Influences of Film on EFL Learners’ Listening Abilities:
Focusing on the Comparison Between Film- and Textbook-Based Dictation Practice

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Abstract

Focusing on the differences between film- and textbook-based dictation practices, this investigation examined the influences of film on the listening abilities of EFL learners. During the 10-week study, participants in the film-based group practiced dictation with film-based materials and those in the textbook-based group practiced dictation with textbook-based materials. Although the listening comprehension ability measured by the textbook-based test showed marginal improvement, the results showed that the students in both groups improved their listening comprehension skills in the film-based test. Their aural perception abilities, as measured by the film- and textbook-based dictation tests, did not show improvement. However, the results of the questionnaire revealed that the students in both groups felt that their listening abilities improved, with the students in the film-based group expressing the feeling that there was more improvement than that expressed by their counterparts in the textbook-based group. The study found that a fast speech rate was the factor that caused the students to feel the most difficulty in understanding the film; in comparison, the textbook-based group paid more attention to the details of the text.

1. Introduction

A film is among the most attractive teaching materials for both language teachers and learners alike. Indeed, there are a number of advantages to the use of film as a teaching material.

First, films are authentic materials, which were not produced as materials for language learning. Learners are usually accustomed to the teaching materials, which are modified to match the level of their language proficiency. The modified materials tend to be less difficult and more understandable for the learners. Certainly, it is important for learners to study with materials that match their language levels. However, it is also beneficial for them to get authentic language input, produced by a real speaker for a real audience and not intended for non-native learners (Gilmore, 2007; Porter & Roberts, 1981).
Second, motivational factors should be accounted for. Since films are developed for the purpose of entertainment, most learners enjoy watching films. Therefore, using film as a teaching material has a positive influence on the motivational factors of learners.

Finally, the visual effects of films help learners comprehend the input. Since the difficulty level of the language in films is typically higher than that of the teaching materials, which are modified to be more understandable to learners, most learners find it difficult to comprehend the language used in films. However, the visual factors support learners in understanding the language, which is usually difficult for them.

In spite of the advantages of using film as a teaching material, not many studies have been conducted on the influence of films on language teaching. Moreover, among the film related studies, most examined students' motivational factors or simply reported on lesson plans using films (Johnson, 2008; Kobayashi, 2011). The effects of the use of film on learners' language skills, especially listening skills, has not received significant attention by researchers.

Among the few studies related to learners' linguistic ability, Amino (2007) and Kadoyama (2010) used English film materials for one semester and concluded that the film materials had positive effects on the students' listening proficiency as well as their motivational factors. Though their studies are noteworthy in that they examined the improvement in the students' listening ability, they did not compare the effects with a control group. Therefore, the results of their studies are limited.

Regarding listening activities via film, Kobayashi (2001) categorized the various film-related activities into the “whole presentation” and the “partial presentation.” He proposed that each presentation be divided into tasks for “comprehension,” such as comprehension questions, and for “aural perception,” such as dictation practice. Kadoyama (2008b) argued that rather than using a number of different films, teachers should choose one film and use three to five minute scenes in each lesson so they do not need to explain what is happening in the story to the students every time. In addition, this approach involves less lesson preparation time for the teachers.

Dictation is commonly used to apply films to language lessons. Kadoyama (2008a) examined the effects of film-based dictation practice by comparing various methods of presenting the materials. He concluded that the effects of film-based dictation practice would be enhanced if students understand the gist of the dictation material before the dictation practice. He also suggested that dictation should be incorporated with other teaching techniques, such as more content-focused instruction or the use of applicable segments to meet the learners' needs to improve their listening comprehension skills.

In the present study, partial dictation practice through films was used as a listening activity. In partial dictation, all of the material is presented in auditory form, and part of the material is presented in written form. Oller (1979) maintained that partial dictation was a valid pragmatic testing measure because it required learners to interpret what they heard as part of natural spoken
discourse, and the learners’ global language proficiency could be measured. Nation and Newton (2009) also supported the use of dictation as listening practice. They stated that “dictation helps language learning by making learners focus on the language form of phrase and clause level constructions, and by providing feedback on the accuracy of their perception” (p. 59).

