The International Journal of Language Studies
2025, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 32–41
Journal page: https://ijlangstudies.org/index.php/home
DOI: https://doi.org/10.60087/ijls.v2.n4.004
ISSN 3078-2244

Research Article

Reconceptualizing Dictation-Based Listening for Young EFL Learners: A Cognitive–Phonological Perspective

Kim Anh, Huynh Thi[1]

[1] Hoa Sen University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

Dictation has been viewed as a mechanical for a long time, accuracy-oriented classroom activity, and as such, it has received limited attention in communicative approaches to English language teaching. However, researchers and practitioners have begun to reconsider dictation as a form of listening practice, particularly in relation to bottom-up processing and phonological awareness. In spite of this new interest, little theorizing has been done on dictation-based listening among young EFL learners, particularly regarding the developmental nature of learners.

This paper aims to explore dictation-based listening for young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) from a cognitive–phonological perspective, adopting the conceptualist perspective rather than an empirically designed study to explore how dictation activities can facilitate listening comprehension through the involvement of processes such as phonological decoding, attention, working memory, and sound-meaning mapping. It also argues that dictation becomes pedagogically meaningful only when tasks are developmentally calibrated and appropriately scaffolded.

As a conceptual contribution, the paper offers a theoretically grounded reconsideration of dictation within EFL listening instruction. It discusses implications for the design of developmentally appropriate dictation tasks and suggests directions for future empirical research, including investigations into technology- and AI-assisted dictation for young EFL learners.

Keywords

dictation-based listening; cognitive processing; phonological awareness; young EFL learners; listening comprehension; de-velopmental pedagogy; English as a foreign language

1. Introduction

Listening comprehension is commonly known to be one of the most complex skills among English as a foreign language

*Corresponding author: Kim Anh,, Huynh Thi

Email addresses:

addresses:vunguyenanh1210@gmail.com (Kim Anh,, Huynh Thi)

Received: 05/10/2025; **Accepted:** 08/11/2025; **Published:** 25/12/2025

(EFL) learners, especially children and adolescents [1,2]. Compared to reading, spoken language occurs in real-time, and the learner cannot regulate the speed of the input. Due to this, EFL learners have to learn to listen to the sounds and signals at the same time and to divide the continuous speech into segments, to temporarily store linguistic information and combine it with the preexisting one to create meaning [1,3]. These pressures are compounded by poor attentional control, the development of working memory capacity, and the emergence of phonological representations in young learners [3,4].

In EFL contexts, listening difficulties among young learners are frequently associated with problems at the perceptual and phonological levels rather than with a lack of general comprehension strategies. Learners often struggle to discriminate unfamiliar sounds, identify word boundaries in connected speech, and map spoken forms onto lexical representations [1,3]. These difficulties can exist in scenarios in which learners are exposed to communicative and meaning-based classroom practices, implying that global knowledge can play no role in the process of developing the practical listening skills.

To deal with these concerns, the present EFL pedagogy has laid more stress on the communicative and learner-centered methodology, which emphasizes interaction, fluency, and meaning-oriented interaction [7]. In these strategies, the listening activities may be set to enhance gist meaning, inference, and higher-level processing. Even though these practices have led to more interactive classrooms, they can offer little help to learners who have continued problems with decoding spoken language at the phonological level [1,2]. Consequently, a significant number of young EFL students keep facing challenges during speech segmentation and sound-word mapping, which may impede the future process of listening development.

The dictation was traditionally used in language classrooms as a method to test the accuracy of spelling, the level of grammar, or the awareness of linguistic structure. With time, dictation came to be linked to controlled input and accuracy-based teaching and was, as such, considered less in line with communicative and learner-centered pedagogies [7]. Consequently, dictation has often been marginalized in EFL listening instruction or retained only as a supplementary classroom activity.

More recently, however, research on listening comprehension has begun to challenge this marginalization. Cognitive and metacognitive approaches to studies have focused on highlighting that successful listening is characterized by active handling of both meaning and language structure [1, 2, 6]. In this view, those activities which focus the attention of the learners on phonological detail and demand attentive processing of the spoken input can be supportive in the development of listening. When dictation-based exercises are modeled as listening-oriented task as opposed to assessment techniques, the latter seem to involve learners in intensive perceptual processing and short-term information storage of which listening comprehension involves both[1,3].

