

# USING CROSSWORD PUZZLES IN TESL

by Kelly Harris, Jr.

There is something about challenges that always arouses some interest in people. In almost every possible field of endeavor challenges are possible. Language learning is far from being an exception.

This paper is to put forth my ideas on the worth of a particular type of challenge exercise that might be used in teaching

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English as a second language — crosswords. I believe in their worth and hope to distinguish between good learning exercises and time consumers, although students should learn something from both types.

Walter Powell Allen, in two booklets of designed crosswords, has organized some very fine exercises that do not seem too difficult nor beyond the teaching realm.

He indicates in prefaces to both booklets that his intention is to provide fun and practice for people learning English. Also indicated is that the puzzles are from the basic 500 word list from *The Teachers Word Book of 30,000 Words* and the basic + 1,000 word lists. This seems to me like a fine idea. However, there is no indication given that these word lists are readily available to the students. Allowing second language learners to work without guidance or helpful lists is a negative approach. I think that lessons, similar to the one which follows, be given first before students attempt the crosswords.

Admittedly the puzzles are reasonably easy, but to use them as they are might be detrimental. I have noticed that no particular subject matter or central idea permeates the various examples, and this I do not agree with—until students become competent in their word knowledge. Step by step puzzles will help students more — that is, nouns and pronouns, or verb forms, or antonyms, synonyms and homonyms. Just so long as some sort of methodical build-up is used, then the Allen booklets will be helpful.

Dacanay and Bowen follow the pattern of

use that I have proposed as being of greater benefit in the initial learning stages. They insist that it is even necessary that a sample crossword be worked with the class on the blackboard to show the importance of unit, cohesion, and relevance.

Depending on the experience and total exposure of the class members, crosswords should begin with about ten to twelve answers being required, and building up from there. I personally like the 13 x 13 pattern as a maximum checker and prefer the square rather than "open-grill" formats.

Another very important part of crosswords that I implement is having students draw up their own puzzle frames instead of using cyclo-styled frames. My reasoning for this is that the following of written and spoken instructions will be more beneficial than allowing for greater speed in solving the puzzles.

(e.g.) Instructions should be written on the blackboard and then gone over orally. A picture or drawing of a sample frame would also assist.

After explaining, have class members repeat the instructions so that someone else can draw the required frame on the blackboard or a cardboard.

Basically then, my contention is that there are good lessons, that can be given through crosswords, but lists, instructions, demonstrations and examples are most important for second language students.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ACROSS:

- 2. Synonym for nought.
- 3. Antonym for man.
- 6. Homonym with 21 down.
- 7. Opposite of better.
- 8. Same sound as 13 across.
- 10. Meaning to join (in animals.)
- 11. SACRED.
- 12. Not very important.
- 13. A small part of a play.
- 15. A synonym to 14 down.
- 18. To teach in church.
- 21. Opposite to sweet.
- 22. A smell.
- 24. The clue for 11 across.
- 27. Down is its antonym.
- 28. A synonym for man.
- 29. Commands; demands.
- 30. More or . . . . are antonyms.
- 31. Terrestrial.

DOWN:

- 1. Trip.
- 3. Meaning climate conditions.
- 4. Opposite of never.
- 5. A word that sounds like 3 down.
- 6. The clue for 7 across.
- 8. The clue for 22 across.
- 9. We usually \_\_\_\_\_ food.
- 14. To stir up.
- 16. Another word for beast.
- 17. Very important.
- 19. What people eat.
- 20. Journey.
- 21. Use a \_\_\_\_\_ to stop a car.
- 23. To eat completely.
- 24. If words are synonyms the meanings are the \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. Stop is a word that means the same.
- 26. Sounds the same as missed.
- 27. To join.