In summary, past studies have shown that films had positive effects on learners’ motivational factors and that film-based listening practice had positive effects on their listening ability. However, it is still not clear whether the effects of the films on learners’ listening skills differ from that of textbook-materials. Therefore, this study addressed the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Are the effects of the film-based dictation practice on learners’ listening abilities different from those of the textbook-based dictation practice?

RQ2: Do the factors that learners perceive as difficult in listening comprehension differ between film-based and textbook-based dictation practice groups?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Sixty-six Japanese university students, with a variety of majors, participated in this study. The input data of 14 students was excluded from the analyses, because either they were absent from the lessons more than five times or they did not complete the listening tests. The data of 52 participants was analyzed in the study. The study participants, who were from two different classes, were each assigned to either a film-based dictation practice group (hereafter the film-based group, \( n = 25 \)) and a textbook-based dictation practice group (hereafter the textbook-based group, \( n = 27 \)), respectively. Although different instructors taught the groups, other than the materials used in the dictation practice, they all used the same textbook and followed the same lesson plans, which were based on the discussion that took place before the classes.

2.2 Materials

Proficiency Test. The proficiency test was adapted from a TOEIC Bridge practice test (Takayama & Tozer, 2009). Because of the time constraint, 22 items from the listening section and 23 items from the reading section were used.

The reliability of the proficiency test was \( \alpha = 0.738 \). Based on their scores, it was found that there was not a significant difference between the proficiency levels of the control group (\( n = 27, M = 22.78, SD = 6.48 \)) and the experimental group (\( n = 25, M = 21.96, SD = 5.33 \)), \( t(49.33) = \)
0.498, \( p = .620, d = 0.14 \). Therefore, these two groups were considered ideal groups with which to conduct the present experimental study.

**Listening Tests.** Two types of test were employed to examine the improvement in the students' listening skills. Based on the categorizations made by Kobayashi (2001), partial dictation tests were applied to examine the students' aural perception skills and listening comprehension tests were conducted to assess their listening comprehension skills. As the current study made a distinction between film-based input and textbook-based input, the dictation tests and the listening comprehension tests were conducted with film-based and textbook-based materials.

Specifically, the pre- and post-tests consisted of four listening tests: a partial dictation test with a film segment (film dictation test), a partial dictation test with a segment taken from a textbook (textbook dictation test), a listening comprehension test with a film segment as input (film comprehension test), and a listening comprehension test with input taken from a textbook (textbook comprehension test).

The partial dictation tests had 30 blanks and the script was about one minute long. The words in the blanks are within the first 2000 words (within level 2) based on the JACET 8000 word list, thus likely to be within the vocabulary range of the students.

Fifteen multiple-choice questions were employed to assess film comprehension ability. In the film comprehension test, students watched one segment taken from a film, and then answered multiple-choice questions about it. In the textbook version, students answered 22 questions taken from a TOEIC Bridge listening section.

Table 1 shows the speech rate and the difficulty levels of the four sets of test materials. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL) measures the readability of the text and the numbers stand for the school grade level in the United States. The material for the textbook dictation was narrative, while the material for the other three tests was based on dialogues. Therefore, the FKGL is the highest in the textbook dictation test. The textbook dictation materials were based on language textbooks, and the speech rate was slower than that of the film materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Tests</th>
<th>Length (sec)</th>
<th>Rate (wpm)</th>
<th>Total words</th>
<th>FKGL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbook dictation</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>109.0</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film dictation</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>161.9</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook comprehension</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>125.2</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film comprehension</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>149.3</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

*Speech Rate and Difficulty Levels of the Pre- and Post-Tests*
As visual information tends to have a greater impact on learners’ memory than aural information, the question items in the film comprehension section were developed to assess their aural, rather than their visual, comprehension. Since the students were not given answer keys after the pre-tests, and the post-tests were conducted 10 weeks later, it was assumed that they did not remember the content of the test. Therefore, the same materials were used for both the pre- and the post-tests.

**Teaching Materials.** The teaching materials for the ten weekly lessons included a partial dictation worksheet (see Appendix A) and a journal sheet. In each script, there were 10 blanks in the first week and 20 to 22 in the second week. After the third week, the same procedure as in the first and the second week was conducted, but with a different script. Therefore, a total of five different original scripts were used and two versions, one with 10 blanks and the other with 20 to 22 blanks, were created for each script. The words to be omitted were chosen based on phonological change such as “assimilation, contraction, and blending” (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996).

