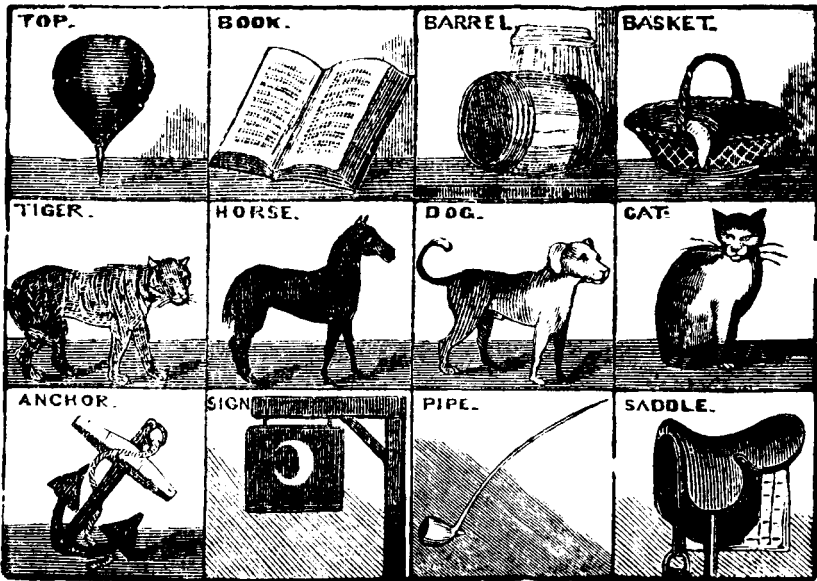


PART C EMPHASIS ON LISTENING AND READING

Pictures have a major role to play in the development of student skills in listening and reading. There are two reasons in particular for this:

1. The meanings we derive from words are affected by the context they are in: pictures can represent or contribute much to the creation of contexts in the classroom.
2. It is often helpful if the students can respond to a text non-verbally: pictures provide an opportunity for non-verbal response.

8 Pictures and the teaching of meaning



Pictures have been used for centuries to help students understand various aspects of foreign languages. The pictures have motivated the students, made the subjects they are dealing with clearer, and illustrated the general idea and forms of an object or action which are particular to a culture. The general idea of 'house' can be translated verbally, but not the physical structure of 'house' as found in different countries and even areas of countries.

Pictures and the teaching of meaning

Pictures have a role to play in the teaching of meaning even in traditional grammar translation methods. In recent years, teachers have given more emphasis to the importance of introducing new language to students within appropriate contexts. Superficially, this approach might seem more laborious than teaching meaning by translation. However, a central aim of the teacher is to help the students develop skill and confidence in searching for meaning themselves. Translation might often provide meaning quickly but it does not develop this essential learning strategy which the students can continue to draw on long after they have left the classroom.

Contexts, pictures and meanings

It is now generally accepted in language teaching that we must learn to deal with chunks of language above the level of the word or the sentence. When we try to understand someone speaking we normally take into account not only their verbal language but their appearance, the sound of their voice, their behaviour, their relationship to others, the situation and the setting. If we are reading we are affected to some extent by the appearance of the book or newspaper or greetings card. The non-verbal information helps us to predict what the text might be about, and this ability to predict helps us to recognise meaning more quickly than if we had to sort it out solely from what we hear or read.

Pictures can represent these non-verbal sources of information. Indeed, they and what they represent are centrally bound up with the nature of communication itself. What we see affects how we interpret what we hear and vice versa. How someone is dressed, how they behave and what they say are inextricably linked in our minds.

Communicative methodology emphasises the need for teachers to prepare students to communicate making use of non-verbal as well as verbal means. The teacher has the task of creating a context within which communication that takes into account both verbal and non-verbal factors can take place.

