

The effect of Task Repetition with Dictation Intervention on the Development of Chinese University Minority EFL Students' Spoken English: A Case Study of Honghe University in Yunnan Province

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Abstract

The current paper shows and discusses the findings of a quasi-experimental study with a group of first-year minority students (N=12) at Honghe University in Yunnan province, China, which investigated the application of TR with post-task intervention (dictation) on minority university students' spoken English fluency. In this regard, a speaking practice (4/3/2 technique) with dictation intervention including 16 monologue topics, a pre-test and a post-test were conducted to explore the development of the minority students' spoken English fluency under the TR with dictation intervention. Also, a focus-group discussion was adopted to explore the effects of TR with dictation intervention on the improvement of the spoken fluency from the students' perspectives. The results show that the students' spoken fluency was developed through the calculation of four variables, including the mean length of the run (MLR), phonation time ratio (PTR), average pause length (ALP) and repair per 100 syllables (RI00).

Besides, the results of the focus-group discussion reveal that the students' spoken fluency was enhanced from different aspects, such as the improvement of confidence and interests, the content or topic familiarity, the cultivation of sense of language, the development of organization skill, logicity and coherence and the building of linguistic skills though self-diagnostic with dictation; also, these aspects affected the improvement of the students' spoken fluency in this study. Finally, related pedagogical implications and recommendations for the future study are discussed at the end of this paper.

Key words: task repetition (TR) with dictation intervention; speaking fluency; Chinese minority university students

Introduction

For Chinese educators, teachers and students, the English teaching and learning is always an important and difficult problem. In this regard, Yang (2005) and Gil (2006) claimed that the situation of English learning in today's China is neglected by neither Chinese scholars nor Western scholars. In particular, ethnic minorities have been providing with sufficient material in English language teaching and learning, concerning social equity. Majority of the ethnic minority groups own their mother tongues (native language) or dialects; accordingly, they acquire Chinese as a second language and English as a foreign or the third language. Moreover, it is of great significance for the members of ethnic minorities to manage personal trilingualism in order to participate in international communication under a background of globalization. In this regard, the personal trilingualism refers to their L1 (native language, mother tongue or dialect), L2 (Putonghua: the standard national language of China) and L3 (English: the international language). Gao stated that "... for ethnic minorities, the chance to obtain linguistic skills represents an important opportunity for social advancement and economic development" (Gao, 2011, p.158).

The English learning ability of minority students is relatively lower than Han students. Olan (2007) investigated the situation of minority university students at the most famous university in Yunnan province, and the results showed that, compared with Han Chinese students, nearly 63% of the ethnic minority students had a lower English competence before they entered the university. Ma (2006) stated that the English educational issue of minority learners in Yunnan province where there is a continuously significant concern in both administrative and academic domains. Consequently, the situation of English teaching and learning for ethnic minority university students in Yunnan province shows a great representativeness, concerning either social or academic significance. Yang (2005) stated that for most ethnic minority students, they apply their second language (Putonghua) as a medium to learn a third language (English) which may become a hinder in their English learning. In this study, one of the regions in Yunnan province, Honghe Hani and Yi autonomous prefecture is concerned. It is considered as the largest ethnic minority group which is taking up nearly 46% of the total number of people in this area (Ma, 2006). There are two main minority groups in Honghe, they are Hani and Yi. These minority students in primary or secondary schools who are not given much access to English learning due to the absence of educational resources. Similarly, for most of the Honghe minority students in Yunnan, English education will be accessible to them unless they plan to enter universities. Consequently, once they enter universities, they have totally different conditions of English learning and English language levels compared with the Han Chinese students.

A prominent issue lies in the EFL education at university level in minority regions is spoken English teaching, including parts of the Han students. Based on the researchers' working experience at Honghe University, in which the study was launched, a contour profile is demonstrated according to the observation and descriptions of some students. Firstly, only one semester of oral English class is included in the university syllabus in a total of four years program, little focus has been emphasized on spoken English teaching and learning.

