Student sketching and the teaching of English as a second language: an integrated approach

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Student sketching and the teaching of
English as a second language: An integrated approach

by

Maria Magnabosco Shahidi

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I have always considered drawing and writing and speaking to be complementary ways of communicating and learning about the world. So, it seemed natural to continue studying art and drawing along with my native language throughout my formal education. I’ve taught both art and English and have recently combined them in the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) at the university level.

Artists, educators and scientists have all played a role in influencing my interests in combining art, especially drawing, with language learning.

Rudolf Arnheim, who coined the phrase visual literacy and wrote a book by the same name in 1969, visited my class in art theory at Iowa State in the late 1970’s. His stunning statement that all concepts, no matter how abstract, could be visually represented, intrigued me.

About the same time, Betty Edwards wrote the first of two popular books, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979), which showed how the ability to draw was linked to a certain way of thinking, a way which could be rediscovered if it had been forgotten in childhood. Her theory was derived from the discoveries of Nobel Laureate Roger Sperry regarding the dual yet equal nature of brain functioning: global, visual, and perceptual as well as sequential, verbal, and analytical.

A few years later, Edwards lectured at Iowa State about the exciting implications of utilizing art to teach academic subject matter. She prophesied that the thinker of the future would be able to willfully access an appropriate thinking mode for solving the problem at hand.

I found all of this to be fascinating and later, when I began graduate studies in the English department at Iowa State, wanted to explore the
possibilities of integrating the visual with the verbal in an attempt to motivate and creatively energize my students. After informally experimenting with five different ESL classes, the approach finally evolved into a teaching strategy called Sketch Talk: Drawing in English.

This thesis outlines the process I followed and offers my encouragement to others who may wish to try it.

Chapter One includes examples of various types of visual materials used in teaching ESL, noting the lack of student-generated drawing, and presents my rationale for integrating sketching with teaching ESL. Key points are that Sketch Talk: Drawing in English contributes to students' active involvement in their learning, reflects the way the brain processes language and nonlanguage, and serves as a scaffold to help build students' new second language.

Chapter Two describes four personal experiments with integrating student sketching and teaching ESL. They are organized by the kinds of verbal skills practiced: functional conversation through dialogues and roleplays, vocabulary building, self-expression and idea generation, and negotiation. Each includes the procedure used and examples of student-generated drawings, followed by my comments and student evaluations.

Based on these experiments and their results, I wrote Chapter Three as a guide for ESL teachers, outlining how to set a visual stage in the classroom and presenting models of three lessons, including procedures, variations, and notes to the teacher. Some advantages of using Sketch Talks with various audiences are described, and teachers are encouraged to experiment with the flexibility and adaptability of this method.

The Appendix contains students' drawings, along with other figures illustrating this method of teaching.
CHAPTER ONE

GOALS, DEVELOPMENT OF AN IDEA, AND RATIONALE

Introduction

In this project, I combine student-generated sketching with the teaching of various listening and speaking skills to intermediate level students of English as a second language (ESL). The primary reason for this approach is to actively engage students in their learning by adding a visual dimension to the usual verbal classroom environment. My aim is for their sketches to provide a visual support system, enabling students to both reach for language they don’t yet have and to signal their need for new particular language.

Literature review

A review of ESL listening/speaking texts reveals widespread recognition of the importance of visual material (drawings, photos, maps and diagrams) in teaching; however, because the visual material usually is being presented by the teacher--instead of being created by the student--the student plays a passive role instead of an active one. Even so, pictures in texts do help with recall and understanding and learners react favorably to them (Rathet, 1994). Evidence shows that visuals can be motivational, as well, serving as “messages” that cause us to change our thinking and/or behavior (Lazear, 1988).

In the past few years, an increasing number of ESL materials has been developed with a strong visual element. At one extreme, we find, for example, a multimedia system called *English Express* which includes videodiscs, CD-ROM, software, books and cassettes. It is advertised as enabling students “to associate spoken words and sentences with real-life images...to activate students’ senses--visual, tactile, and auditory.”
Through this stimulation of the senses, students will absorb the language more quickly and retain it longer." Testimonials from teachers say, "I no longer have to spend hours looking for pictures and materials to create my lessons;" and "English Express really gets the class up and involved, not just watching. I like the colorful pictures and well-paced activities" ("English Express," 1992, p. 18).

There seems to be a trend toward using more drawings in texts and teaching materials. For example, Longman Linguistics Corporation advertises its "New Spontaneous Descriptions--Overhead Transparencies," as follows:

This intermediate English teaching series is of great interest to adult students and contains thirty-two overhead transparencies of everyday situations which evoke spontaneous conversation from students because they are intrigued by the unusual events taking place in the pictures. Also available are two books which contain a narrative of each picture, two spontaneously recorded descriptions of each...transparency, and numerous exercises. ("New Spontaneous Descriptions," 1992, p. 10)

A textbook containing similar teaching material is Picture Stories for Beginning Communication (Heyer, 1989); its humorous cartoons without captions are designed to be used in a variety of ways.

Some ESL dictionaries also use extensive visuals. The Visual Dictionary contains 25,000 words, 85 pages of tables and indexes, and 3,000 very exact line drawings illustrating the human body, the animal kingdom, food, clothing, personal articles, music, hobbies, sports and games, and farming and gardening; this allows the student to look up an image and find its name--or look up a word that can't be visualized (Corbell, 1986). The New Oxford Picture Dictionary (Parnwell, 1988) contains fairly realistic color drawings, organized thematically, beginning
with basic “survival” level topics.

At the other end of the continuum, we find the traditional use of photos or drawings, asking students to compare them while practicing a part of speech, such as using comparative and superlative adjectives or placing out-of-sequence picture stories into their proper order and then telling the story (Ur, 1988). Often, such visuals are teamed with cassettes for the teaching of listening skills, with directions typically sounding like this: “Take a few minutes to look at the pictures and the food categories. Then, listen to the tape and write a word under each picture” (Tsukamoto and LaLuzerne-Oi, 1993, p. 14).

Recent trends in ESL curriculum design have included the use of visualization techniques as mnemonic devices for teaching vocabulary (Wenden and Rubin, 1991) and as organizational devices for composing and editing text (Barton, 1989; Johns, 1986), writing summaries (Kirkland and Saunders, 1991), and note-taking (Jones, Pierce, and Hunter, 1988).

For example, in his doctoral dissertation, Barton described spatial visualization techniques as a useful way of taking a snap-shot of students’ thinking processes as they wrote compositions. His most solid conclusions were that visualizations helped students feel in control of their own writing, eased the burden on short term memory, and particularly helped during the early invention stages of composition (1989).

Another visualization technique is described by two ESL researchers, Kirkland and Saunders, who recommend underlining, color coding, mapping and diagraming when writing summaries of textual material; the techniques were useful for helping students see the “big picture” and to “understand the extent of recursion needed in a complex reading-

Others recommend a mapping diagram as an alternative to outlining or note taking, linear approaches that work against the need for a recursive process. A top-down approach is urged—one which moves from the general to the specific—versus the usual bottom-up approach of textbooks which often delete details and purposely don’t use redundancy (Jones et al., 1988).

