

To dictogloss or not to dictogloss: Potential effects on Jordanian EFL learners' written performance¹

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This study investigates the potential effect of a proposed dictogloss-based program on Jordanian EFL tenth-grade teachers' writing instruction and on their students' writing performance. The participants are 20 Jordanian EFL teachers and 96 tenth-grade students selected from the public schools of Al-Kourah Directorate of Education in the second semester of the academic year 2015/2016. The teachers were trained on both the theoretical and practical aspects of dictogloss. The students were divided into an experimental group (n=70) and a control group (n=26). The former was taught through dictogloss while the latter was taught per the guidelines of the Teacher's Book. Descriptive statistics were used to compare the teachers' performance on the one hand and that of the students on the other. The findings revealed that the level of teachers' instructional practices in writing was high on the three dimensions of the observation checklist (*viz.*, *preparation and planning*, *Dg procedures*, and *assessment*), and that the teachers were reportedly highly satisfied with the content, method, and time of training as well as their interaction, motivation, and benefit. Moreover, statistically significant differences were found between the teachers' performance on the pre- and post-tests, which can be attributed to the training. The findings further revealed statistically significant differences not only among the students of the experimental group on the pre- and post-test but also in the overall writing performance of the experimental and control groups, in favor of the former.

Keywords: dictogloss, instructional practices, Jordan, writing performance

1 Introduction and background

There seems to be a consensus among scholars (e.g., Brown, 2001; Cuning, 1998; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Nunan, 1999; Omaggio, 2001; Parker, 1993) that writing is an intricately complex process of exploring one's thought, discovering ideas, and generating meaning (Flower & Hayes, 1981) which requires sustained intellectual effort over time (Nunan, 1999). Writing is a lot more than speech written down (Cuning, 1998; Omaggio, 2001), as written expression is both a slow and laborious process.

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Writing, often dubbed the neglected skill (Duncan, 1991; Obeiah & Bataineh, 2016), is reported as a source of relatively considerable difficulty for learners of English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language (EFL) alike, which translates into weakness in these learners' written performance (Bataineh & Salah, forthcoming; Obeiah & Bataineh, 2015, 2016). Several scholars (e.g., Carson, 2001; Conner & Kaplan, 1987; Myles, 2002; Nik, Hamzeh & Rafidee, 2010; O'Mally & Chamot, 1990) attribute students' weakness in writing to linguistic factors (e.g., language interference, overgeneralization), affective and social factors (e.g., lack of self-esteem, attitudes toward the target language), learning styles (e.g., tolerance of ambiguity, field independence), learning strategies (e.g., monitoring errors, translation), and cognitive factors (e.g., language transfer, input, interaction).

The literature suggests various solutions for learner difficulties in writing, most prominent amongst which is adopting strategies that would encourage learners to participate actively in the learning/teaching process. Relevant to this particular research, scholars (e.g., Dewi, 2014; Duara, 2013; Kooshafar, Youhanaee & Amirian, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2010) have proposed dictogloss (henceforth, DG), first introduced as a variation of traditional dictation by Wajnryb (1990), as a context-based strategy and a means for integrating form and meaning in the learning context (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Stewart, Silva & González, 2014).

Dictogloss is hailed as a consciousness-raising strategy which potentially encourages language learners to interact and cooperate to rewrite a linguistically acceptable text, similar to the original in both style and content (Jacobs & Small, 2003; Stewart et al., 2014). Even though it was originally meant to assist language learners in improving their grammar knowledge (Wajnryb, 1990), DG has expanded to other areas of linguistic, communicative, and human development (e.g., speaking, writing, opinion-sharing, and learner-centered negotiation) which involve students and teachers alike (Robinson, 2011).

The implementation of dictogloss occurs in a range of three to five major steps (e.g., Jacobs & Small, 2003; Shak, 2006; Wajnryb, 1990; Wilson, 2003). While Wajnryb (1990) identifies four stages (viz., preparation, dictation, reconstruction, and analysis and correction), Wilson (2003) identifies three stages (viz., listening, reconstructing, and discovering), Jacobs and Small (2003) five stages (viz., [topical discussion, listening, note-taking, reconstruction, and comparison and correction]), and Shak (2006) five stages (viz., listening, noticing, activity, checking, and writing). However, as the current researchers see that the difference in the number of stages does not affect the procedures, they adopt Wajnryb's (1990) original four stages:

1. **Preparation.** The teacher and students engage in a topical warm-up activity to make use of the students' topic-related prior knowledge and encourage their involvement with the text. Towards the end of the stage, the students are divided into groups and made aware of the requirements of the activity (Stewart et al., 2014; Wajnryb, 1990).
2. **Dictation.** In this stage, the text is read twice, once for the students to just listen and another to listen and take notes. The text is read a third time for the students to confirm and/or revise their notes.
3. **Reconstruction.** Using their notes, students work, in small groups, to reconstruct an approximation of the text.

