Using the Illustrations in *Access to International English*

**Introduction**

Illustrations should not be seen merely as a means of making a textbook more attractive than it would otherwise have been, or as a kind of "light relief" to balance demanding prose. Pictures are integral parts of textbooks and are very often ideal for stimulating discussion and developing communication skills, whether used by themselves or in conjunction with written text. They are often much more open to different interpretations than prose, and tend to provoke stronger and more varied reactions from learners, such as admiration, surprise, shock, anger, horror and not least bewilderment. All this makes them eminently suitable for discussion in pairs or groups or by the class as a whole.

For some activities the pictures can be used as they are – in the book – but for others, for example when text would be a hindrance rather than a help, they should be scanned and presented on slides such as those used in PowerPoint presentations.

**Illustrations as the basis for pre-reading activities**

Now and again it is a good idea to introduce the theme of a chapter by discussing an illustration, and to do so it seems natural to look at the pictures on the title pages of chapters. Three examples follow.

*Page 7*

At first glance this photograph may appear to have no interest and to convey no useful information whatsoever, but it is an ideal lead-in to the whole subject of English as an international language. Since it is the first illustration likely to be dealt with, perhaps it is best to involve the whole class in a brainstorming activity by projecting it onto a screen. This has the additional advantage of its not being associated with text which might be a distraction. Students could be asked to deduce where it is, and at least some will use clues such as the number of terminals, and the fact that English is the only language used, to place it at London’s Heathrow Airport.
What about signs at other airports? Are they in English as well? Normally they are, but in addition to the language of the country they are in. Learners may volunteer the information that at Las Palmas Airport they are in Spanish and English, in Paris in French and English, and there may even be a well-travelled bright spark who mentions that at Riga Airport they are in Latvian, English and Russian. So why, at Heathrow, are they in English only? This, of course, is the key question.

*Page 97*

This picture might well be used in conjunction with the heading and sub-heading above it. A good start would be to ask students to define "multiculturalism" and to give examples. Then they could be asked to discuss who the young man is, where he comes from and, most importantly, why he is showing the placard. Has his colour any relevance? Is he necessarily a Muslim himself? Why has he attached the Stars and Stripes to the placard? The word "Islamophobia" needs to be defined, and the concept discussed. These activities will go some way towards preparing learners for the chapter itself.
No illustration is open to more interpretations than this one, and in order to focus attention on the subject of the chapter, it might be best to present it together with the chapter heading and sub-heading. One approach is to divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss the following:

- Whose hands are they, and what are they doing?
- What are they looking for, and why?
- The globe has stopped at the Americas. Is this important?
- Can you see yourself as the owner of two of these hands? If so, what would you be looking for?
- Why did the artist choose to make his or her point in this particular way?
Comparing and contrasting

Key points in texts can often be illustrated and reinforced by comparing two or more pictures with each other. Here are some suggestions:

- First look at the picture on page 124 and describe the mood. Then do the same with the photograph on page 117. The same can be done with pages 156 and 191, and with numerous other illustrations. Ask each other "What . . .?", "Where . . .?, "When . . .?" and "Why . . .?"

- Compare two illustrations and comment on cultural differences. The two photographs on page 64 and those on pages 74 and 78 illustrate different tastes in films, and pages 285 and 308 show two very different residential areas.

- Look at two pictures of people (those on pages 293 and 301, for example). Make a list of the similarities and differences between them. Can you identify with either one? Does either arouse strong feelings in you?
Creative activities

- Pictures of people can be given new meaning if learners make speech bubbles or thought bubbles and assign them to the pictures.
- A useful exercise is for learners to make captions for pictures.
- Some illustrations can be turned into advertisements (page 37 and many others) or appeals (pages 191 and 193, for instance).
- An illustration can provide the basis of an essay or a dialogue arguing for and against an idea.

Other activities

Students can be encouraged to choose pictures themselves and explain why they have chosen them. Examples:

- Find a picture which expresses a strong mood (happiness, worry, anger, determination, etc.).
- Find a dramatic picture. Why have you chosen it? What is going on? What special techniques has the artist or photographer used?
- Which is your favourite picture? Explain to your classmates why you like it more than the other illustrations.
- Find a picture which you think would make a good CD or DVD cover. What sort of music or movie could it be used for?
- Choose a picture of a person and put yourself in his or her shoes. Think, talk or write about the following:
  - Who am I and why am I here?
  - What have I just done?
  - What am I doing now?
- Choose a person in a picture. What do you think of him / her / them?
- Would you like to be like him / her / them? Why (not)?