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COMBINING DICTOGLOSS AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This article describes dictogloss, an integrated skills technique for language learning in which students work together to create a reconstructed version of a text read to them by their teacher. The article begins for explaining the basic dictogloss technique, contrasting it with traditional dictation, and citing research related to the use of dictogloss in second language instruction. Next, dictogloss is situated in relation to eight current, overlapping trends in second language teaching. Then, in the key section of the article, a description is provided of how the literature on cooperative learning enables teachers to better understand how dictogloss works and to use dictogloss more effectively. Included in this section is a rationale for using dictogloss with global issues content. Finally, eight variations on the basic dictogloss procedure are presented.

Introduction

Dictation has a long history in literacy education, particularly second language education. In the standard dictation procedure, the teacher reads a passage slowly and repeatedly. Students write exactly what the teacher says. Dictation in this traditional form has been criticized as a rote learning method in which students merely make a copy of the text the teacher reads without doing any thinking, thus producing a mechanical form of literacy. Ruth Wajnryb (1990) is credited with developing a new way to do dictation, known as dictogloss. While there are many variations on dictogloss – we will be describing some of these later in this article - the basic format is as follows:

1. The class engages in some discussion on the topic of the upcoming text. This topic is one on which students have some background knowledge and, hopefully, interest. The class may also discuss the text type of the text, e.g., narrative, procedure, or explanation, and the purpose, organizational structure, and language features of that text type.

2. The teacher reads the text aloud once at normal speed as students listen but do not write. The text can be selected by teachers from newspapers, textbooks, etc., or teachers can write their own or modify an existing text. The text should be at or below students' current overall proficiency level, although there may be some new vocabulary. It may even be a text that students have seen before. The length of the text depends on students' proficiency level.

3. The teacher reads the text again at normal speed and students take notes. Students are not trying to write down every word spoken; they could not even if they tried, because the teacher is reading at normal speed.

4. Students work in groups of two-four to reconstruct the text in full sentences, not in point form (also known as bullet points). This reconstruction seeks to retain the meaning and form of the original text but is not a word-for-word copy of the text read by the teacher. Instead, students are working together to create a cohesive text with correct grammar and other features of the relevant text type, e.g., procedure, or rhetorical framework, e.g., cause and effect, that approximates the meaning of the original.

5. Students, with the teacher's help, identify similarities and differences in terms of meaning and form between their text reconstructions and the original, which is displayed on an overhead projector or shown to students in another way.

Dictogloss has been the subject of a number of studies and commentaries, which have, for the most part, supported use of the technique (Brown, 2001; Cheong, 1993; Kowal & Swain, 1994, 1997; Lim, 2000; Lim & Jacobs, 2001a, b; Llewyn, 1989; Nabei, 1996; Storch, 1998; Swain, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Swain & Miccoli, 1994). Among the reasons given for advocating the use of dictogloss are that students are encouraged to focus some of their attention on form and that all four language skills – listening (to the teacher read the text and to groupmates discuss the reconstruction), speaking (to groupmates during the reconstruction), reading (notes taken while listening to the teacher, the group's reconstruction, and the original text), and writing the reconstruction) – are involved. Further potential benefits of the technique are discussed later in this paper.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section situates dictogloss within current trends in second language teaching. The next section provides ideas on how ideas from cooperative learning can help teachers understand how dictogloss works and enhance its impact. The third section presents a number of variations on dictogloss. Our purposes for writing this article are to encourage more teachers to use dictogloss, to use it more effectively via insights from cooperative learning, to link dictogloss with global issues content as one way of making language learning more meaningful, and to experiment with variations on the standard dictogloss procedure.

Section 1: Dictogloss and Current Trends in Second Language Education

Dictogloss represents a major shift from traditional dictation. When implemented conscientiously, dictogloss embodies sound principles of language teaching which include: learner autonomy, cooperation among learners, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners. These principles flow from an overall paradigm shift that has occurred in second language education (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001).