The goal for most students is to pass the exam and obtain academic credits, and a large number of students are not able to speak English fluently for a few minutes until the day they graduate. Moreover, teacher's teaching methods and courses materials are limited under the pressure of teaching hours and pedagogical tasks, although the content of the oral English textbook is relatively abundant and diverse. In this regard, English teachers mainly pay attention to some basic types practice, such as make replacement exercises or fix sentences patterns back and forth in a few lines of conversation or dialogue in pairs. Furthermore, another common problem which prevents minority EFL learners from fluently speaking English is related to their own situation. Students have studied English extensively and may have a good knowledge of grammar, but they lack confidence in speaking English. Also, they make the same small speaking errors repeatedly, which can be the fact that their L1 or L2 interferes with the ability to make themselves understood in ways that are not obvious. The subtle and essential differences between L1 or L2 and L3 (English) have not neither been paying attention by educators nor realizing by learners themselves.

Accordingly, two research questions were produced with the intent of exploring the effects of TR (4/3/2 technique) with dictation intervention on the development of spoken English fluency of Chinese minority EFL university minority students, with a group of first-year minority students at Honghe University, they are:

1. Does TR (4/3/2 technique) with dictation intervention help to develop Chinese minority EFL university students' spoken English fluency?
2. What aspects of spoken English fluency are improved with TR with dictation intervention from Chinese minority EFL university students' perception?

In this regard, a hypothesis is produced as follows to examine the quantitative results (the pre-test and post-test) of RQ I.

Hypothesis: there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group's pre-test and post-test scores of fluency (MLR, PTR, ALP, and R100 respectively) at a significant level of .05.

Review of Literature

Speaking fluency and the measurement

Based on a broader definition, fluency is considered as similar to overall speaking proficiency. One often cited the definition of fluency that is found in Fillmore (1979)'s study which is first recorded. Four means are described which speakers can give a speech fluently, including the ability to fill time with talk, speaking with few pauses; the ability to speak coherently using 'semantically dense' sentences, with few superfluous words or fillers; knowing what to say in different contexts is the third symbol of fluency; and learners have the ability to be creative in language learning.

Several studies showed that the fluency is strongly affected by the number of syllables per second, the articulate rate, the length of speech runs, the rate of stressed syllables, as well as the use of high-rising intonation, mid-rising intonation, and mid-falling intonation. However, Kormos and Denes (2004) suggested that it is not necessary to examine fluency with an analysis of intonation. They found that the rate of stressed syllable was relatively easy to measure based on asking non-native English speakers to make narratives to fit cartoon slips. Generally, the previous study suggested that learners' oral language proficiency can be strongly reflected through the examination of fluency. Besides, it is reasonably measures learners' fluency through recording their stressed syllables rates.

This study uses a recent trend which focuses on the role of fluency in language learning, to explore how learners' fluency would be affected under TR with dictation intervention. In addition, the utterance fluency, which is regarded as the most representative measurement of fluency, was adopted in

this study. In this regard, an insight into frequency and location of pauses is considered important in measuring fluency based on different researchers. Wood (2004) states that highly fluent L2 speakers and native speakers tend to pause at sentences and clause junctures, or between non- integral components of clauses and clauses themselves. Pausing at other points within sentences gives the impression of dis-fluency. In this study, learners' speaking fluency was measured mainly according to the temporal variables in utterance fluency and the variables were calculated based on Zhu & Zhou (2014)'s formulas which were adopted from previous studies. Their study explored the spoken English fluency of Chinese high school students with mean length of runs (MLR), phonation time ratio (PTR), average length of pauses (ALP), and repairs per 100 syllables (RI00), the results showed a positive improvement with these four variables and formulas. Hence, it might be feasible in the context of Chinese EFL learners, which could speak English present fluency.

