

Teaching Listening and Speaking Simultaneously

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In this paper we describe an activity to help learners practice listening and speaking at the same time. Our activity is based on Wajnryb's Dictogloss technique (1990). Dictogloss is a listening activity in which the learners recreate a short passage spoken by the teacher a number of times. We have taken this listening and writing activity a step further and used it as a springboard for a speaking activity. A further refinement is that the texts we use are dialogues on topics of immediate interest to learners, since they are written in response to suggestions from learners, or are about events in the news. Our learners enjoy this activity and evaluate it quite favorably.

As teachers of Oral English classes we believe it is necessary to teach both listening and speaking, and that classroom activities must be interesting and topical to our learners. We find that this activity achieves both those goals.

この論文では、生徒にどの様に相互関係があり、お互いに従属したリスニングとスピーキングのアクティビティーをあたえるかという事を明示しています。これらのアクティビティーは生徒達に興味を持ってもらうため、現在のニュースや生徒からのリクエストから選ばれた題目を使います。私達のアクティビティーはディクトグロス(Wajnryb, 1990)を基に発展させたものです。ディクトグロスとは、先生が何度か話す文の一説を生徒達が造り直すというリスニングアクティビティーです。私達はそれをもう一つ先のステップへ持っていき、スピーキングアクティビティーとしても使いました。生徒達に評価を頼むと、喜んでしてくれ、アクティビティーに対して好意的であるという事を知りました。口語英語やConversational Englishの先生として、リスニングとスピーキング両方を教えるのはとても重要な事だと私達は信じています。また、アクティビティーは生徒達にとって興味のもてる内容であるべきだと思います。このアクティビティーは、この二つの目標をどちらも達成しています。

Conversation practice mainly involves two skills, speaking and listening. Speaking cannot take place if the speaker is unable to decode what her interlocutor is saying, which shows why it is important to teach listening as well. In this paper we will give an example of an activity that gives learners (Ls) a chance to work on both skills at the same time while dealing with topics that are of interest to them. The activity we have is an extension of Dictogloss, a listening and writing activity developed by Wajnryb (1990).

We will first give a brief outline of the way Dictogloss was originally used. Then we will describe our adaptation of it into a speaking and listening activity, which is focused on meaning and real communication. We will give an example of an actual activity used in our classes and describe how to do it. Finally we will list its benefits to our Ls and show how it was perceived and evaluated by them.

Dictogloss

Dictogloss, as formulated by Wajnryb, has four steps: preparation, dictation, reconstruction, analysis and correction. In the preparation phase the topic is introduced as well as vocabulary and the language to be focused on. The text is next dictated at near normal speed three times. The Ls take notes, trying to get the main ideas down on paper, although there is not enough time for them to write full sentences. In the reconstruction phase the Ls divide into groups of three or four and try to recreate the original text in writing. In this phase Ls compare notes and discuss vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The final step is when the Ls compare their reconstructed text with those of other groups and the original text and make corrections to their versions. Differences are discussed and analyzed. Depending on the level of the Ls and the difficulty of the text, a Dictogloss can take from twenty minutes to an hour.

Our Learners

At the beginning of each semester, we ask our Ls what they want to learn in our Oral English classes. They tell us that they want to have a lot of conversation practice about practical topics. When asked to elaborate they mention practicing different situations, such as ordering food in a restaurant, going through customs, taking a taxi, and talking about current topics of interest to them such as music, books, or what is happening in the world. They feel that these topics will help them get along well when they go abroad or are in an English speaking environment in Japan.

In addition, we asked them to give us some idea of their thoughts about the importance they placed on doing listening as opposed to speaking activities in class. There were 34 Ls in our Oral English class who responded to the following:

I would like to spend ___% of my energy improving my listening and ___% improving my speaking (total should be 100%).

The results can be seen in Figure 1. Clearly most Ls were aware of the need for listening activities along with the speaking activities.

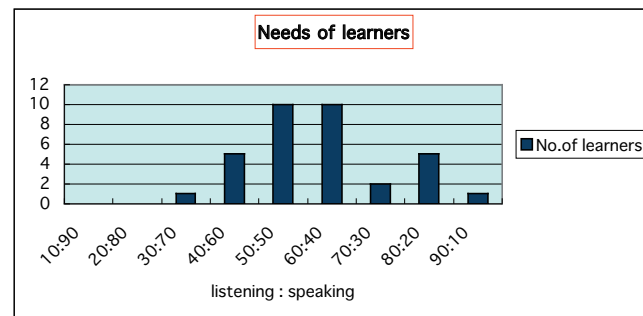


Figure 1. Needs of Students.

Our Adaptation

To adapt the Dictogloss activity to the needs and interests of our students, we made the following changes to Wajnryb's activity:

- *Topic.* We use either a current topic from the news, or one of the "everyday scenes using English" our

Ls have expressed an interest in. Some of our recent current topics have included: Princess Norinomiya's engagement, the presidential election in the U.S., the mysterious submarine in Japanese waters, the earthquakes in Niigata Prefecture, and the kidnapping in Nara. Everyday topics have included: taking a taxi, ordering in a restaurant, shopping, talking about the weekend, plans for winter vacation, and plans for after school today.

