

Enlivening Dialogue Practice With a Free App

by [Keith M. Graham](#)

Most language course books have a dialogue page. The purpose of the dialogue is to put the target language of the lesson into an authentic context for students. Unfortunately, my students rarely find these dialogue pages relevant. In fact, they find them downright boring. Perhaps this is a reflection on my teaching, but I suspect that they question how authentic the dialogue really is to their own life. To help my students connect with the dialogue and make it their own, I use a free app called [Educreations](#) to turn the course book dialogue into a narrated story with illustrations.

About the App

Educreations is a free electronic whiteboard app for the iPad or computer that can record your voice and screen to produce a video, which can be shared online. On the whiteboard, you can write or draw using 10 different colors, you can type text, and you can import pictures from your iPad or from the web. The app allows you to share your video in many ways, such as through e-mail, sharing a link, embedding on a website, or posting on Facebook and Twitter. Here is how you can use the app for dialogue practice.

1. Teach the Dialogue

Before they can make the dialogue their own, students first need to become comfortable with the course book version. Each teacher has his or her own style and structure for doing this, but I use the following steps:

1. Explicitly teach and practice unknown vocabulary
2. Listen to the dialogue
3. Practice reading in partners or small groups
4. Discuss the dialogue

2. Write a New Dialogue

Once students are comfortable with the dialogue, it is time for the students to make the dialogue their own in pairs or small groups. Depending on the students' abilities, you can scaffold this step as much or as little as needed:

- For more advanced students, you can give them free reign to change the dialogue completely as long as the new dialogue demonstrates usage of the target language.
- For less advanced students who need more scaffolding, you can have students underline words or phrases in their course book that they can change.
- For beginner students, you may want to develop a list of words or phrases they can use to fill in each underlined area.

The class can brainstorm the list of possibilities together and then, in their groups, choose which ones to use. This will help them recycle vocabulary and help improve their fluency.

The following is an example of what a beginner dialogue may look like and how the students can change it to make it their own.

A: Do you have a ball?
B: Yes, I do. I have a red ball.
A: Do you have a kite?
B: No I don't. How about you? Do you have a kite?
A: Yes, I do. I have a green and yellow kite.

In this example, students would substitute different nouns and colors when they rewrite the dialogue. An example of this dialogue rewritten by beginner learners may look like the following:

A: Do you have a toy car?
B: Yes, I do. I have a white toy car.
A: Do you have a yo-yo?
B: No I don't. How about you? Do you have a yo-yo?
A: Yes, I do. I have a blue and red yo-yo.

An example rewritten by advanced learners might look something like this:

A: Hey! That's a great blue yo-yo. Do you have any other colors?
B: Yes, I do. I have a green and yellow one, too.
A: Do you have any other toys?
B: No, my other toys are at home. Do you have any toys with you?
A: Yes, I do. I have a big, brown teddy bear.

3. Draw the Illustrations

Once the dialogues are written, the students are ready to create their illustrations. Before students start, you should decide how many illustrations they need. For shorter dialogues, one or two pictures may be sufficient. For longer dialogues, you will need more. The illustrations are important because, for many students, drawing pictures helps them connect with the meaning of the text. However, when deciding on how many pictures, you should keep in mind the amount of time you have for the activity. This step can take up a lot of class time if you do not plan ahead.

4. Create the Video

Using an iPad, take a picture of each of the illustrations. Then, import the pictures into Educreations, one picture per page. After all of the pictures are imported, press record and have the students recite the dialogue they have written.

The way this step is executed largely depends on your classroom situation. Older students can typically handle creating the video on their own without too much teacher intervention, while younger students may need to be guided explicitly by the teacher.

The number of iPads available in your classroom also is a determining factor. In 1-to-1 classrooms where every student has an iPad, all students can work at the same time. However, in a classroom with only one iPad available, it is best to either set up learning stations or have

another activity ready so that students remain engaged for the entire class time while waiting for their turn with the iPad.

See the handout on how to create the video using the app.

5. Share

Now it is time for each group to share their video. You can share them in class or you can require students to watch them for homework by providing students with the links for each video. To keep students engaged, have them write short notes about each presentation. If teaching in primary or secondary school, don't forget to share with the students' parents. They will be thrilled to see their child is using English in a real situation, even if they don't understand English themselves.

A Note About Sharing and Internet Privacy

Whenever working in a digital environment, teachers must keep student privacy and safety in mind. Educreations offers four choices for sharing completed videos: Public, Private, My Students, and My School. Choosing "Public" allows for the video to be visible to anyone and searchable on the Educreations website. "Private" only allows those with a link to access the video and it is not discoverable through search. "My Students" and "My School" will make the video searchable for students who have registered for accounts on Educreations and have enrolled in your course or school through a course code. Like "Private," these two options also are viewable to people with the link.

