

DICTATION AND ITS BENEFITS TO LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract: Through author's personal learning and teaching experience as well as consulting other professional dictation related articles, the author has pointed out some benefits and recommended some basic steps for doing dictation for students at Faculty of English Language Studies, HUBT. In addition, suggestions of time for doing dictation in English and websites where dictation practice lessons are available are also made in this report.

Key words: Dictation, benefits of doing dictation, improvement, language skills.

1. Introduction

Dictation, according to Robby (2015), is exercise whereby you copy exactly someone's speech by listening to it and writing it down. Vietnamese primary school students are very familiar with this kind of exercise since at this level, it has been with them for about three years but the dictation is in Vietnamese language. Some kids find it sometimes boring because of different reasons. However, doing dictation in English can hardly be officially applied to any level from primary to tertiary. To Vietnamese students, doing dictation is hard, but as English native speakers put it "Hard work pays off" or "No pain, no gain". It is really true after a certain period of doing dictation in English because of different benefits it has brought back to learners. Doing dictation does improve your listening, pronunciation, writing, taking notes, and speaking skills which are crucially important to any English learner.

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2. Development

2.1. Dictation improves your listening, pronunciation and intonation at the same time

Doing dictation improves your listening and pronunciation, that has been proved by many learners. Doing dictation helps learners be familiar with many different accents from different places, and with both native speaker's and non-native speaker's one. It helps learners be familiar with different styles and situations which are new to them. It also helps learners be patient with listening again and again to catch every single word and therefore do not miss any information.

In addition to improving listening skill, doing dictation helps learners improve their pronunciation and intonation over time. When they listen to English words again and again, repetition mechanism will be automatically created in their mind. This mechanism is very important to learner's development and improvement of listening skill. Sometimes they repeat

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the words soundly, sometimes quietly, which is called shadowing. The repetition unintentionally trains their pronunciation and intonation. Therefore, Listening – Repetition – Writing help learners improve their pronunciation and intonation a lot. But not all dictation pieces are worth doing to improve pronunciation and intonation. Perhaps, the most crucial benefit of doing dictation is that learners must be patient with listening again and again purposely for the information they need, which if not for doing dictation, many learners would not be patient to do.

Bellow are four steps which are useful for doing dictation efficiently after having chosen suitable level and topic:

Step 1: Listen to the content throughout once without looking at the subtitle or transcription to get general information as well as intonation. At this step you can also adjust the speed if it is too fast or too low.

Step 2: Listen carefully for each sentence, pause and write.

Step 3: In case you cannot hear all words in a sentence, rewind and listen again and again until you catch the words. However, if listening for several times you still can not catch, skip it. Keep going on till you finish the last sentence.

Step 4: Compare what you have written with the transcript. Pay attention to words or phrases you can not catch or write. After comparing, you need to realize the reasons (because new words, strange pronunciation, linking sound or elision) and take notes in a notebook to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

2.2. Dictation trains learners' writing and taking note

Everytime learners finish writing what they have listened to, they need to edit

their writing and make some adjustments according to how well it sounds. Through dictation, learners widen their vocabulary, collocations, or the way native speakers use their language in general, which improve their writing over time. Gradually, they can learn the nature way of written English by doing dictation. Dictation can also help learners listen to professionals giving speeches and write them down and make sure their hand adopt native-like speech patterns right from the beginning instead of much longer trial and error way.

Doing dictation overtime will be beneficial to learners when they listen to lectures from their teachers at schools where listening and writing are still two main activities during lectures at different education levels in Vietnam. Being familiar with dictation is a big advantage in interpretation where taking notes is crucially important skill to an interpreter.

2.3. Dictation improves learner's speaking skill

According to Robby's advice (2015), learner should follow three steps bellow to develop their speaking skill:

Step 1: Listen to some motivational speakers such as Tony Robbins, and write down his speech by pausing the video from time to time. While writing it down, learners should shadow the speaker and speak it out loud.

Step 2: After writing the piece down on paper, learners should read it out loud a good few times. Learners may also try to read along the speakers by watching the video again and again, thus learners train their pronunciation to develop both speaking and listening skills.

Step 3: In this step, learners retell the written piece without looking at the written content. Do it many times. At first

learners may refer to the paper for some clues but eventually they will be able to retell the whole thing without even looking at. Thus speaking skill is developed.

2.4. Some suggestions for time and websites for dictation

Dictation can be done at different time periods but in current situation, it is most suitable to be done at the end of listening period. In the situation where English teaching periods are being shortened, it is difficult to ask for its own period, it should be introduced in combination with listening skill. In addition, it is a good idea to introduce the benefits of doing dictation and some effective steps to encourage learners to do it at home. There are several websites helping learners do dictation well. Following are some of the websites: Listen-and-write.com; Breakingnewsenglish.com/

dictation.html; learningenglish.voanews.com; loe.org; Voicetube.com; Ted.com; learnenglish.de/dictationpage.html.

3. Conclusion

It is no doubt that hard work pays off. Listening purposely to suitable English and patiently writing what you hear down when you have already recognized its benefits will definitely improve your English skills, primarily your listening skill which is normally the most difficult one to Vietnamese learners.

This article has tried to highlight some benefits of doing dictation to English learners and introduced some essential steps which may be suitable to many learners to apply. Different websites suitable for doing dictation have been introduced as well with the purpose to help learners step by step improve their English./.

Reference

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CHÉP CHÍNH TẢ VÀ LỢI ÍCH CỦA NÓ ĐỐI VỚI NGƯỜI HỌC NGÔN NGỮ

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Tóm tắt: Thông qua kinh nghiệm học tập và giảng dạy của cá nhân tác giả cũng như tham khảo các bài báo liên quan đến chính tả của các chuyên gia khác, tác giả xin đề xuất một số bước cơ bản để luyện đọc chính tả cho sinh viên tại Khoa Ngôn ngữ Anh, HUBT. Ngoài ra, các gợi ý về thời gian cho hoạt động chép chính tả bằng tiếng Anh và các trang web có các bài học thực hành chép chính tả cũng được đưa ra trong báo cáo này).

Từ khóa: dictation, benefits of doing dictation, improvement, language skills.