

## 2) Guiding Principles for Conducting Dictation

- Design
- Coverage
- Frequency
- Weighting and Marking

Some guiding principles for conducting dictation are discussed here. These principles should not be new to teachers as they are extracted from the *English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* (CDC, 2004).

## 2) Guiding Principles for Conducting Dictation

### Design

- Dictation should be **contextualised** to illustrate the communicative use of language and help pupils progress towards the Learning Targets.
- Dictation could be conducted in combination with **a range of activities** to develop pupils' language skills.

CG pp.176&177

Like all English learning activities, dictation should be contextualised to enable pupils to seek and process information, formulate responses and make connections. The meaningful and purposeful context allows pupils to apply grammar items and structures, and helps them progress towards the Learning Targets.

Apart from dictating words and sentences, teachers can also conduct a variety of activities in combination with dictation. For instance, in the dicto-comp / dictogloss example in LT 3.1 of Appendix A, after noting down the key words while listening to the story about Andrew, pupils are engaged in pair work to share their notes before they reconstruct the story individually. In this way, pupils will have the opportunities to practise various language skills.

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## Coverage

- Not every word in the learning materials must be learnt by heart.
- Pupils should not be asked to study formulaic expressions or classroom instructions for dictation.
- Pupils should not be asked to spell the spoken form of the date in full words.

CG p.175

As for the coverage, teachers should remember that not every word in the learning materials must be learnt by heart as it is too demanding for pupils. To help pupils learn vocabulary more effectively, key words related to the topic and target language structures which pupils have a lot of chances to use in writing should be emphasised and included in dictation.

Formulaic expressions (e.g. I'm fine, thank you.) and classroom instructions (e.g. Pass the worksheets to the back.) should not be included in dictation because they are for daily conversation. In contexts where the same key words are used for other purposes (e.g. We will go on a hike if the weather is fine.), it would be appropriate for teachers to include them in dictation if they are the target vocabulary.

Besides, the spelling of the spoken form of dates in full words should be avoided as dates are not usually written in the same way when they are expressed orally.

## 2) Guiding Principles for Conducting Dictation

### Frequency

- Teachers should not overburden pupils with excessive dictation as it may kill their interest in learning English and deprive them of the opportunities to engage in other meaningful English learning activities.

CG p.174

There is no fixed rule regarding the frequency of dictation. While dictation helps consolidate the learning of the target vocabulary, teachers should not overburden pupils with excessive dictation as it puts too much stress on pupils and kills their interest in learning English. The lesson time saved could then be spent on other meaningful activities to help pupils develop other language skills.

2) Guiding Principles for Conducting Dictation

## Weighting and Marking

- Dictation should not take up more than 10% of the subject marks.
- Marks should not be deducted for repeated mistakes.
- **Bonus marks** can be given to promote autonomy in language learning.

CG pp.175&177

Since dictation reflects only a small part of pupils' performance in English language learning, it is recommended that dictation should not take up more than 10% of the English Language subject marks.

Marks should not be deducted for repeated mistakes as it is not appropriate for us to conclude that pupils who misspell the word five times have the same language ability as those who make mistakes in five different words.

When conducting theme-based free dictation, bonus marks can be given to promote self-learning and enhance pupils' motivation. It is not necessary to assign a full mark for dictation. Pupils should be encouraged to write as many words as they can that are related to the topic / theme.