability. In other words, it is considered that, in this practical research, the method of using listening in the writing class was successful, possibly leading to improvement of writing ability.

Also, there was a moderate correlation between perception of the listening materials and English ability (TOEIC ® Test), and it is posited that introducing listening materials in the writing classes led both to enhancement of learners' perception of listening (activities) and listening improvement.

Lastly, future research should be done in the following areas. First, in this research the number of the subjects is small, so by increasing the number, the results will be more convincing. Next, not only learner affectivity but also actual writing improvement should be verified in future research. Even if the efficacy of this practice is confirmed from the perspective of learners' affectivity, it does not necessarily mean that there has been actual practical writing improvement. Based upon the above, further steps are necessary for better education and research.

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APPENDIX 1
Vocabulary Check Sheet (sample)

No.1 Honing Conversation Skills

Clues to Listening Activity (1)

- hone ()
- Big Apple ビッグアップル (ニューヨーク市の愛称)
- on a regular basis ()
- fad ()
- develop a taste (～を)好きになる
- cuisine ()
- Dear me. (感嘆・失望などを表して)おやまあ [やれやれ]。
- in-your-face ()
- gratuity ()
- of one kind or another ()
- Cf. one...or another ()

Write English words twice and the Japanese meaning once.

English	English	Japanese

APPENDIX 2
Survey on English Writing

- 1 I could enjoy studying, using the listening materials.
- 2 I felt it was difficult to listen to the dialogues.
- 3 Listening materials were useful to improve my listening skill.
- 4 Listening materials were useful to enrich my vocabulary.
- 5 Listening materials were useful to increase my English expressions.
- 6 Short tests were useful to improve my writing skill.
- 7 I enjoyed writing by use of listening materials.
- 8 Writing by using listening materials is effective to improve writing ability.
- 9 It has become easier to write the content by using listening materials.
- 10 Using listening materials motivated me to write in English.
- 11 Writing by use of listening materials motivated me to study English.
- 12 I could enjoy doing the task.
- 13 The task was useful to improve writing ability.
- 14 The essays which linked listening and writing are useful to improve writing skills.
- 15 Peer review was fun.
- 16 Comments from my partner were useful to improve my writing.
- 17 Checking my partner's essay was useful to improve my writing.
- 18 I have become confident about writing through peer review.
- 19 I was more motivated about English writing through this class than before.
- 20 I could get the hang of English writing through this class.
- 21 I have developed confidence about writing in English through this class.
- 22 I came to like writing in English better through this class.
- 23 On the whole, the listening materials used in class were good for writing.
- 24 I enjoyed learning the following topics.
 - (1) Honing conversation skills
 - (2) Animal companions
 - (3) Money and happiness
- 25 Feel free to describe your feelings and thoughts based on each item.
 - (1) Writing essays using listening materials.
 - (2) The textbook you used.
 - (3) Improvement of English ability (vocabulary/writing/listening, etc.)
 - (4) Others (the whole class)

ABSTRACT

Efficacy of Theme-based Listening Materials in English Writing: Focusing on learner affectivity

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This research investigates Japanese university students' feelings about English writing classes and the writing process. The focus is on the positive effects of using listening materials in the writing class and learners' enjoyment of writing. Driving this practical study, which uses listening as a means toward improvement of writing ability, was the expectation that exploiting useful/interesting listening materials (practical business English) in the writing class would be an effective way of getting learners to produce their feelings and thoughts in English. Swain's (1985, 1995) Output Hypothesis states that while comprehensible input is a necessary condition for second language acquisition, it is not in itself sufficient, with output also playing a major role. In the process in which input becomes output, appropriate input is required if learners are to be able to produce their feelings and thoughts (output) smoothly. Therefore, in this practical study students first learned necessary vocabulary and English expressions, using topic-related dialogues through listening, and then did the writing activities. The author expected the method to have a positive effect on learners' affective aspects related to writing.

It was found that, regarding learner perception of the writing class, students judged the class positively, with over 80% approving of the method of writing through listening, believing it to be effective for writing improvement. Also, when examining the relationship between writing by use of listening and perceived English skills, the results showed that the writing method had a strong correlation with elements of perceived English ability (vocabulary, listening, English expressions). Furthermore, the method correlated moderately with enjoyment of the English writing class. It is suggested that the positive introduction of the listening materials increased the learners' enthusiasm to write English essays as well as enhancing their English writing ability.

要 約

英語ライティングにおけるテーマ別リスニング教材の有効性 — 学習者の情意面に焦点を当てて —

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本研究は、英語ライティング授業とライティングプロセスに関する大学生の情意面を調査した。特に、ライティング授業へリスニング教材の導入することの効果やライティング授業の楽しさに焦点を当てている。ライティング力の改善に向けた一方法としてリスニングを使用する実践研究を行うことは、ライティング授業で有用な興味深い題材を開拓し、学習者に英語で表現させるために効果的な方法であるという期待であった。

Swain の Output Hypothesis では、理解可能なインプットが第2言語習得には必要な条件であるが、アウトプットが重要な役割を果たすうえで、それ自体では不十分であると述べられている。インプットがアウトプットになる過程において、学習者がスムーズに自己表現ができるためには適切なインプットが要求される。それ故、この実践研究では、学習者がまずリスニングを通して話題に関連あるダイアログを使って学び、必要な語彙や英語表現を習得する。それから実際にライティング活動を行った。

その結果、ライティング授業の学習者の情意面に関しては、80%以上の学習者がこの方法を好意的にとらえ、ライティングの改善に効果があったと述べている。また、このリスニングを通じたライティング手法は、英語力の各要素（語彙・リスニング・英語表現）に対する学習者の認識と強い相関がある結果が出た。