

# *Introduction*

*Interactive Dictations* is a low-intermediate to intermediate level text that is intended to improve the listening, speaking, and writing skills of ESL students. Reading skills are also reinforced, along with attention to vocabulary and grammar. This text provides a wide variety of dictations that include provocative news items, problems to solve, and decisions to make. Each dictation naturally leads to a discussion activity that can take twenty to thirty minutes.

Teachers can pick and choose which dictations meet the needs, interests, and levels of their particular students. Dictations are classified by topic, but one topic is not necessarily easier or harder than another. Topics can be used to supplement a theme or grammar point of an existing text.

Within topics, the units are designed to stand alone — each unit contains one dictation activity, a follow-up discussion, and a writing activity. Pair or small-group work is encouraged in both the dictation and discussion sections. This text includes several cooperative learning activities.

Some units are short. Teachers can use these as fill-ins for a 15 to 30 minute lesson. Longer units will take 30 to 60 minutes.

The full dictations are available in the second part of the book. A CD with the full dictations is also available.

## ❁ **Different Types of Dictation** ❁

Dictation has been presented in many forms through the years in reading, listening, grammar, and writing classes. It is also used as an assessment procedure. This text, however, does not deal with scoring or analyzing student work. The dictations are meant to be a challenging springboard to discussion and writing by which the students are encouraged to use the language they have just encountered in the dictation.

This text includes four forms of dictation: **partial**, **pair**, **dictogloss**, and **prediction**. While all units include pair and group work in the discussion segments, several units will include more extensive cooperative and role-play types of activities. See the unit on proverbs as an example.

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### **Partial** (sometimes known as *cloze*)

Most of the dictations in this text are partial dictations where words, phrases, or chunks of language have been deleted, and students are required to listen and write down the missing words. All the dictations should be discussed upon completion. Pair work is encouraged.

### **Pair** (sometimes known as mutual)

This dictation requires students to work in pairs to combine two-part texts into one continuous piece. One student has a copy of dictation “Student A,” and the other has dictation “Student B.” Each student has half of the text. They should not look at each other’s sheets. Student A dictates and Student B writes, then B dictates and A writes, and so on until the story is complete.

### **Dictogloss**

In this kind of dictation, the focus is on getting the gist or main idea of a sentence or short paragraph.

There are many variations of the dictogloss technique. In the directions for the sentence-level dictogloss, students are told that they will hear a sentence only once, after which they are to jot down the words they can recall and try to reconstruct the sentence in writing as accurately as they can. The first time this is done, the teacher will probably have to allow the students a second reading until they discover that they need to pay attention the first time around. As the students work at rebuilding the sentence, they can work in pairs and then fours.

### **Prediction**

Prediction lessons come in two parts. The first part focuses more on reading skills and grammar. The students are required to work in pairs, reading the passage and predicting (or guessing) what should be in each blank space. Any logical or grammatically correct word or phrase can be accepted. Part Two requires the students to listen to the same passage and see if their guesses were correct, or similar.

## ❁ Tips for Teachers ❁

1. When reading the full dictations, try to speak naturally, at normal speed, keeping the features of the spoken language. If you are reading the full text at normal speed and you know the exercise will be fairly easy for your students, give the word, phrase, or chunk of language only once. Try to start with a pace that is comfortable for your students, and then make them work a bit at understanding. If you think the text will be difficult for your students, repeat two, possibly three times. When field testing our material, several teachers said that they thought the material looked quite difficult for their students, but they were surprised how well their students did. It's up to you to decide what works best. If you have to repeat more than three times, the text is too difficult for your students.
2. The students may want to check the spelling of a word or words as you are giving the dictation. It's best to tell them to wait until the end of the activity.
3. For numbers, have the students write numerals, rather than the word (15, instead of fifteen), except for single-digit numbers (1-9). They should also use dollar (\$) and percentage (%) symbols rather than writing out the words.
4. One key to making the dictation a positive experience is to have students correct their own work. When the dictation is completed, the students check with each other in pairs on what they've heard, while you walk around helping and clarifying. This, in itself, allows for a great deal of discussion. After they have self-corrected, they can turn to the full dictation texts for confirmation. You can then go over the dictation with the class and discuss whatever vocabulary or concepts they don't understand.
5. Rather than read the full dictations from the appendix, you may find it helpful to copy the page you're dictating and fill in the blanks yourself ahead of time. This is useful when giving feedback. It's easier when you're working from the same page as your students. Here is an example from "Proverbs":
  1. There's no *place like home*.
  2. Don't *count your chickens* before they are hatched.
6. There was no one pattern that was followed when choosing words or phrases to be deleted. Sometimes the deletions focus on idioms, sometimes on numbers, sometimes grammar, sometimes vocabulary.
7. *Interactive Dictations* also works well for substitute teachers, since a minimum amount of preparation is needed.