TR and spoken fluency

Task repetition (TR) is labeled as a task implementation variable that has produced a great deal of interest in the area of task-based language teaching and oral language production since 1996 when Bygate (1996) first tried to explore task repetition influence on the performance of oral narrative tasks. Manchon (2014) explored that TR has been conducted in three different types: exact task repetition, content task repetition, and procedural task repetition. In this regard, exact task repetition is related to perform the exact same task (same content and procedures) several times. Besides, content repetition is related to perform some tasks with the same content but different procedures in order to reach the communicative goal. Procedural repetition is related to perform some tasks with different content but the same procedures in order to reach the communicative goal.

The results of several studies showed the positive effect of task repetition on learners' speech production by allowing them to activate, refine, and optimize their linguistic resources for the purpose of successfully

completing a given task in line with the specific communicative demands that it entails (Lambert, Kormos & Minn, 2017), especially in the EFL context. Accordingly, in order to provide spoken fluency practice for English learners, Maurice (1983) designed the 4/3/2 technique. Nation (1989) defined the 4/3/2 technique (or activity) as “giving the same talk to three different listeners in turn, but with four minutes to give the first delivery of the talk, three minutes for the delivery of the same talk to the second listener, and two minutes for the third.” (Nation, 1989, p. 379). Hence, each speaker has to deliver the same talk three times to three different listeners with a progressive decrease in the time available for each delivery. In the process of 4/3/2 technique practice, the speakers can cultivate the ability to use certain vocabulary and grammatical constructions, which is able to accelerate recovery by lexical and syntactic priming. Nation (1989) made a comparison between the first and last speeches in the 4/3/2 tasks to explore learners' fluency, accuracy, and complexity of speeches. The results revealed that speech rate (words per minute) was improved and the number of false starts, repeated words, and hesitations (such as uh, um) was reduced. Compared with some previous studies, Arevart and Nation's study provides an example of the use of 4/3/2 technique to improve learners' oral fluency, including the effects of repetition and time pressure and a post-test to evaluate the long-term effects. In summary, most of the previous studies of fluency under 4/3/2 instruction have mostly focused on short-term effects instead of relatively longer-term development. Whereas short-term influences on fluency can be explained by planning and repetition, which enable the speaker to transfer attention and to benefit from priming, longer-term effects may require proceduralization and automatization. In this study, relative longer-term (with 15weeks) effects of 4/3/2 technique are used on the development of minority learners' spoken fluency.

TR with dictation intervention

Dictation is reconsidered to have a role in TR speaking practice because it is considered as a bridge of speaking, listening and writing for students to develop their speaking fluency.

Several researchers pointed out that there is a strong connection between listening and speaking skills, and both skills are very crucial for learners to complete the task (White, 1998; Cole et al. 2007). Similarly, Field (2008) provided a reflection to this, “it is listening which is arguably the more important since it is listening which enriches the learner's spoken competence with new syntactic, lexical, phonological and pragmatic information” (Field, 2008, p.5). In this regard, speaking skill is developed as listening is regarded as a receptive skill and speaking as productive skill. Nation (2009) also stated that dictation helps students to diagnose and correct grammatical errors; cultivates students’ ability to distinguish sounds; furthermore, learners are able to learn punctuation and develop aural comprehension.

Generally, however, no studies were investigated on the dictation as an intervention in language teaching and learning, especially combined with the effects of TR on learners’ speaking fluency. Therefore, this study conducts these two factors in the context of Chinese minority university students’ spoken English fluency teaching, which may provide a reasonable support to this issue.

Methodology

The research designs

A mix-method of a quasi-experimental research design and qualitative data analysis was conducted with a group of minority students (N=12) in Honghe University, to determine how the participants viewed the experiment and whether they agreed with the results. They were taught using the TR (4/3/2 technique) with dictation intervention, and the researcher took the role of the teacher. This group of students took the pre-test before the leading research and the post-test after the TR with dictation intervention speaking practice, and then they also participated in a focus-group discussion after the post-test to give the perception of the effects of TR with dictation on the development of fluency.