In spite of this new impetus, dictation-based listening is still underdeveloped in the literature conceptually. A lot of the literature still views dictation as a classroom activity, with little theoretical analysis on what cognitive and phonological processes it can trigger. This specified gap is particularly pronounced in the case of the research studies on the topic of young EFL students, whose developmental aspects cannot be compared to those of adult students, and this should be seriously considered when creating the listening exercises [4].

Against this background, this paper reconceptualizes dictation-based listening for young EFL learners from a cognitive–phonological perspective. Rather than evaluating dictation in terms of effectiveness outcomes, the paper seeks to clarify how dictation-based listening may engage bottom-up processing, attention, working memory, and phonological noticing in developmentally appropriate ways [1,2,5,6]. Figure 1 presents an overview of the conceptual relationships examined in this paper and serves as a framework for the subsequent analysis.

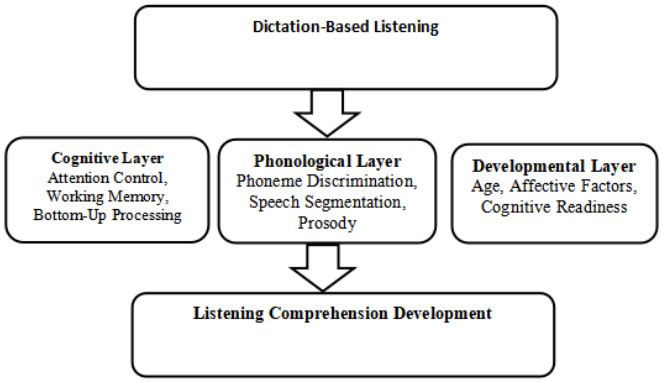

Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of dictation-based listening for young EFL learners.*

2. Reconceptualizing Dictation-Based Listening for Young EFL Learners

2.1. Dictation in EFL Listening: From Technique to Listening Task

Dictation has a long history in foreign language teaching and has commonly been used as a classroom technique to check spelling accuracy, grammatical awareness, and learners' attention to linguistic form. In many instructional traditions, dictation involved controlled input and required learners to

reproduce spoken language in written form with a strong emphasis on accuracy. In this framing, dictation was normally understood as an isolated classroom process instead of a section of the listening development. With the increase of the role of the learner-centered orientation and communicative orientation in the pedagogy of EFL, the focus on the instructional priorities changed in a way so that it began to be more oriented towards interaction, fluency, and meaning-based engagement [7]. In these pedagogical settings, dictation used to be viewed as being less consistent with classroom objectives that highlight spontaneous communication and learner agency. As a result, dictation was used more selectively and placed as an additional activity, or not included in the instruction of listening. This marginalization, however, was heavily informed by a very small conceptualization of dictation as an accuracy-based activity. Dictation itself was hardly studied in terms of its relations to listening comprehension processes or placed in theoretical frameworks of listening development. Therefore, its possible role in listening pedagogy, especially with learners with perceptual and phonological challenges, was underresearched.

From a listening perspective, dictation requires learners to attend carefully to spoken input, segment the speech stream, and retain linguistic information long enough to reconstruct it in written form. These requirements are also consistent with those processes of core listening found in cognitive models of listening comprehension, such as bottom-up decoding, attention control, and temporary storage of information [1,3]. Under this perspective, dictation may not be simply considered as a method of testing but as a listening-based activity that externalizes the listening processes and renders them pedagogically manipulable. This reconceptualization is particularly applicable to young EFL learners. The study of listening development indicates that a significant proportion of young learners are found to be in difficulty at the phonological and perceptual stages of listening, such as the identification of word boundaries or recognition of reduced forms in linked speech [1, 3, 4]. The task of listening, which involves paying special attention to phonological form, might thus serve a supportive purpose in solving these difficulties. When planned to take developmental implications into consideration, dictation-based listening provides a systematic environment where learners are able to improve their interaction with spoken language to a degree of mental challenge that is manageable. The reconceptualization of dictation as a listening strategy instead of a mechanical one creates more pedagogic flexibility. The input length, speech rate, repetition, and instructions support variables can be manipulated to match the age, proficiency, and readiness of learners. The given point of view preconditions a more principled interpretation of the dictation-based listening and offers a base where one can consider its cognitive and phonological processes in later parts.

2.2. The Re-emergence of Dictation in Listening Research

Over the past two decades, listening comprehension research has been focusing more and more on the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of listening. Rather than treating listening as passive reception of meaning, contemporary models conceptualize listening as an active process involving the interaction of acoustic input, linguistic knowledge, and cognitive resources such as attention and working memory [1,2]. This change has given rise to a new focus on instructional methods that involve the learner getting close to the perceptual requirements of the spoken language.