In spite of all the potential usefulness of visualization techniques for dealing with textual and written material, they did not seem useful enough for my intended use as visual counterparts to my students’ oral English. I wanted to wean students from constant reliance on written and textual material, believing that speaking skills are best developed by actually speaking as much as possible. I decided that some type of drawing would be more appropriate than spatial visualization techniques, as it could stand alone and readily communicate its meaning.

Clearly there is much prepackaged visual material for the ESL classroom. Yet, these visuals have limitations. Apparently, one problem with pre-printed pictures is that they don’t always work well for all viewers due to cultural differences in evaluating their content: The viewer may select a different focus than that of the lesson being taught, for example (Rathet, 1994). Another argument can be made that students should be actively engaged in more than a response to visuals, as the multi-media materials makers promise. These limitations can be met when students create their own visuals, ones with personal meaning and custom made to match their immediate language needs.

Very recently, a few ESL materials have begun to include this
possibility. The text *English Firsthand Plus* (Helgesen, Brown, Mandeville, and Jordan, 1991) offers part of a blank page for drawing, as a supplementary activity following one lesson. Another single lesson, “Read and Draw,” (Isbell, 1994) asks groups of students to read a story and draw what they've read; a representative then explains the drawing to the class.

A more developed combination of teaching ESL through drawing is found in “English by Drawing: Making the Language Lab a Center of Active Learning” by Ilyse Rathet (1994). She describes how on hot summer days in rural Japan her students began nodding off while listening to conversational English tapes. Knowing how much her students liked to draw in their free time, Rathet hoped to keep them more alert by offering them listening tasks in which they had to draw responses to the language tapes they were hearing. Besides keeping her students actively awake, Rathet found the addition of drawing helped clarify culturally based misinterpretations of expressions such as time and quantity and helped students generate their own simplified representations of target language structures. In her article, Rathet describes her methodology and offers sample activities. She also offers the following recommendation:

> Of equal importance is that many students enjoy drawing, or at least the opportunity to feel active while "receiving" information from the teacher, a tape, or a text. Like Total Physical Response, English by Drawing is an active approach that allows students to move (if only hands and eyes) while they listen, thus making for more active and memorable learning experiences. (Rathet, 1994, p. 22)
Rationale

This is a key point for the integration of sketching with teaching ESL: Whenever students are not fully engaged in cognitive strategies that are both spatial and linguistic, there is the danger of becoming dissociated from genuine learning; dissociated learning is that which is not personally meaningful to the student; it is “second-hand” knowing. In order for meaningful and useful learning to take place, new information must be internalized; this takes place through active involvement and by finding a personal link to what is encountered in the classroom (Sheridan, 1990; Zamel, 1992).

By providing students with examples and teaching them to create their own drawings, they will become actively involved with their own learning, instead of being dissociated from it. Also, they will be learning a strategy to apply to other areas of learning--formal as well as informal. For example, the need to continue to build vocabulary and to take classroom notes will be paramount to continued academic success, and everyday organization of time and paperwork can be enhanced by adding a visual dimension to the usual verbal one.

Such a teaching method would also reflect the way the brain processes information: a simultaneous mediation between conceptual and verbal realms (Damasio and Damasio, 1992). Specifically, the teaching strategy I’ve developed, Sketch Talk: Drawing in English, links a nonverbal activity (drawing) to a verbal one (learning a second language) in a way that is mutually supportive: as if one rung of a ladder is a word and the next, a sketch, with the hand rails being the teaching method used to negotiate meaning between the visual and verbal realms.
Visualized in this way, the teaching approach echoes the brain's processing of language, as described by Antonio and Hanna Damasio, neurologists at the University of Iowa College of Medicine who have been studying the neural basis for memory and language for the past twenty years. Their recent research postulates that the brain processes language by means of three interacting structures: One is specialized for nonverbal, conceptual thinking; another, for language; and the third, for mediating between the first two.

The conceptual or nonlanguage interactions of the brain have to do with the body and its environment. "Anything that a person does, perceives, thinks or feels while acting in the world" (Damasio and Damasio, 1992, p. 89). The brain then organizes the nonlanguage into categories such as shape, color, sequence or emotional state, then categorizes these results further and further. (It is these layers of categories and symbolic representations that allow us to use abstraction and metaphor.)

A second neural system of the brain deals with language: phonemes, phoneme combinations and syntactic rules for combining words. This processing applies to both the language we create ourselves and to the language input we receive from our environment.

A third set of structures mediates between the first two, either by transforming a concept into a word-form or transforming word-forms into concepts (Damasio and Damasio, 1992).

Some educators believe that the insights being provided by brain researchers have relevance for curriculum design and teaching techniques. For example, in 1990, Susan Sheridan of the University of Massachusetts utilized a cross-modal approach to teach writing to
elementary students. Sheridan used the term cross-modal or cross-domain to describe the brain's simultaneous processing of visual and verbal information. Her operating philosophy was that, "If thought is cross-modal by nature, education should be cross-modal by design" (Sheridan, 1990, p. 191). Specifically, Sheridan chose a combination of writing and drawing in an attempt to develop descriptive and inferential thinking skills. Her hypothesis was that such training would be more effective than a writing program without the inclusion of drawing "because it models or reflects the integrated spatial/linguistic workings of the mind" (Sheridan, 1990, p. 103).

Basically, Sheridan's Drawing/Writing approach involved students first drawing an object and then writing about what was learned about the object. She predicted that both the quantity and quality of students' writing would improve, resulting in the generation of more words, facts, and inferences. The five drawing lessons (contours, shapes, values, "the perfect whole", and abstraction) were linked to writing about what the object might or might not be used for (speculative, predictive, and hypothetical thinking on a variety of levels).

Sheridan's research with elementary children showed that drawing served three purposes: It helped in moving through increasingly abstract levels of symbolic representation, showed how to dissect and use the analytical process, and assisted in focusing sustained attention to a body of data (1990).

By making comparisons between systems of representation, such as when we both draw and write, we are mirroring the brain's ability to mediate between nonlanguage and language, and, "Two symbol systems, if they are used in complementary ways, are better than one, to get close
to and to gain distance from a knowledge base” (Sheridan, 1990, p.192). The problem is that many people think of drawing and writing as being unrelated skills. Thus, they do not believe in nor understand, as yet, the constant transferring that is going on in the brain between the spatial and linguistic processing of thought. “The operative basis of an activity like Drawing/Writing is the on-going transfer of meaning between symbolic realms” (Sheridan, 1990, p. 199). This certainly brings to mind the neural brokerage between the nonlanguage and language structures of the brain, as described by the Damasio’s (1992).

Twenty five years ago, before supporting evidence from brain researchers was available, Rudolph Arnheim discussed the visual nature of our verbal concepts and how, “The shapes of verbal language are tooled for the mass evocation of images” (1969, p. 253). He described how just a single word can evoke a wave of mental images—how powerfully and compactly our language stores its underlying visual symbols. Arnheim also predicted that when productive thinking in any area of cognition is recognized as being perceptual thinking, the central function of art in general education would become evident (1969).

Arnheim’s legacy is evident in the philosophy of Betty Edwards, an art educator who claims that an indirect advantage of learning to draw is enhanced perceptive powers and thinking abilities (1989). Edwards is the author of two popular books, Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain (1979) and Drawing on the Artist Within (1986). The books are off-shoots from her doctoral research at the University of California at Long Beach.