In this section, we discuss each of these eight overlapping trends with reference to dictogloss. The Steps referred to below are the five steps in the standard dictogloss procedure described in the Introduction section above. For explanations of the variations from the standard dictogloss procedure mentioned in the current section (Section 1), please refer to Section 3 of this article.

1. **Learner Autonomy.** Learner autonomy involves learners having some choice as to the what and how of the curriculum and, at the same time, feeling responsible for and understanding their own learning and for the learning of classmates (van Lier, 1996).

In dictogloss, as opposed to traditional dictation, students reconstruct the text on their own after the teacher has read it aloud to them just twice at normal speed (Steps 2 and 3), rather than the teacher reading the text slowly and repeatedly. Also, students need to help each other to develop a joint reconstruction of the text (Step 4), rather than depending on the teacher for all the information. Furthermore, Step 5 provides students with opportunities to see where they have done well and where they may need to improve. Swain (1999) believes that, "Students gain insights into their own linguistic shortcomings and develop strategies for solving them by working through them with a partner" (pp. 145). Ways to add other dimensions of learner autonomy to dictogloss are students:

(a) asking for a pause in the dictation (Variation B)
(b) choosing the topics of the texts, selecting the texts themselves, and taking the teacher's place to read the text (Variation C)
(c) elaborating on the text (Variation F)
(d) giving their opinions about the ideas in the text (Variation G).

2. **Cooperation among Learners.** Traditional dictation was done as an individual activity. Dictogloss retains an individual element (Steps 2 and 3) in which students work alone to listen to and take notes on the text read by the teacher. In Step 4 of dictogloss, learners work together in groups of between two and four members. Additionally, in Step 5, they have the opportunity to discuss how well their group did and, perhaps, how they could function more effectively the next time. We will go into greater detail later in this article on how to improve group functioning in dictogloss.

3. **Curricular Integration.** From the perspective of language teachers, curricular integration involves combining the teaching of content, such as social studies or science, with the teaching of language, such as writing skills or grammar. As in traditional dictation, with dictogloss, curricular integration is easily achieved via the selection of texts. For instance, if the goal is to integrate language and mathematics in order to help students learn important mathematics vocabulary and grammar, language teachers (in consultation with mathematics teachers and, perhaps, students) can use a mathematics text for the dictogloss. The discussion prior to the readings of the text (Step 1) helps students recall and build their knowledge of the text's topic. As Brown (2001, p. 2) points out, "Writing this information [what students know on the topic] on the chalk board allows the students to notice the wealth of information they have as a collective." In addition to promoting integration between language education and other curricular areas, dictogloss, as noted earlier, also promotes integration within the language curriculum, as all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing - are utilized.

4. **Focus on Meaning.** In literacy education, the focus used to lie mostly on matters of form, such as grammar and spelling. In the current paradigm, while form still matters, the view is that language learning takes place best when the focus is mainly on ideas (Littlewood, 1981). Dictogloss seeks to combine a focus on meaning with a focus on form (Brown, 2001). As Swain (1999) puts it, "When students focus on form, they must be engaged in the act of 'meaning-making'" (pp. 125-126).

5. **Diversity.** Perhaps it is appropriate that the term 'diversity' has a few different meanings. One of the meanings particularly relevant to dictogloss is that, due to

differences in background and in ways of learning (Gardner, 1999) different people will attend to different information. This is reflected in the variation in the notes that students take in Step 3. Working in a group in Step 4 allows learners to take advantage of this type of diversity. A second meaning of diversity suggests that different students will have different strengths (Cohen, 1998) which may lead them to play different roles in their group. For instance, those with larger vocabularies and greater content knowledge in the topic of the text can help with that part of the reconstruction, and those whose interpersonal skills are better developed may often help coordinate the group's interaction.