Within this evolving research landscape, dictation has begun to reappear as a listening-related activity with potential pedagogical value. Studies grounded in cognitive perspectives suggest that activities requiring learners to reconstruct spoken input may promote careful listening and heightened awareness of linguistic form [1,3]. In contrast to the global comprehension tasks within which learners are expected to rely on inferential context, the dictation-based tasks involve a long-term focus on the speech signal per se, which predicts the bottom-up processing of the listening and foresight.

Importantly, the renewed interest in dictation does not represent a return to traditional, unmediated dictation practices. The new attraction to dictation is not a revival of old and untamed dictation. The modern discourse lays stress on the importance of task design and instructional mediation in determining the experience of listening in learners. The dictation can be performed over short portions of addressed input, over controlled repetition, or selective transcription, which enables the teachers to dictate cognitive load and match task demands to the processing capacity of learners [2,6]. These differences emphasize the flexibility of dictation-based listening in the contemporary listening pedagogy.

From a metacognitive perspective, dictation-based listening may also support learners' awareness of listening processes. By comparing their written reconstructions with the spoken input or a target version, learners can become aware of gaps between perception and form, which may prompt reflection on listening strategies and phonological cues [2,6]. Such reflective engagement aligns with research emphasizing the importance of metacognitive awareness in listening development, particularly for learners who struggle with persistent comprehension difficulties.

Despite these developments, much of the literature continues to discuss dictation in descriptive or outcome-oriented terms, focusing on classroom effectiveness rather than on underlying mechanisms. As a result, the theoretical basis for using dictation as a listening task remains fragmented. In particular, limited attention has been given to

how dictation-based listening engages specific cognitive and phonological processes or how these processes interact with learners' developmental characteristics [3,4].

This gap highlights the necessity of a more conceptualized conceptualization of dictation-based listening as part of the research in listening. It is through placing dictation in the context of cognitive and metacognitive theory of listening comprehension that one can shift the technique-based descriptions onto one side, and on the other side, we can examine dictation as a task that is systematically able to engage perceptual, cognitive, and reflective aspects of listening. This redefinition offers a transition to the following part that discusses dictation-based listening in a task-oriented approach.

2.3. Dictation Beyond Technique: Toward a Task-Based Perspective

Although the contemporary interest in listening research has revived, the issue of dictation is often talked about as a classroom practice instead of a listening activity based on theoretical assumptions. Task-based approaches to listening are, as a rule, assumed to entail the intentional working with input, explicit mental load, and possibility of the learners to work with the language in a meaningful way [1,2]. Dictation can seem inconsistent with these principles when it is presented in a very limited way as an accuracy-oriented or evaluative task.

However, a more detailed analysis offers the idea that dictation-based listening may pass some of the major requirements of a listening task, if it is designed to fit the task. When dictating, the learners have to pay keen attention to any verbal input and understand it well enough to recreate the same in a written format. The processing of phonological, lexical, and syntactic information and coordination of attention and working memory resources are necessary in this process [1,3]. This is the meaning of dictation; it requires active listening and not mechanical repetition.

As compared to most of the listening activities in the world, dictation introduces a time lapse between the input and output. Students have no choice but to make use of short-term context and store some part of what is said in their memory as they keep track of the incoming information. This time aspect promotes increased involvement in the speech signal and establishes the grounds for detecting differences between the perceived and target forms [2,5]. Dictation may also encourage reflection on the problem of listening and phonological characteristics when the learners review or revise their transcriptions.

Significantly, the proposal to redefine dictation as a listening task does not mean that all tasks should be designed similarly. Depending on the instructional objectives and peculiarities of learners, dictation-based listening may be quite different in its focus and complexity. Activities can include selective transcription, brief utterances, repetitive exposure, or collaborative rebuilding and enable teachers to control the amount of cognitive load and scaffold the process of listening [2,6]. This flexibility is especially essential in the case of young EFL learners, the listening performance of which is highly conditioned by the developmental limitations.

When dictation is perceived as an activity, instead of a method, that also reverses the focus of the surface accuracy as the desired effect, rather, dictation has the pedagogical importance of externalizing the process of listening and rendering it visible to students and teachers. Mistakes in the transcription may demonstrate certain perceptual or phonological weaknesses and give the chance to mediate the instructional process instead of implementing the summative assessment [1,3].

