

'DICTATION'

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In the past Dictation was used mainly as a 'testing' device, to test spelling and punctuation. It tended to be used in isolation, with no relationship to other language activities. The passages used tended to be rather long and 'unseen'; i.e. the students had not studied/used the passages before and they contained new/unfamiliar/difficult structural and lexical items. Dictation lessons used to be labelled as such in the timetable and each lesson took up to thirty minutes.

In an English as a Second Language (ELS) situation, 'Dictation' could be more profitably used as a **consolidation-cum-integration*** device, to consolidate structural and lexical items already familiar to the students. In an ESL situation, 'seen' passages could be used, i.e. passages already studied/used by the students and containing familiar structural and lexical items. The passages should be short — five or six sentences are enough. Dictation need not be an isolated activity; it could serve to integrate the different aspects/areas of English teaching, e.g. Listening-Comprehension, Reading-Comprehension, Syntax, Vocabulary work, Written Expression, etc. A 'Seen Dictation' session would require only five to ten minutes, once the students are familiar with the procedure involved. Such sessions could be conducted once/twice a week; they do not need to be labelled as 'Dictation' in the timetable, because they are consolidation-cum-integration activities and could be part of, say, the Listening-Comprehension/Reading-Comprehension/Vocabulary Work sessions.

The following are some suggested exercises for the use of 'Dictation' in an ESL situation. Besides consolidation, they offer a variation from the usual technique of conducting the 'Dictation' lesson in which the teacher reads the passage aloud bit by bit and the students write what is read out by the teacher. The exercises given below have been adapted/modified from various sources. Teachers should further adapt/modify them or prepare other exercises to suit the proficiency level, linguistic background, etc. of their classes. Certain principles/criteria should be kept in view all the time. e.g. cumulative progression, building on the students' knowledge and experience, generally increasing difficulty. etc. An important objective (exemplifying integration of 'Dictation' with Syntax, Reading and Listening-Comprehension) is training the students to spot key words and structural relationships in sentence patterns, e.g. the relationship between a preposition and the noun/pronoun it governs, or the special slot occupied by mid-position adverbials.

*Integration = integration of (1) linguistic skills, (2) linguistic elements, (3) linguistic skills, and elements, (4) intra-subject, (5) inter-subject.

The following points should also be noted:

1. The teacher would normally use one exercise in a session. However, he may sometimes want to use two, depending on various factors, such as the time available and the interest and retention of the class.
2. In addition to the written instructions for each exercise, the teacher may want to give further explanations/examples, to weak classes.
3. The teacher will have to prepare cyclostyled materials for distribution to his students.
4. In the following exercises, 'PRY' means 'The passage will be read to you'.
5. For each exercise, a few examples are given.
6. Unless stated otherwise, the words etc. in the exercises will be in the same order as in the passage.
7. The passage for these exercises is about the tiger.
8. These exercises are based on one passage. With a real class the teacher would, of course, use different passages from time to time.
9. The level in these exercises is lower secondary. (The actual target population could be Form 1).

TIGERS

A tiger watches carefully for danger as it drinks at the river. It is an excellent swimmer and can cross fast-flowing rivers easily. It will dive into the river to escape from its enemies, or other dangers, such as forest fires. The tiger, which is five or six feet long when fully grown, is a big relative of the cats which we keep in our homes as pets. When a tiger is attacked it uses its teeth and claws to defend itself.

1. PRY. As you listen, cross out the incorrect word/phrase in each of the following pairs:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) <i>watch—watches</i> | (d) <i>such as—such is</i> |
| (b) <i>easily—easy</i> | (e) <i>pets—pests</i> |
| (c) <i>dive on to—dive into</i> | (f) <i>its—it's</i> |

2. PRY. You will hear the following adverbs. Write the opposites:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| (a) <i>carefully</i> | _____ |
| (b) <i>easily</i> | _____ |

(The teacher may then go on to other parts of speech, e.g. adjectives.)

3. PRY. The following are words which appear in the passage. Some of the letters in each word are missing. Fill in the missing letters.

(Each dash stands for a letter).

- | |
|---------------------------|
| (a) <i>c _ _ _ _ _ ly</i> |
| (b) <i>ex _ _ _ _ _ t</i> |
| (c) <i>en _ _ _ _ _ s</i> |
| (d) <i>re _ _ _ _ _ e</i> |

4. The following words will be read to you. Look at the passage and put a tick (✓) against these words as you hear them. (They will not be read in the same sequence as in the passage).

relative
danger
defend
fast-flowing

5. PRY. Number the following nouns in the order in which you hear them. (They are not listed in the same sequence as in the passage).

enemies
rivers
relative
swimmer

(The teacher may then go on to other parts of speech).

6. PRY. Fill in the blanks below with suitable words from the passage. The following sentences do not occur in the passage. (Each dash represents a letter).

(a) *We must drive _ _ _ _ _ on wet roads.*
(b) *The man climbed up a tree to _ _ _ _ _ from the tiger.*

7. PRY. On the left are adjectives and on the right are the nouns described by these adjectives.

- (i) Match the adjectives with the appropriate nouns.
(ii) Add the articles (if any) preceding the adjectives.

<i>Adjectives</i>	<i>Nouns</i>
(1) <i>excellent</i>	(a) <i>rivers</i>
(2) <i>fast-flowing</i>	(b) <i>relative</i>
(3) <i>big</i>	(c) <i>swimmer</i>

8. PRY. Listen carefully and then unscramble the following groups of words:

(a) *six is or long fast which five*
(b) *of cats big a the relative*

9. PRY. Listen carefully and write, as you hear them, the words formed from the following words:

(a) *excel* (c) *full*
(b) *ease* (d) *defence*

10. PRY. The following phrases end in a preposition followed by a noun (group). Write the noun (group) in the blank. (Each dash stands for a letter).

(a) *watches carefully for _ _ _ _ _*
(b) *drinks at _ _ _ _ _*
(c) *dive into _ _ _ _ _*
(d) *escape from _ _ _ _ _*
(e) *keep in _ _ _ _ _*

11. PRY. As you listen write the correct forms of the following verbs:

(a) *watch* (d) *dive*
(b) *drink* (e) *attack*
(c) *cross* (f) *use*

12. PRY. Write all the adjectives and adverbs in the passage:

(The teacher can then go on to other parts of speech).

13. PRY. As you listen, fill in the missing subject word/phrase in the following:

- (a) _____ *watches*
- (b) _____ *drinks*
- (c) _____ *will dive*
- (d) _____ *is a big relative*
- (e) _____ *is attacked*
- (f) _____ *uses*

14. Read the following questions. PRY. Now answer the questions:

- (a) *What does a tiger do as it drinks at the river?*
- (b) *Can a tiger swim well?*
- (c) *How does a tiger escape from forest fires?*

15. Write three questions based on the passage. Answer your questions.

16. PRY. Fill in the blanks with 'a/an/the' where necessary:

- (a) _____ *tiger watches carefully for _____ danger as it drinks at _____ river.*
- (b) *It is _____ excellent swimmer and can cross fast-flowing rivers easily.*
- (c) *It will dive into _____ river to escape from its enemies, or _____ dangers, such as _____ forest fires.*

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