The research context

This study was launched at Honghe University. It is located in the Honghe autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, China; and it was established in 1978. In the year of 2016, HU had a student body of 16364, including 7429 ethnic minority students which took up around 45% of the total number of students at HU. There is a class of thirty-eight first-year students in the College of Foreign Language (CFL) major in English, and the participants were selected from these students in this study.

The participants

Before the study, all the existing class of thirty-eight first-year students were given a questionnaire to fill up with bio-data regarding name, age, minority groups, results of the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) and the Oral English test. Twelve students were selected based on the questionnaire. In this regard, they are ethnic minorities (group-Hani and Yi) with similar English ability. **Table I** shows the general information of these twelve students.

Table I. The general information of the students

Ethnic categories:	Hani and Yi
Sexuality:	Male: 4
	Female: 8
Age:	Between 18-21 years
Average score of the NMET	110 (150 in whole)
Average score of the Entrance Oral English Test	67 (100 in whole)

The research instruments

Three main research instruments were conducted in this study, which are illustrated in **Table 2**, and the development of each is discussed.

Table 2. Research instruments in this study

Research Questions	Instruments
RQ 1	Pre-test and post-test
	TR (4/3/2 technique) speaking practice materials
	Lesson plan
RQ 2	Focus-group discussion questions

Pre-test and post-test

The pre-test and post-test were conducted to answer RQ1. Before the main study started, students were given a monologue topic (which was included in their Oral English coursebook), and they had five minutes to prepare. In this regard, they did not be notified that it was a test, and the teacher did not provide guidance and explanation before and during the speaking. And then, they were required to speak about 4-5 minutes in turn (same time as the first round of 4/3/2 technique practice), and their speaking was recorded respectively with a recording pen. The same procedure was adopted in the post-test of the same twelve students.

TR (4/3/2 technique) speaking practice materials

All the monologue topics (16 topics) were selected from parts of students' coursebook (College Oral English I), they were used to teach students in the process of the study (including in the pre-test and post-test). 'College Oral English I' was based on College English Teaching Syllabus by Chinese Ministry of Education, and it was applied in Spoken English teaching at university level. This study focused on the monologue learning that as one of the significant parts but usually ignored by teachers and students. An example of the topics used in the TR speaking practice in this study is

showed in the **Appendix I**, including relevant vocabulary, sentences which provides reference for the students.

Lesson plan

A lesson plan was prepared for the students to apply the 4/3/2 technique with dictation intervention, including TR speaking practice with time arrangement of each step (pre-speaking, while speaking, and post-speaking), activities in each step, which was based on Nation (1989)'s framework of 4/3/2 technique.

Focus-group discussion questions

Semi-structured interview questions with four main items were conducted to answer RQ 2. These questions concluded 'the learners' attitudes toward TR', 'benefits that the learners obtain from TR', 'the learners' major change in speaking though TR', 'the effects of the teacher's support in TR' and 'the function and effect of dictation as a supplementary tool in speaking process from learners' perception'. In the process, students were asked to discuss these main questions, and the teacher could ask more detailed points (sub-questions) according to the students' talk. All questions were validated by Chinese professors at HU. The questions are indicated in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Focus-group discussion questions

Q1: "From your own experience, what is the most obvious change or improvement from 4 mins to 2 mins in the 4/3/2 technique task speaking practice?"
Q2: "Do you think that the TR help to improve your speaking ability? In what way?"
Q3: "From the very beginning to the end, any changes you have make in the whole TR speaking practice process?"
Q4: "Do you think that the dictation is useful? Especially for your speaking aspect?"

Data collection procedures

This study adopts a theoretical framework mainly including Nation's (1989&2000) 4/3/2 technique evaluation mode, and dictation as an intervention in language learning. Accordingly, a pre-test and a post-test of the group of students, TR with dictation intervention and focus-group discussion were conducted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to answer RQs.