There are a number of ways of using diversity to facilitate each student being a helper (the star) in their group, rather than always being the one receiving help from their more proficient partners. One, we can use a range of topics, striving in particular to read texts on topics which less proficient students know about. Two, students can create visuals to illustrate their text reconstructions (Variation D). In this way, those students whose illustration skills are currently better than their literacy skills have a chance to shine.

6. **Thinking Skills.** The definition of literacy has been expanded beyond being able to read and write to also being able to think critically about what is read and about how to best frame what is written. The discussion that takes place during Step 4 of dictogloss provides learners with chances to use thinking skills as they challenge, defend, learn from, and elaborate on the ideas presented during collaboration on the reconstruction task. Thinking skills also come into play in Step 5 as students analyze their reconstructed text in relation to the original. We can challenge students' skill at identifying main ideas by asking them to write summaries rather than text reconstructions (Variation E) and to elaborate on the texts read (Variation F).

7. **Alternative Assessment.** Assessment measures in second language education have been criticized for a focus on measuring language acquisition out of context, e.g., by testing proficiency via single words or isolated sentences rather than whole texts (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). In response to these criticisms, a range of more context-based alternative assessment procedures have been developed, including think aloud (Block, 1992), peer critique (Ghaith, 2002), portfolios (Pierce & O'Malley, 1992), and dialogue journals (Peyton, 1993).

Dictogloss offers a context-rich method of assessing how much students know about writing and about the topic of the text. The text reconstruction task provides learners with opportunities to display both their knowledge of the content of the text as well as of the organizational structure and language features of the text (Derewianka, 1990). As students discuss with each other during Steps 4 and 5, teachers can listen in and observe students' thinking as they about a task. This real-time observation of learners' thinking process offers greater insight than does looking at the product after they have finished. In this way, dictogloss supplies a process-based complement to traditional product-based modes of assessment. Furthermore, students are involved in self-assessment and peer assessment.

8. **Teachers as Co-learners.** The current view in education sees teachers not as all-knowing sages but instead as fellow learners who join with their students in the quest for knowledge. This knowledge can pertain specifically to teaching and learning, or it can be knowledge on any topic or sphere of activity. Dictogloss may be of use here in at least two ways. First, as mentioned in the last paragraph, we can observe students and apply what we learn from our observations in order to teach better. Second, during Step 1, we can share with students our interest in the topic of the dictogloss text and some of what we have done and plan to do to learn more about it or to apply related ideas.

Section 2: Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning, also known as collaborative learning, is a body of concepts and techniques for helping to maximize the benefits of cooperation among students. Various principles for cooperative learning have been put forward in the literature on cooperative learning (e.g., Baloche, 1998, Jacobs, Power, & Loh, 2002, Johnson & Johnson, 1999, Kagan, 1994, and Slavin, 1995). In the current section of this paper, we discuss eight of these cooperative learning principles and how they can inform the use of dictogloss.

1. **Heterogeneous Grouping.** Forming groups in which students are mixed on one or more of a number of variables including sex, ethnicity, social class, religion, personality, age, language proficiency, and diligence is believed to have a number of benefits, such as encouraging peer tutoring, providing a variety of perspectives, helping students come to know and like others different from themselves, and fostering appreciation of the value of diversity.

Thus, in forming groups for dictogloss, we might want to look at our class and make conscious decisions about which students should work together, rather than leaving the matter to chance or to students' choice. The latter option often results in groups with low levels of heterogeneity. Furthermore, when we opt for heterogeneous groups, we may want to spend some time on ice breaking (also known as teambuilding) activities, because, as Slavin (1995) notes, the combination of students that results from teacher-selected groups is likely to be one that would never have been created had it not been for our intervention.

2. **Collaborative Skills.** Collaborative skills are those needed to work with others. Students may lack these skills, the language involved in using the skills, or the inclination to apply the skills during dictogloss. Some of the collaborative skills relevant to dictogloss include: asking for and giving reasons; disagreeing politely and responding politely to disagreement; and encouraging others to participate and responding to encouragement to participate. The overlap between collaborative skills and thinking skills can be seen in particular in the first two pairs of skills just mentioned, i.e., those involving reasons and disagreement.