Creating contexts

What is context? We can analyse it in this way:

Context: setting (place, objects)
 participants (appearance, actions, relations with others)
 purpose (what the people are trying to achieve)
 topic (the subject of the communication)
 channel (words heard or read, their tone or appearance)

The art of the teacher is to create contexts in which the students'

Part C Emphasis on listening and reading

minds are focussed on the meaning and use of the language being taught and the language is experienced by the students as essential to their participation in the activity. The language must be intrinsic to the context, not forced or artificial; a native speaker should feel at ease using the same language for the same purpose.

Let us take an example: *The Guinness Book of Records*. Superlative and comparative facts are intrinsic to *The Guinness Book of Records*; it would be impossible to talk about records if we couldn't make use of these forms.

This example provides us with two other important points. First, the context for the introduction of 'new' language should interest the students. *The Guinness Book of Records* is a very popular book, with enormous sales, so it has a good chance of being of interest. Secondly, the context chosen should involve the students so that they can try to make their own use of the new language forms. Students can talk about records they know about or about their own personal records. Students could even do things to create records in the classroom, like making and flying paper planes and seeing whose plane goes the furthest, listing as many words as possible beginning with the same letter, talking without hesitation for as long as possible, naming as many things as possible within a picture.

8.1 Establishing meaning

Introducing meaning is only the first step in a long process in which students become familiar with an aspect of language and what it represents. The students must be given an opportunity both to experience and use the language in a variety of contexts if it is to become a significant part of their language resource. This chapter is concerned with the initial focussing on meaning and the following chapters with the extension of the students' familiarity with meaning, form and use necessary for effective communication.

Our natural inclination is to search for meaning and this is an essential aspect of language learning and development. In foreign language learning there is rarely enough time for this searching to be allowed to happen in a random way. The teacher is responsible for introducing 'new' language at a considerable pace. The use of suitable pictures in the introduction of language can speed the process by which students assimilate meaning.

The remaining part of this chapter describes and to some extent assesses the appropriacy of a number of ways of using pictures in the introduction of language which is new to the students.

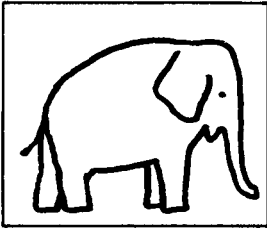
Pictures and the teaching of meaning

8.2 Bringing the outside world into the classroom

This section is concerned with the role of pictures in the teaching of meaning. The limitations of most classrooms mean that the outside world must be simulated. If the representation and reference to the outside world are understood by the students in the way intended, then it is hoped they will understand the 'new' language associated with them. The basis of all the activities involves the teacher, tape or written text describing the content of a picture, with the picture illustrating the meaning of the 'new' language. Alternatively, one or more pictures might illustrate a dialogue or story; if the dialogue and pictures are understood then it is hoped that the language which is new to the student will also be understood. The activities in this section, although of value if used appropriately, would not be done by the teacher and students unless they were learning a foreign language. These activities thus contrast with those in section 8.3 which concern events in the classroom which are of more authentic interest.

Using one example

233 Elephant



Teacher: This is an elephant.

There are many things which are difficult to bring into the classroom, including elephants! Pictures make it possible. However, a single example of an object is sometimes insufficient to focus the students' minds on the interpretation the teacher wishes to convey. In the example of the elephant we do not necessarily want to name the animal. The language aim could be to say how big it is.

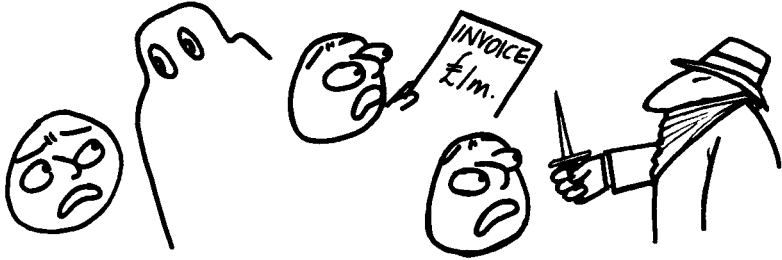
Using several examples

In order to focus the students' minds on one aspect of a picture it is sometimes helpful to show several pictures which all have one key point in common.