Firstly, 12 students were randomly divided into three subgroups (a, b & c) based on Nation (1990)'s framework which stated that normally four students should be assigned in a subgroup, and the teacher can record each student's speaking clearly. Besides, they were with a face to face sittings, and three subgroups were arranged at a random time, and then they were notified to understand the process of TR (4/3/2 technique), which is three rounds for the speaker to talk repetitively at a decreased time from 4 minutes at 1st round, to 3 minutes in middle and 2 minutes for the 3rd round. Also, they were provided one monologue topic in each class; the teacher explained the topic before the practice in Chinese, including background information, new words and sentences, and students practiced with teacher-led assistance. The whole process of the students' speaking was recorded by a recording pen and monitored by the teacher. Finally, students were required to do a speech-to-text dictation every time after each class, they wrote down every single word of TR speaking per each topic from 4 minutes to 2 minutes based on the audio files (their speaking) provided by the teacher.

Besides, the group of students participated in the focus-group discussion after the post-test. Firstly, a Chinese version of the discussion questions was validated by a Chinese professor, who holds a Ph.D. degree and teaches English at HU. They were required to write down the key opinions for each question concisely in several minutes before the discussion, which could provide a clear summary of students' opinions. Meanwhile, the researcher also took notes on each question based on the students' discussion. The students' discussion was recorded with a recording pen.

Data analysis

The analysis of the results of TR speaking practice with dictation intervention was according to the records of the group of students' pre-test and post-test. Firstly, the students' recording was saved as the sound file with "16 bits, single track". For these documents (wave file), a software named Adobe Audio Pro 2.0 (2017) picked up the pause time/times, sample length and length of pause according to the wave pattern. And then the number of syllables, number of repairs, and pause times/time of each student in the group were accounted for by both software and manual annotation of the researcher. Furthermore, collated data (including the numbers of syllables, numbers of repairs, pauses times/time, phonation time) were submitted into four formulas (see **Table 4**) based on Zhu & Zhou (2014) to calculate the scores of each fluency variable of each student, including mean length of runs (MLR), phonation time ratio (PTR), average length of pauses (ALP) and repairs per 100 syllables (RI00).

Table 4. The criteria of fluency measurements in this study.

The Temporal Variables in Utterance Fluency	Computing Method
MLR (mean length of runs)	sample syllables / total pauses times
PTR (phonational time ratio)	total amount of time of articulation / total amount of time required to produce a sample
ALP (average length of pauses)	total pause time / total pauses times
RI00 (repair per 100 syllables)	(number of repairs / sample syllables) * 100

Finally, the statistical analysis was performed with Excel and SPSS (HU) to explore the development of the students' spoken English fluency under the TR with dictation intervention in this study.

Also, the analysis of the results of the focus-group discussion is based on the students' discussion recordings. Firstly, students' discussion recordings (in Chinese) was listened carefully and combined with their notes on the manuscripts, and the key words of each question were summarized and categorized based on the similarities of students' perception. In this regard, the recordings, summary of students' discussion and manuscripts were given to a colleague to validate. Finally, the classifications of the keywords in Chinese version and the relevant quotations of the students which were to be used was translated into English, and both the Chinese and English versions were checked and validated by a colleague regarding the meaning and expression.

Research Findings and Discussion

Both the qualitative and quantitative results of the research findings for research questions are illustrated and discussed in this section, including the development of the students' spoken English fluency (RQ 1) and the effects of TR with dictation intervention from learners' perspectives (RQ 2).

1. The development of the students' spoken English fluency

The results of the Hypothesis showed a significant development of the students' spoken fluency under TR with dictation intervention. Firstly, the results of the HI (see **Table 5**) interestingly reveals a significant difference between pre-test and post-test fluency scores of the group students', respectively of MLR, $p = .000$; PTR, $p = .000$; ALP, $p = .012$ and RI00 $p = .001$.

Table 5: The Pre-test and Post-test Paired Samples T-test

The minority group of students (N=12)			
Variable	M	SD	t
MLR	-5.62833	2.40597	-8.104**
PTR	-.16000	.07508	-.7383**
ALP	.36083	.41375	3.021*
RI00	.87083	.66469	4.538**

Note: * $p < 0.05$

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Accordingly, the results suggest that the TR (4/3/2 technique) with dictation intervention practice enhanced the students' spoken English fluency as the four variables (MLR, PTR, ALP and R 100) are related to the spoken English fluency in this study.