3. **Group Autonomy.** This principle encourages students to look to themselves for resources rather than relying solely on the teacher. As Wajnryb (1990, p. 18) notes:

> Classroom organization in the form of group work allows for the development of a small learning community … . There is also the factor of group responsibility for the work produced. … The creation of small learning communities means increased participation and learner co-operation. This injection of 'democracy' into the classroom allows learners to complement each others' strengths and weaknesses.

In Step 4 of dictogloss, while students are working in their groups to reconstruct the text, and in Step 5, while students are comparing their text to the original, it is very tempting for teachers to intervene either in a particular group or with the entire class. We may sometimes want to resist this temptation, because as Roger Johnson writes, "Teachers must trust the peer interaction to do many of the things they have felt responsible for themselves" (http://www.clcrc.com/pages/qanda.html).

4. **Simultaneous Interaction.** In classrooms in which group activities are not used, the typical interaction pattern is that of sequential interaction, in which one person at a time – usually the teacher – speaks. For example, the teacher explains a point, asks a question to check students' comprehension of that point, calls on a student to answer the question, and evaluates that student's response. In traditional dictation, the teacher is the only person who speaks, unless the teacher calls on individual students to read back what has been dictated.

When group activities are used, one student per group is, hopefully, speaking. In a class of 40 divided into groups of four, ten students are speaking simultaneously, i.e., 40 students divided by 4 students per group = 10 students (1 per group) speaking at the same time. Thus, the name: simultaneous interaction (Kagan, 1994). If the same class is working in groups of two, we may have 20 students speaking simultaneously.

We encourage simultaneous interaction in Step 4 of dictogloss, and the smaller the groups (pairs too are groups), the more students are interacting simultaneously. Simultaneous interaction is also relevant at Step 5 of dictogloss. Many teachers may want to have one group then another read or show their reconstruction or some part thereof to the class, via overhead projector, visualizer, or other means. When this happens, we are back to sequential interaction.

Many alternatives exist that maintain simultaneous interaction. For instance, one person from each group can go to another group. These representatives explain (not just show) their group's reconstruction to the other group, solicit feedback, and pass on that feedback to their original group. Of course, simultaneous and sequential interaction may be usefully combined in Step 5.

5. **Equal Participation (Kagan, 1994).** A frequent problem in groups is that one or two group members dominate the group and, for whatever reason, impede the participation of others. Cooperative learning offers many techniques for promoting equal participation in groups. Some of these may be useful in dictogloss.

a. The fact that everyone has written potentially different notes during Step 2 provides some impetus for everyone's ideas to be sought. The group might accentuate this by deciding on a division of labor during the note-taking, e.g., one person is mainly responsible for the first half and the other for the second half.

b. Everyone can have a designated turn to read their notes.

c. Each group member can have the main responsibility for one part of the reconstruction.

d. Each person can have a role to play. Roles should rotate. Examples of roles include:

- *Facilitator* who looks to see that the group's reconstruction has the characteristics of the text type, e.g., explanation, which is the language focus of the lesson.
- *Checker* who checks to see that everyone in the group can explain all the group's choices in creating their reconstruction.
- *Conflict Creator* who disagrees in order to generate debate.
- *Recorder* who writes down the group's ideas.
- *Language Monitor* who checks that the group is using the second language when appropriate (teachers and students may decide that the first language is sometimes appropriate).

Furthermore, speaking in a group rather than to the entire class and the teacher may create an atmosphere in which students feel more comfortable about participating and taking the risks that speaking up involves. Wajnryb (1990, p. 18) believes, "Group work reduces the stress on the learner (as well as the teacher) by moving interaction away from the public arena. … allows for the phenomenon of 'exploratory talk' among peers, something which is rendered impossible by the size, power asymmetry, and lack of intimacy of the full classroom."