Her methods are influenced by research done on the “split-brain” by Nobel Laureate Roger W. Sperry and his students at the California Institute of Technology over the past forty years. When brain
hemispheres were surgically isolated from one another, dual modalities of thinking became surprisingly evident: The left hemisphere, dominant in most individuals, was verbal and analytical while the right hemisphere was nonverbal and global in its processing. Subsequent research on normal intact brains also revealed "that both hemispheres use high-level cognitive modes which, though different, involve thinking, reasoning, and complex mental functioning" (Edwards, 1979, p. 30).

Edwards' books instruct us how to manipulate our visual processing abilities while "tricking" our more dominant verbal skills into submission; the result is learning how to draw in a representational manner or in an analogous (symbolic) way.

Taking inspiration from Sheridan, Arnheim, and Edwards, I've designed a teaching method for ESL students, utilizing what we now know about the brain's dual modes of processing. I believe drawing can be used as a way to tap into students' nonlanguage intelligences and act as a scaffold to help build their new second language and help them reach for language they already know but cannot yet express.

The following chapter describes some of my experiments to integrate sketching with the teaching of listening/speaking and my students' reaction to them.
CHAPTER TWO
FOUR PERSONAL EXPERIMENTS WITH INTEGRATING
STUDENT SKETCHING AND TEACHING ESL

During the eight week spring terms of 1993 and 1994, I taught listening and speaking to 23 students who were enrolled in Iowa State University’s Intensive English and Orientation Program (IEOP). They were placed at the intermediate level, based on a mean score of approximately 435 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The majority of the students had arrived in the U.S. just prior to enrolling.

Tables 1 and 2 show a breakdown of students by term, number, sex, and country of origin.

Table 1. Spring 1993 student numbers by sex and country of origin

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Table 2. Spring 1994 student numbers by sex and country of origin

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Preliminary Explorations

Although I knew I wanted to experiment with combining drawing with my ESL lessons, I first needed to decide what type of drawing would work best: detailed, representational drawings as in Sheridan's experiment and in Edwards' first book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1986); more symbolic analog drawing, as described in *Drawing on the Artist Within* (1979); or something in-between (see Figure 1 in Appendix). Instead, my students answered the question for me. I asked them to draw their plans for a summer vacation; this revealed their general interest in drawing and ability to capture an idea. Some did it very simply and quickly and others took more time to produce detailed, sophisticated drawings. However, because my goal for the students was to quickly convey a visual message, one that could keep up with their quick verbal processing, I wanted to encourage quick sketching.

The cartoon-like drawing and symbol making used for *Mindmapping* offered an exciting possibility. Mindmapping is being popularized in the United States by Nancy Margulies (1991); the method was invented twenty years ago in England by Tony Buzan and was further developed by Michael Gelb, an American author and lecturer. Mindmaps may or may not include written words; it is a way of making our thoughts visible in a fast symbol-laden form (see Figure 2).

I saw a natural link between Mindmapping's cryptic sketching and *Pictionary--The Game of Quick Draw* (©1985) and decided to use the game as a beginning activity, modeling the kind of quick sketching I had in mind. As its makers claim, "You don't need to be an artist to play; all that's needed is imagination and a fast pencil" (©1985). This is another important selling point: Quick sketching is less likely to intimidate
those students (and teachers) who are either convinced that they cannot draw or that they don't like to draw—or both! Also, there isn't a long learning phase, as with regular drawing.

The question now at hand was how to link sketching to an intermediate level listening/speaking class where the goal was learning functional English and communicative strategies. Vocabulary building seemed like a good place to start since it really is "the medium of instruction in all classes" (Shaughnessy, 1977; cited in Carroll and Mordaunt, 1991, p. 23).

Vocabulary building is vital to all students' academic success. A native speaker of English will leave college with a receptive vocabulary of approximately 60,000-100,000 words learned and acquired (Mackey, 1965; cited in Carroll & Mordaunt, 1991), and this is a formidable and discouraging obstacle to be faced (Shaughnessy, 1977; cited in Carroll & Mordaunt, 1991). Imagine the challenge this presents for the non-native speaker, who at the intermediate level of ESL classes has only 5,000-7,500 recognition items and 1,500-2,000 productive items. Thus, Carroll and Mordaunt recommend that students approach vocabulary learning in a formal, self-directed way, in addition to their usual likely habit of trying to guess a word in context—something that is generally accepted as valuable. The self-conscious acquiring of a vocabulary is recommended, especially at the intermediate level of ESL.

Carroll and Mordaunt foster this goal through the Frontier Method, so called because students can imagine actually using the words in the near future; the words are on their frontier or verge of mastery. When such a word is encountered, its sentence, with the word underlined, is written on a 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 inch index card; below is written the word, broken
into syllables (to help with spelling), followed by the part of speech as it is used in the sentence and the phonetic spelling. On the back of the card, the word's etymology and synonym and antonym entries (optional) are added, along with two or three of the definitions presented in the dictionary, marking with an asterisk the definition that most closely fits the way the word was used. The final step is to write an original sentence incorporating the word (see Figure 3).

The authors report that students enjoy generating their own words, rather than being assigned them, "making the process more personal and therefore more meaningful" (Carroll and Mordaunt, 1991, p. 24).

In my class, the experience of playing Pictionary led naturally into the use of a variation of the Frontier Method of vocabulary building. Since the goal of the Frontier Method is to establish as many words as possible, as soon as possible, into the student's functional lexicon, it seemed a natural place to insert a visual component, a symbol of the word uniquely created by the student and intended only for his or her own use--as a mnemonic element and as a way to enliven the exercise. I later came to call them Frontier Word Sketches. (In fact, I did not choose to teach my students the complete Frontier Method since I felt it was too tedious for my fast-paced listening and speaking classes.)

Next, I sought a way to incorporate typical textbook lessons into this teaching approach. As is often the case when teaching ESL classes, the textbooks are already assigned. My spring 1993 text, Speaking Naturally (Tillet and Bruder, 1985), proved especially effective for combining with sketching due to its emphasis on open-ended dialogues and roleplays and its many drawings. That experience lead naturally into variations and extensions using games, a videotape, and a magazine article.
B: family room; local artist (Tillitt and Bruder, 1985, p. 33).

Next, I handed out drawing materials--one sheet of 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint paper for each pair of students, along with felt-tip markers in a variety of colors and sizes. I then asked each pair to sketch their roleplay. Afterwards, they stood before the class and presented their dialogue while holding up their drawing. (Just as the suggested expressions for each speaker attempted to evenly balance the roles, my directions were that each student be responsible for creating his or her own drawing, even though some were willing to draw for everyone.)

**Comments:** *Speaking Naturally* (Tillitt and Bruder, 1985) provided an ideal introduction to this category because of its strong emphasis on communicative strategies and the functional use of language, its cassettes of phrases and dialogues, its cued dialogues, and mini-roleplays. The sketching dovetailed especially well with the dialogues and roleplays. Again, the text and cassettes provided background and phrase practice for the conversations. In contrast, ESL listening and speaking texts often present models of dialogues that are to be mimicked by students and varied by selecting alternate phrases from a list of choices. Sometimes the students are not even asked to close their texts and practice extemporaneously modeling the dialogues! However, when integrated with sketching, any listening and speaking textbook lesson can take on a new life and become a lively, personalized expression.

