

Dictation

In dictation the teacher speaks, the students listen to him and write it down in their note books. At the early stages, dictation should be used for helping the students in writing or accelerating their speed of writing but at later stages it can be used for testing purpose.

In dictation only those words should be given to the students which they have already practised. If there are some difficult words in the paragraph, those should be written on the black-board first. Then the teacher may rub it off and give dictation of the content. During dictation, the teacher should not repeat the language material unnecessarily. According to F.G. French, dictation is a valuable exercise because:-

1. It trains the ear to listen carefully to spoken English. It helps both in listening and speaking.
2. It uses hand as well as the eye in practising the shape of words; and this for better than oral spelling by the names of the letters (ell, tee, ee, are, ess);
3. It fixes in the pupils mind the divisions of each sentence pattern because the good teacher, when he dictates, will dictate division by division as below: "My son Chinto/did not go away/until yesterday." These divisions are brought to the pupils notice by sound, by appearance and by memory.

Material of Dictation

Material of dictation should be carefully selected. It should be of reasonable length neither too long nor too short. The structures should be familiar to the pupils and there should be no difficult words. It will be better if the passage has been selected from a lesson which the pupils have already learnt. Even disconnected sentences can be selected for dictation.

Procedure

First of all, the teacher should read the whole passage slowly so that the students have a general idea of the passage. Then he should dictate it at normal speed in intelligible phrases according to the sense of sentence. He should be very careful about pauses, stress and intonation. His voice should be clear and audible to all the pupils. Each phrase should be spoken only once. The teacher should avoid repetition, because, with repetition the pupils will not be able to form the habit of listening attentively. After the dictation is over, the teacher should read the passage once again to help the pupils to fill up gaps, if any.

Correction

Written work of the pupils should be corrected because only then the teacher will come to know about the progress of every pupil. The pupils may be asked to exchange their exercise books among themselves or they may correct their mistakes with the help of the book from which the passage has been taken. However, the teacher should be vigilant lest the pupils should become dishonest.

Advantages of Dictation

1. It helps the students in improving their speed of writing.
2. It inculcates the habit of careful listening among the students.
3. It is a very useful technique for teaching spellings and pronunciation of the words.
4. It helps the learners in fixing up the words and structures in their memory.
5. It helps the students to write grammatically correct English.

Spelling

Correct spelling is very important for impressive writing. If spellings are incorrect, a message may become incomprehensible or even misleading. English spellings are difficult because English is a mixed language. It has borrowed words from many sources, especially Latin and Greek. Max Muller once said, "English spelling is a national misfortune to England and an international misfortune to the rest of the world." George Bernard Shaw, the famous English dramatist had made fun of English spelling. He gives an example; suppose, a person knows only three words i.e. rough, women and nation. In these words, he notes the sounds of 'gh' 'o' and 'ti' respectively. Then, he is asked to write the word 'fish'. With the help of pronunciation of the three words, he knows he will write the word 'fish' as 'ghoti'.

Examples of Irregular Spelling

A few examples of irregular or irrational English spelling are given below:-

1. **One letter different sounds:** In English alphabet, there are twenty six letters but these give rise to forty four sounds. For example, the letter 's' gives different sounds in the words like 'this', 'these' and 'sugar' and letter 'a' has different sound in words 'fat', 'father' and 'fate' etc.
2. **One sound different spelling:** Pairs of words like 'there' and 'their', 'seize' and 'cease', 'deer' and 'dear' have different spellings but same sound.
3. **Silent letters:** In the words like knife, 'k' is silent; in doubt, 'b' is silent and in hour, 'h' is silent. Besides, there is a confusion in the minds of the pupils and they write,
 - a) double 'l' at the end of words like beautiful, helpful;
 - b) 'ie' in place of 'ei' in the words like receive and deceive;
 - c) 'el' in place of 'le' in the words like bottle and angle;
 - d) 'ent' in place of 'ant' in the words like servant and important;
 - e) 'ea' in place of 'ee' in the words like speed and cheese.

Improvement of Spelling

George Bernard Shaw was so much against the existing English spelling that he desired that the English alphabet should be replaced by phonetic alphabet even at the cost of civil war. However, it is not possible to do so because, then, we shall be completely cut off from the vast treasure of literature in different fields available in English. Certain suggestions can be given to help the teacher to improve spelling of his pupils:

1. The teacher should write words on the black-board and speak them along with their spelling. The pupils should also speak the words along with spelling and write them in their note-books.
2. When the spellings of a difficult word are to be taught, the teacher should underline the difficult part of the words.
3. The pupils should be encouraged to maintain a spelling note-book in which they should write the spelling of difficult words in alphabetic order.

4. The pupils should be asked to group together words on the basis of some common element in spelling. For example, words like cat, rat, mat, bat, sat, hat etc. can be put in one group and words like fan, man, can etc in another group.
5. The habit of consulting dictionary should be encouraged.
6. Exercises in dictation are quite useful in fixing correct spelling in the minds of the learners.
7. Commonly mis-spelt words may be written on the board and it should be hung in the class-room. The students will look at the chart and learn spelling. After a week or so, the chart should be replaced by a new spelling chart.
8. Spelling games like the following are also quite useful:-
 - a) The teacher writes a word e.g. ‘school’ on the black-board. The pupils are required to write different words with the letters of this word.
 - b) The class is divided into two groups. The teacher writes a word on the black-board. A pupil from first group is asked to write a word beginning with the last letter of the word. Then, a pupil from second group is asked to write a word beginning with the last letter of the word written by the pupil from the first group. In this way, the game continues.