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Introducing Theme-Based Listening Materials into English Writing: Focusing on Learner Affectivity

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Recently, in the global society the focus in foreign language education has tended to be on productive skills from elementary school through university. It is natural that when we try to communicate with other people in English, in addition to receptive skills (input), productive skills (output) are also important to convey our feelings and thoughts to others. 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 using listening materials in a writing class as one of the useful 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 learners 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 learners 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 learners 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. Uenishi (2017) investigated Japanese university learners' perception of English writing with a focus on the effects of using listening materials in a writing class and learners' enjoyment of writing. As a result, it was shown that the writing method had a strong correlation with elements of perceived English ability (vocabulary, listening, English expressions).

In the present research, the author integrated the data obtained based on writing practice for a couple of years, analyzed and discussed the results, like the previous research. The author expected the method to have a positive effect on learners' affective aspects related to writing, Specifically, 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 learners?
(2) Is there a relationship between learners' perception of effects on writing through listening and their affective aspects in class?
(3) Is there a relationship between learners' perception of listening materials and their affective aspects in class?
(4) How do the learners feel about the writing class and English ability improvement?

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 learners seem to understand the content and be motivated to write 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 learners 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 learners 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; given that learners 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, learners are required to bring their dictionaries to class every lesson. After checking and memorizing the meanings of the words / phrases, 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 learners in the class confirm the answers for the blanks. Then, the textbook is used for learners to learn how to write essays and to practice writing.

The aforementioned procedure is used every week, and in one 90-minute lesson learners do not have enough time to write an essay even though they can practice simple writing. Therefore, learners are assigned to write one essay every four lessons based upon each of the three listening topics. For example, after the first theme 'Honing conversation 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 learners 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. Learners 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 226 freshmen from the Faculties of Education, Letters, Law, Science, Applied Biological Science, Integrated Arts and Sciences, and Informatics and Data Science from 2015 through 2018.

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

Category	Classification	Item	Cronbach's α
C1	Usefulness of listening materials	3, 4, 5	.816
C2	Effect on writing	8, 9, 10,11	.825
C3	Essay writing	12, 13, 14	.764
C4	Peer review	15, 16, 17, 18	.839
C5	Enjoyment of writing class	1, 7, 12, 15	.774
C6	Attitudes toward writing	19, 20, 21, 22	.876
C7	Topics	23, 24, 25, 26	.843

The learners' average TOEIC test score was 504 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.

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 .876 to .764 (Table 1); therefore, the reliability of scales are all considered acceptable in this paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question (1)

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

TABLE 2 Descriptive Analysis of Each Item

Item	*M*	*SD*	*N*	Item	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Q1	4.29	1	226	Q14	4.60	1.01	226
Q2	4.83	0.93	226	Q15	4.25	1	226
Q3	4.60	0.86	226	Q16	4.43	1.01	226
Q4	4.66	0.95	226	Q17	4.38	1.03	226
Q5	4.63	1.11	226	Q18	3.82	1.03	226
Q6	4.14	0.96	226	Q19	4.20	1	226
Q7	4.30	0.99	226	Q20	4.5	0.99	226
Q8	4.33	0.94	226	Q21	3.87	1.01	226
Q9	4.09	1.03	226	Q22	3.83	1.05	226
Q10	3.85	1.06	226	Q23	4.48	1.00	226
Q11	3.91	0.95	226	Q24	4.44	1	226
Q12	4.14	1.08	226	Q25	4.71	1.05	226
Q13	4.85	0.89	226	Q26	4.49	1	226

First, describing the items related to listening materials, on the whole the materials used in the writing class were received favorably by learners (Table 2). Specifically, Questions 3, 4, 5 and 13 show the very high numerical values, M=4.60, 4.66, 4.63 and 4.85, respectively. Furthermore, regarding positive and negative responses, Table 3 shows that over 90% of the learners felt that it was useful to improve listening ability (Q3), and 88% of them responded positively to the introduced listening materials (Q4 & Q5). This implies that introducing listening materials and tasks is very useful to enrich vocabulary and increase English expressions. However, regarding Q2 (Difficulty in listening), more than 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.