4. Analysis and Correction. During this stage, each group of students correct their text before comparing it to those of the other groups (with the help of the teacher).

Dictogloss is potentially useful for improving students' written performance, as its practicality and flexibility comprise catalysts for integrating form and meaning (Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004), accommodating students' interests and learning preferences, providing context for negotiation (Kowal & Swain, 1994), working readily with cooperative tasks (Faghani, Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2015; Jacobs & Small, 2003), and allowing for a more interactive approach to language proficiency (Stewart et al., 2014).

Therefore, DG has the potential to integrate communicative notions with the traditional concerns of grammar instruction (Al-Sibai, 2008; Pica, 1997), to work as a form-focused technique (Jacobs & Small, 2003; Shak, 2006) in which students aim not to reproduce the text word-for-word but rather to best approximate its meaning and style and to allow for the so-called 'meta-talk' or 'language related episodes', occasions in which students discuss or question their language use as they engage in a reconstruction task in L2 (Qin, 2008; Rashtchi & Khosroabadi, 2009).

Dictogloss has generally been reported to positively affect EFL students' language development in writing and in the other three language skills alike. For instance, Nabei (1996) reported positive DG effects on female Polish and Chinese ESL learners' language skills. Similarly, Abbasian and Mohammadi (2013), Kooshafar et al. (2012), Prince (2013), Purwaningsih & Kurniasih (2014), and Zheng (2006) reported that DG positively affects the written performance of Iranian, French, Nigerian and Chinese EFL learners, respectively. In the same vein, Khoii and Pourhassan (2015) have reported a positive effect of DG on Iranian EFL learners' immediate and delayed grammatical performance. Similarly, Smith (2012) found that dictogloss promotes both oral interaction and written performance of Japanese learners, as they interact and understand content, organization and language features of the text.

1.2 Problem, purpose, and research questions

Scholars (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris & Sass, 2011; Stronge, Ward, Tucker & Hindman, 2007) seem to agree that teacher quality and experience are catalysts for student success. The current researchers, both veteran EFL teacher trainers, have experienced first-hand teachers' lack of effective techniques of instructional delivery, often in spite of their good intentions and willingness to learn. This study is the second in a series which examines the potential effectiveness of a number of instructional techniques in the Jordanian EFL context. Research suggests that most Jordanian learners show a rather unsatisfactory level of proficiency in the four language skills (Bataineh, 2005; Bataineh & Zghoul, 2006; Al-Damiree & Bataineh, 2016; Al-Rabadi & Bataineh, 2015), and in writing in particular (Bani Younis, 1997; Bataineh & Obeiah, 2016; Obeiah & Bataineh, 2016). The literature attributes these weaknesses to a host of factors which range from limited vocabulary (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Rababah, 2003), ineffective learning strategies (Dewi, 2014), and limited opportunities for practice (Adas & Bakir, 2013) to ineffective teacher training (Alkhaldeh, 2010; Al-Wreikat & Abdullah, 2010; Bani Abdo & Breen, 2010) and ineffective instructional delivery (Al-Khasawneh, 2010).

Therefore, this study aims at examining the potential effect of a proposed DG-based training not only on Jordanian EFL teachers' writing instructional practices but also on their students' overall written performance. More specifically, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect, if any, of the DG-based training on teachers' writing instructional practices?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences (at $\alpha = .05$) between the teachers' mean scores on the pre-/ and post-tests, which may be attributed to the training?
3. What are the teachers' reflections about the effectiveness of the training?
4. Are there any statistically significant differences (at $\alpha = .05$) between the students' mean scores on the writing pre- and post-tests, which may be attributed to using dictogloss?

It is worth noting that, with the plethora of current reforms in education across disciplines, Jordan is investing in both research and training on innovative (but cost-effective) instructional strategies. These researchers, within this and other research teams, are actively seeking instructional innovations that may combat student weakness and break the monotony of and disinterest in traditional teacher-fronted delivery.

In this spirit, the current study, albeit distinct in purpose, target group, and data collection, builds on Bataineh and Bani Younis's (2016) exploratory study of the effect of dictogloss on teacher instruction and student written performance. More specifically, Bataineh and Bani Younis (2016) examined the effect of dictogloss-based training on 16 Jordanian EFL teachers' instruction and 100 of their students' writing performance, using a pre- and post-test for teachers and students and a classroom observation checklist. Thus, not only do the two studies target two distinct sample groups (7-10th grade students vs. 10th grade students only), one from the North-Eastern Badia and the other from Al-Kourah Directorate of Education at the west end of Jordan, but they also differ in the means of data collection, as the current study adds teacher reflection on the training to the instruments used in the former.

