Color Vowel® and Blue Canoe®
A Collaborative Dictation Activity
An activity outline by Karen Taylor

Overview
Collaborative dictation, also known as *grammar dictation* and *dictogloss*, is most easily described as an activity in which students listen to a short text then work together to reconstruct in writing what they heard. In reconstructing the text, students negotiate meaning as they engage in intense practice, all the while integrating a wide range of skills and knowledge ranging from vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse to grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.

Materials
- Audio reading of the Blue Canoe "Pronunciation Fundamentals" lesson (Alternatively, the teacher can simply read the text aloud.):

  - **Language→ Pronunciation Fundamentals → Spelling is not Pronunciation**

    Text (for teacher reference)
    Spelling can certainly be confusing! The word "over" doesn't rhyme with "cover." But "great" rhymes with "straight." Yet "through" is different from "thought." That's because spelling is not pronunciation. And speaking English is not the same as reading it.

- Blue Canoe (for use as an immediate extension to this activity)

Steps for conducting this activity in a Zoom room with Breakout rooms. Note how little information the teacher provides along the way. Stick to the script!

1. Introduction/ Predicting vocabulary: **You are going to listen to a short text about English spelling.** *Given the topic, what words do you predict you might hear?* [Have students' write words in the chat. Limit this step to 30-60 seconds of brainstorming, then move on.]

2. Listening: **Now please listen.** [Play the audio file.]

3. Dictation Phase: **Now find a piece of paper and a pen/pencil.** *I will play the text again. This time, write down as many of the words as you can.* [Play the audio again. When it has ended, give everyone about 30-45 seconds of silence as they keep writing.]

4. Small Group Reconstruction: **Did you write everything down? No?** *Do you need to hear the text again? Well, let's see if that's true. I'm now going to put you in groups, and one person in the group will need to be the Scribe by sharing their screen as they type into a document. Who are my Scribes?* [Jot down their names]

*Everyone, including the scribe, should look at their hand-written notes to help the scribe recreate the text you heard. Your mission is to **reconstruct the text you heard, to make it grammatical, and to make it look good in writing.** You have 4 minutes.*
[Create breakout rooms A, B, C and D with a Scribe assigned to each group.]

5. <u>Whole-group Reconstruction</u>: ***Welcome back. Were you successful? No? Are you sure? Let's see.*** *We are going to pool these texts to generate a single group transcript of the text you originally listened to. Scribes, please copy/paste the first sentence of your texts into the chat.* [From here, invite individuals to read the sentences and suggest changes as you type what they say. If time permits, repeat this process with each of the six sentences until you have recreated the entire text.]

6. <u>Reflection</u>: ***What kinds of things did we talk about while reconstructing the text?*** *What words or phrases gave you (and all of us) the most trouble? Why?* [This step of the activity can be quite rich if you support students' analysis of their dictation and reconstruction process. A range of language issues may arise, including pronunciation, spelling, linking, vocabulary, etc.]

7. <u>Closure</u>: ***Would you like to compare your reconstructed texts to the original audio?*** Yes? [play audio] [show original text if desired as well]

8. <u>Extension</u> [If time permits]: ***What Color (Color Vowel) are the important words in this text?*** Have students identify content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, negatives) and enter them into their Color Vowel Organizer).

9. <u>Homework</u>: ***Take out your phones and open Blue Canoe. In the Lessons section, go to Language→ Pronunciation Fundamentals → Spelling is not Pronunciation.*** You have now listened to, taken notes on, reconstructed, and talked about these sentences. Your homework tonight is to speak these sentences by completing the lesson in Blue Canoe. Note any pronunciation feedback you receive.

To learn more about Grammar Dictation, I highly recommend Ruth Wajnryb's excellent and timeless book of the same title: *Grammar Dictation* (Oxford University Press, 1990). As noted by series editor Alan Maley, grammar dictation *"...requires learners to draw upon a nexus of interrelated skills. Initially learners engage individually in the creative reconstruction of text from memory and from their own linguistics resources. They then share this with others in a process of gradual approximation to a final product. With time and practice they learn to refind and develop their own linguistics resources but always in relation to what they already know. The contribution of individual and group effort are nicely balanced."*

- Karen Taylor