

Writing in tesl

For the last twenty years, dictation as an effective teaching device has been strongly neglected because of the approach to language learning and teaching which emphasizes the spoken languages as the model. It is the purpose of this paper to suggest some possible functions of dictated speech and to recommend these uses to teachers and students who learn languages.

We suggest that dictation is one very effective way of correcting orthographic errors. For students who have learned English sounds before going on to the writing system, it will form the next logical step.

Dictation can be divided into several types: phonemic items, phonemic texts, and orthographic items or orthographic text dictations.

The following discussion centers around an orthographic text dictation. A text dictation is a dictation of about 100 – 150 words taken from contemporary sources that offer reasonable models of the written or spoken varieties of the language being learned. Like item dictation, the text dictation, which is usually taken from written rather than spoken sources, should be used as a learning exercise and only secondarily as a testing exercise. Its most important function is to provide drills in understanding connected speech. It may consist of a series of isolated sentences or a paragraph, a unified group of sentences. Since speech does not occur as isolated items and context can help students correct the structural difficulties he has, paragraph dictations that are self-contained contextual units are best for most drills.

The strong reason for using material not previously studied is that students must learn what they hear and what they do not hear. This can only be accomplished by making their experience of hearing the primary and first aspect of the dictation, as indeed it should be. The materials for dictations must be selected according to the students' abilities and the levels of usage and the mostly needed style. Dictations serve teachers and students variously and efficiently.