6. **Individual Accountability.** Individual accountability is, in some ways, the flip side of equal participation. When we try to encourage equal participation in groups, we want everyone to feel they have opportunities to take part in the group. When we try to encourage individual accountability in groups, we hope that no one will attempt to avoid using those opportunities. Techniques for encouraging individual accountability seek to avoid the problem of groups known variously as social loafing, sleeping partners, or free riding.

These techniques, not surprisingly, overlap with those for encouraging equal participation. Some further ideas that are relevant to dictogloss include:

a. As mentioned under simultaneous interaction, group representatives can go to another group to get ideas from other groups during Step 4 and to report what their group has done in Step 5. This representative should be selected at random, rather than being a volunteer or a nominee of their group. This encourages all group members to be ready.

b. After doing dictogloss in groups, the class can do dictogloss working alone using a text of the same text type and the same or related content area.

c. In Step 4, groups can confer but then individual members write their own reconstruction.

d. In Step 5, the teacher can call on group members at random to explain their group's reconstruction decisions.

7. **Positive Interdependence.** This principle lies at the heart of cooperative learning. When positive interdependence exists among members of a group, they feel that what helps one member of the group helps the other members and that what hurts one member of the group hurts the other members. It is the "All for one, one for all" feeling that leads group members to want to help each other, to see that they share a common goal. Wajnryb (1990, p. 18) observes, "As a group pools its resources to perform the task of reconstruction of the dictogloss text, they assume common ownership of the version they are creating. This inevitably generates a certain pride of ownership and increases learners' commitment to their energy investment."

Johnson and Johnson (1999) describe nine ways to promote positive interdependence. Five of these are discussed below in regard to dictogloss.

a. Environmental positive interdependence: Group members sit close together so that they can easily see each other's work and hear each other without using loud voices. This may seem trivial, but it can be important.

b. Role positive interdependence: In addition to the roles mentioned above, there are also housekeeping types of roles, such as Timekeeper who reminds the group of the time limit for Step 4 and Sound Hound who tells the group if they are being too loud in their deliberations.

c. Resource positive interdependence: Each group member has unique resources. Ways that students can control such resources in dictogloss include:

- Individual members enter Step 4 with the notes they took while listening to the teacher read the text.
- If some students' current achievement level suggests that they will not be able to take any useful notes, and we are worried that this will affect their relationship with groupmates, we can assist such students, e.g., letting them read the text the day before, giving them a note-taking scaffold, or providing them the text in the form of a cloze passage (Davis & Rinvolucri, 1988).
- Each student can have a different reference book, e.g., different dictionaries, grammar books, encyclopedias, or other sources of content information, or computer access to internet versions of such resources.
- Information gained by talking with other groups about their reconstructions constitutes another resource. Group members can be designated to visit other groups to gain this information.
- In Step 5, one group member can be given a copy of the text read by the teacher and can lead the group in comparing their reconstruction to the original.
- In Variation C students take turns reading aloud to their groupmates.

d. External Challenge positive interdependence: When the same group stays together over a period of time – this is recommended by most books on cooperative learning partly as a means of allowing groups to work to improve their group dynamics – students can aim to improve on past performance in dictogloss.

e. Reward positive interdependence: If groups meet a pre-set goal, they receive some kind of reward. Rewards can take many forms: grades, sweets, certificates, praise, the choice of a future activity the class does, the chance to do their team cheer or handshake, or just a feeling of satisfaction.

8. **Cooperation as a Value.** This principle means that rather than cooperation being only a way to learn, i.e., the *how* of learning, cooperation also becomes part of the content to be learned, i.e., the *what* of learning. This flows naturally from the most crucial cooperative learning principle, positive interdependence. Cooperation as a value involves taking the feeling of "All for one, one for all" and expanding it beyond the small classroom group to encompass the whole class, the whole school, on and on, bringing in increasingly greater numbers of people and other beings into students' circle of ones with whom to cooperate.

