

Clay Bison Dictagloss



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Originally devised as a technique for learning vocabulary and/or grammar points in a foreign language, dictagloss is also a useful technique to encourage students to work together to extract meaning from complex text. This account has been taken from the internet.

Dictagloss is a very useful activity that helps students to use language in order to learn. A Dictagloss is an alternative way of getting students to learn note-taking skills, as they need to listen to a text being read and reconstruct it. It doubles as a listening and writing task and reinforces ideas such as key words, topic sentences and report writing.

WHY?

To teach students to construct written summaries. A Dictagloss also requires the students to consciously focus on their knowledge of the content and the relationship between ideas and words.

Because students need to pool their key words and understandings to complete the task, active negotiation of meaning between students occurs. Working together during the text reconstruction encourages students to vocalise and think through the grammatical choices they are making and assess the effects that each choice has on their text. Students are developing strategies for editing their work as they write, as they come to mutually acceptable decisions.

HOW?

1. A short text is read to the class at normal pace. The students should listen for meaning.
2. The text is read again and as it is being read the students should jot down key words and phrases.
3. Working in small groups the students pool their words and phrases and attempt to reconstruct the text from their shared resources. Their version should contain the main ideas of the text and approximate the language choices of the passage.
4. Each group of students produces their own reconstructed version, aiming at grammatical accuracy and textual cohesion but not at replicating the original text.
5. Each group reads their finished version to the class and each text is analysed and compared and the students should then refine their own texts in the light of the shared scrutiny and discussion.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- * It is helpful if the teacher is prepared for the last phase (5) of the lesson by considering the most important language features of the text (hence the language analysis below) so that they can focus on these with the students.

- * Write any new or challenging language on the board for scaffolding purposes.

- * This activity should be used to consolidate (not introduce) new knowledge.

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There can be no science of art

Fifteen thousand years ago in France, a sculptor swam and slithered almost a kilometre down into a mountain cave. Using clay, the artist shaped a big bull rearing up to mount a cow, and then left his creation in the bowels of the earth. The two bison in these French caves sat undisturbed for many thousands of years until they were rediscovered by spelunking boys [cavers] in 1912. The discovery of the clay bison was one of many shocking 20th century discoveries of sophisticated cave art stretching back tens of thousands of years. The discoveries overturned our sense of what our caveman ancestors were like. They were not furry, grunting troglodytes. They had artistic souls. They showed us that humans are, by nature, not just by culture, art-making, art-consuming, art-addicted apes.