Using dictogloss to develop cooperative learning among L2 learners

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Background

Traditional dictation can be unpopular with learners and may demotivate them from learning (Scrivener 2011: 362). Therefore, in order to make dictation more enjoyable and

Preparation
- Introduce topic
- Pre-teach vocabulary

Dictation
- T reads the text at a normal speed twice
- Ls take note of the keywords during the second time

Text Reconstruction
- Ls work together in small groups to reconstruct the text

Analysis and Correction
- Ls compare their reconstructed texts with the orignial text
- Ls make necessary corrections

Figure 1: Four stages of dictogloss

useful, various dictation methods have been introduced over the years. One of them is called dictogloss, where learners listen to a passage, note down keywords and then work together to reconstruct the text. Dictogloss was originally proposed by Wajnryb (1990) as an alternative method of teaching grammar. He argued that dictogloss gives learners a more precise understanding of English grammar than other approaches and consequently leads to higher accuracy in language use (Wajnryb 1990).

Four stages of dictogloss

Dictogloss often follows four basic stages: preparation, dictation, text reconstruction, and analysis and correction (Fig. 1) (Wajnryb 1990). During the text construction and correction stages, learners are forced to interact with each other thus promoting cooperative learning to occur. Language is best learned and taught through interaction (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993 cited in Nabei 1996).

Benefits

- Combines individual and group activities
- Text reconstruction promotes both the negotiation of meaning and form
- Encourages learners to stay actively engaged in the learning process, where they identify their grammar problems and allow the teacher to respond to their needs
- Develops multiple skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking)

Issues

- Socio-cultural context of the learners; it is important for teachers to be aware of different learning cultures, especially when they are teaching abroad (e.g. in some parts of Asia, learners are used to having teacher-centred classes).
- Work-group composition and dynamics; heterogeneously grouped teams are believed to bring more benefits than their homogeneously formed teams as they come from different backgrounds. It should also be noted that not all learners perceive cooperative learning as effective or useful.
- Student assessment; if the learners are being assessed using dictogloss, it is vital to reassure the learners that the assessment will be fair and that they will be assessed individually to encourage them to actively take part in the activity.
- Clarity of the instruction; it is important that learners understand the instructions before they start. Therefore, instruction checking questions should be used to check learners' understanding of the different stages of dictogloss.

(Nabei 1996; Scrivener 2011; Vasiljevic 2010; Wajnryb 1990)

Various uses of dictogloss

Depending on the nature of the tasks and adaptation of the four stages (Fig. 1), dictogloss can be used to focus on different areas of the language (e.g. language skills, grammar, vocabulary). Dictogloss has been deemed effective when used in conjunction with cooperative learning to develop listening and speaking skills of L2 learners (Vasiljevic 2010). It has also been used to develop learners' writing skills, specifically in teaching cohesive devices which most L2 learners find challenging (Kooshafar, Youhanaee, & Amirian

2012). Dictogloss is also deemed to be effective when teaching vocabulary (Mackenzie 2013). It should be noted that the stages of dictogloss were adapted to meet the aims and goals of respective lessons. Furthermore, the activities in the studies were designed to attend to their learners' needs thus it may not be as effective to replicate them in a different class. Nonetheless, this also suggests that dictogloss can be adapted to meet the needs of the learners.

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