1.3 Significance of the study

A good body of local and international research exists on the effect of dictogloss on language learning (e.g., Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013; Han, 2011; Nabei, 1996; Khoii & Pourhassan, 2015; Kooshafar et al., 2012; Prince, 2013; Purwaningsih & Kurniasih, 2014; Qin, 2008; Uludag & Vanpatten, 2012). However, to the best of these researchers' knowledge, other than a lone study by them (Bataineh & Bani Younis, 2016), none exists on the effect of DG-based training on teacher writing instruction and student written performance. Thus, this study may contribute to the literature on teacher development by providing new insights into using DG to improve teaching and learning writing alike.

2 Sample, instruments², and data collection

To achieve the purpose of the research, two groups of participants were targeted: teachers and students. The purposeful teacher sample consisted of 20 (9 male and

11 female) EFL tenth-grade teachers from Al-Kourah Directorate of Education (Jordan) in the first semester of the academic year 2015/2016. The selection of these teachers was done according to volunteer sampling, as the participants put themselves forward as research candidates in response to the researchers' call. Volunteer sampling was opted for to ascertain the participants' interest and willingness to take part in the study, which entails extra time and effort on top of their other responsibilities as teachers. Ninety-six (male and female) students of three randomly selected teachers (out of the 20 trained) comprised the student sample of whom 70 were randomly assigned to the experimental group, taught through dictogloss, and 26 to the control group, taught per the guidelines of the prescribed Teacher's Book.

Based on their collective experience and an extensive review of the literature, these researchers developed four data collection instruments: the teacher pre-/post-test, student pre-/post-test, observation checklist, and teacher reflection form.

The validity of the instruments was established by a jury of EFL university professors whose feedback was used to amend the instruments. Similarly, the reliability of the instruments was established by administering them to teacher (n=10) and student (n=20) samples which were excluded from the main sample of the study. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability coefficients of the two administrations of the tests amounted to .96 and .87 for teachers and students, respectively.

The teacher pre-/post-test, in its final form, consisted of six open-ended questions on the theory underlying DG (e.g., *the differences between dictogloss and traditional dictation, the steps of each stage of DG*). The teacher reflection form consisted of four questions, the first three of which address the effectiveness of the training while the fourth seeks suggestions for improving the training. The observation checklist consisted of 20 items along three domains: *preparation and planning* (5 items), *DG procedures* (12 items), and *assessment* (3 items). The student pre-/post-test consisted of one essay-writing question about education in Jordan, which was scored using Obeiah and Bataineh's (2015) adaptation of Wang and Laio's (2008) analytic scoring rubric along the sub-skills of focus, development, organization, conventions and word choice, as shown in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1. Analytic Scoring Rubric (Obeiah and Bataineh, 2015).

| Skill | Descriptor | Score |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| Focus | failure to address the writing task | 0 |
| | inadequately addressing the writing task | 1 |
| | having problems in addressing the writing task | 2 |
| | addressing the writing task adequately but sometimes straying from the task | 3 |
| | addressing the writing task but with frequent errors | 4 |
| | precisely addressing the writing task | 5 |
| Development | using irrelevant details to support topics or illustrate ideas | 0 |
| | using few details to support topic or illustrate ideas | 1 |
| | using fair details to support topic or illustrate ideas | 2 |
| | limited development of topic and use of inappropriate details to illustrate ideas | 3 |
| | using appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas | 4 |
| | using specific appropriate details to support topic or illustrate ideas | 5 |
| Organization | illogical and unclear flow of ideas | 0 |
| | lack of acceptable topic, evidence or logical order, and introductory, supporting and concluding paragraphs | 1 |
| | poorly states the topic, poor evidence of logical order and limited supporting paragraphs | 2 |
| | reasonable amount of development with little details to support topic | 3 |
| | the logical flow is generally clear and connected | 4 |
| | clear progression of ideas and use of specific details | 5 |
| Conventions | serious and consistent errors in punctuation, grammar, capitalization and spelling | 0 |
| | inappropriate conventions with obvious errors | 1 |
| | frequent errors begin to impede readability | 2 |
| | some errors need editing, but do not impede readability | 3 |
| | fair conventions with minor errors | 4 |
| | perfect or near perfect conventions | 5 |
| Word choice | containing severe errors | 0 |
| | inappropriate, incorrect, unclear and distracting inconsistencies | 1 |
| | vague, redundant use of words with frequent errors | 2 |
| | occasional errors of word choice but meaning not obscured | 3 |
| | almost effective word choice | 4 |
| | effective word choice | 5 |
| Total | | 25 |

To achieve its purpose, this study uses a mixed quantitative and qualitative quasi-experimental design: a two-group design for the student sample and a one-group design for the teacher sample, as quantitative data were collected through the tests and qualitative data through classroom observation and teacher reflection on the training. This study has three variables, one independent variable (viz., dictogloss) and two dependent variables (viz., teachers' writing instructional practices and students' overall written performance).