Some students began immediately sketching as they generated ideas. Others waited until the general outline was agreed upon and then went to work. Their drawings reflected this difference--some appearing spontaneous and others, more studied.

Regardless of students' verbal abilities and their various styles of
approach to the lesson, the groups of two to four students invariably engaged in animated discussions, laughter, and teasing. Close observation revealed a high degree of peer teaching, but it was easy to miss because the conversations became spontaneous and natural. Again, the desire to communicate took precedence over the need to “say it correctly”; I believe this to be a great strength of this integrated approach.

Surprisingly, there was never difficulty with some groups finishing much sooner than others, a common problem in group work. I found this interesting and have come to the conclusion that although students are quite involved with creating their sketches, there is always an awareness of what classmates are doing.

When making the presentation to the class, the drawings served only as reminders of what had been rehearsed; some looked at their sketch often and others, hardly at all. Either way, all were pleased to show the drawing. It may also have been valued as a mnemonic device, a visual reminder of what they needed to remember to say. Also, I observed that the drawings served to focus the attention of the audience, helping them to listen more attentively.

**Student evaluation:** A questionnaire was given to twelve of the thirteen students and asked for comments on the idea of sketching and combining it with roleplays, dialogues and vocabulary learning. While every student did not answer each question, responses were clearly enthusiastic: “It’s very interesting.” “It’s funny.” “Very good idea.” “It’s good because we can remember the topic.” Several mentioned feeling shy or embarrassed at first or not liking to draw, but then later becoming comfortable with using their drawings in this way: “First time, I was
shy. But more practice, it is good." Only one student still expressed some reticence, asking, "It helps who can draw well?" Another negative comment was that for some short dialogues or roleplays, sketching wasn't necessary. (I would agree.) One student said that taking a drawing home took too much time; if fact, I never did ask students to do this although some asked me if they could and I agreed.


Procedure: Students were first given directions for playing the game, as follows: Pictionary is a board game for 3-16 players, ages 12 to adult. It is similar to Charades but is played on paper. Players are divided into teams, and each person takes a turn drawing. The deck of cards contains 2,500 words in five categories: Person/Place/Animal, Object, Action, Difficult, and All Play. After throwing the die and advancing to the appropriate place on the playing board (where the category is determined), the player draws a card (see Figure 7). The player then has one minute to sketch the word while teammates try to guess its identity. (If All Play appears next to the word, members of all teams compete to guess the answer.) The winning team gets to throw the die and draw again. The team who first makes it to the end of the board is the winner.

Since Pictionary is usually a game played by native English speakers or advanced-level ESL students, I devised a variation that made it more appropriate for my intermediate level ESL class. Although we followed the standard directions (as above), we used only part of the deck of vocabulary cards. I gave each student five cards, and asked them to learn the words (Difficult category, optional) and practice drawing each
one. The cards were then passed to other students who did the same thing. This became their preparation for playing the game.

In the next activity I intended to show students how a Pictionary-like approach might help them learn new vocabulary words of their own choosing. I handed out cards (words, only) I had made, previewing vocabulary, including slang, from a video they would soon see; they asked me, each other, or consulted their dictionaries for definitions they did not know; then they practiced drawing a symbolic sketch for each word--something just for their use as a mnemonic device and not for communicating with others. These word/sketch combinations were recorded in their notebooks, and they were asked to review them before viewing the video.

**Comments:** I was pleased that my students were able to enjoy playing this popular game as a result of the above modifications. It served my intended purpose of linking the visual with the verbal in a useful way--developing vocabulary. The spin-off was to teach students a technique for learning new words of their choice.

**Student evaluation:** Responses to playing Pictionary and to the sketching of video-preview words were positive:

That was the thing I liked most. I learned a lot of vocabulary from it. Besides being entertainment, we learned many different words. Just memory is boring, but Pictionary is funny. Great. I learned slang words.

Two negative comments were that it was difficult for a foreigner and that more time was needed.
Spring 1994, Experiment Three. Self-Expression and Idea Generation/Extending a Typical Textbook Lesson into a Drawing/Speaking Activity: "My Dream House"

**Procedure:** A unit from *English First Hand Plus* (Helgesen et al., 1991) inspired this activity. It covered the topic of architecture, identifying basic building materials (brick, stucco, plate glass) and parts of buildings (attic, balcony, utility room). After listening to the accompanying tape and completing the textbook exercises, I handed out sheets of 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint paper and felt-tip markers in a variety of colors and sizes and unlined 3 x 5 inch index cards. I asked each student to create a drawing called "My Dream House" (see Figure 8). Afterwards, each student talked to the class about the drawing, describing what made the house so special. Classmates then asked questions.

**Comments:** Here we see an example of how to extend a typical textbook lesson into a drawing/speaking activity. Students were primed with topical vocabulary words and had already been focused on the subject matter. The added element was their own imaginations and their desire for authentic communication with classmates. I walked around the room while they were drawing and was often asked what the English word was for certain objects they had drawn; others used their dictionaries. In both cases, I encouraged them to make a Frontier Word Sketch and sometimes made one for them to "prime the pump."

This was a very successful lesson for several reasons. First of all, the students were ready for a change of pace. Those who had completed the textbook exercises first appeared disinterested in continuing with the next assignment, but, as soon as I handed out the large sheets of paper, the students became alert and interested. The oldest student
(approximately 35 years old) said, "This is for kids!" Yet, he later wanted to be the first to present his ideas. The class became highly motivated and asked to take the drawings home to complete. One student was absent for three days following the in-class drawing; yet, on the fourth day she arrived holding her drawing and waiting to present it.

I was worried about asking one of the Japanese students to present her drawing since she had extreme difficulty in speaking, and was by far the most reticent student in any class I've taught. However, she obviously had artistic talent and produced a very elaborate drawing. She quite willingly stood before the class and quietly spoke about her dream house. She had written a few notes on the back but only glanced at them once or twice. Perhaps it was a lucky coincidence that this shy student liked to draw! She, the entire class, and I were thrilled to finally hear her speak. Drawing proved to be just the prop she needed to boost her confidence in speaking English.

Classmates' questions were excellent and elicited further discussion. The language used provided me with a sample of students' spontaneously spoken English and revealed their immediate communicative needs. The dream house lesson revealed a rich expression of who my students were and the kind of life they envisioned for themselves. They spoke very little of architectural elements; instead, their discussions were of future families and goals. I was pleased to see that the desire for personal, honest communication between classmates became the primary focus of the lesson, contributing a sense of community to the classroom.

Certainly the positive feedback from classmates gave encouragement and inspired self-confidence in speaking before the class. (Most had been in the U.S. for only three weeks.) Evidence of this was seen immediately
as the oldest student asked to present a talk to the class on Gregorian Chants; this was followed by others' requests to discuss home countries. These were all done without written notes, and everyone brought visual material (some drawn) to share.

**Student evaluation:** This lesson's evaluation is included with lesson four's (see below).

**Spring 1994, Experiment Four. Negotiation Roleplay/ Extending an Original Lesson into a Drawing/Speaking Activity: “Tribal People vs. Resort Developers”**

This final lesson provided an opportunity to link several interesting resources into a three-day lesson in team play and negotiation and included review and practice of self-expression and idea generation, conversation through roleplay, making Frontier Word Sketches, and class presentation (see Figure 9).