This reconceptualization, which emphasizes a task-based approach to dictation-based listening, points to the possibility of dictation-based listening operating as a more localized kind of listening practice that serves to supplement more comprehensive communicative aims. Instead of being in competition with meaning-oriented training, dictation can facilitate the early listening skills that will aid the students to be more active in communicative practices. This point of view preconditions the analysis of the cognitive and phonological processes that are implemented in dictation-based listening, which is the next section.

2.4. Limitations of Existing Conceptualizations

Nevertheless, even with the increased attention to dictation in the research related to listening, there is a lack of conceptual clarity. It is a common finding in the available literature that positive classroom performance takes place despite a lack of clarity on how dictation helps in the development of listening at the cognitive or phonological level. Consequently, dictation is occasionally advocated due to the claims of effectiveness instead of reasoning, which is based on mechanism [1,3].

This is not theoretically grounded and presents a pedagogical danger. Without knowing the mechanisms involved, dictation tasks can be constructed in such a way that they place too much load on the attention or working memory of the learners. In the case of young EFL learners, specifically, dictation tasks of poor calibration can cause cognitive overload and increase anxiety or, alternatively, a greater focus on surface-level accuracy, instead of listening growth [2,4]. These practices pose a danger of supporting the negative attitudes towards dictation and the concealment of its possible pedagogical importance.

Moreover, most of the available literature on dictation-based activities has been written regarding the adult/adolescent learners; little has been said about the young

learners. Cognitive control, phonological awareness, and affective regulation developmental differences are also under-theorized, and it is challenging to generalize the results directly to under-18 EFL conditions [4]. Consequently, dictation-based listening pedagogical recommendations are often not developed in terms of development.

These restrictions indicate that a reinvention of the concept of dictation-based listening might not need a reassessment of the effectiveness in the classroom alone. The principled framework is required to discuss the manner in which dictation involves the fundamental processes of listening and the mechanisms of interaction between the processes and the developmental peculiarities of learners. Devoid of such a structure, one always runs the risk of dictation remaining an instructive alternative that is not deployed in a consistent manner and lacks a well-defined pedagogical justification.

2.5. Summary and Rationale for Reconceptualization

This section has tracked a change in dictation standing in EFL listening instruction. Although traditionally considered a mechanical and precision-focused method, dictation has been gradually redefined as an activity that can refer to critical listening processes in the case of proper design. Yet, it has not happened that this re-emergence is followed by a sound conceptual framework on how dictation works as a listening task, especially to young EFL learners.

The review has pointed out a number of conceptual gaps in existing conceptualizations. Dictation is frequently talked about without mentioning cognitive and phonological processes, the limitations of development, and teaching mediation. This makes its pedagogical role in the instruction of listening ambiguous. These loopholes highlight the necessity to outgrow the technique-based and outcome-centered approaches to dictation-based listening and promote a more mechanism-based conceptualization of the latter.

To meet this requirement, the current paper re-conceptualizes dictation-based listening based on a cognitive-phonological perspective. It is through the contextualization of dictation into known frameworks of listening comprehension in place that we can describe the way that dictation can activate bottom-up processing, attention, working memory, and phonological noticing in developmentally relevant manners [1,2,5,6]. This reconceptualization offers a theoretical basis to assess dictation as an independent classroom practice, but as a principled way of listening practice.

In the next section, this framework is expanded by focusing on the cognitive and phonological processes that occur in dictation-based listening. Specific focus is on the functionality of these mechanisms in young EFL learners and how the task design can be used to facilitate effective listening activity without overwhelming the learners.

3. Cognitive–Phonological Mechanisms in Dictation-Based Listening

Listening comprehension is a cognitively challenging process that involves the adjustment of several mental processes in real time. Instead of receiving an oral input passively, listeners need to pay attention to acoustic cues, divide the speech stream into segments, temporarily store linguistic information, and merge it with the preexisting knowledge to form meaning [1]. In young EFL learners, the processes are especially difficult because of the developing attentional control, limited working memory capacity, and the emergence of the phonological representations [3,4]. A cognitive-phonological perspective of dictation-based listening, therefore, has an informative effect on the way in which the given activity could facilitate the underlying listening processes.

3.1. Bottom-Up Processing and Phonological Decoding

The process of bottom-up processing is based on decoding speech sounds on the phonemic, syllabic, and lexical levels before the process of higher-level interpretation can take place [1]. On one hand, young students studying EFL require the bottom-up processing since their lexical and grammatical background is not extensive enough yet [2]. A problem with identifying unknown sounds, determining word marks, and the sound-lexical correspondence often disrupts the listening comprehension [1,3].

