

DICTOGLOSS

Approx. duration: 50-60 min

Groups of: 2-4-6

Competencies involved: S, L, W, R

Levels: All

Required Material :

-Notebook or piece of paper and pen

-Whiteboard and marker (optional)

-Laptop (optional)

Activity Description

The Dictogloss is a modernized version of the dictation. In this iteration, students listen to a read-aloud text or story, write down keywords from the source individually, then try to recreate the text with a teammate or teammates. This activity “[...] offers several benefits for language learners. It enhances the four core language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing while promoting cognitive, metacognitive, and social skills”. [1] More specifically, it has been demonstrated to “[...] help language-learning students towards a better understanding of how grammar works on a text basis [and to] expose where their language [...] shortcomings (and needs) [are]”. [2]

Preparatory steps can vary. The teacher can decide to spend some time on a vocabulary and/or grammar pre-activity. Then, they can play the audio or read the text once to help the students familiarize themselves with it. Students can be encouraged to summarize what they understood orally.

Next, the students are asked to take notes as they listen a second time. They must write down keywords that will later help them recreate the text. The collaborative part can start as soon as the second listening is done. The students must recreate the text with a partner using a combination of their notes. The text must be as close to the original as possible.

The next step is optional: student pairs can get together with one or two other pairs to compare their texts, improve them and combine them. A whiteboard, if available, would work well for this step.

Finally, the teacher shows the students the original text so they can compare it to their own. They can then make minor changes and analyze their mistakes. The wrap-up of this activity can involve briefly discussing what the goal of the activity was, whether it was grammar-based, vocabulary-based or other, so the students can assess the value of what they've learned.

Preparation

TEACHER

- Audio or text choice
- Assignment explanation, including practice

STUDENT

- Preliminary vocabulary or grammar work (if applicable)



Workflow

TEACHER

1. Gives the activity instructions.
2. Reads or plays an audio recording of the text once.
3. Assesses the students' overall understanding.
4. Reads or plays an audio recording of the text a second time.
5. Walks around the classroom to verify the students' progress.
6. Shows the students a transcript of the source text.
7. Proceeds with a collective recap (optional).

STUDENTS

1. Listen to the text once.
2. Orally share their understanding.
3. Listen to the text a second time while taking notes.
4. Team up with a peer to share notes and recreate the text.
5. Join other pairs to combine answers and transfer them to the whiteboard or paper.
6. Compare their work to the original text and correct it.

TEACHER

Evaluation options

- Formative assessment of the recreated text using a basic evaluation grid that has previously been shared with the students

STUDENT

- Formative assessment of other teams' work using basic assessment elements shared verbally
- Self-assessment of the work process and result

Tips

- Students can write their own text. Length will vary by level. They can experience the dictogloss activity working in pairs or small groups where one reads and the others write. [3]
- Choosing texts that present specific grammar notions that are traditionally difficult to teach and learn can go a long way in this activity.

[1] Guleria, Sangeeta. (2025). Dictogloss: a cooperative approach to enhance listening, speaking, reading and writing. Lex localis - Journal of Local Self-Government. 23. 2128-2132. 10.52152/arhthm433.

[2] Wajnryb. (1990) in McLeod, A. K. (2023). Teaching techniques: Beyond Grammar Teaching: Dictogloss Strategies for Improving Literacy. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State. English teaching forum. Volume 61, Number 3. Pages 26-32. https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/4_61_3_beyond_grammar_teaching_p26-32_1.pdf

[3] Sclocco. (2024). Four Skills in One Activity: the Dictogloss. International House Journal. Issue 53. <https://ihworld.com/ih-journal/issues/issue-53/four-skills-in-one-activity-the-dictogloss/>