

# Images

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**Jamie Keddie asks his students to pick up their pencils.**

**G**loria has just moved into a new apartment in Barcelona. She is describing it to the rest of the class and tells us that the one drawback is that the chicken is very small.

In my experience, the kitchen is a confusing place for learners of English. Some students like Gloria refer to it as *the chicken* while others prefer *the cookie*. Furthermore, a cook is usually a *cooker* and to complete the circle, a cooker is often a *kitchen*.

Here is one possible remedy to the confusion: have your students draw a picture of a kitchen which includes, among anything else they want to incorporate, a cooker, a cook and some chicken (all labelled). Whenever the same confusion arises at a later date, learners can be referred back to these images allowing the language to be instantly clarified and revised.

### Drawing in the classroom

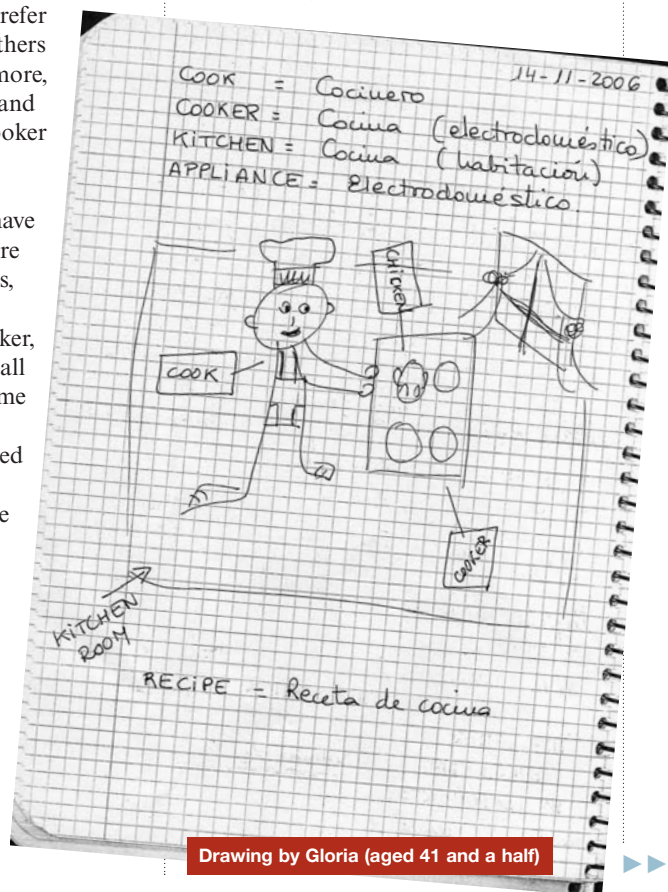
You might think that this is hardly a revolutionary idea and, of course, it isn't. But personally, I spent quite a few years as an English teacher before

I ever considered getting my adult learners to draw.

Perhaps this is a result of my own experiences. There was a time when writing a story without accompanying it with a picture would have been like going to the cinema without buying popcorn. Even up until my late teens, drawing was an important part of school life in subjects as diverse as science, history, language and mathematics. Then, suddenly, life got serious and the drawing just stopped. I suppose that in the back of my mind, I thought that:

- Drawing is a tool that exists primarily for engaging young learners.
- Adult learners are serious learners and they wouldn't want or need to spend time drawing in the language class.
- Drawing has little value in the English classroom; every moment spent drawing is a moment spent not learning English.

I now think that I was wrong on all counts. Drawing can be an extremely effective language learning technique for everyone, including teenagers and adults. It is certainly true that some students may feel a little awkward about



Drawing by Gloria (aged 41 and a half)

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them may seem a bit obscure, most of them were produced in response to things my learners either said or wrote (or, rather, attempted to say or write). In other words, in order to appreciate them, you would have had to be there. This is one situation in which it pays to keep a note of all the language that arises in class.

### Procedure

1 Decide on a number of drawable items that you would like your students to revise. Alternatively, you could choose a theme such as:

- Food
- Clothes
- Animals
- Noun phrases containing phrasal verbs
- Noun phrases containing superlative adjectives
- Vocabulary items contained in a text that your students are going to read

2 Write each of the items once on a different piece of paper.

3 Put all the pieces of paper on the table or floor with the text labels facing upwards for everyone to see. Students see what they have to draw and they decide between themselves who draws what. They draw on the reverse sides of the pieces of paper (ie the blank sides). You may want to give students access to dictionaries if there is likely to be any comprehension confusion.

4 The drawing should not take long. This is an important point. The type of activity that we are considering does not involve detailed works of art that will take hours to produce. We are considering quick two- or three-minute sketches.

5 When all the drawings have been done, take in the flashcards and elicit what each one is and find out who drew what. Remember, the students already saw all of the text labels

doing so, but at least persuading students to draw is a lot easier than getting them to sing. In any case, a couple of good drawing activities will usually convince the reluctant artists that the process can be highly beneficial to their learning.

### Student-drawn flashcards

Flashcards are an invaluable resource for the classroom and students themselves can be the most effective source of them. Student-made flashcards can be used to pre-teach, recap, revise and reactivate language. They can also be used as the basis for a number of games.