Part C Emphasis on listening and reading

234 He is horrified

The first picture below seen by itself could illustrate, 'He has seen a ghost'. Together with the other pictures it is more likely to be seen as, 'He is horrified' in that it is applicable to all three situations.



235 Working

Teacher: He's cooking. She's driving. He's digging. She's telephoning. They are working.

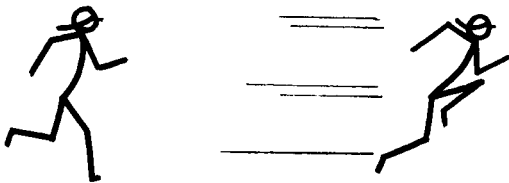
Sometimes it is necessary to show instances of a collective idea, in this case to introduce the verb 'work'.



Comparing examples

Comparing two similar objects, actions or concepts can focus the students' minds on the difference between them.

236 Running and sprinting



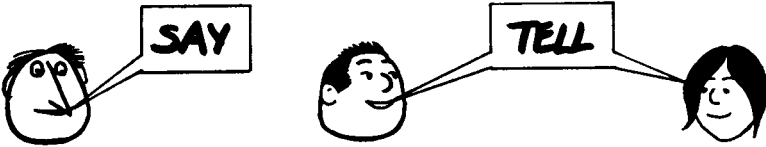
Teacher: She's running and she's sprinting.

Pictures and the teaching of meaning

237 Say and tell

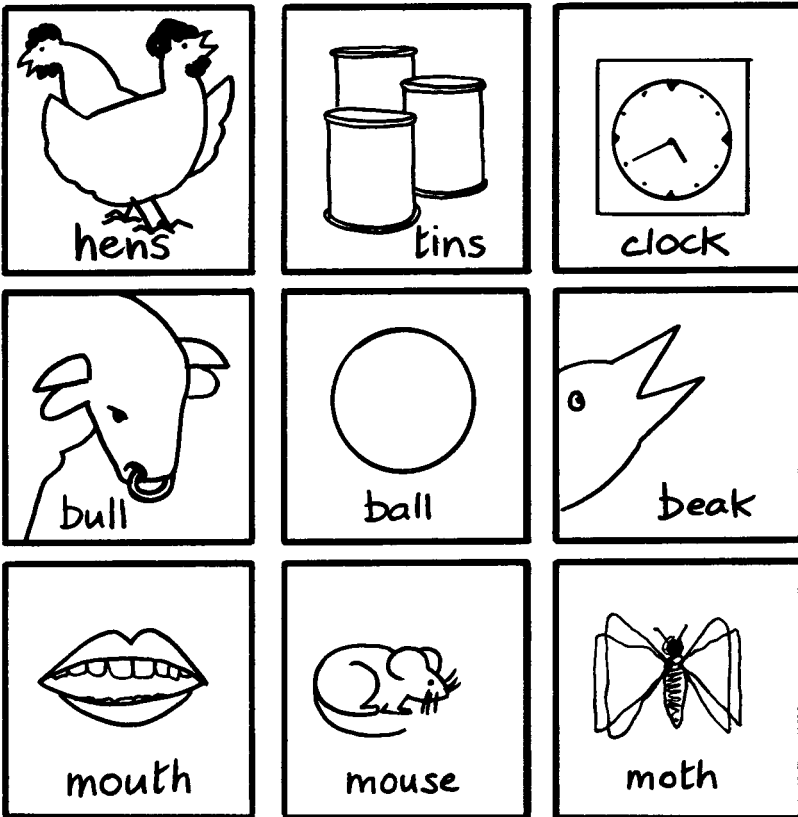
After introducing these words in a broader context, the pictures below may help students to distinguish their usage.

Teacher: He says he likes apples.
 He tells Wendy he likes apples.



