

# Effective Teaching with Dictation

## ディクテーションによる効果的な教育法

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### ABSTRACT

*Dictation has an unfairly deserved reputation as a boring, uninspiring activity that is more suited for the audio-lingual classroom than for communicative classrooms. This article discusses several ways of using dictation activities in a student-centered and fun way in an EFL or ELF setting. A step-by-step description of various dictation activities including 'Rapid Connected-Speech Dictation,' 'Form-Focused Dictation' and 'Discussion Question Dictation.' will be shared in this paper.*

Keywords: dictation, cooperative learning

### 要旨

ディクテーションは退屈でつまらないアクティビティであり、コミュニケーション型な指導よりもオーディオリンガル教育に適しているというように見なされ、あまり着目されていない。本稿では、EFLまたはELFプログラムにおける、ディクテーションを使用した学生中心の楽しいアクティビティ - Rapid Connected-Speech Dictation, Form-Focused Dictation, Discussion Question Dictation - を紹介する。

When many teachers today hear the word, 'dictation,' they think of a teacher-centered activity not suitable for their student-centered interactive classrooms. In the author's experience, dictation has an unfairly deserved reputation as a boring uninspiring activity that is more suited for the audio-lingual classroom than for communicative classrooms. Nevertheless, Nation lists 'dictation' as one of the twenty most useful teaching techniques for the EFL classroom (Nation, 2013). I want to describe some ways that my colleagues and I at a private women's college in Tokyo employ dictation activities that I believe are language-focused, student-centered and, most of all, fun. Students in the Introductory College English 1A class, which is a speaking and listening class, are required to do homework each week that includes listening to a conversation about a certain topic, for example, movies. They answer comprehension questions, study fifteen vocabulary words identified as words that most students don't know<sup>1</sup>, and then finally, they complete two dictations: (1) five sentences that

<sup>1</sup> Brent Culligan and colleagues at Aoyama Gakuin Women's Jr. College created this list. First, they compiled a 6000 word list from frequency lists including Coxhead's Academic Word List. Next, they wrote 120 yes/no tests. The students marked 'Yes' if they knew the word, or 'No' if they didn't. To control for guessing, non-words were included. Results were analyzed using Item Response Theory. Then, the researchers determined how difficult each word was, which words the students probably knew, and which words they didn't. Finally, they created a list of the 120 most frequently occurring words based on the probability that the average student would know about half of them.

we refer to as Rapid Connected-Speech Dictation and, (2) five questions about the week's topic.

In class, I repeat the five Rapid Connected-Speech Dictation sentences and ask the students to review their answers. Next, I have the students work in groups of three and compare their answers. If they find any discrepancies, they must talk within their groups and agree on a common transcription of the spoken utterance. If a shared understanding cannot be reached, they are instructed to note this and ask me at a later time. Then, I assign each group a sentence and ask them to write it on the board. Finally, we look at each sentence together as a class and if there are any grammar, vocabulary or usage points to consider, we discuss it as a class.

After I finish this activity, I move on to the activity we call a 'Form-Focused Dictation.' This is a dictation activity consisting of five sentences focused on a certain pronunciation issue, for example the reduction of 'going to' to 'gonna.' First, I explain what 'form' the dictation is focusing on and remind them that they are going to hear many spoken examples of this form in the five sentences. Thus, this activity functions as a 'noticing' activity meaning that the students are required to pay attention to a form that helps them be able to recognize it in conversation or in a listening passage and eventually use it in their own speech. Next I tell the students to write down what they hear as I read each sentence three times. After I finish reading the sentences, I put the students in groups to compare their answers. Finally, I ask the students as a class to tell me how to write each sentence on the board. If they have written something different from what I said or have forgotten a word, then I give them hints about the sentence and encourage them to figure out what was originally said. However, from an ELF perspective, the teacher might choose to focus more on the meaning of the individual sentences and to disregard differences, as long as the meaning of the sentence is the same.

After the class has finished this, I move on to checking the the five discussion questions that they wrote for homework by listening to a recording of these questions and writing them down as a dictation. These questions are the starting point for the students to work in groups to have a conversation about the topic of that week's lesson. Since the students have listened to these sentences at home, I simply read the sentences once and tell the students to review their answers. I then give them a chance to compare their answers with other students. Finally, I put the students in groups of three and ask each group to write one question on the board. We then check each question together to make sure they are all complete. The next step is for the students to create some more questions on the topic that they want to discuss. The conclusion to this activity is for the students to work in groups and talk about the topic using the questions from the dictation and the questions that they generated themselves.

In conclusion, I believe the activities I have described can be used in a student-centered communicative way that is fun. These activities are easy to use in any teaching situation and are not difficult to create. I encourage you to incorporate dictation activities into your lessons and to report on their effectiveness.

## REFERENCES

Nation, P. (2013). *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* Seoul: Compass Publishing.