**Procedure:** In this case, the students were not told in advance what the lesson's goals and activities would be to allow for more spontaneous idea generation and to discourage prejudgment of the lesson. I introduced the Disney video *Never Cry Wolf* (Miller, 1983) simply as an entertaining way to hone their listening skills and told them other ESL classes had liked it very much.

The video and the magazine article, “Worth Saving--Will Natives Survive Tourism's Onslaught?” (Glab, 1993) were thematically linked. Both examined culture clash, intentional and unintentional, and provided an examination of the wisdom of indigenous culture. Advantages of economic development and modernization were cited, along with the price that must be paid for them. Neither offered easy solutions and both encouraged their audience to think for themselves.
While the video presented the issues as secondary to its engaging story of the everyday survival needs of a young scientist in the Artic, the magazine article brought the issues themselves to the foreground and presented colorful examples of how tourism has both hurt and helped indigenous peoples.

The next day, following a short class discussion of the video, I handed out the magazine article and read part of the first paragraph telling how children in Nepal developed tooth decay for the first time as a result of eating chocolate bars tourists gave them. This was a perfect link with the movie since one of its main characters had lost his teeth because of switching to a western diet containing sugar; this unfortunate circumstance triggered a key chain of events in the movie's plot.

The remaining forty minutes of class were spent reading the article. I handed out 3 x 5 inch unlined index cards for making into Frontier Word Sketches, and I roved the room, helping with definitions and sketches. Final instructions were to finish reading at home and come to class the next day prepared to discuss the article and to share any related personal experiences.

The next day, following a brief discussion of the article, I assigned two teams, six developers and five natives, who were to negotiate terms of development for an island. The following characteristics of each team were put on the chalkboard:

**Developers:** like Disney or Club Med; covet island's natural beauty, including its unspoiled beaches, tropical rain forest with many rare plants and birds, perfect climate, friendly natives.

**Natives:** happy but poor, talented--sing, dance, make beautiful art objects, close family structure, agricultural economy.

I handed out two sheets of taped-together 18.5 x 21.5 inch drawing
paper per team, felt-tip markers in a variety of sizes and colors, and a supply of chocolate bars to the developers for enticing the natives. The drawings and negotiations were to be completed in one class period, allowing for uninterrupted continuity.

I kept busy and out of the students' way by making a video tape of this activity. The only time I became involved was to announce the approaching time to begin the 15 minutes of negotiating.

**Comments:** As seen in this lesson, it's exciting to find two very different materials (video and magazine article) that are thematically related and are of interest to ESL students; it's even more fulfilling to find a way to expand on them and allow students to use their imaginations and desire to communicate. A controversial, timely topic holds great appeal, as well. While the linking of the video and article was serendipitous, it was such a rewarding experience that I will consciously seek similar set-ups in the future. (An example of students' personal identification with the issue was seen when the developers called themselves a joint Japanese/Venezuelan venture because four of them were citizens of these countries, and they could identify with the role of developers.)

Reviewing the video provided evidence that students were activated by the integration of sketching into the lesson. Body-language I had not noticed was now very evident: The older student who began the lesson with a yawn became his team's coach, then began drawing, and finally was the proud introducer of the plan to the natives, as well as the keeper of the chocolate. When it was time to begin negotiating, a student quickly stood up and took off her jacket, like a prize-fighter coming out of her corner of the ring! Both these examples suggest that
sketching served to physically energize my students.

There was no change in usual classroom behaviors; the most talkative students continued to dominate the most quiet. While this was expected, there was an added benefit of this integrated lesson for the quieter students, namely that through sketching they were pulled into the center of things and were valued by both themselves and classmates. I observed that all except the one extremely quiet student entered into the negotiations by their own volition. (The facial expressions of the other one indicated her enjoyment of the activity, and as usual, her sketch was remarkable.) Thus, I would give a high rating to the heuristic quality of this activity.

A mystery remains as to why teammates didn't engage in conversations to plan either their sketches or their negotiations. (When I announced the time was almost at hand to begin the 15 minutes of negotiation, no one attempted to organize an approach.) Yet, each team presented a unified front; all were on the same wave-length! How did this happen? Did their sketches "speak" to one another? (I find a parallel between this and the earlier observation of how they all seemed to complete their roleplay sketches at the same time, a result of probable glancing around the room. Now, the video clearly revealed how each team watched the other's work in progress. Yet, this still doesn't explain why verbal advance planning wasn't necessary.)

During the negotiations, the chocolate was cleverly used by the developers to first offer friendship and then, as negotiations began to fail, as an attempted bribe; however, in the end, the natives put them in their place by rejecting the chocolate, along with their bid.
**Student evaluation:** I first gave two questionnaires to the spring 1994 class. One asked about sketching in preparation for two roleplays, and, in contrast, the other asked about using a written "to do" list and textbook preparation for two roleplays (no sketching).

Both stated:

_I'd like to know if you enjoyed these activities and if you think they were helpful to your listening/speaking skills. Please answer the questions below by using a 1 to 5 scale; 1 means "not at all," and 5 means "very much."

**Question 1.** I enjoyed these lessons
**Question 2.** I would like to have more similar lessons
**Question 3.** I think they were helpful to my listening and speaking skills
**Question 4.** I learned some new useful vocabulary words

These two questionnaires failed to clearly isolate a response regarding sketching, with mean responses being almost identical, 3.4 (8 responses) for including drawing and 3.7 (7 responses) without drawing. Also, the results were contradictory; for example, students said they enjoyed the lessons without drawing more, yet wanted more lessons with drawing. Students thought both approaches were helpful to listening and speaking skills but indicated that more new useful vocabulary words were learned in the lessons without drawing.

Both questionnaires included the following:

_Please comment: Would you do anything to improve or change these lessons or the way they were conducted?_

While all responses were positive, only two comments were related to drawing. One student remarked: “Nothing. I enjoy this class. But, I dislike draw the pictures, so I wouldn’t want to draw. But, I like looking other student’s pictures and speech.” Another student said:

_You might use roleplays [with drawing] more than book. Because sometime the book becomes boring. But this kind of_
activities become funny and you can learn easily. Also you memorize easily. Because you try to do something, you can use dictionary and you learn at the same time. In my opinion it's really useful to learn.

A third questionnaire was designed specifically to ask about the drawing experience. It stated:

One of our class activities has been making drawings to help with class presentations and roleplays. You've worked alone, with a partner and with a small group. What did you like the most about drawing? What did you like the least about drawing? Any other comments?

Six of the seven responses were favorable. Three students specifically mentioned the dream theme as a favorite, citing its universality, amusement, and use of imagination. Also, one student singled out “Developers vs. Natives” as the favorite.

I was pleased to see that three students specifically said that drawing helped improve their vocabularies, pronunciation and conversational skills, as follows: “I like this idea because drawing can help me describe a situation.” “I improve my vocabulary by drawing. And when we speak about roleplay, my pronunciation is improved.” “When we draw some pictures in here, we had conversation in this class. So, thinking of English especially conversation can improve in this class.”

The one negative response was signed by the older Venezuelan male mentioned earlier who again said that drawing was for children and that young people probably enjoy this activity. One student mentioned that even though the drawings took too much time, he/she liked the class very much.