- *Genre.* Whereas Wajnryb does not specify what kind of short texts should be used with Dictogloss, we always use a short dialogue between friends.
- *Feedback Session.* After the Ls have finished the reconstruction phase of the activity, we ask individual Ls from the different groups to tell the class what they have as their final version for each sentence of the dictation. After each sentence, we ask a question or the L's opinion using the contents of that sentence as a starting point. We follow this procedure with each sentence in the dialogue, conversing with different Ls as we go along. Often Ls who have not been called on will add their opinions or ask questions in the natural flow of the conversation.

An Activity Step by Step

We used the following dictation about the past weekend with a class of 28 college freshmen at a high level women's university in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture:

Student A: How was your weekend?

Student B: It was all right, I guess. I didn't do much.

Student A: I didn't either. I just worked at my convenience store job.

Student B: Oh, you have a job! Does it pay well?

Student A: About average. I get 750 an hour.

Student B: I'm really looking forward to next weekend though.

Student A: Why? Have you got a date or something?

Student B: Yeah, I'm going to visit my boyfriend in Yokohama.

Student A: Lucky you.

Some of the ideas for this dictation were taken from a short conversation between the teacher and a L the previous week. The Ls were told before the dictation began that they were going to hear a conversation between two students at their university who were talking about their weekend. We told them to get ready to write and to listen but take notes only, as the dictation would be too fast for them to write down everything. Ls soon become adept at taking notes, developing their own styles. The teacher then dictated the conversation between Students A and B at near normal speed three times. After the third repetition, the Ls were put into groups of three or four and told to try to reconstruct the conversation. In this part of the activity the Ls used

dictionaries to check on word meanings, pronunciation, and spelling. They also discussed the meaning of the notes they had taken, as well as the discrepancies, similarities, and their significance for the meaning of the conversation. There were agreements as well as disagreements between the Ls as to what had been dictated. One L wrote her group's final version on a separate piece of paper. This reconstruction process took the Ls 15 minutes.

The final, speaking part of the activity followed. The teacher asked several Ls from different groups their group's version of the first sentence. At times the Ls' versions were not the exact words we had used. We did not correct them outright, but simply wrote the original on the board for their perusal. We then had a short discussion with those Ls about their last weekend, what they did and where they went. As we proceeded through the entire conversation in this way, we tried to get as many Ls as possible involved, asking them about the kind of weekend they had had, part-time jobs, the pay, their plans for the next weekend, trips to Yokohama, etc. Often the Ls gave one-word answers, but at other times longer ones. Short answers were accepted, as they are often appropriate in this type of conversation. From beginning to end the whole activity took 35 minutes. Some Ls, very few in our experience, have a tendency to go over the sentences in the dictation pointing out what they see as grammatical errors, or deficiencies. To avoid any problems, teachers should be mindful of such possibilities when making the dictation. It also may be useful for teachers to emphasize to the Ls the listening and speaking aspects of the activity.

Benefits for Our Learners

There are various benefits for the Ls from doing this activity:

- The Ls are given a chance to have meaningful discussions about current events and everyday conversational topics they have suggested.
- The Ls are 100% focused on communicating and often forget previous inhibitions about expressing themselves, such as fear of making grammatical or other kinds of mistakes.
- The Ls often have strong opinions or feelings about the topic and the relevant schemata are already planted firmly in their brains through the media or personal experiences, which adds to their involvement and passion in the discussion.
- From the context and the *here and now* nature of what is being discussed Ls are able to guess the meaning of unknown vocabulary and understand heretofore difficult grammatical structures.
- The Ls appear to become more confident in their conversational ability and have a sense of satisfaction at having been able to express themselves and having been understood in English.
- The atmosphere in the classroom is a positive one and a feeling of mutual respect prevails, as even lower level Ls are given a chance to show their expertise on topics that more advanced Ls know little or nothing about.

There are also the benefits inherent in the Dictogloss part of the activity. These include:

- developing and improving listening strategies and skills
- learning new vocabulary
- developing proof reading and editing strategies
- an opportunity for cooperative learning

Also this activity motivates and stimulates Ls for the reasons described above, offers experiential learning, and is based on chunks of language, which is helpful for lower level Ls.

Learner Evaluation of the Activity.

We asked our Ls to evaluate the activity. We used an evaluation line from 1 to 6 spaced along one half of the blackboard:

I think this activity was:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Effective				Not Effective at All	

Seventy-five percent of the Ls answered 1 or 2, and the remaining 25% answered 3. When questioned individually several of the Ls who had chosen 3 said that the activity would have been better if the dictation part had been repeated four times instead of only three.

Conclusion

Our activity, which consists of a Dictogloss dialogue on a topical or everyday subject with an added speaking phase, has been well received by our Ls. We feel that it has led to profitable learning experiences for them, and to L involvement and enjoyment of our classes. In the Ls' eyes it is a legitimate and useful way to spend class time. No textbook is used for this activity and for some Ls we have found this leads, rightly or wrongly, to increased credibility for the activity. For Oral English classes, this activity is current, appears to be authentic, has come about through consultation with our Ls, and helps Ls improve the two skills we are mainly concerned with—listening and speaking.

Reference

Wajnryb, R. (1990). *Resource books for teachers: Grammar dictation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.