The results reflect several previous studies (Bygate, 2001; Lynch and Maclean, 2000; Hawkes, 2012), which document the positive effects of TR on learners' spoken output. For instance, Bygate (2001) has strongly suggested that TR has a valuable influence on language performance, as the repeated performance producing a more syntactic engagement. Also, Sheppard (2006, cited in Ellis 2009) claimed that task repetition accompanied by either input or feedback positively affects the complexity, accuracy, and fluency in different degrees. In this study, dictation as an intervention undoubtedly provides input or feedback to learners (such as linguistic skills they gained from dictation), which is combined with TR to facilitate the development of speaking fluency. In this study, as the basis of these four variables, the pauses are revealed to be decreased. For instance, the number of syllables of the student D's pre-test was 329, but it was increased to 622 in the post-test; besides, the length of pauses time of student F was also shortened from 112.103s to 39.289s; similarly, the number of her pause times was reduced from 51 to 37. Other students (E, F, K, L etc.) also presented a noticeable decrease in the pause times. Accordingly, the students reduced the length of pauses, decreased the number of pauses or increased

the length of speech between pauses with the development of the phonation time ratio in a speech, which are in line with the findings of several previous studies (De Jong & Perfetti, 2011; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011; Iwashita et al., 2008).

II. The effects of TR with dictation on the students' spoken fluency

The results of the qualitative data according to the focus-group discussion questions revealed that the students' spoken English fluency was improved on different aspects under the TR with dictation intervention, which is in line with the statements of Lambert, Kormos & Minn (2017), TR has positive effects on the development of learners' spoken production through allowing them to activate, refine, and optimize their linguistic resources for the purpose of successfully completing a given task in line with the specific communicative demands that it entails. In this study, the results show that the students' spoken fluency was enhanced, including the improvement of confidence and interests, the familiarity of contents and topics, the cultivation of sense of language, the development of organization skill, logicity and coherence, the acquiring of linguistic skills though self-diagnostic with dictation, the improvement of comprehensible language abilities, including the speaking ability through dictation. Accordingly, it revealed that the students' spoken fluency was developed with the change of these aspects. Also, it showed that the dictation has positive effects on the development of the students' speaking ability, in terms of the cultivation of linguistic skills and comprehensible language abilities.

Firstly, this study revealed minority students' confidence in English speaking was developed. They lacked self-confidence in terms of pronunciation, background information or vocabulary, but it turns out that this kind of TR provide them with exposure to practice and had the confidence to speak. It gives the same finding along with many previous studies showing a positive relationship between self-confidence and success. High confidence increases the intensity of thoughts and feelings of learners that can improve language performance. In this regard, this study provided another support to previous studies (Hanton, Mellalieu & Hall, 2003).

Also, this study showed that spoken fluency was improved if students became familiar with the content of the topic. It supported some findings of previous studies, in terms of the effects of content familiarity on language fluency. For instance, Gavin and Huang (2018)'s study which was conducted to explore the relationship between content familiarity and L2 fluency, and the results demonstrated that second language (L2) fluency is influenced by pre-task planning and content familiarity. In this regard, content familiarity is found to enhance fluency. Accordingly, this study provided another support to this point. Also, when the minority EFL students were asked to repeat the monologue task, they were likely to get improvements in fluency. It supported Bygate's (2001) opinion which claimed that in the first task performance, language learners can familiarize themselves with the content to be produced; and later in the second performance of the task, they have ample attentional resources to focus on the selecting and editing of the appropriate language, which in turn might result in better language output. In this study, task repetition plays a critical role in providing the students with in-built planning opportunity in the speaking process. In this study, the topic familiarity with speaking fluency is also revealed. It demonstrated the connection between topic familiarity and speaking fluency, which showed that topic familiarity influences the development of fluency. It is in line with Chang (2011) and Robinson (2001) other studies, which indicates a positive effect of topic familiarity on promoting fluency, and the results of the experiment revealed that participants' performance is more considerably fluent in the 'familiar topic' task. Ellis (2003) also argued that familiarity of topic promoted performance in terms of fluency. The findings of this study provided more evidence from the minority students' perspectives to support the previous studies.