Dictation-based listening involves bottom-up processing directly when the learner is required to pay close attention to the phonological form of auditory input. In order to rebuild what they perceive, learners have to discriminate phonemes, discern patterns of syllables, and word boundaries in continuous speech. This need decreases the utilization of contextual guessing and promotes more accurate perceptual processing.

Repeated involvement in such decoding processes can lead to the formation of more stable phonological representations, which are critical in effective listening comprehension [1].

3.2. Attention Control and Selective Listening

The process of listening comprehension largely depends on attention, especially during the process of learning a foreign language, where the input is alien and cognitively challenging [2]. Young learners usually cannot remain concentrated for long when listening to speech that is either fast or rich in

language [4]. Dictation listening encourages a specific and long-lasting attention because it gives the learners a specific and straightforward listening task: to repeat spoken words in a written form. In dictation, learners need to concentrate on relevant acoustic information, sift irrelevant information, and attend to constant segments of listening. This intensive interaction is opposed to global listening activities, where students can afford to make a general impression of meaning without paying close attention to the language. Dictation tasks can consequently be used as controlled attentional regulation practice during listening when they are properly scaffolded.

3.3. Working Memory and Temporary Information Storage

Working memory helps in the short-term storage and manipulation of language information when listening [1]. The listeners have to store bits of speech to a certain extent in order to incorporate them with any new information and create meaning. In the case of young EFL learners, the working memory capacity is comparatively small, and therefore, long periods of speech are especially challenging to process [3].

An explicit requirement of dictation-based listening is that it puts certain requirements on working memory because, prior to transcribing, learners are required to retain parts of spoken language in mind. Developmentally-calibrated dictation tasks (with short input segments, manipulated pacing, and repetition) can offer systematic training in the management of the working memory task. With time, it could help to enhance efficiency when processing spoken input. Nonetheless, once the dictation is larger than the processing capabilities of learners, it can lead to cognitive overload, which is why the design of the tasks should be principled [2].

3.4. Phonological Awareness and Speech Segmentation

The listening comprehension relies on the phonological awareness, which entails the ability to discriminate sounds as well as to divide continuous speech into meaningful units [1]. EFL learners of a young age often have problems recognizing the word boundaries because of such characteristics of connected speech as reduction, assimilation, and weak forms [3].

Dictation-based listening assists with speech segmentation as learners are asked to make a decision on how the speech stream can be subdivided into words and phrases. Transcription errors are likely to show problems in the segmentation of sounds, and phonological gaps become visible and can be mediated through instruction. By practicing a series of controlled spoken inputs repeatedly, learners can eventually become more sensitive to repetitive patterns of phonology and, as a result, enhance their capabilities to deconstruct spoken language in real time.

3.5. Phonological Noticing and Form–Meaning Mapping

The listening comprehension relies on the phonological awareness, which entails the ability to discriminate sounds as well as to divide continuous speech into meaningful units [1]. EFL learners of a young age often have problems recognizing the word boundaries because of such characteristics of connected speech as reduction, assimilation, and weak forms [3]. Dictation-based listening aids speech segmentation as learners are asked to decide how the speech stream can be subdivided into words and phrases. Transcription errors are likely to show problems in the segmentation of sounds, and phonological gaps become visible and can be mediated through instruction. By practicing a series of controlled spoken inputs repeatedly, learners can eventually become more sensitive to repetitive patterns of phonology and, as a result, enhance their capabilities to deconstruct spoken language in real time. 3.5. Form-Meaning Mapping and Phonological Noticing. Identification of the necessity of language learning has also been focused on awareness, where learners need to be aware of the linguistic features before they can be incorporated into the formation of knowledge systems [5]. Phonological noticing is a part of listening in which an individual becomes conscious of sound differences, fading, or stress patterns that they had previously never noticed or at least misunderstood. Phonological noticing can be achieved with the help of dictation-based listening that externalises the process of listening by means of written transcription. Existing differences in perception and form become salient as learners compare their transcription with another version that the learner speaks or a target version. Such a comparison can attract attention to problematic sounds or reduced forms, which are useful in a more appropriate mapping of forms and meanings. In young learners, such noticing should be scaffolded to ensure there is no feeling of anxiety and that the learners remain engaged [4].