The film-based group used the film, *Night at the Museum*, as a teaching material for the dictation activity. Since the plot was simple and the students were able to simultaneously study the history of the United States, this film was considered ideal for teaching language. The textbook-based group used an audiovisual material, *Our World Heritage* (Takemae, O’Connor, Okada, & Nakao, 2003) as a dictation activity material. It was selected since it described history, which was also a focus of *Night at the Museum*. In both groups, a segment approximately one minute long was chosen for the dictation activity. The average speech speed of the film segments used for dictation practice was 149.75 words per minute, while that of the textbook material was 98.2 words per minute. Therefore, the speech rate of the film was much faster than that of the textbook material. However, it should be noted that since its speech speed varied with the speech of the individual characters and thus contained a range of slower and faster speeds, it was difficult to measure the speech rate of the film.

Regarding the journal sheet, every week the students were asked to write a journal entry reflecting their comments and thoughts about the dictation activity. Although they were encouraged to write what made the language features and contents of the texts easy or difficult to comprehend, they were allowed to write their comments freely.

**Questionnaire.** A questionnaire asking their thoughts about the dictation practice was developed to determine their motivational factors and their perceived listening comprehensibility. The questionnaire was written in Japanese on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) (see Appendix B).
2.3 Procedure

In the film-based group, each week, the students watched one segment from the film without subtitles. Since it was assumed that it would have been too difficult for the students to dictate a conversational dialogue if they did not have any idea about the context of the scene, the instructor explained the context of the scene, such as the characters in the film and what happened before the focused scene. After watching the scene, the students dictated the dialogue and filled in the blanks in the dictation sheet. They listened to the dialogue three times. The instructor paused after each sentence in the first and second dictation practice; in the third dictation practice, there were no pauses. The number of times they listened to the passage was determined using a pilot study. In the pilot study, most of the students agreed that three times of listening was enough for them to complete the task and that they listened to the dialogue with pauses for the first two times and in the third time without pauses. After finishing the dictation, the students checked their answers by themselves. Afterwards, the instructor explained the meanings of the scripts as well as any words that included phonological changes.

Although the same dictation material was used for dictation in the following week, 10 additional blanks were added to the worksheet. Therefore, five different materials were used in the ten weeks. The same segment was used for two weeks so that it would give the students a chance to review what they studied in the previous week and to have them focus on listening comprehension as well as dictation.

In the textbook-based group, the students engaged in the dictation activity in the same manner as the film-based group, but with textbook-based material.

2.4 Data Analysis

To examine the effects of both the film-based and the textbook-based dictation practice on the students’ listening comprehension ability, four pre- and post-tests (a film dictation test, a textbook dictation test, a film comprehension test, and a textbook comprehension test) were applied. A 2(Test timing: pre, post) × 2(Group: film-based group, textbook-based group) two-way analysis of covariance (ANOVA) was conducted for each test result. In this analysis, “Test timing” was defined as a within-subject factor, while “Group” was defined as a between-subject factor.

The dictation tests were scored based on Oller’s (1979) methods of marking dictation; specifically, that spelling errors should not be considered incorrect because spelling is not the focus of the skills to be measured in most of the dictation activity.

As for the dictation worksheet, the percentage of words for which the students got the correct answer was calculated. The words with both a low and a high percentage of correct answers were subsequently analyzed.

The journal entries that the students wrote after dictation practice were examined qualitatively to examine the factors that they felt made the listening comprehension difficult.
Regarding the questionnaire about their listening improvement, motivation, and the difficulty levels of the dictation practice, an independent t-test was conducted between the film-based and the textbook-based groups. Their comments were also analyzed qualitatively.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Listening Tests

The mean scores of the four pre- and post-tests are presented in Table 2 and Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. To analyze the scores of the four tests (a textbook dictation test, a film dictation test, a textbook comprehension test, and a film comprehension test), a 2(Test timing: pre, post) × 2(Group: film-based group, textbook-based group) two-way analysis of covariance (ANOVA) was conducted for each test result.

