Using Dictation in ELT

Interactive and communicative dictation activities for English classes

Developed by Halis Bereket





Listening • Writing • Checking • Speaking

Why dictation still matters

Accuracy and fluency

Dictation can support attentive listening, spelling, pronunciation, note-taking and self-evaluation.

All four skills

Student-led variations turn dictation into a listening, speaking, reading and writing activity.

Classroom energy

When used imaginatively, dictation adds variety and concentration without heavy preparation.

Useful at different levels when the text is graded.
Effective as review, lead-in, practice or checking activity.
Learners notice their own listening and writing errors.



What is dictation?

A simple technique becomes powerful when the procedure is varied.

A text is read or played aloud, and learners write down what they hear.

Not only teacher reading

The dictating voice can be the teacher, a recording, a student, a pair, or even a group.

Not only word-for-word

Learners can listen for gist, key words, errors, missing parts, pictures, colours or meaning chunks.

Not only writing

Many versions lead naturally to speaking, pronunciation, reconstruction and peer checking.

Halis Bereket’s 3-listening model

1. Listen only

Students listen at normal speed and try to catch the general meaning. No writing yet.

2. Listen and write

Students listen again with pauses or breaks and write the sentences or chunks.

3. Check and correct

Students listen once more and correct their own work before comparing.

Seminar message: Dictation is not a punishment; it is a guided listening-and-noticing activity.

A classroom quiz sample: Listen and write

Name, Surname:
Listen and write. (Quiz 10)



It's _____. _____ _____
_____ _____.
It's _____. _____ _____
_____.
It's _____. _____ _____
_____.
It's _____. _____ _____
_____.
It's _____. _____ _____
_____.
It's _____. _____ _____
_____.

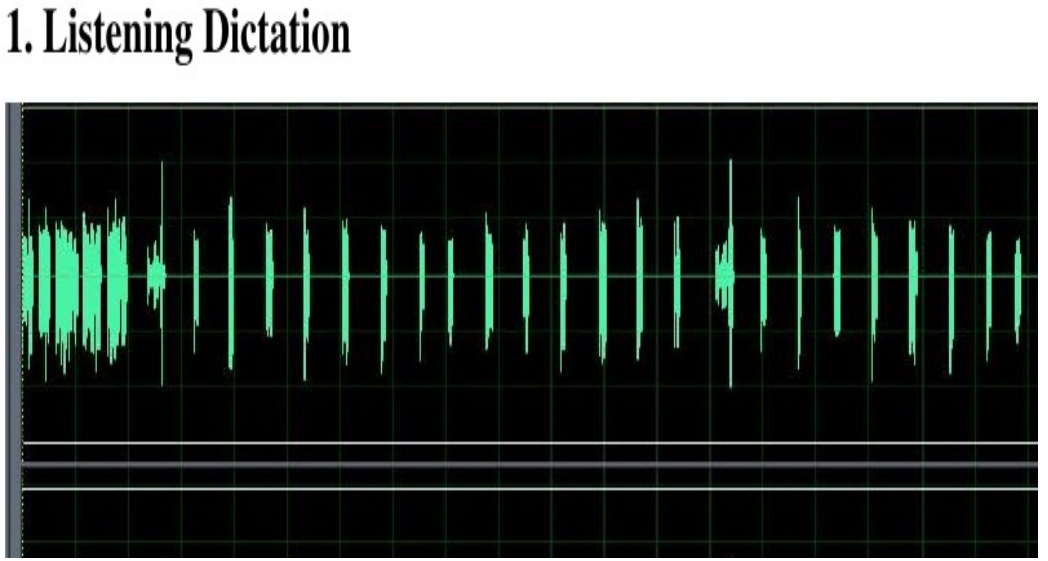
Students receive a short worksheet with numbered blanks.
The audio is played in the 3-listening sequence.
Checking becomes a learning stage, not just marking.

PowerPoint setting

Start the sound on click, not automatically. This gives the presenter control before each listening stage.