After establishing the validity and reliability of the instruments, the researchers met with the teachers to explain the purpose of the study, obtain their consent, and assure them of the confidentiality of their responses. The first researcher administered the pre-test to the teachers and set to train them on both the theoretical and practical aspects of DG. He, then, administered the reflection form and the post-test, and set to observe the teachers as they implemented DG in their respective classrooms. The pre-test was administered to the student sample just before the DG-based instruction whereas the post-test was administered immediately after the conclusion of the treatment.

2.1 Instructing the experimental and control groups

The experimental group was instructed through DG, as follows: (i) The topic was introduced and discussed; (ii) key vocabulary was taught (through visual organizers, examples, synonyms, antonyms, etc.); (iii) the teacher read the text, with brief pauses between sentences; (iv) students worked in groups to write the words/phrases they could recall from the text; (v) students and the teacher discussed the recalled words/phrases and noted differences; (vi) the teacher read the text again; (vii) students worked in groups to make sentences out of their notes, compared their notes and sentences with those of the other groups, negotiated correct answers, and edited their notes; (viii) the teacher read the text for the third and final time, as students worked in groups to reconstruct the original text, using their notes and recalled information; (ix) the teacher checked group work, and individual students were each asked to write his/her version of the text; (x) students worked, in groups, to ensure correct content, grammar, and punctuation, pooling information and negotiating options; (xi) the reconstructed texts were checked and finalized; and (xii) the teacher wrote a reconstructed text on the board and provided instant feedback.

On the other hand, the control group was instructed, for the same duration, per the guidelines of the Teacher's Book, *Action Pack 10*, as follows: (i) The teacher introduced the topic and new vocabulary (in isolation); (ii) students were taught how to state their purpose, generate ideas, organize content, and edit their essays; (iii) the teacher moved round the class to monitor progress and offer feedback; (4) the teacher asked students to write and submit their final drafts (with accurate spelling and grammar); and (5) the teacher announced the end of the lesson by collecting the students' essays for marking at home.

Note that in instructing the control group, the teacher adhered religiously to the guidelines of the Teacher's Book. Thus, unlike those in the experimental group, these students received direct instruction; they did not get to listen to the text (but were rather asked to write the text using the new vocabulary and the ideas discussed in the introduction to the lesson), nor were they engaged in any group work or given immediate feedback on their performance.

3 Findings and discussion

The findings are presented and discussed according to the four questions of the research.

3.1 The first research question

To answer the first question, which addresses the potential effect of the DG-based training on teachers' writing instructional practices, the teachers were observed using an observation checklist on a five-point Likert scale (*always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never* with the numerical values of *five, four, three, two, and one*, respectively). It is worth noting, however, that since no data are available on the teachers' practices prior to the treatment, the researchers are in no position to make any claims about the normality, or lack thereof, of the distribution then. However, the distribution of these practices after the treatment is right-skewed, as the mass of the distribution is concentrated to the right of the figure. This is an

indication of improvement in the teachers' DG-related practices following the treatment, which is further supported by the absence of *rarely* and *never* categories of response along the items of every dimension of the three domains in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

The frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages of the teachers' responses were calculated for the data obtained through the classroom observation checklist, as shown in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 below.

Table 1. Results of the observation along *Preparation and Planning*.

| No. | Preparation and Planning | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Mean | SD | % |
|--------------|---|--------------|----------|-----------|--------|--------|------|------|----|
| 1 | Formulating specific and measurable outcomes | F 10 % 50 | 9 45 | 1 5 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.45 | 0.60 | 89 |
| 2 | Determining appropriate instructional strategies | F 9 % 45 | 11 55 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.45 | 0.51 | 89 |
| 3 | Determining appropriate assessment strategies and tools | F 9 % 45 | 10 50 | 1 5 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.40 | 0.60 | 88 |
| 4 | Determining the length of the text according to students' proficiency level | F 11 % 55 | 8 40 | 1 5 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.50 | 0.61 | 90 |
| 5 | Allocating appropriate time for each outcome | F 5 % 25 | 15 75 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.25 | 0.44 | 85 |
| Overall Mean | | 22.05 | | | | | | | |
| SD | | 1.82 | | | | | | | |
| % | | 88.2 | | | | | | | |

Table 1 shows that the level of teachers' practices on the first dimension of the observation checklist, *preparation and planning*, was high, with a mean score of 22.05 and a standard deviation of 1.82. Table 1 also reveals that Item 4, *determining the length of the text according to students' proficiency level*, topped the mean scores with a mean score of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.61 whereas Item 5, *allocating appropriate time for each outcome*, scored the lowest mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.44.

