

A LESSON ON SYNONYMS, ANTONYMS, AND HOMONYMS FOR ESL STUDENTS

by Kelly Harris, Jr.

This lesson may need two class periods depending upon the speed of the students to grasp the points.

In any language that is being taught as a second language, there is a need for teachers to use drills that will reinforce various concepts, meanings, or usage patterns. The following lesson plan attempts to give a method of reinforcing the concept that *sounds and meanings of words are most important in the English language*. This particular lesson is geared for High School Students who have had exposure to English previously, but this method is flexible and may easily be adapted to younger or more inexperienced students, as will be demonstrated by the short and simple example following the data for the lesson plan.

MAIN IDEA: Sounds and meanings of words are most important in English.

(a) Introduce students to three words that indicate distinct categories of words which illustrate the main idea.

i.e. HOMONYMS - words sounding the same
 SYNONYMS - words meaning the same
 ANTONYMS - words with opposite meanings

(b) For HOMONYMS, point out that spelling becomes a very important aspect of learning as does an awareness,

(b) For HOMONYMS, point out that spelling becomes a very important aspect of learning as does an awareness of context, particularly where reading is used extensively as a mode of teaching.

e.g. I see *him* every day.
 I sing a *sea hymn* every day.

(c) With SYNONYMS, it may be necessary to use visual aids to teach the several names that things may use or be known by. ANTONYMS may also be handled this way.

e.g. (S) eraser - duster (hold up the item used for clearing the blackboard)
 (S) slipper, shoe, sandal (show various types of footwear)
 (A) boy - girl (have a boy and a girl stand)
 (A) break - fix (demonstrate both)

(d) Issue the following list of words to the students for an orally conducted exercise. The object is to have students recognise or understand the categories into which the pairs fall.

(a) Antonym (b) Synonym (c) Homonym

here	there	join	connect	stop	halt
here	hear	join	disconnect	halt	cease
their	there	join	mate	odour	smell
their	they're	holy	wholly	odour	scent

zero	nought	holy	sacred	scent	sent
zero	nil	holy	unholy	scent	cent
nil	nothing	teach	preach	up	down
male	female	preach	exhort	commands	rules
man	male	preach	lecture	demands	commands
woman	man	minor	miner	orders	rules
horse	hoarse	minor	major	moor	more
course	coarse	minor	petty	more	less
course	rough	important	major	more	beside
coarse	smooth	alarm	excite	never	not ever
better	worse	bitter	sweet	weather	wether
seen	noticed	mist	fog	weather	whether
scene	picture	mist	missed	brake	break
join	unite	beast	creature	break	fix
voyage	trip	beast	animal	earthly	worldly
trip	tour	consume	devour	worldly	terrestrial
tour	journey	devour	eat		

NOTE: Have each student in turn try to answer a pairing. If necessary open the choice to the class. Difficult pairings may need further illustrating by mime, visual aid, or still further words.