Also, this study found out that the sense of language is another change of learners in the TR speaking practice. According to the students' perceptions, it is difficult to describe how and when the language sensibility has been cultivated, as it is an unconscious process. Student A's idea is in line with Student D's, "throughout the process of practice; I think that we could gain the sense of language if we practice more." At this point, it is a reaction

to Cetin (2015) idea that the sense of language can be cultivated by speaking continuously, and it comes from language practice and guides the practice in return. The students' speaking become more fluently with the formation of language sensibility.

Moreover, this study also revealed that the students gained organizational skills and the cultivate ability of logicity and coherence through TR speaking practice, which contributed to the improvement of spoken fluency. In the process of preparation, students acquired the usage of connectives or conjunctions, because they could make vocabulary and sentences structures adjust to their speaking over time with repetitions to make their speaking more coherently or logically. This is following Robert (1998) cited in Field (2008) finding that connectives can be used to indicate the logical relations between words, phrases, and sentences in compositions so that the whole text can be more coherent. In this study, learner's logical ability is improved by using connectives. Coincidentally, it is a reaction to Robert's view. Also, students' logicity and coherence are enhanced through the TR practice method, which reacts on the improvement of students' speaking fluency. The organization of ideas affects the spoken English fluency and coherence. In this regard, speaking becomes more fluently if ideas are organized logically. Accordingly, logical organization is associated with fluency and coherence in the speaking assessment, and it also provided the rationale to evaluate learner's speaking fluency (Harman, 1986 in Pinto, 1998).

In addition, the dictation as an intervention in this study helped improving the students' spoken English fluency, in terms of the cultivation of linguistic skills and comprehensible language abilities. First, the students' linguistic skills were developed through dictation with checking vacancy and holes by themselves in this study, which cultivated a comprehensible linguistic skill, in terms of vocabulary, sentences, and grammatical issues. In this regard, the students could find out the missing words from their speaking though the speech-to-text dictation, and then they recalled and rechecked the words or phrases to fill vacancies. For instance, student D's

manuscript (see Appendix 2) shows the process of the dictation, she marked the missing words or unsure points of her speaking through listening, which might help her to cultivate the ability of finding mistakes or filling holes in the language learning process. Like Nation (2009)'s research showed that learners can diagnose and modify grammatical mistakes. And then, the accumulation of basic language helped to facilitate the development of speaking skills as well. It is regarded as a good circulation in English language learning by Student D in this study. At this point, it reflected the idea of Stansfield (1985, in Davis and Rinvolutri, 2002). Dictation in English provides high relevance to language proficiency. Some teachers have started to apply speech dictation to English language teaching rather than simple words dictation, and the results showed that "dictation enlarges a student's vocabulary and fills his mind with a good standard of speech" (Natalicio, 1965, in Semin, 2013, p.139).

At last, for most of the students in this study, they could not recognize the words in speaking or listening in the previous learning experience. One reason for this failure might be the fact that Chinese learners are more accustomed to reading the letters visually than to listening to the sounds auditorily, in comprehending the sentences. It reacted Sun (2009)'s study, which suggested that learners can easily understand the sentences if the general visual images of the content are shown. Besides, Hirokazu (2014) study might provide evidence at this point. He concluded that learners' ability to listening is improved after given dictation practice according to a study on 26 high school students in Japan. On the whole, based on the views of this study and other similar studies, listening is described as an approach to teaching listening that strikes a balance between attention to form and attention to meaning, and tries to achieve a focus on sound and word recognition by adapting the dictation approach. Nation (2009) proposition stated that the improvement of speaking ability is connected with listening in English education. That is, listening helps learners to "distinguish sounds and develop aural comprehension" (Nation, 2009, p.49). This indicates that comprehensible listening will cultivate learners' ability to distinguish sounds and learning accurate punctuation. This study

revealed that the students' spoken English fluency can be improved with dictation as an intervention.