How to prepare a Listening Dictation sample

Choose 6-10 short target sentences from a familiar text or audio.
First listening: natural and uninterrupted - listen only.
Second listening: use pauses (about 12 seconds in the original version) so learners can write.
Third listening: check and correct; pause if careful correction is needed.
Earlier Cool Edit version: about 10 seconds silence + a brief warning cue before writing.



Classroom-tested application







Real classroom photos can be used briefly to show that the activity was applied with university students. Faces should remain blurred or covered for public use.

Rolling and False Reading Dictation

Rolling Dictation

Learners hear a text or story with missing words. The recording/teacher reads twice without stopping; learners fill in gaps.

False Reading Dictation

The teacher tells a story, then retells it with wrong words. Students listen, stop the teacher and correct the mistakes.

These versions connect dictation with vocabulary review, listening for detail and speaking correction.

Fast Flash Dictation family

Pictures

Show 10-15 pictures quickly; groups remember and list what they saw.

Vocabulary

Flash recently studied words from one lexical area.

Stories

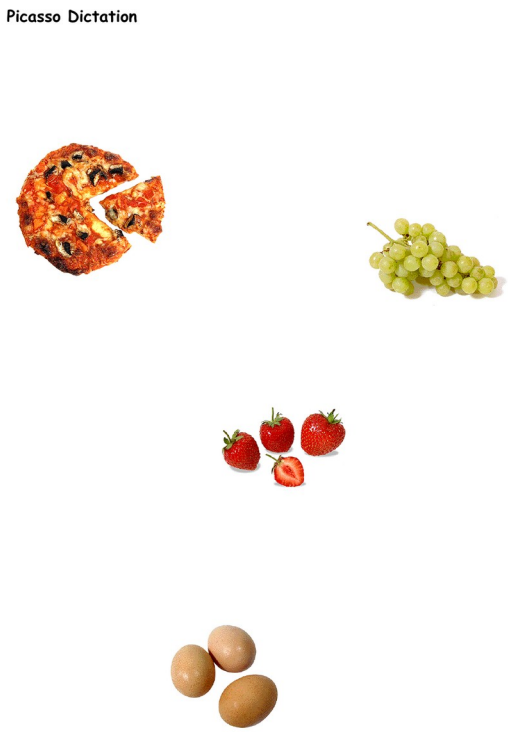
Connect flashed pictures into a short narrative.

Text

Flash chunks faster than learners can copy; they must catch meaning and structure.

Colour Dictation and Picasso Dictation





Visual dictations reduce anxiety and make instructions meaningful, especially with young learners.

Shouting Dictation

Pair-work structure

Two students have different versions of the same text. Each one dictates missing parts to the other.

Classroom effect

Learners listen carefully, speak clearly and negotiate meaning. It can be lively but purposeful.

Teacher reminder: a lively classroom is not a noisy classroom; the activity needs clear rules, distance and a time limit.

Dictogloss, Mistakes and Bad Cold Dictation

Dictogloss

Learners listen for general meaning, take notes, reconstruct the text and compare with the original.

Mistakes Dictation

Students correct grammar or meaning errors in a dictated or printed text.

Bad Cold

The teacher “loses” a word by coughing or sneezing; learners choose a sensible word to fit the gap.

These variations turn dictation into problem solving, reconstruction and creative language use.

Running / Wall Dictation

Set-up

Stick short texts on the wall or board. Divide the class into teams. Each team has a secretary.

Action

Runners read a sentence, keep it in mind and dictate it to the secretary.

Focus

Writing, memory, pronunciation and teamwork are all active at the same time.



Practical teacher tips

Explain the purpose before starting.
Grade the text carefully: too hard becomes stressful.
Read or play at natural speed. Avoid isolated word units.
Use sense groups when pausing.
Let students notice and correct their own errors.
Use short activities often rather than long activities rarely.

Suggested seminar flow

1. Warm-up

What do teachers remember about dictation?

2. Method

Why dictation can support listening and accuracy.

3. Demo

Run the 3-listening sample with participants.

4. Variations

Show selected activity types with short examples.

5. Design

Participants adapt one dictation activity for their class.

6. Share

Pairs/groups present their activity idea.

Keep in mind

Dictation becomes powerful when learners listen with a purpose, write with attention, and check with understanding.

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