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8. You and your students can also create dictations from local newspapers, the Internet, or any other source. This way you can choose a timely topic and easily adapt it to the level of your students.
9. With higher-level students, you may want to ask a student to read a full dictation. The reader may prepare for this by listening to the CD.
10. Discussions. The discussions can be by pairs, small groups, or the entire class.
11. Cooperative activities have been included in four of the units. These are extensions of pair and group work and they are one of the best ways to have everyone in the class very involved.

*Day 1.* There are four groups, A,B,C, and D. On Day 1, everyone in each group is responsible for researching part of the material assigned to that group.

*Day 2.* All groups reassemble, and the group members go over all the information they have gathered, being sure that each member is fully familiar with all the material.

*Day 2 or 3.* New groups are formed. Each group includes one person from each of the original groups. In other words, each new group will consist of one A, one B, one C, and one D. The Group A person is responsible for sharing all of the Group A material. By the end of this activity every member of the class should have the complete information. This can be a lengthy activity, but it is very valuable, especially for shy students.

## ❁ **Using the CD** ❁

Although it is not necessary to have and use the accompanying CD, many teachers find that having the CD provides greater flexibility in using the material. It can be used in several ways:

1. Play the track once through without stopping **before** reading the dictation to the students. This will introduce the topic and give the students a head start toward comprehending the dictation when it is read to them. Playing the recording before the dictation also provides excellent listening comprehension practice, valuable preparation for listening to lectures.
2. To give the students a chance to hear a different voice, have the students take the dictation from the CD. Although more challenging, this can help the students prepare for standardized listening tests. You can use the pause button; that will allow the students time to fill in the blanks.

3. Play the CD **after** the students have taken the dictation and checked their answers. This can help the students improve and become more confident in listening comprehension.

Teachers suggest that varying the way the recordings are used from unit to unit interests their students and gives their classes the opportunity to express their preferences.

On the CD, each dictation text is on a separate track. The CD track numbers are given in the table of contents of this book (v-vi), and also next to the titles of the gapped texts (1-112) and the titles of full dictations texts (113-151).

## ❁ **Using a Listening Laboratory** ❁

Almost any dictation that is done in class can also be done in the language lab. However, there are some additional things that can be done in the lab that cannot be done in the classroom.

1. Read a short partial dictation in the lab. Then have the students tape what they have written. You can collect both, and then on the student tape give some feedback on their pronunciation.
2. The students create their own partial dictation and make four or five copies of it. They record it carefully and leave the results at their stations. They then move from station to station doing four or five of each other's dictations. The students' dictations can follow a general theme – food, for example – or a specific form – a joke or poem.
3. Dictate a chunk of language. The students listen and record it. Add another chunk. The students record again. At the end of the short, fairly simple dictation, the students transcribe it. Collect their transcriptions and make appropriate comments and corrections.
4. Dictate a problem. An example might be a “Dear Abby” letter that you have turned into a dictation. After each student has done the dictation, they record the solution to the problem. You should listen and respond to the solution, or the students can move from station to station listening to their fellow students and making comments of agreement or disagreement. By preparing short, easy-to-understand dictations first, you can also use this technique to introduce current political or social topics that you think will be of particular interest to your students.

## ❀ **Pronunciation** ❀

Students are often familiar with a word, and they may read it easily, attempt to write it, but still hesitate to use it orally because they don't know how to pronounce it.

Consequently, teachers should pronounce the words in the vocabulary list and have students repeat the words aloud. Students may then be encouraged to use some of the words in the discussion with their partner.

## ❀ **About the Full Dictation Texts** ❀

The complete texts of the dictations begin on page 113. You can read these full texts to give the dictations, have a student read them, or use the CD.