Especially insightful were the comments by three students who said they initially hadn't liked the integration of drawing into lessons but later changed their minds. Two of these mentioned their inability to
draw well as the cause of their initial hesitation. One said, "The problem is I can't drew very well. Sometimes I think this way but when I drew different my mind." The most extensive and insightful comments made by a student on this topic are as follows:

I don't like to draw the picture. Because when I went to middle school, my score to draw the picture is very bad. So when I have to draw the picture, every time I confuse and I think this is not useful in conversation. Sometime too I think, I graduated high school. When I graduated high school, I can escape to draw the picture. But in this class, I drew the picture. When I draw picture in my thinking this is not useful. I thought so. But not just drawing, we explained about picture. That point is excellent. Thank you very much.

I think this reversal of a previously held attitude is a key point to be made in favor of integrating sketching and the teaching of ESL. I was very touched by a similar comment from the spring, 1993, class:

Do you believe that your class is the best delight of my school life? From p.m. 2:10 to p.m. 3:00, I have a great joy. The time is more delightful than the lunch time. In fact, I don't like to draw. But in last week, I was happy when I drew the picture. I greatly appreciate that you and Dr. Matthies let me participate in your class.
CHAPTER THREE
SKETCH TALK: DRAWING IN ENGLISH
A GUIDE FOR ESL TEACHERS

Getting Started

I have found it useful to read a letter of explanation to my students on the first day of class, providing background information on myself and why we're integrating drawing with ESL. Because drawing is not something students expect to be doing in a university-level ESL class, I've found that by explaining the theoretical underpinnings of the visual/verbal approach they are more open-minded and willing to give it a chance. Also, I hand out a visual version of my remarks, done in the manner of a Mindmap (see Figure 10). Key points made in both my letter and drawing are that Sketch Talk: Drawing in English will be used to supplement our text(s), serve as a bridge between students' native language and English, assist memory--especially for vocabulary words, and help plan dialogues and roleplays. The method is enjoyable, involves active participation, and utilizes the brain's verbal and visual abilities. (Students are encouraged to write back to me, telling about themselves; I have found their letters to be very useful in matching classroom topics to their interests.)

Setting the Visual Stage

An important aspect of this teaching approach is the creation of a visual stage by the teacher. From the first day of class, communication incorporating visual components is essential. This includes an emphasis on supplementary visual resources and a down-playing of written material. My philosophy is that students need to learn to speak English by actually doing it, and my goal is to provide situations which lend just
enough support to encourage them. I feel that if they rely too heavily on textbooks, they will be modeling their speech after an imposed pattern; instead, I value their attempts to communicate in an authentic way, selecting topics that interest them. The use of student-created visuals supplements or completely replaces the need for a textbook, while still providing a model and a scaffold to learning, just as a good text should; the big difference is that the visual paired with the verbal forces students to choose their own words to express their thoughts.

A simple way to quickly involve students in making a personally meaningful visual is to ask them to create a visual symbol for themselves to use on their drawings instead of a signature (see Figure 11). Make one of your own, as well, in advance, and show it to the class, along with any symbols you’ve collected from previous classes. When grouping students for pair or team work, use their symbols. (An offshoot of this is that it serves as a mnemonic device for the teacher to remember names!)

Whenever possible, give your instructions accompanied by quick sketches on the chalkboard, on transparencies, on large sheets of paper, or by presenting already prepared sketches (see Figure 12).

Another way to emphasize the rich communicative role that visuals may play is to show students cartoons without captions and ask them to provide an imaginative narration or tell them the story line. (The added humor is another benefit in the classroom.) I’ve successfully used examples of such cartoons from the text Picture Stories for Beginning Communication (Heyer, 1989), showing transparencies of the cartoons while reading their narratives from the book, followed by asking students questions on meaning and vocabulary (see Figure 13).
Interesting variations will come to mind for using cartoons without captions, such as showing only one picture at a time and asking students what they think is coming next or asking a group of students to put in order a set of individual pictures, making a story (Ur, 1988).

Provide each student with a sheet of 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint drawing paper along with several felt-tip markers in various sizes and colors and **give a drawing lesson**, based on ideas from *Mapping Inner Space* (Margulies, 1991); this establishes that quick, symbolic sketching is our goal—not elaborate, detailed drawings. Draw your own examples on the chalkboard or on a transparency, in addition to having some prepared examples (see Figure 14). Hand out examples of Mindmapping (see Figure 15) and show sketches from previous classes, if available.

By now the students are well prepared to **play Pictionary—The Game of Quick Draw** (©1985). However, its large set of vocabulary cards needs to be pruned to suit the class level; this can be most easily done by only playing with ten to twenty cards per team. Teams may also share their cards in preparation for the All Play possibility—something that is a lot of fun. Practice in advance by making quick sketches of the words and sharing them with teammates.

**Pictionary variations:**

1. Students search through the stack of cards looking for words they don’t know but are interested in learning; or you might wish to “preview” words from a video or reading material that are likely to be new for the students. Next, the cards are distributed to the class; they ask one another for meanings or look them up in their dictionaries and make their own cards.

2. Use the cards to play a version of *Pictionary*, adding the appropriate
category: Person/Place/Animal, Object, Action, Difficult, or All Play.

A natural spin-off of playing *Pictionary* is to introduce the Frontier Method of vocabulary learning. Obviously, a source of potential new words is needed, and you may choose appropriate written material, such as a magazine article, or cassette recordings of books or lectures. For a pared-down version, just to quickly practice the method, use words students select from their experience with the picture stories or from playing *Pictionary*. Either way, ask students to add a quick sketch to each of their vocabulary cards, making them into Frontier Word Sketches (see Figure 16).

**Teaching Sketch Talks**

*Sample lesson: “My Dream House”*

This is an example of how to extend a typical textbook lesson into a drawing/speaking activity. Students are primed with topical vocabulary words and are already focused on the subject matter. The added element is their own imaginations and their desire for authentic communication with classmates (see Figure 8).

**Aims:** Self-expression and idea generation; integrate topical vocabulary into authentic communication with classmates; self-confidence in presenting ideas

**Resource link:** A typical textbook lesson

**Materials:** (Per student) 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint paper; felt-tip markers in a variety of sizes and colors; 3 x 5 inch unlined index cards (for making into Frontier Word Sketches)

**Class time:** Approximately 50 minutes
Procedure:
1. Locate a textbook lesson on housing or architecture and teach it as you normally would. Supplement with extra descriptive words and pictures, if necessary (brick, stucco, plate glass; attic, utility room).
2. Distribute art supplies and index cards (see above).
3. Ask the students to draw their "Dream House" and to make Frontier Word Sketches along the way.
4. Have each student describe the house to the class and answer questions.

Variations: Topics that encourage imaginative thinking, such as planning a summer vacation or a party, work especially well for this lesson. Usually students immediately respond to the opportunity to draw something that is already on their minds, such as upcoming travel plans or an imaginary party with their best friends and invited celebrities! (see Figures 17 and 18). Similar topics are found in most ESL listening/speaking textbooks.

Notes to teacher: Walk around the classroom, helping with vocabulary questions and encouraging the making of Frontier Word Sketches. I sometimes make a card for a student to help "prime the pump" when the student seems hesitant to do anything other than spend a lot of time looking up words in the dictionary. This lesson provides a "snap shot" of students' current level of spontaneous speech; make notes during the presentations and discussions regarding students' language needs and interests.

