DICTATION AS A MEANS TO ESTABLISH PHONEME-GRAPHEME CORRESPONDENCES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at offering a set of dictation as a means to establish phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English language. First, it deals with the phases of this complex activity. Later, it deals with the contribution done by the English Teaching Community. Subsequently, appears the set of dictations (integrated by 16) proposed to establish phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the students´ acquisition of the English language. It ends with the effectiveness of the set dictation proposed.

KEY WORDS: Dictation, phoneme-grapheme, skill, spelling.

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo ofrecer un conjunto de dictados como un medio para establecer la correspondencia fonema-grafema en el idioma Inglés. Primeramente, se aluden las fases de esta actividad compleja. Posteriormente, se trata la contribución hecha por la Comunidad Docente de Inglés. Concluye con un conjunto de dictados (integrado por 16) para establecer la correspondencia fonema-grafema en la adquisición del idioma inglés por parte de los estudiantes y su efectividad.

PALABRAS CLAVES: dictado, fonema-grafema, habilidad, ortografía.

The teaching of English has become a fact of colossal importance for many and various reasons. It is a need for the development of any society and country. In the case of Cuba, it keeps relations of cooperation and interchange with a great number of countries in the scientific, technological, educational, cultural and sport fields. The interchange of delegations, technicians, and students as well as the participation in conferences and other international events increase too. Besides, the sources of information are mainly in the referred language and in internet cover more than the 80%. So, it shows the importance of learning the English language.

It is not a secret to anyone that learning the English language is a difficult process, and much more when the task is writing. Many times, this expression has been heard: "In the English language, you pronounce one way and write another form", and, isn´t it nothing else but the truth? Hence, this is the aim of this paper indeed.

The establishment of phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the students´ acquisition of the language is a process in which the learner must be aware of the need of the English representation of sound through spelling. So, this article aims at providing teachers with various ways to teach the students how to improve their spelling abilities by means of dictation, which is generally disregarded.

It is important to highlight that other aspects which are implicit in dictation such as listening, speaking and reading are also taught and practiced with any of the

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techniques in which dictation may be applied. However, this article is centered only on the phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Facts to use dictation in classes
Dictation is considered as an easy task, but when it is deepened and analyzed its bases, one becomes aware of how difficult it is, since it is a means of fixing in a written form what was orally known by the learners. It uses the eye as well as the hand for practicing the shades of words and it also fixes in the pupil´s mind the division of each sentence pattern (through group) or pauses. It deals very much with perception which implies the students´ abilities in listening comprehension and transfer of the mother tongue to the target language.

In accordance to Byrne (1989, p. 20) "(…) it involves not only the ability to understand a sequence of sentences read aloud, but also to reproduce them in writing, that is why it is a more difficult exercise than is generally appreciated, even when the text is made up, as it should be, of patters and vocabulary the students are familiar with, both in their spoken and written forms".

From the above quotation it is inferred that dictation is a complex exercise, so it is necessary to make it purposeful, focusing attention on specific problems of pronunciation. For this, it is recommended not to dictate a whole passage, but a number of sentences that contain the sounds where the problem of pronunciation is, it could be minimal pair distinction. It does not mean that if passages are used for dictation must be short, they should be in general not be short but also to a large extent containing sentences that do not have to be broken up into units that are meaningless when heard separately.

Dictation can also be used to focus attention on specific problems of observation. For this purpose, visual dictation or visual oral dictation can be used. Besides, it can be turned into account to center attention on speaking. For this aim, explanatory dictation or appraisal one can be applied. Moreover, it can be administered to focalized intentness on understanding. For this goal, selective dictation, dictation without writing or commentary one can be utilized.

Dictation can be devoted to focus alertness on searching. For his end, creative one can be used. Besides, it can be consecrated to concentrate advertence on vocabulary. For this intention, self-checking dictation or combined one can be used. Finally, it can be utilized to test the students´ abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this regard, control dictation comes in handy.

Santiesteban (2012, p. 4) "These abilities are not levels, even when at the beginning they can manifest as such, the development of these is achieved with systems of exercises and differentiated procedures". Hence, dictation could be the exercise that would come in handy.

In this regard, there are several reasons to used dictation in classes; one of them is than the learners are creative during the exercise. It means that when they do not understand a dictated word they look for another, but in this approximation they try to find, generally, a word they know how to write.

Another reason is that the students are active after the exercise. Before checking the dictation everybody is eager to know what the results are. So, they try to check it as soon as possible. First among then, and then, everyone tries to go to the board.