One way of expanding the scope of the positive interdependence felt by students is the use of texts with global issues content. Global issues connect with such areas of education as peace education, environmental education, human rights education, and development education (TESOLers for Social Responsibility www.tesolers4sr.org). Specific topics that the authors have used for dic togloss include hunger, nuclear weapons, vegetarianism, and reducing use of disposable products.

Section 3: Variations on Dictogloss

We have used several variations on dictogloss. These are described in this section. No doubt, others exist or await creation.

Variation A: Dictogloss Negotiation

In Dictogloss Negotiation, rather than group members discussing what they heard when the teacher has finished reading, students discuss after each section of text has been read. Sections can be one sentence long or longer, depending on the difficulty of the text relative to students' proficiency level.

(1) Students sit with a partner, desks face-to-face rather than side-by-side. This encourages discussion. After reading the text once while students listen, during the second reading, the teacher stops after each sentence or two, or paragraph. During this pause, students discuss but do not write what they think they heard. As with standard dictogloss, the students' reconstruction should be faithful to the meaning and form of the original but does not employ the identical wording.

(2) One member of each pair writes the pair's reconstruction of the text section. This role rotates with each section of the text.

(3) Students compare their reconstruction with the original as in Step 5 of the standard procedure.

Variation B: Student-Controlled Dictation

In Student-Controlled Dictation, students use the teacher as they would use a tape recorder. In other words, they can ask the teacher to stop, go back, i.e., rewind, and skip ahead, i.e., fast-forward. However, students bear in mind that the aim of dictogloss is the creation of an appropriate reconstruction, not a photocopy.

(1) After reading the text once at normal speed with students listening but not taking notes, the teacher reads the text again at natural speed and continues reading until the end if no student says "stop" even if it is clear that students are having difficulty. Students are responsible for saying "stop, please" when they cannot keep up and "please go back to (the last word or phrase they have written)." If students seem reluctant to exercise their power to stop us, we start reading very fast. We encourage students to be persistent; they can "rewind" the teacher as many times as necessary. The class might want to have a rule that each student can only say "please stop" one time. Without this rule, the same few students – almost invariably the highest level students - may completely control the pace. The lower proficiency students might be lost, but be too shy to speak. After each member of the class has controlled the teacher once, anyone can again control one time, until all have taken a turn. Once the class comprehends that everyone can and should control the teacher if they need help, this rule need not be followed absolutely.

(2) Partner conferencing (Step 4 in standard dictogloss) can be done for this variation as well. Student-Controlled Dictation can be a fun variation, because students enjoy explicitly controlling the teacher.

(3) Another way of increasing student control of dictation is to ask them to bring in texts to use for dictation or to nominate topics.

Variation C: Student-Student Dictation

Rather than the teacher being the one to read the text, students take turns to read to each other. Student-Student Dictation works best after students have become familiar with the standard dictogloss procedure. This dictogloss variation involves key elements of cooperative learning, in particular equal participation from all group members, individual accountability (each member takes turns controlling the activity) and positive interdependence as group members explore meaning and correctness together.

(1) A text - probably a longer than usual one - is divided into four or five sections. Each student is given a different section. Thus, with a class of 32 students and a text divided into four sections, eight students would have the first section, eight the second, etc. Students each read the section they have been given and try to understand it. If the text is challenging, students with the same section can initially meet in groups of three or four to read and discuss the meaning.

(2) In their original groups, students take turns reading their section of the text as the teacher would for standard dictation while their groupmates take notes.

(4) Students work with their partners to reconstruct the text, with the students taking the role of silent observer when the section they read is being reconstructed.

(5) For the analysis, Step 5 of the standard procedure, each student plays the role of the teacher when the section they read is being discussed. Every group member eventually plays the role of teacher.

Student-Student Dictation can also be done by students bringing in the own texts rather than using a text supplied by the teacher.

Variation D: Dictogloss Summaries

While in the standard dictogloss procedure students attempt to create a reconstruction of approximately the same length as the original, in Dictogloss Summaries, students focus only on the key ideas of the original text.

