

1. Statement of purpose

The BBN-ANG-108 end-of-term test is a test of academic skills. It consists of a written part and measures the candidates' ability to use English at a high level of proficiency in formal academic language use settings.

2. General information

This test must be taken by all students enrolled in the BBN-ANG-108 Academic Skills course. The pre-requisite for the test is the BBN-ANG-104 Academic Skills course. The test is offered during the spring semester and can be taken once only. There are no Academic Skills classes in the week of the test. The test is not offered in the time slot of the BBN-ANG-108 Academic Skills course but late in the afternoon. Students are expected to make themselves available for the time of the test. The results of the test are added up with the other grades received in the BBN-ANG-108 course.

3. To do before the test

Students taking the test must sign up for the test in class on the registration sheet provided by the course tutor. The signing up is done with the academic skills course tutor.

Students with special needs (e.g., hearing-impaired, visually impaired, dyslexic students) should ask their course tutor to add a note and e-mail address to their names before submitting their students' test registration sheets. The administrators of the test will contact them prior to the test.

4. The test

4.1. Procedures

Working time: 90 minutes

IDs (ID = student identification card – felsőoktatási diákigazolvány) are checked on entering the room and during the test. Students who cheat are suspended, and suspension will automatically result in a fail mark ('1', elégtelen). The test takers may not use dictionaries or any other resources during the test.

The use of dictionaries or any other reference materials or electronic devices, including cell phones, will not be allowed during the examination.

4.2. Before the test students will be given the following instructions:

- Switch off and put away your mobile phones.
- Only leave on the table your ID and pens.
- Do not talk during the test.

- Write in BLUE ink (kéken író töltőtollal / golyóstollal).
- Write legibly.
- Put your name, EHA code, tutor's name and class code **legibly** on **each** answer sheet in the space provided.
- Leave margins.
- Write the final versions of your texts on the answer sheets provided; you may use the back of the task sheet and of the answer sheets for outlining and drafting.
- Do not write any part of your short essay on the summary answer sheet or the other way round. The answer sheets are corrected separately by different raters and the missing text segment will not be corrected.
- Cross all draft versions **clearly** to indicate that raters should not read them.
- You can write for 90 minutes to complete the two tasks.
- You must report the number of words each text you wrote contains. You shall have to count the words and write the number in the space indicated on the answer sheet.
- If you wish to go to the restroom, the time when you leave and return will be recorded on your paper; you must be back in the lecture hall in **5** minutes.
- When you have finished writing the test, **remain seated**, put up your hand, wait until your paper is collected and the invigilator tells you that you may leave the room; do not talk while you are waiting.
- Test results will be announced by the class tutor in the last week of the semester.

4.3. Structure of the test

The written part of the test comprises a summary writing and a short (one-paragraph) argumentative essay writing task.

4.3.1. Summary writing task

Students read a passage of about 700 words on a general Applied Linguistics topic (e.g., using authentic texts as language teaching materials, the role of dictation in the language classroom) that discusses several different aspects of the topic. Test takers must find and summarise about four to six aspects by responding to a guiding question about the text. Therefore, they do not have to summarise the whole text. The summary is a complete paragraph of about 130 words (+/- 10%) written in the semi-formal/formal style typical of popular science magazines (e.g., *National Geographic*, *Popular Science*).

The summary is evaluated on the basis of *Task Achievement* (the summary starts with a topic sentence, continues with the developmental part, and ends with a concluding sentence; develops all the aspects specified in the guiding question; is concise; contains no chunks lifted from the original text; is of the required length), *Coherence and Cohesion* (organisation of ideas; links between ideas; punctuation), *Grammar* (range of structures used; accuracy; errors that hinder comprehension), *Vocabulary* (range, accuracy, errors that hinder comprehension; spelling) and *Style*.

4.3.2. Short (one-paragraph essay) argumentative task

Students are required to write a short (one-paragraph-long) *argumentative* essay of about 130–150 words. The topic of the essay does not require specialised knowledge or excessive creativity from the test taker. If the essay is not related directly to the topic given in the task,

the paper is a fail.

The essay is evaluated on the basis of *Task Achievement* (the presence and quality of title, topic sentence, support, concluding sentence; the text must be argumentative and of the specified length), *Coherence and Cohesion* (organisation of ideas; links between ideas; punctuation), *Grammar* (range of structures used; accuracy; errors that hinder comprehension), *Vocabulary* (range, accuracy, errors that hinder comprehension; spelling) and *Style*.