There are a few ways teachers can ensure the privacy of students. First, the teacher should be sure the students do not reveal any personally identifiable information within their dialogue. Second, it is safest to use the "Private" share option, which restricts the video from being shared through social media or from being embedded on a website; it can only be viewed with the link. "My Students" and "My School" are essentially the same as "Private," with the exception of making it searchable for those with accounts enrolled in the course or school, but it requires students to register on the Educreations website. Finally, it is best practice to get parental consent before sharing. This ensures that all parties involved are aware and comfortable that the work is being shared through a third-party platform.

Other Uses and Activities

There are many other ways teachers and students can use Educreations. First, teachers can use it when [flipping](#) their classroom: They can create a video lesson, such as for a grammar concept, that students can watch at home whenever they need. This is particularly helpful when students are working on their homework or reviewing for a test.

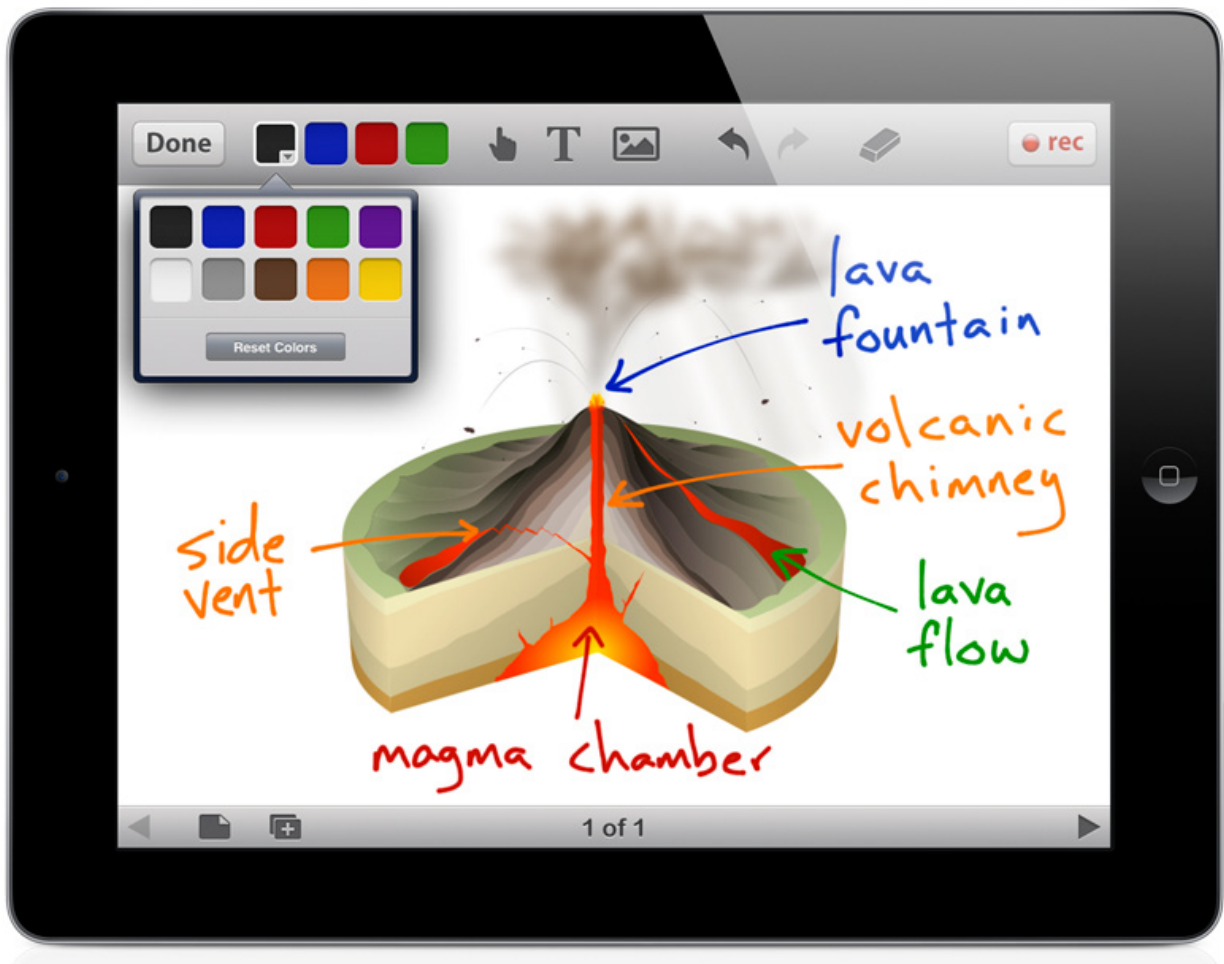
The app also offers endless opportunities for creating student presentations on any topic. Students can use the app to record a presentation that includes voice-accompanied writing, drawing, and imported pictures that can later be shared with the class. The presentation capabilities of the app are only limited by the students' and teacher's imaginations.