3.6. Summary of Cognitive–Phonological Mechanisms

This section has demonstrated that dictation-based listening involves a variety of cognitive and phonological processes involved in the listening comprehension process, such as bottom-up processing, attentional control, working memory, segmenting speech, and phonological noticing. The mechanisms are especially applicable to young EFL learners whose listening problems are often caused by the perceptual and processing limitations and not the readiness to

communicate.

In a cognitive-phonological view of dictation, a more principled assessment of the pedagogical potential of dictation becomes possible. This approach, as opposed to the mechanical approach of dictation, gives more emphasis to the ability of dictation to facilitate underlying listening activities in cases where the tasks are developmentally and instructionally mediated. Continuing on this analysis, the following section discusses the interaction of these mechanisms with the developmental features of young EFL learners. The figure shows the processing stages of dictation-based listening, starting with the spoken input and ending with phonological noticing and form-meaning mapping with the aid of the bottom-up processing and the working memory processing, the written reconstruction, and the phonological processing of the meaning.

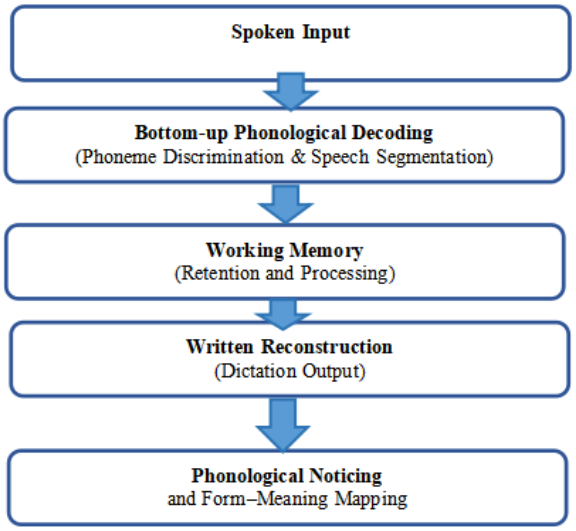

Figure 2. *Cognitive–phonological mechanisms involved in dictation-based listening.*

4. Developmental Characteristics of Young EFL Learners and Dictation-Based Listening

Understanding the developmental characteristics of young EFL learners is essential for evaluating the pedagogical suitability of dictation-based listening tasks. Learners under the age of 18 differ substantially from adult learners in terms of cognitive maturity, attentional control, emotional regulation, and learning strategies [4]. These developmental differences shape how learners process spoken input, manage cognitive demands, and respond to listening activities in classroom contexts. Any reconceptualization of dictation-based listening must therefore be grounded in an awareness of learners' developmental constraints and capacities.

4.1. Cognitive Development and Attentional Capacity

The cognitive control of the young learners and their attentional resources is still developing, and this influences the situation where they can maintain focus during the listening tasks in case of unfamiliar language or fast speech [3]. Listening comprehension involves constant division of attention to the incoming information, and young learners might not be able to sustain such concentration over a long period.

Dictation-based listening may be in harmony with these developmental features when well designed. The dictation tasks usually provide a tangible and distinguishable destination to be achieved: to recreate the input that has been spoken out loud, and this task can be used to facilitate attentional resources by decreasing task confusion.

In comparison with open-ended listening tasks that require inference or spontaneous response, dictation offers predictable task demands that could assist young learners in allocating attentional resources in a more efficient way. Nonetheless, dictation can surpass attentional capacity and lead to disengagement, unless the length of input is calibrated, speech rate is developmentally memorized, and repetition is developmentally memorized.

4.2. Working Memory Constraints and Processing Capacity

Another important developmental aspect that determines listening performance is the working memory capacity. Young learners can store and manipulate linguistic information in real-time with a less developed capacity to temporarily store information compared to adults [1,3]. As a result of this, they are unable to compute long stretches of spoken language, and it is challenging to span information across clauses. The very nature of dictation-based listening tasks makes them a burden on working memory since the learners need to remember large chunks of spoken information long enough to be able to write it down. Dictation can furnish systematic training in dealing with working memory requirements in listening when tasks are meticulously adjusted, with short input measures, pacing, and available repetitions. On the other hand, dictation exercises that are not consistent with the processing ability of learners might cause them to develop too much mental load, which causes frustration and less understanding.

4.3. Affective Factors: Anxiety, Confidence, and Motivation

Affective variables play a significant role in young learners' engagement with listening tasks. Learners in this age group are often sensitive to evaluation and peer comparison, which may increase anxiety and inhibit participation, particularly in listening activities requiring immediate oral responses [4].

