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# PICTURE DICTATIONS

Robert Heath

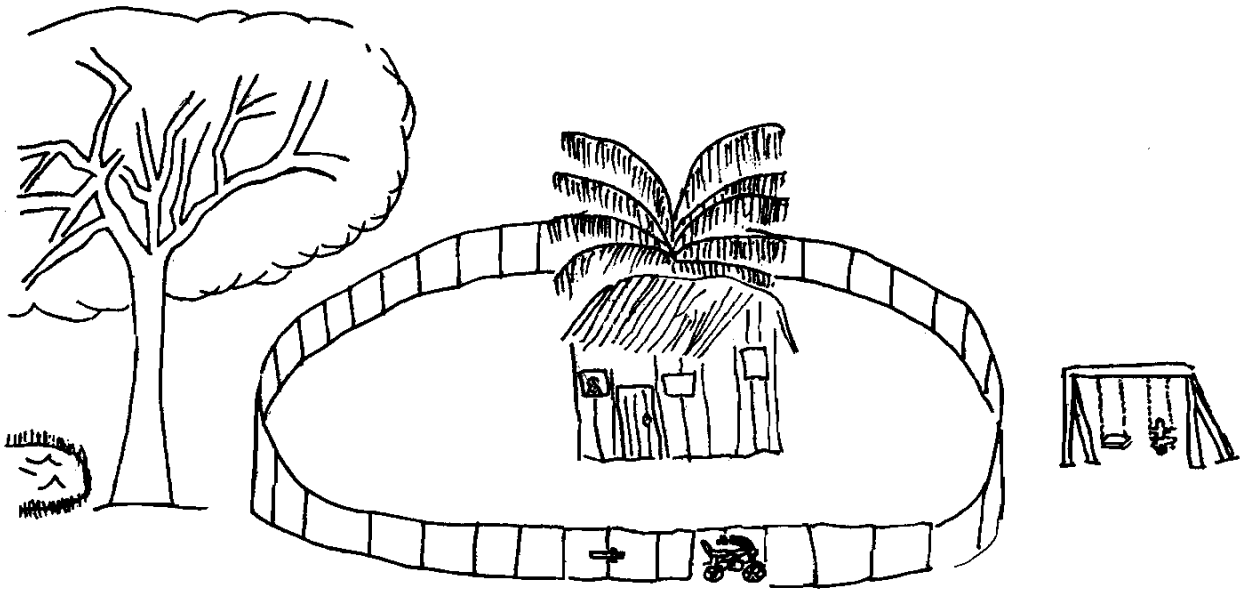
Picture dictations are a quick, amusing and interesting way of doing a number of useful things in the English class. First, they test listening comprehension. Second, they provide a useful way of revising certain prepositions of place. Lastly, they provide a good basis for a guided composition, getting the pupils to describe the picture using some of the language you dictated.

The procedure is very simple. The teacher, having made clear to the class that she is not interested in their drawing ability in this exercise, "dictates" the picture. For some classes it will be necessary to teach, first of all, these phrases: top left-hand corner, bottom right, in the middle, right hand side, and so on.

Here is one that was given by an IE student, Miss S Z Gan, to a Primary Four class.

- 1 Draw an attap house in the middle of the paper.
- 2 There is a fence round the house.
- 3 A bicycle is leaning against the fence near the gate.
- 4 I can see a woman through the window in the house.
- 5 There is a coconut tree behind the house.
- 6 There is a tree beside the house, outside the fence, on the left.
- 7 Some of the branches of the tree are hanging over the pond which is under the tree.
- 8 There is a swing on the right side of the house outside the fence.
- 9 A boy is sitting on the swing.

The illustration on the next page shows the effort of one pupil in the class.



The dictation should be given quickly, a sentence at a time, with no repetition of sentences. After they have drawn their pictures the pupils could be asked to do a composition in which they describe their pictures. They could also be asked to design their own picture dictations and give them to the class.

These are easy to make up, but teachers who would like to see other examples could look at these books:

Anthony Chamberlin and Kurt Stenberg, *Play and Practise: Graded Games for English Teaching* (John Murray, 1976), p 7.

John Haycraft, *An Introduction to English Language Teaching* (Longman, 1978), p 79.

Helen Moorwood (Ed.), *Selections from Modern English Teacher* (Longman, 1977), pp 29–30.