4.4. Scoring

The summary is rated by the course tutor. The essay is rated by the course tutor and another academic skills teacher. Scores can be awarded from 0-3 for each of the assessment criteria.

Criterion	Summary scores	One-paragraph essay scores
Task Achievement (completeness and content)	3x2	3x2
Coherence and Cohesion	3	3
Grammar	3	3
Vocabulary and Style	3	3
Total		30

The raw scores are converted into grades according to the following matrix:

0–14	1 (elégtelen)
15–18	2 (elégséges)
19–22	3 (közepes)
23–26	4 (jó)
27–30	5 (jeles)

The results are announced by the course tutor at the latest in the last academic skills class. The course grade is calculated so that the coursework and the test constitute 60% and 40% of the final grade.

For further details please contact the test co-ordinator, Gyula Tankó, E430.

5. Sample test paper

Academic Skills Test (A) – April, 2007

Working time for the two tasks: 90 minutes

Name: _____	108 tutor's name: _____
EHA code: _____	108 course code: BBN-ANG-108/____

Task 1

Write a paragraph of 130 words in which you summarise in your own words as far as possible *the potential problems with dictation in language teaching and the ways these problems can be overcome*, which are discussed in the reading passage below.

Using dictation by Amy Lightfoot

In its simplest form, dictation refers to a person reading some text aloud so that the listener(s) can write down what is being said. When used in the language classroom, the aim has traditionally been for students to write down what is said by the teacher, word for word, later checking their own text against the original and correcting the errors made. While this certainly has its uses, there are countless variations that can make it more interesting and learner-centred. For example, a related activity, sometimes called 'dictogloss', requires the students to only take notes of the key words used as they listen and then later reconstruct the text so that it has the same meaning as the original text although perhaps not exactly the same form.

There are several reasons why dictation activities work well in the classroom. From the teacher's point of view, dictations can be done with any level, depending on the text used; can be graded for a multi-level class; and usually require very little preparation and photocopying. In fact, dictation can be used to decrease preparation time for other activities. Instead of spending hours making cut-up activities such as matching vocabulary and their definitions, why not just give the students blank slips of paper and dictate the necessary information to them in the classroom? This also gives the students more listening, writing and spelling practice.

For the students, dictations can focus on both accuracy (form) as well as meaning. Speaking and pronunciation can be developed if the students do the dictating rather than the teacher. Additionally, dictation activities where students compare their version of the text to the original can increase their ability to notice aspects of the language which are sometimes overlooked, as well as mistakes which they commonly make. These might include common spelling errors, absence of articles or the third person 's', etc. The comparison also helps students to become better at identifying errors in their own written work.

What definitely needs to be addressed is the perception that students may have of doing a dictation activity. Some students (and teachers) may have developed an aversion to dictation. It is important, therefore, to ensure that we vary the ways that we do dictation in class and encourage the students to focus on meaning as well as accuracy. All sorts of texts can be dictated, from single words of a vocabulary list to sentences from a dialogue to full paragraphs. These can also be dictated in the 'wrong' order, requiring students to unscramble them once it's finished. Using dictated texts as a precursor to further activities like this will help students to see them as an integrated part of the learning process. It is important that we and the students see these activities as learning experiences rather than as simply testing their ability to listen and copy words and sentences.

A second issue is that some students may find dictation more difficult than others, especially if you are teaching a multi-level class. One way of combating this is to think about how much of the dictation we expect our students to produce. We can give weaker students skeleton versions of the text to be dictated, with gaps for them to fill in as they go along, rather than a blank sheet of paper. Incidentally, this can be a useful approach for practising 'noticing' specific parts of speech – for example, all the students can be required to listen for only the prepositions or articles needed to fill in the gaps.

Students often are not very good at looking for mistakes in what they have written when comparing it to the original text. It can often be easier to check the errors in someone else's text rather than in our own. Also, it might be an idea to leave some time between completing the dictation and checking the text against a correct version as students are often better able to find their errors with 'fresh' eyes. Doing this will also be good training for students, giving them strategies for checking their own written work.

In this article we have examined the benefits and problems associated with dictation as well as explored some variations on the traditional approach. Dictation does not work for everything or for everyone, but by looking again at this traditional method we can add to our classroom techniques a touch of the familiar with a little innovation.

Task 2

Write a short (one-paragraph essay) argumentative essay of 130-150 words on the topic *learning a foreign language at a very early age*. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.