Table 2

Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Four Listening Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Textbook dictation test</th>
<th>Film dictation test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film-based</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook-based</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18.77</td>
<td>5.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Textbook comprehension test</th>
<th>Film comprehension test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film-based</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook-based</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The maximum possible score (MPS) of the dictation tests = 30. The MPS of the textbook comprehension test = 22 and the MPS of the film comprehension test = 15.

Figure 1. Textbook dictation test scores

Figure 2. Film dictation test scores
First, regarding the textbook dictation test: the analysis revealed no significant main effects of either Group or Test timing, $F(1, 50) = 2.19$, $p = .145$, $\eta_p^2 = .042$; $F(1, 50) = .017$, $p = .897$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, nor was the interaction between Group and Test significant, $F(1, 50) = 2.08$, $p = .156$, $\eta_p^2 = .040$. Although the mean score of the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test in the film-based group, the difference was not statistically significant. In contrast, in the textbook-based group, the mean scores of the post-test were lower than that of the pre-tests. However, the difference was not significant nor was the interaction. This result indicates that the students’ listening perception skills of textbook-based input did not improve in either group after 10 weeks of dictation practice.

Second, the film-based dictation test was analyzed by a two-way ANOVA. It revealed a significant main effect of Group, $F(1, 50) = 8.83$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .150$, and a significant effect of an interaction, $F(1, 50) = 5.27$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .095$. However, there was no significant main effect of Test-timing, $F(1, 50) = 2.01$, $p = .163$, $\eta_p^2 = .039$. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the textbook-based group are higher than those of the film-based group. However, the scores of the textbook-based group declined, while those of the film-based group increased. One possible explanation for this result is that since they had practiced film-based dictation in class, the film-based group maintained their aural perception abilities on the film input. In comparison, in the textbook-based group, they were not able to maintain their aural perception abilities on film input because they were accustomed to the textbook-based dictation practice. As the differences between pre- and post-tests were not statistically significant, the explanation mentioned above remains an implication.

Third, a two-way ANOVA was conducted on the scores of the textbook-based listening comprehension test. The results revealed a marginally significant effect of Test timing, $F(1, 50) = 3.34$, $p = .074$, $\eta_p^2 = .063$, as well as an interaction, $F(1, 50) = 3.68$, $p = .061$, $\eta_p^2 = .069$. The main effect of Group was not significant, $F(1, 50) = 2.64$, $p = .111$, $\eta_p^2 = .050$. In the film-based group, the score of the textbook-based listening comprehension test increased, while in the textbook-based group, the score declined. Therefore, it implies that although the effects remained marginal, film-based dictation practice had better effects on the students’ textbook-based listening comprehension skills than the textbook-based dictation practice.
Finally, a two-way ANOVA was conducted on the results of the film-based listening comprehension test. The results indicated a significant main effect of Test-timing, $F(1, 50) = 5.417, p = .002$, $\eta^2_p = .096$. The main effect of Group and an interaction were not significant, Group: $F(1, 50) = .068, p = .796, \eta^2_p = .001$, Interaction: $F(1, 50) = .143, p = .707, \eta^2_p = .003$. It is noteworthy that, since the film-based listening comprehension test was the only test among the four pre- and post-tests that showed a statistically significant difference in both groups, both groups improved their listening scores on the film-based listening test. Therefore, it demonstrates that whether the dictation practice was with the film-based input or the textbook-based input, it had a positive effect on the students' skills to comprehend film-based listening input.

Overall, the four listening skills, which measured the students' aural perception skills and the listening comprehension skills of film-based and textbook-based materials, revealed some indications on the film-based and textbook-based dictation tests. It was expected that the film-based group would outperform the textbook-based group in the listening perception and comprehension of the film materials, and that the textbook-based group would outperform on the listening perception and comprehension of the textbook materials. Unfortunately, except for the film-based comprehension test, the improvement measured by the pre- and post-tests did not reach significant levels.