Dictation leads to oral communication actively, when the dictation has just been administered, the students try to verify it among themselves, whether their performance was right or not. In that verification oral communication is being used.

It copes with mixed ability group; since it helps to develop the abilities of speaking, reading, writing, listening and others. Dictation is an integrated–skill-exercise where all the skills are dealt in a system. That´s why, sometimes, it is difficult to determine which ability is intended to be developed, because each one has implicitly the development of the others.

Velázquez y Santiesteban (2017, p. 3) "The cognitive activity of the student is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but skills development and competencies all of which presupposes a large variety of criteria and fundamentals".

In this extend, dictation is a kind of activity that can develop not only necessary knowledge and skills, but also competencies. It is also a fact that, it can be administered in large groups. It is, may be, one of its most important aspect. This group learning goes up to the identity of the students. So that, the interpersonal relationships as well as: criticism, self-criticism, evaluation and self-evaluation are fostered. Consequently, the students trust on their knowledge.

It is important to highlight that in the English lessons different types of exercises are carried out, but few of them develop different skills at the same time. Dictation deals not only with the skill to understand what is being dictated, but also to reproduce it in writing, where the students put into practice everything they know. So, it is a technically useful exercise for the teaching of English.

Dictation can also give access to a text. Since the teacher may dictate facts of it which will be analyzed by the students. A general overview of the passage will be appreciated by the learners once they have the dictation.

It is important to point out that in terms of organization, dictation completely calms group. The students use their senses in function to what the teacher says. Finally, it saturates values, since it contributes with the social formation of the learners; through the organization of their "work-place", discipline, attention and other educative values.

All these real facts do not mean that there are no mistakes when the dictation is checked out on the board by the teacher together with the learners. There will always –or, in most of the cases- be mistakes in spelling and word order. Besides, there will be mistakes in the students´ perception if they are not used to this activity or not well trained in listening comprehension.

Dictation is usually considered to be a traditional language learning activity, and some teachers object to it because the vocabulary, word order and grammatical structure seem to be given to the students. Nevertheless, dictation is much more sophisticated activity than it first appears to be, since the linguistic components must be discovered and reconstructed by the learners.

Phases of a dictation work

There is a consensus among specialists of the linguistic area in considering three phases that involve a dictation, these are: preparation, administration and correction. The standard procedures of each phase are the following:

Preparation: the teacher prepares the students introducing the topic, determining its semantic field. The teacher may also prepare the students through a brief discussion of the theme, or a review of special or difficult vocabulary and

expressions. This phrase also involves the adequate selection of the text according to the objective to be evaluated, the deeply analysis of the text on the part of the teacher, the division of the text into thought groups or in short and sensible phrases, and the trying out reading in loud voice before administering it.

Most teachers agree at preparing the text beforehand with the linguistic material known by the students. This material is taught and treated in class, both written and orally.

Administration: here the teacher should follow three steps, as follows:

First: the teacher reads the whole text at a normal conversational speed. The students listen in order to grasp the general overview of the content, but they do not write.

Second: the teacher reads the whole text in a natural style but, at slightly –slower- than normal speed with pauses at suitable boundary phrases, about five or seven words. The learners listen and write as much as they can, as correctly as possible.

Third: the teacher reads the text at slightly –slower- than normal speed. Make pauses according to punctuation marks. The learners read silently what they have written and complete and correct their written text.

However, it is important to highlight that the procedures to carry out the administration and correction phases differ from an investigator to another and from one teacher to another.

For administration the utterances should be read aloud at normal speed for familiarization first. A second time it is read for the learners to copy as much as they can. Here most teachers differ from copying as such; to thinking each utterance should be read slowly twice before the students copy. Moreover, for some teachers phrases should be short and sensible while for others it must be a complete thought group.

Correction: the teacher together with the learners corrects the dictation as soon as possible, pointing out difficulties of any kind.

Taking into account our personal implication, we consider that utterances should be read slowly twice before the students copy. Phrases should be short and sensible, and evaluation and score should depend on the teacher´s purpose.

Set of dictations established by the English Teaching Community
1. **Picture Dictation or Picasso Drawing**: the students listen to a text and draw a picture. Although the response is non-verbal, it does indicate whether the students have understood the message or not. The instruction for this example are the following:
   - First, draw…
   - Second, draw…
   - Third, draw…etc.

There are other types of dictation with more complex techniques at all levels of proficiency as example: The Interactive, The Mutual and The Sequence Dictation.
2. **Interactive Dictation**: it is designed in such a way that it allows the students to think about the information they are writing and to discuss it with the others. Teachers can prepare interactive dictation in any subject area and at almost any level past real beginner.

