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Many teachers recognise the usefulness of simple drawings in their teaching. Drawings have many advantages: they are quick to do; their content can be determined exactly by you, the teacher; they are easy to reproduce. But many teachers think they cannot draw! Or if they can draw they feel they have not got enough time.

This book is based on years of enjoyable experience gained in helping teachers to learn how to draw. It contains a careful introduction to drawing and over one thousand drawings for teachers to copy.

Who might use this book?

The main users of this book will be language teachers. However, teachers of other subjects and indeed anyone whose job involves communication will find this material relevant. I have met speech therapists, sociologists, youth leaders, yoga teachers as well as teachers of history, geography and economics who all make use of simple representations.

The organisation of the book and the selection of language items

The sections, topics and language items in this book are based on the *Threshold Level*, a document produced by the Council of Europe for language syllabus designers. I have also referred to the *Cambridge English Lexicon*.

Language is enormously rich. A word can have many meanings depending on context. I have had to be selective and have often only been able to illustrate one of several possible meanings. I have omitted concepts that are impossible to represent pictorially and language items which are relatively infrequent, i.e. within stages 5 or 6 of the *Cambridge English Lexicon*.

3 Ambiguity

Of course, pictures are ambiguous, thanks to the variety of human minds and experiences. In the early days of audio-visual language teaching, every picture was examined for its ambiguity and all were found 'guilty'. However, there is an increasing awareness today of the way people respond to and interpret information. Above all we realise that objects, actions and words gain meaning through their association with other information. An object in isolation can itself be ambiguous. Is a cow a religious object, a dangerous animal or a source of milk? A word can mean different things according to time, place, cultural context, people concerned and so on. A picture usually contributes to understanding by being a part of a context. It is not surprising that a picture considered in isolation is often found to be ambiguous. See section 6 (pages 119-123) for further discussion on the teaching of meaning through pictures.

Pictorial language

It has often been stated that people who are not familiar with the conventions of pictorial language are unable to interpret a picture adequately. However, it is my contention that these conventions have gained a universality in recent years due to large scale printing and an increased flow of information, making pictures such as the ones in this book more accessible worldwide.

Are simple drawings insensitive and a threat to artistic vision?

Teachers of art and others concerned with the development of their students' artistic vision are often critical of teachers who make use of crude symbols. However, the fault lies, not in the notion of simple drawings, but in the use of crude generalisations and clichés . . . and these can also be found in speech. I hope you will feel that the majority of ideas given for drawing in this book are not based on a closed system but on the development of a sensitive awareness of forms in life.

Using pictures in language teaching

Traditionally, pictures have been used for description or for illustrating a recorded dialogue. In recent years, however, there has been an emphasis on the communicative use of language. Pictures are very useful in this respect. They provide references to which the learner can make a personal response, such as expressing likes or dislikes.

Group work is essential if communicative competence is the aim. There is no alternative if each learner is to have the opportunity to try to use the language he or she has learned. Pictures provide a focus for this essential activity.

This is only a brief look at the role of pictures in language teaching. Further ideas for using pictures are given in Section 6.