Sample lesson: "The Dinner Guest"
This Sketch Talk extends textbook and cassette tape models of dialogues and roleplays to incorporate sketching as a mnemonic device and to
encourage balanced conversational roles (see Figure 4).

**Aim:** Conversation for a specific purpose (complimenting and thanking); remembering a sequence of events without referring to text or notes

**Resource link:** Textbook and cassette tape dialogue and roleplay models of functional uses of English (asking, thanking, agreeing, disagreeing)

**Materials:** (Per pair of students) 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint paper and felt-tip markers; brief list of useful expressions (comfortable; interesting painting; family room; local artist)

**Class time:** Approximately 50 minutes

**Procedure:**
1. Select a listening/speaking textbook lesson as a model for dialogues and roleplays; complete it in the usual way.
2. Divide students into pairs or small groups and distribute markers and paper to be shared (tape sheets together for more than two speakers).
3. Students decide on roles of dinner hosts and guests and sketch the context of their conversations. They may either rehearse before sketching or simultaneously do both.
4. Present the roleplays to the class while either holding the drawings or taping them to the wall. (No written notes or texts allowed.)
5. Classmates ask questions/comment.

**Variations:**
1. Similar Sketch Talks can be designed around almost any ESL listening/speaking lesson. For example, "Babysitter" (asking, thanking) or "Buying a Washing Machine" (agreeing, disagreeing). (See Figures 5 and 6.) Idioms are wonderful to draw, as is a particular tense (present
2. Record the conversations on audio or video tape. Often it is the first experience for students to hear themselves speak English. Besides satisfying students' curiosity, the tapes may be used in individual conferences to point out strengths and weaknesses and, if done periodically, to show progress.

3. Keep track of which students worked together and assign a new mix each time. Especially note the Sketch Talk styles and arrange accordingly; for example, a student may be very talkative but lack confidence in drawing; a good match is with a student who has a very relaxed approach to drawing; this diffuses the first student's anxiety, and it is even better if the second student is less talkative than the first, creating a balance of strengths.

**Notes to teacher:** A fairly common situation is when one particular student is extremely clever at sketching, and the others would gladly turn over the task. This is why the rule that each must create one's own drawing, just as they participate equally in conversation, is so important.

**Sample lesson:** "Tribal People vs. Resort Developers"

This three-part Sketch Talk thematically links a video and a magazine article and pedagogically ties into the preceding two lessons (see Figure 9).

**Aims:** Team play and negotiation; self-expression and idea generation; roleplay for specific purpose

**Resource link:** Video tape and magazine article

**Materials:** Never Cry Wolf (Miller, 1983), Disney video; magazine article, "Worth Saving--Will Natives Survive Tourism's Onslaught?"
(Glab, 1993); 18.5 x 21.5 inch newsprint paper; felt-tip markers; 3 x 5 inch index cards; chocolate bars

**Class time:** *Part one,* 120 minutes for video; *Part two,* 30 minutes for reading article and making vocabulary cards (plus homework); *Part three,* 50 minutes for sketching and negotiating

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce the video as an entertaining way to improve listening skills; don't preview the entire lesson.

2. After a brief discussion of the video, hand out index cards and copies of the magazine article. Preview the article and its thematic link to the video. Ask students to read it and make Frontier Work Sketches along the way. (Homework: Finish reading and come to class tomorrow prepared to discuss it and to share any related personal experiences.)

3. After a brief discussion of the article, divide the class into two teams, Developers and Natives, who are to negotiate the terms of development for a tropical island.

4. List characteristics of each team of the board:
   
   **Developers:** like Disney or Club Med; covet island's natural beauty, including its unspoiled beaches, tropical rain forest with many rare plants and birds, perfect climate, friendly natives.

   **Natives:** happy but poor, talented--sing, dance, make beautiful art objects, close family structure, agricultural economy.

5. Hand out drawing materials (see above list); tape at least two sheets of paper together for each team. Give developers a supply of chocolate bars for enticing the natives.

6. Set time limits, allowing 15 minutes for negotiation stage.
Variations:

1. Seek out different and unexpected sources of thematically linked materials (television program and newspaper article; audio book, textbook and cartoons; art exhibition, musical composition, and poem). Controversial, timely topics such as cross-cultural dating and marriage, global politics, AIDS, and censorship of movies and books, hold great appeal, as well. The goal is to examine an issue from various sides and to encourage independent thinking and innovative problem solving.

2. Expand part three into a second day and rehearse as a skit using props, costumes, and music. Perhaps perform for other ESL students.

3. Video tape the students; watch together and use to analyze the lesson and the class.

Notes to teacher:

1. When introducing the video, do not preview parts two and three of this Sketch Talk in order to allow for more spontaneous idea generation and to discourage prejudgment of the lesson.

2. Be sure to stand back and let things happen naturally; this affords an opportunity to observe students and plan accordingly.

Sketch Talk Extensions

Note-taking: Cross-Modal Journals and Mindmapping

Sketch Talks are useful in the language lab, as well, where students work alone and at their own pace. In particular, a Cross-Modal Journal, a double-entry record of sketches and written notes, is created in response to listening to audio tapes of academic lectures or books (see Figure 20). Model the journal drawings and their organization on Mindmapping (Margulies 1991). Teach about various note-taking styles and practice them.
Aims: Developing an individual style of note-taking to enhance understanding and memory

Resource link: Tapes of academic lectures; resources on teaching note-taking techniques

Materials: Pen or pencil; collection of felt-tip markers; ten sheets of unlined, loose-leaf notebook paper (for both written and sketched notes); loose-leaf notebook

Lab time: Unlimited

Procedure:
1. Place two sheets at a time on the desk like an open book, holes toward the middle, just as they would appear in a notebook. One is for written notes and the other, sketches.
2. Listen to the tape once without making any kind of note or sketch; the second time, begin making sketches on one of the sheets; the third time, make written notes on the other sheet (see teacher notes).
3. Either in the lab or later, paraphrase the lecture, using your own words and referring to your notes.

Variations:
1. Sources for journal entries include video tapes of academic lectures, student recordings of their own story or talk, an actual lecture on campus, or an ESL reading class.
2. Ilyse Rathet (1994) has suggested numerous ways to include drawing in a language lab setting, including the preparation of tape scripts and tapes by the teacher that focus on target grammar point(s), language function(s), or other linguistic structure(s). She includes sample activities such as describing people and the learning environment, drawing emotions, size and quantity, expressions of time, comparisons
and contrasts, weather information, and an activity for teaching English for special purposes.

3. When Cross-Modal Journals are used for more advanced students, especially when a response is sought to an academic lecture, use students' notes to assess their listening comprehension and note-taking skills. Vann and Schmidt (1994) have developed a method for teachers to assess students' reading strategies through note-taking and to teach students how to identify their efficient and inefficient note-taking strategies. Similarly, such a method can be used to analyze notes from a listening task. Also, the journal sketches give clues to how the student is structuring ideas.

**Notes to teacher:**

1. Asking students to make sketches before note-taking is based on the assumption that this is more spontaneous (and thus, faster) than searching for L2 language. (More advanced students may not need to do so.)

2. Although academic note-taking in response to a lecture must be quickly accomplished, the students are not given time constraints during this learning phase and work at their own pace.