The findings can be summarized as follows. First, the students in neither the film-based nor the textbook-based groups improved their textbook-based aural perception skills as measured by the dictation test. Second, film dictation tests indicated that the film-based dictation group maintained their aural perception skills of films while the textbook-based dictation group did not. This indicates that the students in the film-based group became accustomed to the difficulty levels of the film-input by practicing the film-based dictation in each lesson. Third, regarding the textbook listening comprehension skills, although the film-based group improved their textbook-based comprehension ability, the effect remained marginal. The textbook-based group did not improve in their textbook-based listening comprehension. Finally, the students in both groups improved their listening comprehension skills of the film-based input. This indicates that the dictation practice with film-based and textbook-based listening materials helped learners improve their listening comprehension skills for the film.

3.2 Dictation Worksheet

The dictation worksheet was collected and the percentage of correct answers that the students got was calculated. The words with a high rate of correct answers (more than 70%) and those with a low rate of correct answers (less than 30%) were analyzed in detail. The words were divided based on the criteria shown in Table 3.

In both groups, it is clear that the students had trouble listening to function words and short-syllable words, which are not clearly articulated. Moreover, their comprehension increased
when the words were the common words with which they were familiar and were clearly articulated.

What is more intriguing is the comparison between the two groups. As Table 3 shows, the students in the film-based group had particular trouble in understanding connected speech. As the characters in the films spoke relatively fast, it is likely that the connected speech was difficult for them to comprehend. On the other hand, if we look at the textbook-based group, the students had a hard time comprehending the words with high level vocabularies. It is assumed that they did not know those words.

Some words with a high rate of correct answers differed between the two groups. In the film-based group, some words had a high ratio of correct answers, as they corresponded with the picture on the screen. For example, a character in the film said “Happy monkey” when the visual of a monkey was on the screen. In the textbook-based group, the long-syllable words had a high ratio of correct answers. This indicates that the students were able to discriminate the long-syllable words from the other words, as they were clearly articulated.

Table 3

*Lists of words analyzed in the Dictation Worksheet*

1. Words with a low rate of correct answers in both film-based and textbook-based groups
   a. Function words  
      ex.) dreaming of, in the nose
   b. Short-syllable words  
      ex.) they are so, I call you

2. Words with a high rate of correct answers in both film-based and textbook-based groups
   a. Common phrases  
      ex.) at the end of, good luck
   b. Articulated speech  
      ex.) in or out, on and off

3. Words with a low rate of correct answers distinctive in each group
   a. Film-based group:  
      Connected speech  
      ex.) leave him alone, not at all
   b. Textbook-based group:
      High vocabulary levels  
      ex.) had an advanced, rich in wildlife, worth preserving

4. Words with a high rate of correct answers distinctive in each group
   a. Film-based group:
      Visual aid  
      ex.) happy monkey, who can tell me
   b. Textbook-based group:
      Long-syllable words  
      ex.) independent, dreaming, outside

*Note.* Underlined words are the words subject for analysis.

The journal entries that the students wrote after the dictation practice in each lesson were analyzed qualitatively. In the film-based group, most of the students commented on the fast speech rate. They also noticed that the speech rate in the movie changed with the different characters.
In comparison, in the textbook-based group, the students commented on their lack of skill in dictating the details, such as function words and articles. By comparing their comments, it was clear that the film-based group felt that the speech rate made their listening comprehension challenging. The textbook-based group did not mention much about the speech rate, and they were able to pay more attention to the details of the text.

3.3 Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire, which asked the students their thoughts about the dictation practice, are shown in Table 4. The independent t-test revealed statistically significant differences between the film-based and the textbook-based groups in Q2 and Q4, (Q2: t(54) = 2.50, p = 0.015, d = 0.66; Q4: t(54) = 3.60, p = 0.001, d = 0.96), while Q 1 and Q 3 did not reach statistical significance, (Q1: t(54) = 1.49, p = 0.142, d = 0.41; Q3: t(54) = 0.253 p = 0.801, d = 0.07).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Film-based group</th>
<th>Textbook-based group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. General listening ability</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. Difficulty of the dictation</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. Motivation for the dictation</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. df = 54.*

These results indicate that the students’ perception regarding their improvement in their listening ability (Q2) and their interest in the dictation practice (Q4) differed between the two groups. The students in the film-based group perceived that their listening ability improved more than the students in the textbook-based group did. Likewise, the film-based group enjoyed the dictation practice more than the textbook-based group. Their listening comprehension (Q1) and difficulty with the dictation (Q3) remained the same between the two groups.