Outcomes

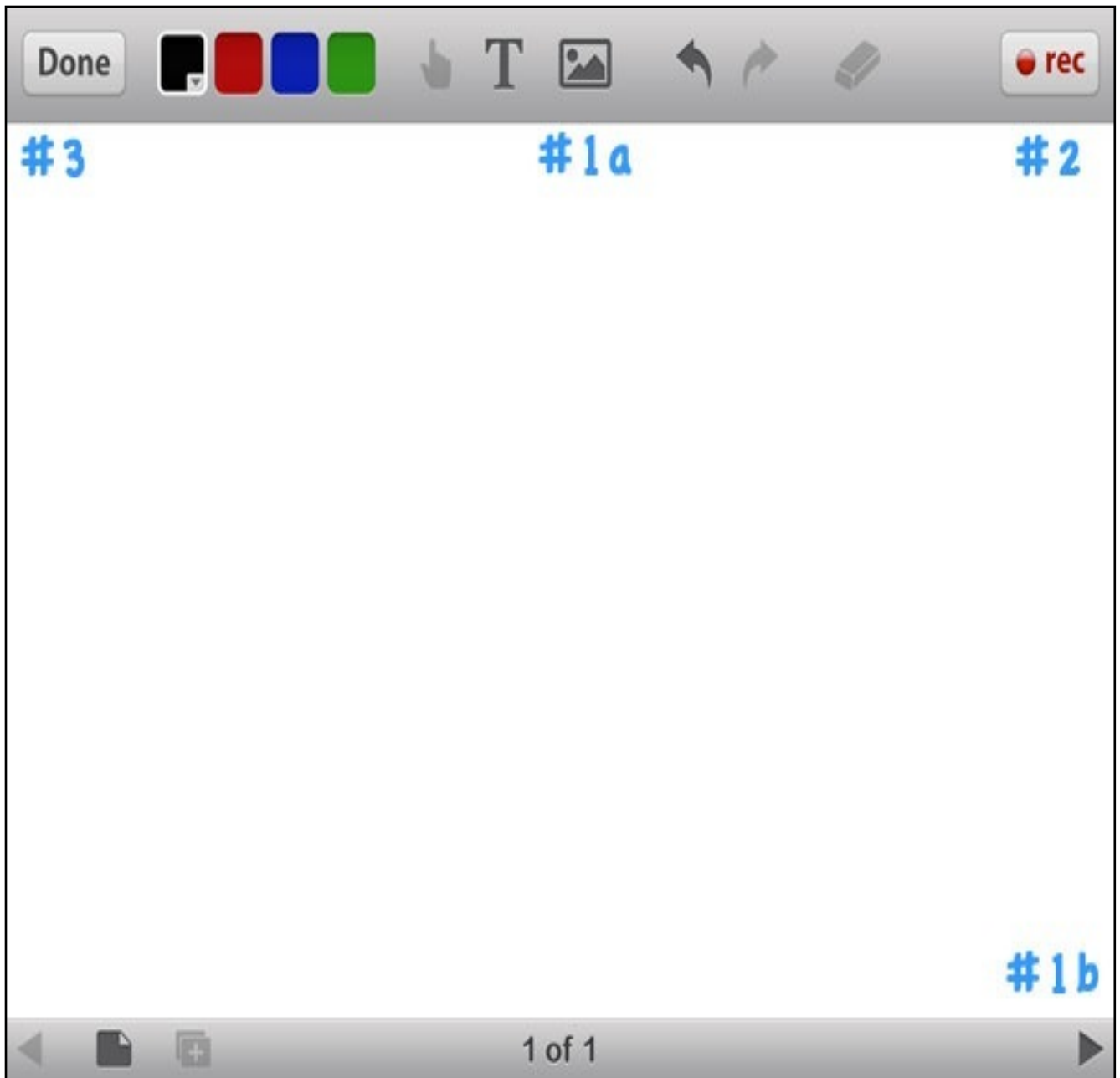
Our goal as language teachers is for our students to connect with and use the language we teach. Unfortunately, students don't necessarily find the dialogues provided in course books as authentic and useful as they were meant to be. Using technology such as Educreations, students can dive deeply into any dialogue or language concept and really make it their own.

Keith M. Graham currently teaches at Yuteh Private Bilingual School in New Taipei City, Taiwan where he is both an EFL and music instructor. Mr. Graham holds a Masters of Education in international literacy from Sam Houston State University and a Bachelors of Music from the University of Houston. His interests include content-based language teaching, educational technology, and music education at the primary and secondary levels.

Create An Animated Dialogue Using Educreations



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Screenshot of Educreations

Step 1: Import Pictures



Import an image from your iPad, Dropbox, or the web.



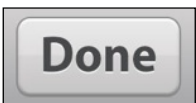
Add a new page to the presentation.

Step 2: Record



Press record and record the dialogue.

Step 3: Save the Lesson



Press “Done” to save the lesson and fill out the video info. In the end, choose a privacy setting.

Cancel Choose a Lesson Title Next

TITLE

DESCRIPTION (OPTIONAL)

< Back Audience Next

Choose who can view this lesson.

Private Public

My Students My School

Step 4: Watch the Video



On the next screen, click on the video you just made to watch it.

Step 5: Share

At the end of the video, click "Share" to share it through e-mail or on the web.