Table 2. Results of the observation along *DG Procedures*.

| No. | Procedure | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Mean | SD | % |
|-----|---|--------------|----------|-----------|--------|--------|------|------|----|
| 6 | Engaging the class in discussion on the topic of the upcoming text | F 12 % 60 | 6 30 | 2 10 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.50 | 0.69 | 90 |
| 7 | Giving students an opportunity to discuss the type of the text | F 10 % 50 | 5 25 | 5 25 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.25 | 0.85 | 85 |
| 8 | Reading the text aloud at normal speed without pauses as students listen, but do not write | F 17 % 85 | 2 10 | 1 5 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.80 | 0.52 | 96 |
| 9 | Reading the text again at normal speed with pauses, and allowing students to take notes (words/phrases) | F 14 % 70 | 6 30 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.70 | 0.47 | 94 |
| 10 | Following the logical sequence of presenting the material | F 6 % 30 | 14 70 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 4.30 | 0.47 | 86 |

| No. | Procedure | F | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Mean | SD | % |
|-----|--|------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|------|------|----|
| 11 | Encouraging students to express themselves orally and in writing | F 6 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.20 | 0.62 | 84 |
| | | % 30 | 60 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 12 | Assigning students to small groups to reconstruct the text in full sentences without the interference of the teacher | F 15 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.75 | 0.44 | 95 |
| | | % 75 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 13 | Students, with the teacher's help, identify similarities/differences in meaning between the reconstructed and original texts | F 7 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.20 | 0.70 | 84 |
| | | % 35 | 50 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 14 | Students, with the teacher's help, identify similarities/differences in form between the reconstructed and original texts | F 6 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.10 | .72 | 82 |
| | | % 30 | 50 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 15 | Students, in groups, discuss the text before writing their final draft | F 18 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.90 | .31 | 98 |
| | | % 90 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 16 | The teacher conducts an error analysis session | F 11 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | .51 | 91 |
| | | % 55 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 17 | Once their final drafts are ready, students check for ideas, stylistics and mechanics | F 14 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.70 | .47 | 94 |
| | | % 70 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| | Overall Mean | | 53.95 | | | | | | | |
| | SD | | 1.84 | | | | | | | |
| | % | | 89.92 | | | | | | | |

Table 2 shows that the level of teachers' instructional practices on the *DG procedures* dimension was high with a mean score of 53.95 and a standard deviation of 1.84. Table 2 also reveals that Item 15, *students, in groups, discuss the text before writing their final draft*, topped the scale with a mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.31 as opposed to Item 14, *students, with the help of the teacher, identify similarities and differences in terms of form between the reconstructed and original texts*, which scored the lowest mean score of 4.1 and standard deviation of 0.72.

Table 3. Results of the observation along *Assessment*.

| No. | Procedure | F | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Mean | SD | % |
|-----|---|------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|------|------|----|
| 18 | The teacher uses appropriate assessment tools and strategies | F 7 | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.30 | 0.57 | 86 |
| | | % 35 | 60 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 19 | The teacher encourages self-assessment | F 5 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.15 | 0.59 | 83 |
| | | % 25 | 65 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 20 | The teacher uses the results of assessment to improve students' performance | F 4 | 9 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.85 | 0.75 | 77 |
| | | % 20 | 45 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| | Overall Mean | | 12.30 | | | | | | | |
| | SD | | 1.55 | | | | | | | |
| | % | | 82 | | | | | | | |

Table 3 shows that the level of teachers' practices on the *assessment* dimension was also high, with a mean score of 12.30 and a standard deviation of 1.55. Table 3 further reveals that Item 18, *the teacher uses appropriate assessment tools and*

strategies, topped the scale with a mean of 4.13 and standard deviation of 0.57 whereas Item 20, *the teacher uses the results of the assessment to improve students' performance*, scored the lowest mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.75. Note that the observation was done after the training, which may readily explain why the teachers' DG-based practices fell in the two highest categories of *always* and *often*. These teachers have just been engaged in the acquisition of DG-related knowledge and skills.