The students’ comments were also analyzed qualitatively. Regarding the improvement in their general listening ability (Q2) in the film-based group, they felt that their improvement was mainly for the following reasons: “I got used to listening to the film script” (n = 9, 56.3%), and “I comprehended at the word level” (n = 3, 18.8%). Others who did not feel the improvement commented that the listening was too difficult (n = 2, 12.5%). In the textbook-based group, the students answered, “I got used to listening to the passages” (n = 4, 21.1%), and “I was able to pay attention to the details” (n = 4, 21.1%). Some students indicated that their listening did not improve (n = 3, 10.5%). Although the scores of the textbook-based group were significantly lower
than those of the film-based group, their comments indicated that the students in the textbook-based group also felt their improvement. Moreover, their comments about attention to the details of the listening passage correlated with their comments from the journal.

Although the scores of the perceived difficulty of the dictation (Q3) did not differ between the two groups, their comments showed that the reasons for the difficulty varied. In the film-based group, the main reason for the difficulty was the fast speech rate, "The speech rate was too fast" (n = 7, 36.8%). Others simply could not comprehend, "It was difficult to comprehend what the speakers were talking about" (n = 5, 26.3%). The connected speech also contributed to their difficulty (n = 3, 15.8%).

In contrast, in the textbook-based group, most students expressed their weakness in listening comprehension, as in, "I am not good at listening" (n = 9, 45.0%). Like the film-based group, others also commented on the connected speech (n = 3, 15.0%), and the fast speech rate (n = 3, 15.0%).

The students' enjoyment for the dictation (Q4) also showed a significant difference between the two groups. In the film-based group, their interest in the films contributed to their enjoyment, as in, "Because it was taken from a film" (n = 7, 38.9%), and others had a positive attitude toward dictation, as they felt that their listening had improved (n = 3, 16.7%). The difficulty of the dictation practice caused their decreased interest, as in, "It was too difficult" (n = 3, 16.7%).

However, although the scores of their enjoyment were lower in the textbook-based group than the film-based group, both positive and negative comments were observed. For example, some students in the textbook-based group showed interest in the dictation practice, as in, "I’m interested in listening" (n = 3, 17.6%) and "I like the dictation practice" (n = 3, 17.6%). Others did not show interest, as in, "I’m not good at listening" (n = 4, 23.5%) or "It was too difficult" (n = 3, 17.6%).

In summary, the scores of the questionnaire revealed that the students in both groups felt that by doing the dictation practice, both their listening comprehension skills and their perception skills improved. Primarily because they got used to listening, the students in both groups recognized their own improvement in general listening ability. The textbook-based group also mentioned their attention to the details of the listening passage.

Regarding the difficulty levels, the film-based group felt that the fast speech rate in the films made listening comprehension challenging. In the textbook-based group, they pointed out that they were just not good at listening. The cause of difficulty commonly observed in both groups was the connected speech.

The comments on their interest in dictation activity differed between the two groups. The majority of the students in the film-based group indicated that they enjoyed the practice because they liked the film. In contrast, some of the students in the textbook-based group expressed that they were not good at listening, while others liked the dictation practice.
4. Conclusions

The present study investigated the differences between the effects of dictation practice using a film and those using a textbook on learners’ listening comprehension abilities. The 10-week-study was conducted to examine and compare the improvement of the students’ listening ability in the film-based group who practiced dictation using a film and the textbook-based group who practiced dictation using a textbook (RQ1). The improvement of their listening abilities was examined through pre- and post-tests, and whether they felt their improvement was examined by the questionnaire.

First, the results of the pre- and post-listening tests showed that the students in both groups improved their listening comprehension skills in the film-based test. However, neither group showed a statistically significant improvement in their aural perception ability, as measured by the dictation tests. Likewise, in the film-based dictation test, although neither group showed statistically significant improvement, the mean scores of the experimental group improved while those of the control group did not. The improvement of the listening comprehension ability measured by the textbook-based comprehension test remained at a marginally significant level. The film-based group marginally improved with their textbook-based comprehension test, while the textbook-based group did not.