Although the flashcards shown here and the language that accompanies

a David's cat being sick (drawn by David)



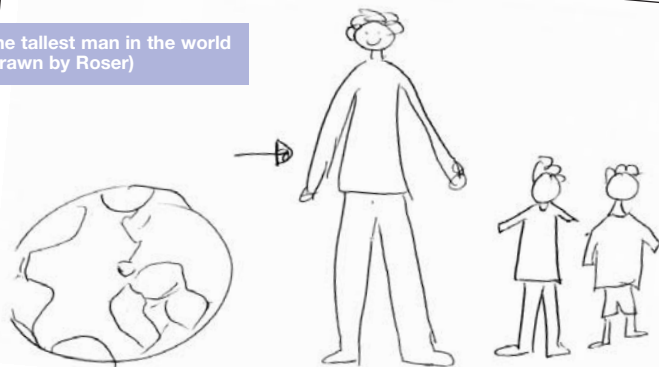
b Chus looking up rude words in the dictionary (drawn by Chus)



c A policeman working as a police dog (drawn by Angels)



d The tallest man in the world (drawn by Roser)

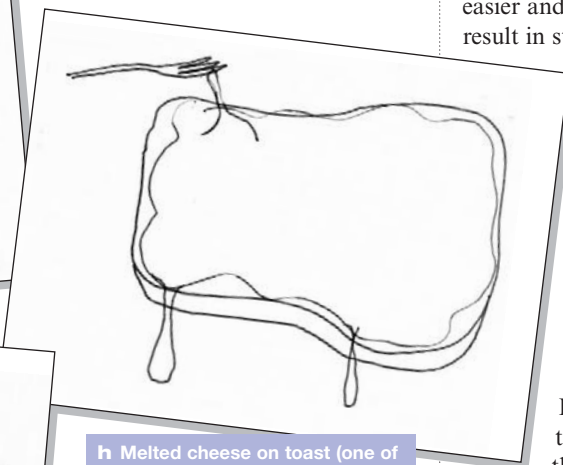


e David Beckham finding out that his wife is having an affair (drawn by Gloria)





f If my English was as good as my cooking I would be happy. (said and drawn by Coral – I think that is a chick pea on the right)



h Melted cheese on toast (one of the things I miss about home) (drawn by me)



g Oscar on holiday being chased by bees (drawn by Oscar)

when the cards were first laid out for them. But can they remember the language? Elicit and help so that all the drawings are identified. This is usually quite good fun.

- 6 Use the flashcards to practise and drill the language.

### Spontaneous flashcards

Flashcards don't have to be planned prior to a lesson. Imagine one of your students is trying to tell you that she would be happy if she could speak English as well as she could cook. She is struggling a bit with the language (the notorious 'second conditional') and in response to this, you have to offer grammatical guidance. You write the sentence on the board and have everyone copy it into their books before drilling its pronunciation.

Instead of allowing the utterance to be forgotten for ever, get the student to draw it on a scrap piece of paper and add it to the bank of other flashcards. It seems that there will always be a way of representing a sentence pictorially (see flashcard f above).

It is a good idea to have a supply of scrap pieces of paper on standby for situations such as these. The images can be used for recapping, reactivating or revising language very effectively at later dates.

### Games for flashcards

There are many activities in which flashcards could be incorporated.

Try a class quiz. Show individuals or teams a flashcard and award points for good language production (grammar, pronunciation, etc).

Place flashcards onto the boards of games such as 'Snakes and Ladders'. Put them on the snakes' heads and at

*Drawing is a fun and engaging activity that can be used for all language learners, including adults and teenagers*

the bottom of ladders. If a student lands on one of these hot spots, he or she must then produce the corresponding language. If the language is good, the student will then be granted permission to go up the ladder or not be eaten by the snake. (If you are not familiar with this game, you can find the rules for it at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).)

### Notebooks

Imagine how much more difficult it would be to browse newspapers if they didn't contain pictures. Try to encourage students to include quick sketches in

their notebooks. Such decoration will break up the harsh sea of text and make reading and browsing at later dates easier and more enjoyable. It may even result in students opening their

notebooks more often.

Importantly, it also makes finding specific language items that have been previously covered a lot easier. In learners' notebooks, pictures can serve as a type of mental indexing system.


### The classroom wall

Putting student pictures and the accompanying language on the classroom walls can be a great way of keeping language that has been covered fresh in learners' minds. The photocopier can be a good friend for this purpose.



There are very few limitations to the structures, vocabulary and aspects of pronunciation that can be represented pictorially. And perhaps most importantly, drawing a piece of language allows learners both to remember it and to own it.

As you can probably imagine from the flashcards above, drawing is a fun and engaging activity that can be used for all language learners, including adults and teenagers. Even when students roll their eyes at the idea of drawing, most of them will be laughing at the results within a few minutes.

Drawing is merely another resource that teachers have at their disposal which requires minimal resources and materials. Even if you only decide to get your students to draw every now and again, this will contribute to classroom variety (which is always good). 



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