Next, it was asked whether the introduced specific topics were suitable for the writing tasks. It was found that more than 80% of the learners felt positive about the introduced topics (M=4.48). The numerical values of those topics are: Honing conversation skills (M=4.44), Animal companions (M=4.71), Money and happiness (M=4.49); all topics were received favorably by more than 80% of the learners. In particular, the topics 'Money and happiness' and 'Animal companions' were received favorably by about 87% of them (Table 3). This implies that it is important for the teacher 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 of Each Item (%)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Agree	81.9	93	92.5	88.1	88.5	79.7	82.4	85	68.7	62.6	70.5	71.4	93
Disagree	17.6	7	7	11.5	11	19.8	17.2	14.5	30.8	37	29.1	28.2	7
Item	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Agree	86.3	77.5	82.4	80.6	62.6	78.9	84.6	68.3	61.7	83.3	82.4	86.8	87.2
Disagree	13.2	22	17.2	18.9	32	20.7	15	31.3	37.9	16.3	17.2	12.8	12.3

Furthermore, learners' perception of the writing class which uses listening materials is described. On the whole, learners 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=4.30),
Q8: It is effective to improve writing ability (M=4.33),
Q9: It has become easier to write the content by using the listening materials (M=4.09),
Q10: Using listening materials motivated me to write in English (M=3.85),
and Q11: Writing by use of listening materials motivated me to study English (M=3.91).

The results can mean that learners thought the writing class to be useful. Especially, Table 3 shows that the learners feel quite positive toward the listening materials introduced in class, and that they feel it was an effective way of developing writing ability.

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

Research Question (2)

In this section, based on Research Question 2, the relationship between learners' perception of efficacy of writing through listening and their affective aspects in class is analyzed and discussed, using the Pearson product-moment.

First, as shown in Table 5, there was a moderate correlation between learner perception of efficacy on writing through listening and their perceived English ability (vocabulary/listening/expressions) (r=.58). Also, it was found that there was a moderate correlation between learners' perception of effects on writing through listening and perception of writing essays/peer review (r=.55; r=.52, respectively). Moreover, their perception of efficacy on writing through listening had a moderate correlation with enjoyment of the writing class (r=.64).

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

TABLE 4 Descriptive Analysis (Categories)

	M	*SD*	*N*
C1	4.63	.79	226
C2	4.03	.81	226
C3	4.53	.82	226
C4	4.22	.84	226
C5	4.25	.79	226
C6	4.10	.86	226
C7	4.55	.85	226

Furthermore, regarding enjoyment of writing through listening, it was found that there was a strong correlation between learners' perception of enjoyment of the writing class through listening and perception of writing essays / attitudes toward writing (r=.78; r=.70, respectively). Also, there was a moderate correlation between learner perception of enjoyment of the writing class through listening and their perceived peer review (r=.62). Moreover, their perception of efficacy on writing through listening had a moderate correlation with enjoyment of the writing class (r=.64).

The above-mentioned results suggest that it is important for learners to take the writing class in English with pleasure, using listening materials. That is to say, there is a possibility that enjoying learning English writing through listening in class leads to positive attitudes toward various writing activities, more confidence in writing, and enhancement of motivation about English writing.

TABLE 5 Correlative Relationship between Categories

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
C1	1	0.58**	0.54**	0.37**	0.49**	0.52**	0.46**
C2		1	0.55**	0.52**	0.64**	0.67**	0.59**
C3			1	0.51*	0.78**	0.69**	0.58*
C4				1	0.62**	0.64**	0.44**
C5					1	0.70**	0.66**
C6						1	0.56**
C7							1

****: p<.01; *: p<.05**

Research Question (3)

In this section, Research Question (3): "Is there a relationship between learners' perception of listening materials and their affective aspects in class?" is discussed, referring to Table 5.

First, as described in Table 5, there was a moderate correlation between learners' perception of listening materials and the effects on writing / attitudes toward writing through listening (r=.58; r=.52, respectively). It is considered that introducing listening materials has made learners aware of the improvement of listening ability and have positive attitudes toward writing. Also, it was found that learners' perception of listening materials had a moderate correlation with essay writing (r=.54). 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 essay writing.