To check the potential effect of the DG-based training on teachers' writing instructional practices on the three dimensions of the observation checklist combined, a t-test was used, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The effect of the DG training on teachers' writing instruction on all dimensions.

| Dimension | Mean | SD | SE | t | Df | Sig. |
|--------------------------|-------|------|-----|-------|----|--------|
| Preparation and Planning | 22.05 | 1.82 | .40 | 8.10 | 19 | <.001* |
| Procedure | 53.95 | 1.84 | .41 | 21.64 | 19 | <.001* |
| Assessment | 12.30 | 1.55 | .34 | 3.01 | 19 | .007* |
| Overall | 88.30 | 3.98 | .89 | 14.91 | 19 | <.001* |

n=20

Table 4 shows that the level of the teachers' practices on the observation checklist as a whole was high with a mean score of 88.30 and a standard deviation of 3.98. Table 4 also reveals a high level of the teachers' practices on the observation checklist on each of the three dimensions: *teaching procedures*, *preparation and planning*, and *assessment* which scored means of 53.95, 22.05, and 12.30 and standard deviations of 1.84, 1.82, and 1.55, respectively.

These findings may be attributed to a number of factors, most important amongst which are the meticulous design and execution and reflective nature of the training, the trainer's rapport with the trainees prior to and during the training, and the expert knowledge the teachers gained from the training.

To begin with, the training was designed according to the teachers' actual needs, as gleaned from the first researcher's close contact and frequent supervisory classroom visits, which is further supported by the participants' unanimous rating of the *content* and the *method* of training as *excellent* (Table 5, below). Second, the training was informed by the reflective model, as trainees were allowed opportunities to reflect on their micro-practice, to self-critique, and to receive both peer feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Third, as the Ministry-assigned supervisor of the participating teachers, the trainer was familiar to them in both personality and style, which may have encouraged them to participate more actively in the sessions and, thus, affected their performance both on the post-test and in their later implementation of DG. Finally, the expert knowledge afforded by the training may have contributed to the participants' commendable classroom practices.

3.2 The second research question

To answer the second question, which sought statistically significant differences (at $\alpha = .05$) between the teachers' mean scores on the pre- and post-test, which can be attributed to the DG-based training, means, standard deviations, and t-test statistics of the teachers' performance on the pre-/post-test were calculated, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and t-test statistics of the teachers' performance on the pre-/post-test.

| Test | Mean | SD | Df | t | Sig. |
|-------|-------|-------|----|------|--------|
| Pre- | 0 | 0 | 19 | 2.29 | <.001* |
| Post- | 66.95 | 14.75 | | | |

Table 5 reveals a statistically significant difference (at $\alpha = .05$) between the teachers' mean scores on the pre- and post-test, which can be attributed to the DG-based training. Table 5 also shows that the mean score of the teachers' performance has risen from zero (which indicated no familiarity with DG) on the pre-test to 66.95 on the post-test.

This marked improvement in teacher performance may be attributed to a host of factors, most prominent amongst which is the knowledge the trainees gained about DG. Furthermore, the novelty of DG itself may have heightened the teachers' attention to and involvement in the training, which may have reflected positively on their performance. This claim is further supported by the respondents' assessment of the training as *excellent* or *good* on all six dimensions, not to mention their self-reported enjoyment of and benefit from the training activities (Tables 6 and 7 below).

3.3 The third research question

To answer the third question, which sought the teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of the training, the skills they have acquired, and their suggestions for improvement, the data obtained from the reflection schedule were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed, as shown below.

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of the DG training along the dimensions of *method*, *content*, *timing*, *interaction*, *motivation*, and *utility*, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' evaluation of the effectiveness of the DG training.

| Item | Fair | | Good | | Excellent | |
|-----------------------|------|---|------|----|-----------|-----|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Content of Training | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |
| Method of Training | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |
| Timing of Training | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 19 | 95 |
| Trainees' Interaction | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 17 | 85 |
| Trainees' Motivation | 0 | 0 | 4 | 20 | 16 | 80 |
| Trainees' Benefit | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 17 | 85 |

Table 6 shows that the respondents categorically rated the training as either *excellent* or *good* on all six dimensions. The *content* and *method* of training were rated as *excellent* by 100 percent of the participants whereas the *timing*, *interaction*, *utility*, and *motivation* of training were rated as *good* or *excellent* by 5 and 95, 15 and 85, and 20 and 80 percent of the participants, respectively.