Dictation-based listening presents both potential benefits and risks. On the one hand, dictation offers a structured task format with clear expectations, which may reduce uncertainty and enhance learners' sense of control. The written nature of transcription allows learners to engage with listening input privately, without the immediate pressure of oral production. On the other hand, dictation has traditionally been associated with error correction and assessment, which may heighten anxiety if tasks are framed evaluatively. The affective impact of dictation therefore depends largely on instructional mediation and feedback practices. When implemented as a learning-oriented activity emphasizing noticing and improvement rather than accuracy alone, dictation can support learner confidence and motivation.

4.4. Developmental Differences Across Age Groups

Young learners are a broad category that includes many stages of development, beginning with early childhood and ending with adolescence. The stages vary in terms of thinking ability, learning orientation, and sensitivity to instructional activities [4]. More scaffolded activities that require familiar content and short input are likely to benefit younger learners, but older learners are becoming more able to deal with longer texts, less scaffolding, and critical discussion. Listening mode through dictation can be modified to suit these developmental differences. In the case of younger learners, dictation can be based on very brief utterances, the use of familiar vocabulary, and the teacher's assistance they require with an emphasis not on transcription but on sound recognition and phonological awareness. In older learners, tasks may become increasingly more challenging, with longer input, introducing more diverse vocabulary, and allowing the learner to compare their work or reflect on it. This adaptability highlights the value of dictation as a flexible listening task that can be tailored to learners' age, proficiency, and instructional goals.

4.5. Summary: Developmental Suitability of Dictation-Based Listening

This part has demonstrated that the pedagogical relevance of dictation-based listening is closely associated with the developmental features of young EFL learners. The capacity to think, the sensitivity to feelings, and the changing learning strategies determine the way learners approach listening activities and the way they can benefit as a result of learning. Through designing dictation-based listening, keeping these developmental considerations in mind, one can make dictation-based listening an effective and developmentally sound listening activity, which facilitates attentional focus, phonological processing, and confidence in the learner.

These advantages, however, are not inseparable characteristics of dictation, but they grow out of task design that is principled and the mediation of instruction. The application of dictation in a developmental perspective helps strengthen the idea that it is necessary to match the listening activities with the cognitive maturity and emotional requirements of a learner. Based on this developmental analysis, the following section explores the pedagogical implications of the reconception of dictation-based listening among young EFL learners.

5. Pedagogical Implications and Directions for Future Research

The cognitive–phonological and developmental analyses presented in the preceding sections indicate that the pedagogical value of dictation-based listening does not lie in the activity itself, but in how it is conceptualized, designed, and mediated. When dictation is reframed as a listening-oriented task rather than a mechanical technique, it can function as a principled form of listening practice for young EFL learners.

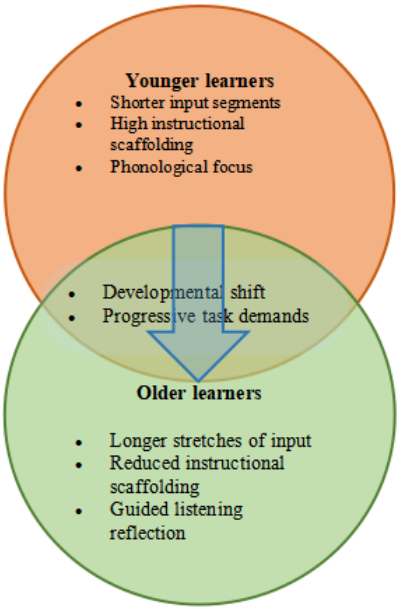

Figure 3. *Developmentally calibrated implementation of dictation-based listening for younger and older EFL learners.*

5.1. Pedagogical Implications for Listening Instruction

A key pedagogical implication of this reconceptualization is the need to reposition dictation within listening pedagogy. Rather than functioning as a post-listening assessment or an accuracy-focused exercise, dictation should be understood as a task that externalizes listening processes and engages learners in careful perceptual and cognitive processing of spoken input. According to this perspective, the transcription is not for instructional purposes but an avenue of making listening activities visible and learning opportunities available.

The design of the task is to be at the center of the pedagogical effectiveness of dictation-based listening. Since young learners have a small working memory and their ability to control attention is under development, dictation exercises must be developmentally adjusted by strictly controlling the amount of input, speech rate, repetition, and lexical complexity [1,4]. Cognitive load can be controlled with short snippets of listening, foreseeable processes of tasks, and the possibility of repeated exposure to support the engagement of the learners.