Summary

A quasi-experimental study was used to explore the development of Chinese minority university EFL students' fluency in spoken English under the using of TR with dictation intervention at HU, regarding the development of MLR, PTR, ALP and R100 of fluency. The results showed that there is a significant development in English speaking fluency of students under the TR with dictation intervention. Also, it revealed that TR with dictation intervention has positive influence on the improvement of the students' spoken English on different aspects, such as learners' confidence, sense of achievement or satisfaction, the reduction of disfluent symbols, the cultivation of language sense, the development of linguistic abilities (vocabulary use, organizational skill, coherence or logic ability), etc. Generally, TR and dictation as a post intervention acted together on the development of learners' spoken English fluency, which showed a connection of dictation activity and speaking ability in EFL learning and teaching.

Implications of the Study

Accordingly, several related pedagogical implications can be produced. Firstly, the results showed that 4/3/2 technique was appropriate in enhancing the minority students' English spoken fluency in this study. In the future, different kinds of TR can be used to apply to develop the spoken English proficiency of the students in the context of minority areas. Besides, English teachers should be careful in selecting tasks in different teaching contexts because different types of tasks may provide the different results in real learning and teaching situation. Furthermore, dictation was applied after the 4/3/2 repetition task each time as a follow-up intervention in this study, it revealed a listening deficiency of the students and helped to explain why they were able to understand their speech rather than native speakers' speeches to a certain degree. Accordingly, teachers should encourage students

to exposure to more active or native-like communication by listening devices; also, students should be required to listen and memorize more regular sentences, excellent dialogues, paragraphs in listening, what may develop learners' thinking and expression competence, and they can speak naturally if they persist in these practices and get into the habit. Generally, learners can gain immediate feedback on the nature of their linguistic performance, and they can compare their output with the original text. The students may enjoy if dictation is reasonably lined to English language lessons, and it helps to develop four language skills in an integrative way. In addition, this study found a correlation between dictation and the development of learners' spoken fluency. This correlation should be explored further. In particular, it will be interesting to investigate how fluency is affected by the dictation more directly. For instance, an experiment can be given with two groups (an experimental and a control group), to explore the development of learners' speaking skills based on the improvement of their listening and writing ability.

The Limitations of the Study

The predominant limitation of this study is a small size of the research sample because the main goal of this study is to analyze and qualitatively discuss the influence of TR with dictation intervention on the Chinese minority university students' spoken English fluency. Also, the relatively lower English spoken competence of the students may not be able to generalize the whole situation of spoken English learning and teaching contexts.

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Appendix I

Topic 9.

Describe one of your favorite form of transportation. You should say:

What it is;

How often you use it;

What the benefits are;

And predict how it will change in the future.

Vocabulary

The form of transportation

walking trolleybus tram

aeroplane ferry boat maglev (magnetically levitated train) taxi/cab coach
subway/underground

train motorbike/motorcycle electric motor car

Sentences

The features of different forms of transportation

1. Riding a bike offers personal mobility and freedom.
2. Riding a bike, you needn't worry about looking for a parking place.
3. Besides individual health benefits, riding a bike has lots of strong points. Best of all, it will contribute to reducing air and noise pollution, reducing energy consumption, and ultimately helping save the environment.
4. A private vehicle provides the rider with more mobility, comfort and privacy.
5. The subway is obviously the fastest and safest form of commuting traffic.
6. Unlike a plane, the train's soft seats and berths are more comfortable, as well as roomier. Adjustable footrests, tables and chair recliners are all within easy reach.
7. Planes are known for long security lines and strict rules for carry-on items. Trains, however, have every short line.

The benefits of public transportation

1. To ensure safety
2. To save money
3. To ease traffic congestion
4. To improve air quality
5. To reduce energy consumption