The teacher follows the standard procedures for dictating the sentences with the fallowing variations: 1). the students write the sentences, decide if the statement is a fact of fiction and check the appropriate; 2). after the dictation, the students are organized into groups of three; 3). the groups reveal their answer to the rest of the class. The teacher gives them additional information if necessary; 4). the teacher corrects the dictation according to the standard procedures.

3. **Mutual dictation**: the students combine two partial texts into one continuous text. The students are organized into pairs. Student "A" in each pair has Version "A" and Student "B" has Version "B".

   The teacher tells the students that each one has half the text. They should face each other and try not to look at each other´s sheets. Student "A" dictates and "B" writes, then Student "B" dictates and "A" writes, and so on until the text is completed. The teacher has the students show each other their sheets to check accuracy.

4. **Sequence Dictation**: it is similar to the oral activity known as the "strip story" or "jumble sentences". It helps the students concentrate on the sequential development of a piece of writing. For materials, the teacher selects any passage with an obvious logical sequence.

   The teacher follows the standards procedures for dictation with the following variations. The teacher dictates the passage to the students out of a sequence. When the students have written the sentences, they try to re-arrange them so that they are in logical order.

Set of dictations proposed to establish phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English language

The establishment of phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the students´ acquisition of the English language is a process in which the learner must be aware of the need of the English representation of sounds through spelling. The following set will help to achieve this aim.

1. **Visual dictation**: The teacher writes the text on the board or visualizes it on a scream. Then, the students read the text aloud. Later, the teacher explains the difficulties in which the students should not err. The students read the text again, but silently. The teacher covers or erases the text, and then he dictates. Finally, the students and the teacher check the dictation on the board.

2. **Visual- oral dictation**: The teacher writes the text on the board or visualizes it on a scream for the students explain the difficulties. The teacher covers or erases the text and dictates. At the end, the students and the teacher check the dictation on the board.

3. **Explanatory dictation**: The teacher dictates the text. The students write it and they explain the difficulties of it. This kind of dictation should be used before control dictation.

4. **Memory dictation**: The teacher has the learners memorize a short poem, a short passage, etc.; which fits the grammar and vocabulary the

students are dealing with. In coming lessons, it will be dictated to the learners.

5. **Selective dictation**: The teacher dictates taking into account the phases of a dictation work. The students do not copy everything save what the teacher indicates them to.

6. **Oral dictation (foreseeing possible mistakes)**: The teacher reads the text and he makes the analysis of the most difficult words and structures, then he dictates and the students copy. Later they check it up.

7. **Commentary dictation:** The teacher prepares two students beforehand. The teacher reads the text for the first time, then the students comment the text, they make the necessary explanations about it. Later, the teacher dictates the text and the students write it. At the end, they check it up.

8. **Self-dictation:** this kind of diction is carried out by the students themselves (this is not very frequent, but very effective especially for careless students). The teacher gives the students the dictation in a written form. The students read and dictate to themselves having the text in front of them. Though, it may seem very easy it is as difficult as any other type of dictation because the students are forced to pronounce correctly.

9. **Creative dictation:** The teacher assign the students to look up the meaning of different words: in coming lessons the teacher will read sentences containing the words assigned. The learners have to copy the sentences but in third person singular, or any other grammatical or person tense, save in the person or tense they were dictated.

10. **Dictation without writing:** This kind of dictation can account on from five to ten words. The teacher has to prepare some cards containing letters beforehand. Here, he has to say the words and over exaggerates the pronunciation of a sound or combination of sounds and the students will have to show the correct letter or letters that represent the sound or sounds.

11. **Integrated dictation:** The teacher may dictate words, sentences or passages. Then, a student comments the text. Later, the teacher reads the words, sentences or passages again and another student explains each word or spelling complexity while the rest of the students copy the text. Finally, it is checked up on the board and the teacher provokes a debate about their performance.

12. **Self-checking:** The teacher reads the text straight though (in the text, there should be words which follow a spelling rule). Later, he dictates meanwhile the students copy the text; it may provoke doubts in the learners. They have the upright to ask the teacher to clear them up. At the end, the teacher copies the text on the board and the students check themselves. Finally, there is a debate about their performance.

13. **Vocabulary dictation:** The students train themselves in the spelling of the vocabulary words (they are aware of the activity beforehand). The teacher dictates sentences or passages where the word appears, but

they only copy the vocabulary word. At the end, they check it up and evaluate their performance.