Incorrectly calibrated dictation tasks, on the contrary, can tax the cognitive resources of the learners and strengthen the negative attitudes towards listening. Instructional mediation is also critical. Without pedagogical support, learners can be highly task-oriented in terms of superficial accuracy in transcription without being more attentive to phonological properties (sound differences, word delimitation, or word form reduction). By guiding the attention of the learners to the relevant aspects of the phonological level, teachers can facilitate learning through guided noticing, selective feedback, or quick reflective comparison of the transcription of the learners and the input delivered by the speaker. In the case of young learners, this mediation must be non-evaluative and supportive, with the focus being on awareness and progress instead of correction of errors [4].

Dictation-based listening may also be used to help promote instructional coherence when incorporated systematically into listening lessons. Instead of acting as a standalone classroom task, dictation could be a series of tasks that accompany global listening, focused listening, and post-listening reflection to encourage a gradual advance of the listening skills. In this view, dictation is a conceptualizing linkage between the perception-driven practice and the larger communicative agendas and not a residual of form-driven teaching.

5.2. Directions for Future Research

Although this paper has provided a conceptual reconceptualization of dictation-based listening, more empirical studies should be done to focus on how these theoretical claims work in the classroom. The impact of developmentally informed dictation-based listening on the listening comprehension, phonological awareness, and attentional control of young EFL learners could be studied in the future. Both the quantitative and qualitative designs can be used to explain the relationship between various task setups and their effect on learning outcomes in the long run.

Besides that, future studies should focus on the cognitive and affective reactions of learners towards dictation-based listening activities. Since young learners are sensitive to cognitive loads and assessment, research investigation into attention and working memory requirements, anxiety, and confidence of the learners could offer very useful information about the circumstances under which dictation prospers or impedes the development of listening [3,4]. The study on instructional mediation and feedback practices would also enlighten developmentally appropriate task design.

Finally, there is an encouraging future of research expansion on dictation-based listening in terms of the growing penetration of digital and artificial intelligence-based technologies. Dictation tasks that are technologically enhanced, e.g., adaptive speech-rate control, automated feedback, and flexible repetition, can be provided to individuals, and at the same time, the tasks can maintain a structured nature of listening practice [1,6]. The exploration of the interaction between such technologies and cognitive and phonological processes among young learners is an exceptionally promising field into which future research can turn.

6. Conclusion

The paper has been able to reconceptualize dictation-based listening among young EFL learners in a cognitive phonological approach, which disputes the traditional perceptions that dictation is a mechanical or outdated classroom method. The paper has proposed dictation as a principled listening activity by placing it in the contexts of modern concepts of listening comprehension in situations where dictation is structured to involve the major cognitive and phonological processes.

Based on the known studies about listening processing, phonological development, and peculiarities of young students, this analysis has shown that dictation-based listening might evoke bottom-up processing, attentional control, use of working memory, speech segmentation, and phonological awareness. These processes are of special importance to young EFL learners whose listening problems are frequently due to perceptual and processing problems and not to the absence of communicative intent. Notably, the pedagogical worth of dictation is demonstrated to depend on the developmentally informed task structuring and instructional mediation and not within the very activity.

Being a conceptual contribution, this paper does not aim to

demonstrate the effectiveness of dictation-based listening empirically. Rather than that, it provides a theoretically justified framework explaining the reasons and mechanisms of why dictation can facilitate the development of listening in young EFL learners. The paper helps to shift towards more mechanism-based thinking on the issue of dictation in EFL listening pedagogy because it advances beyond technique-based accounts and result-based assessments.

The conceptual assertions presented in this paper have to be put to the test and confirmed through future empirical studies, such as research into developmentally calibrated and technology-augmented forms of dictation-based listening. This study can also help to understand in which situations dictation-based listening could become pedagogical and developmentally suitable to young EFL learners.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript and are defined at their first occurrence:

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
AI	: Artificial Intelligence

References

[1] [1] Field, J. (2008). Listening in the language classroom. Cambridge University Press.

[2] [2] Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203843376

[3] [3] Goh, C. C. M. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems. System, 28(1), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00060-3

[4] [4] Pinter, A. (2017). Teaching young language learners (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

[5] [5] Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. Applied Linguistics, 11(2), 129–158. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.2.129

[6] [6] Goh, C. C. M., & Vandergrift, L. (2021). Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003034758

[7] [7] Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). Approaches and methods in language teaching (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305