

Dictogloss

Level lower intermediate to advanced
Materials sheets of paper / notebooks

Preparation

Choose a fairly long sentence from the coursebook that has in it the grammar you are working on. It should have at least some sub-clauses. At upper intermediate level you would need a sentence of this complexity:

If the conditions had been better, if the money had been right, and if the way forward had seemed brighter, this group of managers would probably not have decided to break away and set up their own company.

1 Tell the students you are going to read them the sentence **once and once only**. Their task is to listen without writing anything and, once you have finished, immediately jot down the key words. From these, they will have to reconstruct the sentences with word-for-word accuracy.

2 Read the sentence clearly and rhythmically. When they have jotted down the key words that they remember, there may be groans from students who did not realise how hard the task is. Tell them that this first time you will give them a second reading!

3 Ask the students to work in pairs, reconstructing the sentence.

4 Bring one student to the board to act as 'secretary'. Ask the class to dictate their reconstructions to this person, who has to mediate between the different versions.

5 Finally, give the text of the sentence to one student, who reads it out slowly a couple of times so that the secretary can correct the text on the blackboard.

Acknowledgement: The first reference to 'Dictogloss' I know of came in the ELTJ in 1963, where it was described as a technique then much used in Australia. I learnt it from Jane Lockwood, an Australian, in the early 80's. In the early 90's, Ruth Wajnryb brought out a book on the 'Dictogloss' technique, *Grammar Dictation*,

How Simple is the Past?

Level elementary to lower intermediate
Materials sheets of paper / notebooks

Preparation

When you have completed a couple of units that introduce irregular simple past forms, go back to one of the listening or reading passages in the coursebook and pull out all the past tense verbs, regular and irregular.

1 Ask the students to quickly re-read the passage.

2 Tell them to shut their books and invite one of them to the board to copy down the verbs you now dictate, **out of their order in the passage**. All the students take them down and you correct the work of the person at the board.

3 Group the students in threes and ask them to decide on the order of the verbs in the passage, numbering them.

4 Ask one student to come to the board and suggest the numbers agreed by their group. Don't interfere. Allow the students to disagree with the person at the board. The less you say, the stronger the technical discussion may get.

5 The students open their books and check the correct order of the verbs.

NOTE: The ideal text for this exercise is a good story from the coursebook cassette, or one you tell the class yourself. **Listening** for the verb orders really helps fix them as sound entities in the students' minds.

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