Next, it was shown that learners' perception of listening materials had a moderate correlation with enjoyment of writing class through listening (r=.49). This implies that listening introduced in the writing class contributed to the learners' enjoyment of the class. As a result, it might be said that they are motivated about English writing and come to like writing essays.

Also, regarding the specific listening topics, as described in Research Question (1), all the topics offered in the writing class were received favorably and they have made the writing class more enjoyable. It was found that there was a moderate correlation between learners' perceived listening topics and enjoyment of the writing class / attitudes toward writing (r=.66, r=.56, respectively). Furthermore, the listening topics had a moderate correlation with essay writing and peer review (r=.58, r=.44, respectively). This shows that there is a possibility that making

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good use of listening materials (topics) positively in writing has led to learners' increased writing motivation and enhancement of enthusiasm / pleasure about writing English passages.

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
Easy to write an essay using listening materials	31
Useful for writing improvement	12
Interesting topics for writing	7
Could enjoy writing an essay	3
Very good method (writing through listening)	2

TABLE 8 Free Description: English Ability Improvement

Responses	N
Could enrich vocabulary	16
Improved writing ability	15
Improved listening ability	13
Could enjoy English writing	5
Improved comprehensive English ability	2

First, regarding Essay writing by use of listening materials, the No.1 response was "It was / became easy to write an essay by using listening materials" (31 learners). Also, there were 12 learners who wrote the following comment: "It was useful for writing improvement." Further, seven learners commented on the topics used in class as follows: "I found the listening topics were interesting for writing." Two learners highly rated this method used in writing: writing through listening.

Then, with regard to English ability improvement, there were 16 learners who made the comment: "I could enrich my vocabulary". Moreover, the following comments: "I could improve listening ability" and "My writing ability improved" were written by 13 and 15 learners, respectively. Five learners described the writing class as follows: "I could enjoy writing classes." 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, it is considered that the method conducted in this practical research (writing through listening) is an effective and useful way of motivating learners 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) based upon the data obtained from more than 200 respondents, and the following was clarified.

First, on the whole, the listening materials used in class were received favorably by learners. Specifically, most of the learners were found to have a positive response to the introduced listening materials. It was found that, regarding learners' perception of the writing class, they evaluated the class very positively, with over 85% 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, learners will have positive attitudes toward writing.

Next, regarding the relationship between efficacy of writing by use of listening materials and learners' affective aspects in class, the method (writing through listening) 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 can enhance their enthusiasm for writing, and develop 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.

Third, with regard to a relationship between learners' perception of listening materials and their affective aspects in class, introducing the specific listening materials into the writing class has a moderate correlation with learners' affective aspects in writing. This means that there is a possibility that making good use of listening materials can lead to learners' increased writing motivation and enhancement of enthusiasm / pleasure about writing English essays.

Lastly, future research should be done in the following areas. First, 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. Therefore, further steps are necessary for better education and research.

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APPENDIX 1

Vocabulary check sheet (sample)

No.8 Companion Animals (3)

Clues to Listening Activity (8)

□ childhood obesity （ ）
□ trauma トラウマ、心的外傷
□ autism （ ）
□ pediatrician （ ）
□ at the risk of over-generalizing （ ）
□ the pluses outweigh the negatives （ ）
□ be inclined to ~ したいと思う
□ be convinced 確信している、きっと ~ だと思う
□ empathy （ ）
□ interaction with people 人々との交流
□ make sense （ ）
□ autistic （ ）
□ motivational factor （ ）

Write English words twice and the Japanese meaning once

English	English	Japanese

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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 came to have developed confidence about writing in English through this class.
22 I came to like writing in English through this class better.
23 n the whole, the listening materials used in class were good for writing.
24 I enjoyed learning the following topic: Honing conversation skills.
25 I enjoyed learning the following topic :Animal companions
26 I enjoyed learning the following topic: Money and happiness
27 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)