Second, the results of the questionnaire indicated that the students perceived that their listening abilities had improved. Though their pre- and post-test scores showed statistically significant improvement only in the film-based comprehension test, the questionnaire results suggested that both groups felt improvement in their listening skills. Therefore, it is clear that although the film-based group felt more improvement than the textbook-based group, both groups felt that they improved their listening abilities by doing the dictation practice.

The study also examined the factors that the students found difficult in listening comprehension (RQ2). The perceived difficult factors were examined through the analysis of the worksheet as well as their comments on the journal and questionnaire.

First, the analysis of the dictation worksheet revealed that it was difficult for the students in both groups to listen to function words or short-syllable words that were not clearly articulated. On the other hand, easy words to listen to included commonly used words and clearly articulated words. The film-based group had trouble listening to connected speech, while the textbook-based group had trouble listening to the words whose vocabulary levels were high. It was also found that the film-based group had better comprehension of the words that matched the visual. In the textbook-based group, they were good at understanding long-syllable words.

Second, the qualitative analyses of the journal and the questionnaire revealed that in the film-based group, most of the students felt that it was difficult to comprehend the film because of the fast speech rate. In comparison, the textbook-based group did not comment on the speech rate, but instead, they paid more attention to the details of the listening text.
Although the current study was conducted to examine whether the effects of the dictation practice on learners’ listening abilities differ between the film- and the textbook-based dictation groups, it has some limitations. Foremost, 10 weeks was not long enough for a longitudinal study to observe the improvement in the students’ listening abilities. Although the students felt that their listening abilities had improved because of the dictation practice, except for the film-based listening comprehension test, their test scores did not show statistically significant improvement. Moreover, as the low mean scores indicate, the partial dictation test of the film material might have been too difficult for them. Therefore, the film dictation test might not have measured the students’ aural perception skills properly.

Despite these limitations, the present study showed some important pedagogical implications. First, this study found that the film-based dictation had a positive effect on the students’ motivation. Although the students who were not good at English might not particularly enjoy the dictation practice, the current study showed that the film-based dictation helped students enjoy the practice. Second, while the students in the textbook-based group did not mention the speech rate, but rather paid attention to the details of the text, the comments from the film-dictation group indicated that the students in the film-based group got used to the speed of the films. Therefore, film-based dictation practice can be used to get students accustomed to authentic language input, and the textbook-based dictation can be used when instructors want students to focus on the details of the text.

This study sheds some light on the differences in the effects of film-based dictation and textbook-based dictation practices on students’ listening abilities. While films are attractive materials for language learning, hitherto, a limited number of studies have been conducted on the films in the language teaching field, especially regarding the effects on listening abilities. Further studies should be conducted involving a longer period of time, as well as using various kinds of films, and students with various proficiency levels.

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References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of the Dictation Worksheet

Note. Underlined words were blank spaces in the original worksheet.

<table>
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<th>Film-based group</th>
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Larry: Right.

Cecil: You’ll wanna strap those to your belt. Now, it can get a little spooky around here at night... ...so you might wanna put a few lights on.

All right, flashlight, keys. What am I forg...? Oh! The instruction manual!
Gus: Instructions. You start with one, two, three...

Larry: Four?

Gus: Are you cracking wise? I ought to punch you in the nose, hopscotch.

Reginald: Leave him alone, Gus. You got it covered, right, Larry?

Larry: Yeah, yeah, I got it.

Gus: You better get it! --

Cecil: Gus! . . . Larry, do them in order, do them all and do them quick.

And the most important thing of all to remember: Don't let anything in or out.

Larry: Out?

Cecil: Good luck, son.

Appendix B. Questionnaire Items on Dictation Practice

Note. The items were all presented in Japanese.

1. ディクテーション活動を行うことで、内容理解度が上がりましたか？
   Did you comprehend the listening passage more by doing the dictation practice?

2. ディクテーション活動を行うことで、リスニング力が全般的に向上了と思いませんか？
   Do you think your general listening ability improved by doing the dictation practice?

3. ディクテーション活動は難しかったですか？Was the dictation practice difficult for you?
   なぜですか？Why?

4. ディクテーション活動は興味を持って行うことができましたか？
   Did you enjoy the dictation practice?
   なぜですか？Why?

5. ディクテーション活動について、なにか感想、改善点など、コメントがあればお願い致します。
   Give any opinions about the dictation practice. (comments or things to be improved)