The participants' reported satisfaction with the training may be attributed to a number of factors, most prominent amongst which are the *novelty* and *meticulous execution* of the training. First, the teachers' pretest, on which the participants scored rather poorly, and the second item of the reflection schedule, which revealed that DG was an essentially new technique, lend credence to this

argument. Furthermore, the cumulative nature of the components of the training made it possible for the participants to learn each skill before proceeding to the next. The tightly planned sequence in which the trainer assumed the role of model and facilitator, rather than source of theoretical knowledge, allowed the participants ample opportunities for autonomy and independent learning and for interaction amongst themselves and with the trainer, which offered the added advantage of peer coaching and assessment.

The participants' reported acquiring skills which would potentially improve their teaching of language skills in general and writing in particular, as shown in the excerpts below:

I have learnt a new technique that, I think, will help me improve my skills to become a more efficient English language teacher (Reflection/ Teacher 3).

This brand new technique will help me improve my skills in teaching writing and eventually develop my student's skills in writing, listening, speaking and reading (Reflection/ Teacher 4).

I have learned a new technique which would help me to improve my skills in teaching writing and my students' as well in writing, listening, speaking and reading (Reflection/ Teacher 5).

This wonderful new technique would develop my ability to teach writing effectively and would encourage my students to write and improve their skills in speaking and listening (Reflection/ Teacher 8).

I have learnt this new skill for teaching writing which I will definitely use in my classroom. I have also learned new vocabulary (Reflection/ Teacher 13).

I have experienced a new technique that may help my students in improving their language and their writing (Reflection/ Teacher 16).

It is worth noting that as they reflected on DG, most respondents addressed not only their practice but also their students' learning. The analysis showed a near consensus that the training has not only helped the respondents develop their writing instruction but would also improve their students' learning of language in general and writing in particular. These responses, coupled with the researchers' observations of the participants' active engagement, commitment, and positive attitudes throughout the training, lend credence to the effectiveness of the training in these respects.

The third item in the reflection schedule sought the teachers' self-reflection on their participation in the training. Percentages and frequencies of these are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Frequencies and percentages of the teachers' reflection of their participation in the training.

| No. | Item | YES | | NO | |
|-----|--|-----|-----|----|----|
| | | n | % | n | % |
| 1 | I thoroughly enjoyed the activities. | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I was actively engaged in the activities. | 17 | 85 | 3 | 15 |
| 3 | The training proceeded according to plan. | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | The language used was communicatively sound. | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | I urge my colleagues to attend similar training. | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 |

Table 7 shows that the participants reportedly found the training engaging and well-executed that they would urge other teachers to attend similar training. Only three participants (15 percent) reported not being active and attentive during the training.

These findings may be attributed to a host of factors, most prominent amongst which are the careful design and execution of the training, the presentation sequence, the ongoing assessment both by the trainer/researcher and the participants themselves, and the ample opportunities for independent learning and self-assessment.

The fourth item of the reflection schedule sought the participants' suggestions for improving the training. The analysis of the responses revealed a near unanimous satisfaction with the training, as the participants did not offer any suggestions for the improvement of the training itself but rather seemed keen on seeking similar training, as shown in the excerpts below:

We wish for more training sessions like this to improve teachers' skills (Reflection/ Teacher 3).

I personally need more training like this to improve my teaching and students' learning (Reflection/ Teacher 4).

Why not make this type of training a regular routine to better enable us to be effective teachers (Reflection/ Teacher 5)?

We need more courses like this about new techniques (Reflection/ Teacher 12).

More training on other aspects of language teaching is always welcome by us teachers (Reflection/ Teacher 19).

We need more training like this one (Reflection/ Teacher 20).

The participants' commendable keenness to receive further training may be attributed to a number of reasons. To begin with, training provided by the Ministry of Education is generally sparse, far in between and, often, generic and irrelevant to teachers' (subject-matter-related) needs. By contrast, the current training was relevant to the teachers' needs, as it went beyond the mere provision of theoretical knowledge into modeling and allowing the participants themselves the advantage of practice. In fact, the participants asked for opportunities to practice DG during the training to test applicability and establish confidence, which lends further merit to their recommendation that DG be used not only with tenth-grade students but also with other grades.

3.4 The fourth research question

The fourth research question sought potentially statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = .05$) in the students' mean scores on the pre-/post-test, which can be attributed to DG, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Means and standard deviations of students' written performance on the pre/post-test.

| Group | n | Pre | | Post | | Adjusted Mean | Standard Error |
|--------------|----|------|------|------|------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| Control | 26 | 2.03 | 2.70 | 2.96 | 3.64 | 4.52 | .46 |
| Experimental | 70 | 3.75 | 3.56 | 9.98 | 5.13 | 9.40 | .28 |

Table 8 shows observed differences among the mean scores of the students of both the control and experimental groups on the pre-/ post-test. However, a much more pronounced gain in achievement is evident for the latter (compare 2.03 to 2.96, 3.7 to 9.98, and 2.96 to 9.98 for the control group, the experimental group, and the two groups, respectively). To determine the potential significance of the difference between the groups, One Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. ANCOVA of the students' performance on the post-test.