(1) Steps 1, 2, and 3 are the same as in standard dictogloss, although to encourage summarizing rather than using the words of the original text, the teacher might ask students not to take any notes.

(2) Students work with a partner to summarize the key points of the text. Here, as well as in other dictogloss variations, we can provide visual cues (sketch, flow chart, photo, mind map) that represents some elements of the story. This aids comprehension and may help students structure their reconstruction. Additionally, students can create visuals to accompany their reconstructions, as another means to demonstrate comprehension and to promote unique reconstructions.

Variation E: Scrambled Sentence Dictogloss

Scrambled Sentences is a popular technique for teaching a number of language skills. Scrambled Sentences Dictogloss employs this technique to raise the difficulty level of dictogloss and to focus students' attention on how texts fit together.

(1) The teacher jumbles the sentences of the text before reading it to students.

(2) When students reconstruct the text, they first have to recreate what they heard and then put it into a logical order.

(3) When analyzing students' reconstructions, the class may decide that there is more than one possible correct order. This fits with the overall spirit of dictogloss, i.e., that there is no one correct way to achieve a communicative purpose, although there are certain conventions that should be understood and considered.

Variation F: Elaboration Dictogloss (Airey, 2002)

In Elaboration Dictogloss, students go beyond what they hear to not just recreate a text but also to improve it.

(1) This dictogloss method may be preceded by a review of ways to elaborate, such as adding adjectives and adverbs, examples, facts, personal experiences, and causes and effects.

(2) After taking notes on the text read by the teacher, as in Step 3 of the standard procedure, students reconstruct the text. Then, they add elaborations. These can be factual, based on what students know about the topic of the text or research they do, or students can invent elaborations.

For instance, part of the text read by the teacher might be:
Today, many students use bicycles.

Students could simply elaborate by adding a word or two:
Today, many Japanese college students use bicycles.

Or, a sentence or two could be added:
Today, many students use bicycles. This reduces air pollution and helps students stay fit. However, bicycle riding in a crowded city can be dangerous.

Variation G: Dictogloss Opinion

In Dictogloss Opinion, after students reconstruct the text, they give their opinion on the writers' ideas. These opinions can be inserted at various points in the text or can be written at the end of the text. If student commentary is inserted throughout the text, it promotes a kind of dialogue with the original authors of the text.

Variation H - Picture Dictation (Airey, 2002)

Dictation does not always have to involve writing sentences and paragraphs. Instead, students can do other activities based on what the teacher reads to them. For instance, they can complete a graphic organizer. Another possibility, described below, is to draw.

(1) The teacher finds or writes a description of a drawing. The description should include a great deal of detail. Relevant vocabulary and concepts can be reviewed in the discussion that occurs in Step 1 of the standard dictogloss procedure.

(2) Students listen to the description and do a drawing based on what they hear.

(3) Students compare drawings with their partners and make one composite drawing per pair.

(4) Students compare their drawing with the original.

(5) Alternatively, students can reconstruct the description text read by the teacher, as in standard dictogloss, and then do a drawing.

Conclusion

The first section of this article described how dictogloss fits with current trends in language teaching. Among these trends is the use of student-student collaboration. Key principles for understanding and facilitating this collaboration were discussed in the second section of the article, including the principle of cooperation as a value and the use of global issues content as one means of operationalizing this principle. Variations on dictogloss were explained in the final section.

Dictogloss is, of course, just one of many innovative language teaching techniques that embody the current paradigm in education, that are well-suited to cooperative learning, that can benefit from their use with global issues content, and that lend themselves to a host of variations developed by creative second language teachers. The current paradigm is not just about how we teach and how students learn. It is just as much about why students learn and why we teach. It is about seeking to create an atmosphere in which students are self-motivated and take an active role in their own learning and that of their classmates and teachers. Furthermore, as can be seen in this article in the choice of topics for dictogloss, part of this classroom atmosphere can include a desire to understand the world and to make it a better place.

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