

## Dictation Workshop with Mario Rinvolucris – Globe Theatre – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2000

### Warm-up Activity:

1. Counting in groups  
Groups of 4-6.  
Count from 1 to 100 in a foreign language in pairs  
Then in English down from 99 to 0 in 3's (99,96,93...) in another pair  
Then first person 1,2,3,4, second 4,3,2,1 in another pair  
Then 50,000 down to 10,000 by units of 1001 in another pair (this like east Asian numbers)

*From: Gurjieff: <sup>A</sup>Everyday exercises. A Russian mystic – good for mathematically inclined students, but you can use any other appropriate sequence (days, months, alphabet)*

How to control class tip: teacher raises hands and waves them about when activity should finish, students raise their hands once they have finished until all hands raised. This is good for a big group, but they must be disciplined. It enables teacher to get feedback on timings – stopping the activity too soon or too late.

2. Talk for 1 minute on “my relationship to water” in pairs

*This is more personal and interesting. Good for multinational groups, and very cultural, giving a richer exchange of language.*

*Remember “If you don't warm people up, you're an idiot.”*

### Dictation activities

Dictation has a high status in France – national televised competitions. It was used in a racist way to determine which immigrants were allowed into Australia in the 70's. It's also very popular in Italian University courses. Some people say it's a waste of time....

1. Classifying words in columns according to senses

Teacher tells students : Divide a page into 4 columns. Put four headings at the top : “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel through my body” “I taste/smell”. Teacher reads out various words/phrases eg boat, mother, landscape, God. Students must classify these according to how they conceive the idea. Must be quick and spontaneous. After finished, write the words up on the board to check spelling and get students to discuss their answers in groups of 3.

*This makes use of Neuro-linguistic programming, and how you access words. Quite an "intimate" exercise. For lower level students you they can use the mother tongue.*

## 2. Dictation on "daydreaming."

If multinational group teacher finds out etymology of the words for "daydream" in different languages. Teacher reads out a collection of questions on daydreaming:

"when/where do I daydream?"

"how long does a daydream last?"

"how exactly do I enter the state of daydreaming?"

Teacher asks students to add in 2 questions of their own like these. Then adds more:

"has may daydreaming changed over time?"

Once finished students answer the questions in groups of 3.

*From "Ways of doing". This is a natural simultaneous exercise. Can consider different areas besides daydreaming. In Japan daydreaming is part of normal academic behaviour in class.*

## 3. Dictation - "two houses"

Teacher reads out dictation about 2 houses (or 2 of anything) trying to be as neutral as possible. Students have to guess which of the 2 the teacher likes best. In groups of 3 : one pays attention to tone of voice, one pays attention to words used, and one to body language. Students then discuss in 3's and vote on which of 2 teacher prefers.

*This is quite a powerful listening comprehension. Selective dictation and also quite visual.*

## 4. Dictation in translation

Teacher asks students to choose another language in which they are intermediate. (or Mother tongue if they aren't) Teacher reads out ambiguous statements in English eg "They swam for Germany." "A taxi for 5 please". Students translate these and then compare which meaning they had heard. (If only using mother tongue they should paraphrase). Discuss in groups of 6.

*This makes use of various ambiguities of language "D'you see her yesterday?" "Juicier yesterday." "Animal face." "Any more fares". Good for an upper intermediate group who are quite serious.*

## 5. Listening for idiolects

Teacher talks about a topic for 5 minutes. (eg canaries) Students must listen very carefully for all the words used by the teacher that are different from their own

English. These are determined by gender, birthplace and age. Each person has their own “idiolect” – “kind of”, “really nice” “frizzled up” etc

*Again very powerful. For advanced students. They can steal bits of other people’s idiolect that they like.*

#### 6. Joint story dictation

Teacher reads out 2 sentences of story “John was 14. He met his history teacher in the corridor.” Teacher tells students to add 2 more to describe John of their own. Teacher carries on with 2 more, and then gets students to add 2 more. Once finished the students take turns reading their stories to each other in pairs.