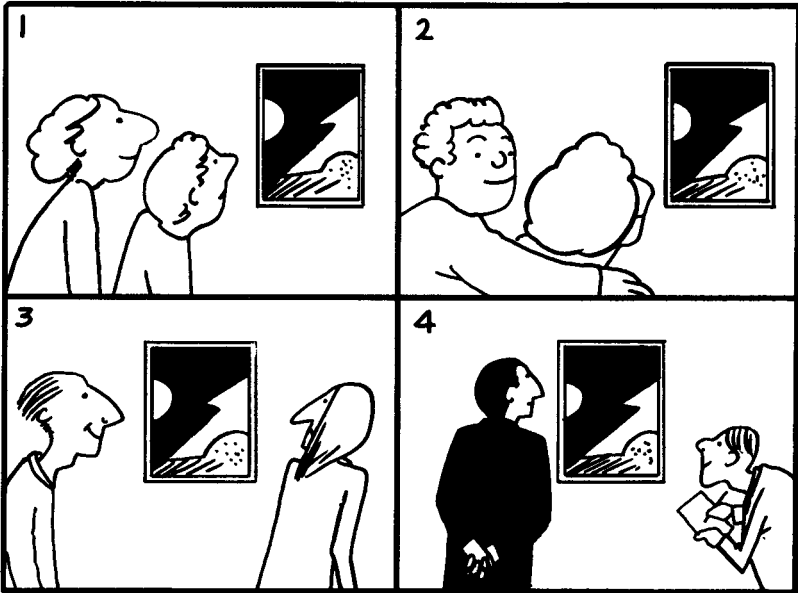
238 Sounds

Sounds and the words containing them can be illustrated on cards, used for presenting and then for practice.



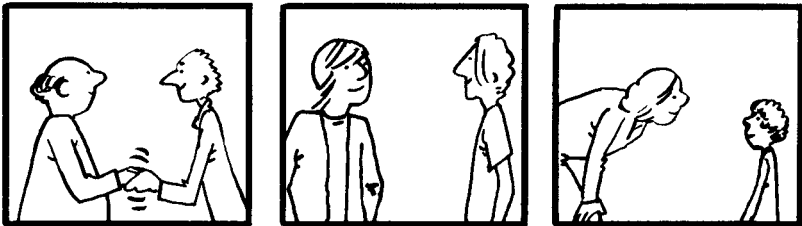
Part C Emphasis on listening and reading

239 Formality / informality 1



Teacher or tape: (Picture 1) Do you like it?
 (Picture 2) Like it?
 (Picture 3) May I ask you if you like it?
 (Picture 4) Excuse me, please. Would you mind if I
 ask you whether you like the picture?

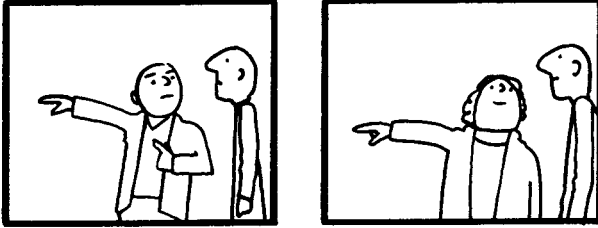
240 Formality / informality 2



Teacher or tape: (Picture 1) How do you do.
 (Picture 2) Hi!
 (Picture 3) Hello!

Pictures and the teaching of meaning

241 Stress

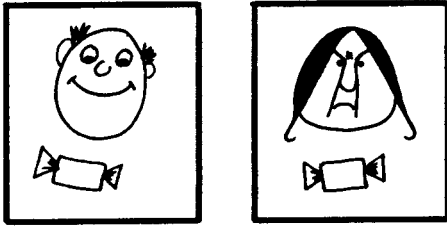


Teacher or tape: (Picture 1) I'm going there!
 (Picture 2) I'm going there!

Contrasting examples

Contrast can be used to focus the students' minds on two contrasting concepts rather than on other features which the pictures are illustrating.

242 Likes and dislikes



Teacher: He likes sweets. She doesn't like sweets.
 The two sides of a piece of card are used for these two pictures. The contrast helps to teach the meaning of each one.

243 Animals

If a number of animals are shown and the pattern of the sentence remains unchanged it is likely that the speaker is naming the animals.