3. The final step of asking students to paraphrase what they heard on the tape creates a scaffold for learning and memory. This is a good activity to include in a teacher/student conference. Rathet (1994) reminds us that the student may need to be prompted or questioned; still, it's a check to see if what was passively heard can now be actively produced.
Advantages of Using Sketch Talks with Various Audiences

One researcher has postulated that learners from language groups who use pictographic morphemes are better at tasks that "utilize specific memory codes or involve visual spatial discrimination" (Hoosain, p. 198; cited in Rathet, 1994, p. 22). Since the majority of my students come from such language groups--Korean and Japanese--this may favorably predispose them toward using Sketch Talks.

Additionally, when an Asian student is especially shy and hesitant to talk, as was the Japanese woman mentioned earlier, the opportunity to draw one's thoughts before speaking them seems to offer the advantages of supplying additional preparation time and aiding memory. Yet, perhaps an even greater need is being met--the need for a voice. Drawing can be this voice for the silent student. Similarly, Christine Casanave, Keio University's Fujisawa campus in Japan, discusses how writing journal responses to reading provides a "language and thought outlet--a voice, as it were--for the silent student" (1994, p.149). My silent Japanese student found her voice through another avenue: artistic expression (see Figure 21).

Two types of students who might be hesitant to abandon themselves to the playful nature of drawing in an academic classroom are the older than average student and/or the very serious scholar. Although presenting a definite challenge to the teacher with statements such as, "This is for kids!" or "This is a waste of time," I encourage teachers not to give up, just to try to adapt the method to these students' special needs as much as possible and not to worry about it. Sometimes such students seem to feel they must complain just to point out their senior status. My Venezuelan male student fit this profile perfectly, and he
seemed to reboost his ego by playing a leadership role with the younger students as they created their Sketch Talks. Also, by being the first to ask to present his talks and volunteering to give a report, his authority was maintained. (I might add that the other students were not always thrilled with his aggressive role, and they even teased him about it via marginal drawings and notes on their Sketch Talks!)

It is also essential to listen to students' arguments against drawing and provide them with examples of how it has helped serious, mature students with their note-taking skills, formal presentations to colleagues, and as mnemonic devices.

Also, this teaching method holds great promise for ESL students who are illiterate in their first language. Their sketches, serving as substitutes for written communication in their first language, may become an even more powerful tool as students learn to read and write in English.

Finally, I hope to encourage other ESL teachers to experiment with designing their own Sketch Talks by emphasizing the flexibility and adaptability of the method. Although these lessons were created with the intermediate level student in mind, they can be easily adapted to any level as long as the visual stage is set. Ideally, lessons should build on one another, just as textbook lessons do, to achieve greater mastery of the targeted language goal.
While ESL literature shows widespread recognition of the importance of visual materials in teaching, there is very little use of student-generated drawing. The Sketch Talk approach attempts to address that deficit by allowing students to 1) link their listening and speaking skills to their drawing skills in a way that supports their learning of ESL 2) increase both their understanding, enjoyment and retention of the material and 3) increase their vocabularies in an immediately useful way. Ideally, they will continue to experiment with the possibilities inherent in a combination of their verbal and visual abilities.

When students apply their spatial and linguistic cognitive strategies to their learning tasks, they become active agents in the creation of personally meaningful learning (Sheridan, 1990; Zamel, 1992). Such learning is more likely to be remembered, as well. Further, this dual-modal approach is complementary with the way the human brain mediates between nonlanguage and language (Damasio and Damasio, 1992). Thus, some educators advocate a cross-modal approach in curriculum design and teaching techniques as a natural application of our inherent mental processes.

Many students enjoy drawing already and others can be persuaded that it is useful when allied with their efforts to communicate. Because learning to speak a second language requires students to be brave, take chances, and hurl themselves into unknown territory, it greatly helps if they can be distracted from being overly self-conscious of their speech. The creation of a relaxed, even playful environment can add immensely to their sense of security and willingness to venture forth.

In her text about making grammar practice more appealing and, thus,
effective, Penny Ur states, "If the activity is a game-like one where the emphasis is on problem-solving or creating amusing juxtaposition...then the subject matter becomes relatively unimportant, and the task itself is what provides the interest" (1988, p. 19). In fact, amusing juxtaposition is a wonderful way of expressing what happens when students start sending word/picture messages to one another. It comes closer to approximating authentic communication than anything else I've used in the classroom, as more personality and emotion are expressed. Learning to speak English becomes secondary to the desire to communicate, and this attitude helps propel a student toward more spontaneous and personally meaningful speech.

**Directions for the Future**

Although my method of evaluation was informal opinion surveys, certain aspects of Sketch Talks could be more scientifically tested, using a control group and an experimental group. For example, the effectiveness of Frontier Word Sketches in remembering vocabulary words could be compared against a method without this mnemonic device.

The development of a complete range of Sketch Talks, spanning from beginning to advanced level ESL, would be useful for developing new ideas and refining their sequencing. Sketch Talks could be incorporated into any ESL class—reading, grammar, or writing, for example—to motivate and assist students in their learning. However, their flexible, adaptable nature does not lend itself to being standardized in textbook form. To function optimally, Sketch Talks need to be customized for each new class, reflecting the unique qualities and interests of those students. It is important to realize that it will be the students themselves, more so than the teacher, who will be the source of new
classroom directions for Sketch Talks. The teacher needs to know when to just stand back, observe, and allow for a complex and interactive sense of community to develop.
REFERENCES


Figure 1. A) Detailed, representational drawing (Edwards, 1986, p. 212).

B) Analog drawing (Edwards, 1986, p. 99)
Figure 2. Mindmapping example (Margulies, 1991, p. 35)
One important function of the skeletal system is to **augment** the muscle system during movement activities.

**aug • ment, v.t. (ôg - mënt)**

**aug • men • ta • tion, n. (ôg - mën - tâ - shan)**

**Source:** Dental Admissions Test preparation text

**[Latin augere, to increase]**

1. To make greater as in size, extent, or quantity; to enlarge, increase

*2. To assist by an increase of resources

Varied reading will help me augment my vocabulary.

**SYN:** To add to

**ANT:** To diminish, subtract from

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Figure 3. Frontier Method card (Carroll and Mordaunt, 1991, p. 25)
Figure 4. "The Dinner Guest"
Figure 5. "The Babysitter"
Figure 6. "Buying a Washing Machine"
Figure 7. Example of Pictionary (©1985) cards
Figure 8. "My Dream House"
Figure 9. "Tribal People vs. Resort Developers"
Figure 10. My remarks, done in the manner of a Mindmap.
Figure 11. Visual symbols
Figure 12. Teacher’s prepared sketch
Figure 13. Cartoon without captions from Picture Stories for Beginning Communication (Heyer, 1989, p. 49).
Figure 14. Drawing lesson from *Mapping Inner Space* (Margulies, 1991, pp. 38-45).
Figure 15. Mindmapping example (Margulies, 1991, p. 55)
Stucco: plaster used for coating or ornamenting
Figure 17. Travel plans
Figure 18. A party with friends
rock the boat: make trouble; risk losing or upsetting something

(A)

growing

thinking

(B)

Figure 19. A) Frontier Word Sketch of an idiom. B) Frontier Word Sketch of a particular tense (present progressive).
Figure 20. Cross-Modal Journal entry
Figure 21. “A Dream Vacation”