14. **Appraisal dictation**: The teacher dictates a text. The students copy it. Then, the students explain the different orthographic complexities. At the end, the teacher and the students check it on the board. In this process, the students self-evaluate their performance.

15. **Follow-up dictation:** The teacher dictates preferably a story, only the beginning of the text. The students will have to finish the story according to their point of view.

16. **Control dictation:** The teacher dictates a text and the students copy. At the end they check it on the board and evaluate the students´ performance.

Up to here a brief reference of a set of dictation, that applied together with those proposed by the English speaking community will contribute to the establishment of phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the students' acquisition of the English language as a target one. The referred set of dictation hierarchs the content of the text rather than its form. So, it constitutes (more than an exhausted study) a sufficient and necessary theoretical approximation to satisfy the didactic aim being established. Hence, it is feasible for the teaching of writing skills.

Effectiveness of dictation as a means to establish phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English language

The experiment constitutes a fundamental way to know the relation between cause and effect presents in an object, phenomenon or process being studied, in this case the phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English language. Hence, the experimental method allowed not only to know the referred verbal activity, but also established the bases for latter dissertation of its behavior.

The experiment applied was successional projected and in accordance to the degree of variable control, it is classified as pre-experiment. The design applied was a pre-experimental one with pre-test and post-test. It was applied in the natural context of Las Tunas University.

The experiment was conceived with a transformative, verifying and qualitative evaluation, with the purposes that follows:

1. To analyze the peculiarities and feasibility of the implementation of the set of dictation.

2. To verify the effects of the set of dictations on the establishment of phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

3. To determine possible ways to better up the proposed set of dictation.

To fulfill this objective, the following actions were planned:

First: to select the experimental group.
For the practical verification of the hypothesis, it was selected a representative sample (113 students of industrial engineering) out of a population of 326 students

of such a measurement. It is important to highlight that group variable as self-selection, mortality and maturation were neutralized. Self-selection and maturation do not influence on the students since they were assigned taking into account the established standards and time was limited (only one year). In case of mortality, we could state that there were no drops out.

Second: to diagnose the initial state.
To diagnose the initial state of the learners related to the phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the acquisition of the English language as target one different types of dictations were applied. The results are shown in appendix 1. The referred appendix portrays the statistic results obtained by the percentage calculation.
The equal pair and non-parametric ranks test of Wilcoxon corroborate the results portrayed by the percentage calculation, as shown below.

	Pre-test
Z	003ª

Third: To implement and to analyze the peculiarities of the set of dictation

The equal pair and non-parametric ranks test of Wilcoxon shows the high significance of the set of dictation in establishing the phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English language. For this, it was taken a representative level of 0.05 of failure. The data were processed in a statistic pack SPSS. The referred test was carried out on the bases of two hypotheses**:**
HI**:** There are significant differences between the initial and final verification in the experimental group.
Ho: There are no significant differences between the initial and final verification in the experimental group.
The application of the statistic test revealed the following results:

	Experimental ending
Z	- 4, 110ª

During the course of the application of these types of dictation was clearly seen the improvement of the students' spelling abilities. In which it is necessary to highlight the influence of: visual, visual-oral, oral, commentary and self-dictation, in the development of the referred abilities.
It is important to state that these types of dictation are not only good for establishing phoneme-grapheme correspondences, but also to integrate skills and to arise interest and love for the subject. Of course, this happens when it is applied systematically with the suggested methodology.
As it has been systematically stated, the correction of dictation should be as soon as possible and the material reviewed with the entire class, pointing out pitfalls and particular difficulties. However, evaluation and score will depend on the teacher's purpose.

Eighty-five students were interviewed, and in their answer they assured that they considered dictation important because they reinforced and practice the way of:

- Writing words and even taking notes (in some cases). Besides, understanding things while listening to the radio and watching T.V. when there is no translation.
- Reading when they associated words they knew from the English lessons and they saw them in a written form.
- Listening materials because with the systematic use of dictation they have sharpened their ears.
- Speaking because they always speak in English after a dictation work.

They also referred to dictation they take in Spanish, Biology, History and Math mainly associating to these types and also the fixation and establishment of phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the mother tongue.

Conclusions

- Dictation is an effective means for establishing phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the students' acquisition of the English language.
- Dictation is a kind of exercise which spreads a great amount of educative and psychological stimuli that are present throughout the exercise.
- Dictation allows integrating writing skills with listening, speaking and reading ones.

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