*For lower intermediate students. Language input is controlled by teacher and this helps students – provides a frame that is open and lifts the quality of their own language. Storytelling good – this one based on the Unicorn story from “Once Upon a time”. Can have descriptive, dialogue, even musical input for the sentences to fill in. For a big class it can be used for vocabulary, for a small class it can be used for correction.*

Tip for correcting – get students to write on piece of paper according to what they want when correcting written work – either “Come when I call you” or “Come when you like.”

#### 7. Meaningful phrases dictation

Teacher tells students. Make 3 columns on a page with headings “meaningful”, “iffy” and “meaningless”. Teacher reads out various phrases and students classify them as above: “I’m sorry, I’m not here”, “the man’s broken all his legs” “oh, my toothbrush is pregnant again”.

Students then discuss how they have classified them.

*This makes use of logical/mathematical mind, pragmatic meaning focussed mind, and philosophical mind. All give different perspectives according to individuals. “The door is open”.*

#### 8. Running dictation

Using “Christopher van Wyk: in Detention”

Students in groups of three. One has to stay still (sat on a chair). One can go from the chair to the outside of the room. One outside can come to the door. The poem put up outside the room and student groups have to tell others in the team three lines at a time - in a chain.

*Bit like Chinese whispers. Making good use of space in the classroom. Better with three than two – more interesting. OK for lower intermediate students. Can do it in different ways.*

## 9. Beginners level dictation in Portuguese

“futbol”. Dictation in foreign language. Write down what you think the words are. Pass the papers to your neighbour who corrects it according to what they think it should be. Student then comes and writes up version on blackboard/flipchart. Teacher invites others to correct.

*Passing the buck for correction – peer correction better and more acceptable. Good for beginner level if using English for dictation. Good to see the hypothesis of others. Can be chaos at first but helps to build up a feeling for language. watch out for students of different ability and handwriting.*

## 10. Use of the voice in dictation

Using “Learning and stuff” by Paul Rutton. Give dictation in parts in different voices. Deep singing voice, then whispered, then normal but at a quick speed, and finally normal voice and speed. Students see what they’ve got – hand out poem. Also discuss how they felt about doing it this way.

*Good on use of voice in dictation. From Grammar Practice Activities.*

## 11. Shouting across the room dictation

Using passage “The three golden figurines”. Teacher divides students into four groups (A, B, C,D) Four students with clear voices – one from each group go and stand diagonally opposite their group members. Each starts from a different point in the text. They have to shout the dictation across the room to the others who try and write it down. All four speak at the same time and groups have to try and just listen to their dictator.

*Can be very noisy and difficult. Make sure dictators do the passage sentence by sentence. It will be very tiring for them. This is a realistic exercise – like trying to listen to one person’s voice or the tannoy in a noisy station.*

## 12. Dictation of phrases – who is the “we”?

Teacher dictates several phrases using the first person – short and subjective. eg “I like the music”, and then questions “which year were you born in?” “what languages do you speak?”. Students change the phrases to use the “we” form and answer the questions in the same way. Once finished they discuss – who is the “we” – me and my partner, me and my brother, me and my football team”.

*Good for them to describe their views. Nice and inclusive.*

## 13. Questions and answers:

What to do with demotivated/uninterested students ?

- Can do filling in text gaps – interest in guessing
- Can do dictation of horoscopes – they like the subject
- Can unpick definitions – “Not yesterday, not tomorrow, not you, other word for said, spoke, small yellow birds” = “Today I talked about canaries”  
Gives a chance to be creative.

Mixed ability ?

- Graded texts in pairs – one student has more gaps to fill (the more advanced)

Beginners ?

- Can overwrite a text – just copying out the letters (good for Arabic/Chinese)
- Can just copy a literary text – whose handwriting expresses the mood of the text best