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Squares | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------|----------------|----|--------------|-------|--------|---------------------|
| Method | 429.12 | 1 | 429.12 | 79.25 | <.001* | .46 |
| Error | 503.56 | 93 | 5.41 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 3089.33 | 95 | | | | |

n= 96 *significant (at $\alpha = .05$)

Table 9 shows a statistically significant difference (at $\alpha = .05$) in the students' written performance on the post-test. This marked improvement in the written performance of the experimental group may be readily attributed to the implementation of DG.

The diligent and systematic implementation of DG by the teachers of the experimental group may account for the students' superior performance. Note that the mean scores of the 12 items comprising the *DG procedures* dimension ranged between 4.1 and 4.9 (Table 2, above), which indicates that the teachers implemented the procedures (e.g., *allowing students the opportunity to discuss the topic and type of text, reading to students at normal speed, presenting the material in logical sequence, allowing students the opportunity to express themselves orally and in writing as well as discuss their texts individually and in groups before producing their final drafts*) with high frequency. Furthermore, the novelty of DG, non-threatening atmosphere, and the friendly feedback provided by teachers and peers alike have added to the effective utility of the procedure (e.g., *students worked in groups to analyze and correct their reconstructed texts, groups compared their reconstructed texts, the teachers engaged the class in a discussion of a sample reconstructed text to identify errors and provide immediate feedback*). This interpretation of the participants' superior written performance is further corroborated by the outcome of the classroom observation.

4 Limitations, conclusions, and recommendations

The findings revealed that teachers were highly satisfied not only with the content, method, and time of training but also with their interaction, motivation, and benefit. Similarly, students were also found to gain significantly in their overall writing performance.

Keeping in mind that the findings may only be generalizable to teachers and students in similar contexts to those who participated in this study, the following conclusions are gleaned from the research:

1. Teachers should be encouraged to go beyond the boundaries of traditional instruction by supplementing, or sometimes even replacing, the status quo with innovative strategies. Not only were the participants impressed with

the effectiveness of the training, but it also reflected positively on both their own and their students' performance.

2. Among the numerous advantages of DG that these researchers experienced firsthand is its superb potential for integrating individual and group activities to give students the opportunity to learn from one another. Peer learning and coaching were evident throughout the treatment.
3. Dictogloss is ideal for incorporating engaging follow-up activities which inform the discussion and encourage language use. Not only does this potentially promote the use of authentic exchanges, but it also actively engages the students in the teaching/learning process, which potentially fosters their expression and argumentative abilities.

The current findings are consistent with those of previous research (e.g., Prince, 2013; Purwaningsih & Kurniasih, 2014; Smith, 2012). Dictogloss was found to promote engaged, active learning as learners worked to reconstruct text and negotiate meaning, both individually and cooperatively, often unconsciously overcoming their reluctance to speak and interact (even when resorting to L1). Dictogloss was also found to lend itself rather readily to different proficiency levels, as learners shared knowledge and collaborated to reconstruct texts. In a word, through dictogloss, the teacher may observe, teach and assess, as learners cooperate to improve their language proficiency.

As the findings revealed a significant effect for dictogloss, on both teachers' instruction and students' written performance, it is recommended that Jordanian EFL teachers be trained to incorporate DG into their instruction. However, further research may need to be conducted on larger samples, incorporating variables such as gender, proficiency level, and learning styles on both writing and other language skills, before definitive conclusions can be drawn. Furthermore, this research may be replicated with two rounds of (immediate and delayed) observation to measure for the long-term utility of dictogloss, which would add to the credibility of the current findings.

One final note is both caution and recommendation. Many educational innovations, in Jordan and elsewhere, have not come into fruition not for lack of diligence and commitment but rather of sustainability and follow-up. The provision of theory is far from adequate, and the professional development of teachers needs to account for both content knowledge and opportunities for hands-on learning for teachers to integrate these innovations into their classroom instruction.

Curricular reform and innovation need to target both teachers' knowledge and skill to improve classroom practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001) and have a sustainable effect on the quality of language education. Furthermore, continuous, on-site follow-up is another catalyst for success, as teachers gain mastery of their profession (Bitan-Friedlander, Dreyfus & Milgrom, 2004; Corcoran, 1995; Hayes, 2000).

Endnote

¹ This manuscript is extracted from the first author's doctoral dissertation per the regulations in force at Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.

² For a copy of the instruments of the research, contact the corresponding author at rubab@yu.edu.jo.

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