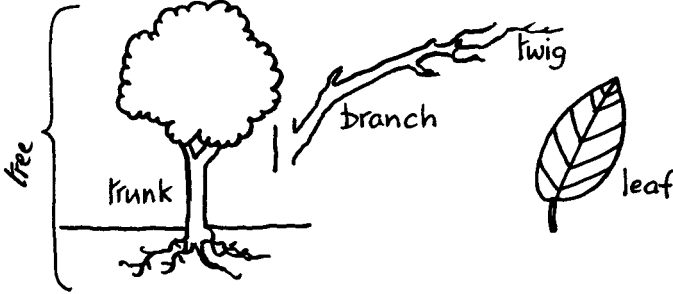


Teacher: This is an elephant. This is a tiger. This is a giraffe, etc.

Part C Emphasis on listening and reading

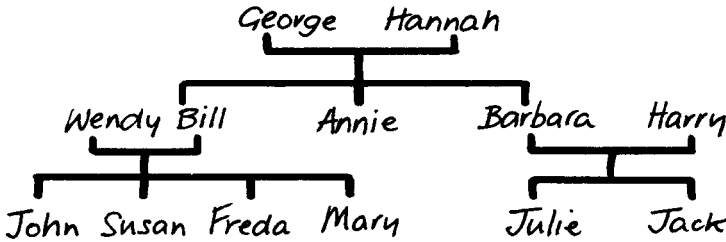
Whole and parts

244 Parts of a tree



The meanings of the words naming the parts of a tree are made apparent by seeing the tree as a whole. The meaning of the word 'tree' is made clear by seeing the parts assembled into the whole.

245 Family tree



This diagram is a family tree. It offers a similar way of contextualising meaning to 'tree' as in the example above. In this case, it is a 'belonging' relationship rather than a physical component relationship.

246 Sentence building

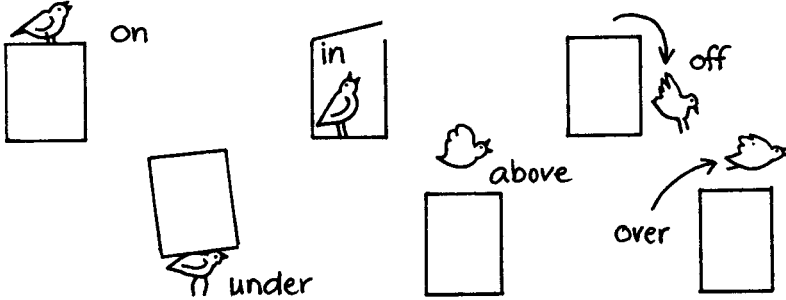


Pictures can be used together with words to demonstrate word order and relationships.

Pictures and the teaching of meaning

Diagrammatic pictures

247 Prepositions

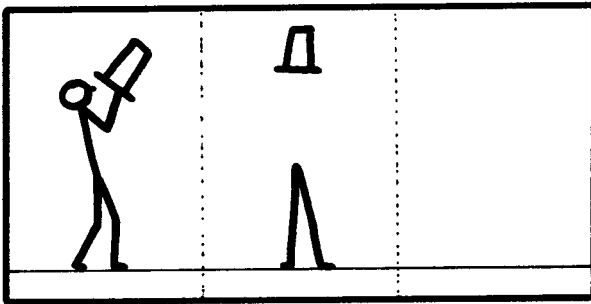


The addition of symbols to pictures can focus the students' attention on the concepts which the teacher has in mind.

Sequence

Some concepts are intrinsically bound up with a sequence of events. In the example below the blank panel would have no meaning unless we had seen the first two panels.

248 Present perfect



Teacher: He's going to make himself invisible. He's making himself invisible. He's made himself invisible.

The sequence of pictures contextualises, however briefly, these three tense forms. If the drawings are made on a piece of folded paper the story can be told with a little more drama as the teacher reveals the actions one by one. Meaning is highlighted in this example partly by the sequence of events and partly by the contrast. (For more examples of the use of folding paper, see page 26.)