

# Running Dictations

**Category:** Teambuilding

**Time:** 30+ minutes

**Requirements:**

1. 10+ participants
2. Projector (Optional)
3. Timer
4. Printed copies of the paragraphs below

**Description:** A dictation activity where participants are given roles to try and piece together a paragraph. There is a total of three paragraphs provided, and while all three paragraphs flow into each other well, doing one or two is just fine. The paragraphs are related to literature I have pieced together in Chapter Two of my capstone. It offers valuable information to help better understand where our Japanese ELs in university are coming from culturally in the educational setting.

This activity is best done in groups of three with each member assigned to different roles. However, if the numbers are even, groups of two is also possible.

**Note:** Reminder that this activity is specifically designed for native English speaking participants. However, if implemented for Japanese ELs, please be mindful to select a short paragraph that is relevant to the class.

## Paragraphs

### Paragraph One (131 words)

To gain some insight as to why Japanese ELs in university lack participation skills, it is necessary to look into the education system at large in Japan. The fundamental means of learning English in elementary and junior high schools do not have the same learning goals as learning in university. English is simply a subject that is mandated by the government for all elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Japan to have. During this time, students are generally taught by Japanese teachers who may or may not have any certification or qualification for teaching English. To add, although students may have experience with native English teachers during their pre-university years, it is most likely that these NETs are hired as assistant language teachers whose role is often very limited.

### Paragraph Two (137 words)

Being that the Japanese education system is still largely traditional in teaching methods, it is understandable that students going into an English class at university for the first time may have a difficult time adjusting to the changes in teaching styles. Without having the proper transition or accommodation to learning methods, Japanese ELs do not have ample opportunity to speak English. In fact, according to Osterman's 2014 survey, students largely complain that they are not receiving enough speaking practice. This result suggests that Japanese ELs are indeed willing to speak English, but they may feel uncomfortable for a variety of culturally-related reasons. It is not common to express opinions, engage in debates, or anything that would suggest disagreement. Practicing harmony is a valuable concept in Japanese society and its practice is not a stranger in the classroom.

### Paragraph Three (129 words)

In Japan, the practice of harmony can be found in many cultural concepts. One of these concepts is called *amae*. *Amae* is an important structure in which individuals along the spectrum of social roles take part in interdependent relationships. This socio-cultural structure involves individuals being taken care of by other individuals who are often seen as more knowledgeable. Just as children rely on their parents for care, students in Japan may also rely on their teachers for that same level of intimate care. Because of this parent-child like relationship, it would be inappropriate in Japan for a student to question their teachers. Through this logic, and with the possibility of not realizing that it may affect their overall grades, Japanese students respect their EFL teacher by not asking questions.

### Pre-Activity

1. Prepare copies of the selected paragraph (or paragraphs if you plan on doing more than one round of Running Dictations). If doing more than one paragraph, I would suggest doing the rounds in order: paragraph one, paragraph two, and then paragraph three.
2. Understand the Roles.
3. A large space would be most effective for this activity to take place.

### Roles

If...

Groups of Three	Groups of Two
<p><b>Role 1: Reader</b></p> <p>Each reader gets a copy of the paragraph. Their job is to read the paragraph to the messenger. They cannot show the messenger any part of the paragraph.</p> <p><b>Role 2: Messenger</b></p> <p>The messenger's job is to go back and forth between reader and writer, relaying what they are hearing from the reader to the writer.</p> <p><b>Role 3: Writer</b></p> <p>The writer's job is to write down what they hear from the messenger.</p>	<p><b>Role 1: Messenger</b></p> <p>The messenger's job is to read their group's designated copy of the paragraph, remember information, and then verbalize it to the writer.</p> <p><b>Role 2: Writer</b></p> <p>The writer's job is to write down what they hear from the messenger, and ask for clarification if needed.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Since there is no reader, post copies of the paragraph on the opposite end of the room to where each writer sits. For a challenge, post the copies up-side down.</p>

### Activity Steps

**Step 1:** Divide participants into groups. It is a good idea to have the room cleared from obstacles. Participants will need space to walk.

**Step 2:** Instruct writers to all be at one end of the room, sitting down with a piece of paper and writing utensil. Writers should be distanced from each other.

**Step 3:** Instruct Readers to be at the opposite end of the room. Readers get a copy of the paragraph in use. They may only read it when the activity officially starts.

**Step 4:** Instruct Messengers to be in the middle of the room, aligned with their group members.

## Classroom Visual of Positions in Steps 1-4

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3
Writer Sits Here	SPACE	Writer Sits Here	SPACE	Writer Sits Here
Messenger Standing Here		Messenger Standing Here		Messenger Standing Here
Reader Standing Here/Paragraph Posted Here		Reader Standing Here/Paragraph Posted Here		Reader Standing Here/Paragraph Posted Here

**Step 5:** Remind participants that this is a timed activity. A total of 10 minutes per paragraph. Countdown to start the activity. Playing music or sound in the background is an idea.

**Step 6:** At this time, you have the choice to call out to the room to switch roles OR continue the activity until time is up. If you plan on doing three rounds of this Running Dictation, switching roles then is a good idea, too.

If a group finishes a little early, tell them to check their paragraphs by having the Writer read back to the Messenger. And the Messenger verifying their sentences with their Reader.

**Step 7:** After the time is up, ask each group to write down their names on their paper. Each group will then get another group's work to check.

**Step 8:** Project a copy of the paragraph on the board. Or have a student from each member access the digital version of the paragraph via QR Code.

**Step 9:** Participants should be encouraged to check the other group's work: spelling errors, punctuation errors, etc., by circling them only. No need to make corrections.

**Step 10:** Instruct participants to add up how many words were correct, and then write down the total at the top.

**Step 11:** Have groups return the paper to their original members. Give each team a moment to look at their errors. Ask each group what their total is and congratulate the winning team accordingly. Don't forget to congratulate all groups for their teamwork and efforts.

### **Post-Activity: Discussion Questions**

In groups, have the participants discuss how they experienced the activity.

Questions participants can consider:

1. What are some challenges you think your students might face with this activity?
2. What changes might you make for your learners?
- 3.
4. Think of questions that you might have for this activity.

### **Activity Rationale**

1. Japanese ELs prefer interactive games done in groups. The concept of working in teams is fairly common in traditional Japanese education.
2. Working in teams fosters familiarity and rapport between students. The element of roles allows learners to understand explicitly what their tasks are - promoting production.
3. This activity is good to practice skills such as reading, listening, and writing.