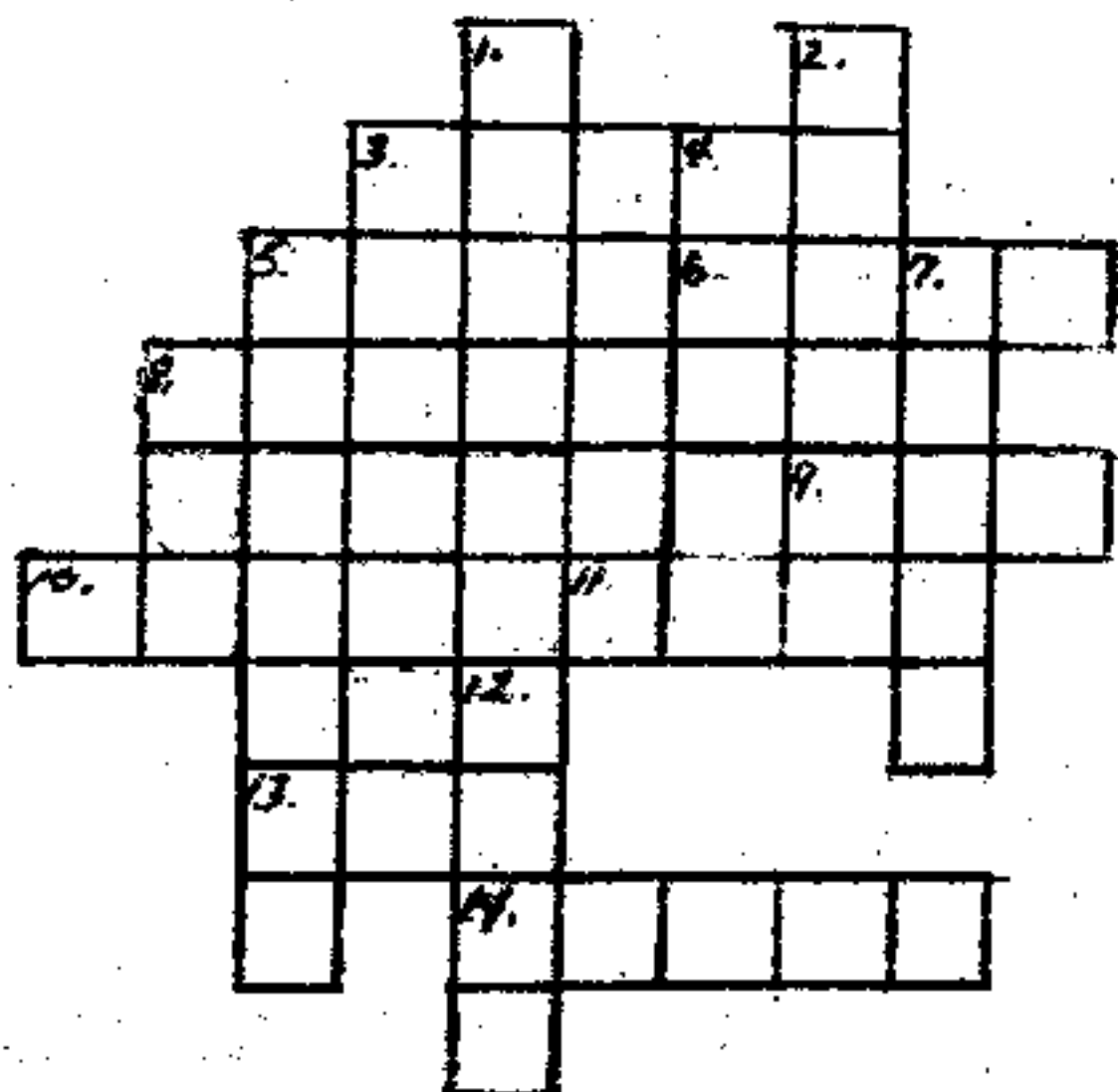
A variation could be that the students would indicate by a *hand to an ear* (sounds alike - HOMONYM); *hands together* (meaning the same - SYNONYM); or *hands apart* (opposites - ANTONYMS), what they feel are correct answers.

(e) When the above exercise is completed hand out the crossword that follows. All answers to the puzzle are included in the exercise list. Allow students to work in groups if they wish, but each student should try to have his individual copy completed for homework.

The following is a much less complicated list of homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms that could be used by beginning adults or on the elementary level; words might be originally introduced as opposites, sound alike and same meanings.

to	two	you	ewe	by	near
two	couple	I	eye	sea	see
two	too	mane	main	sea	ocean
too	also	die	dye	see	view
one	won	birth	death	hot	cold
good	bad	east	west	by	buy
in	inn	north	south	buy	sell
meet	meat	up	down	he	she
no	know	under	below	be	bee
		below	beneath	beat	beet
				wear	where

An example of a crossword that could be used for this level:



CLUE:

Across:

- 3. Opposite of birth
- 5. Near.
- 6. Antonym of east
- 8. Sounds like meat
- 9. Sounds like by
- 10. See
- 11. Sounds like beat
- 13. Also
- 14. Homonym of wear

Down:

- 1. Opposite to she
- 2. Opposite to he
- 3. Sounds like die
- 4. Couple
- 5. Under
- 7. North and -----
- 9. Sounds like bee
- 12. Up and ---

Authors's Note

Having taught in New Zealand for several years, and used this type of exercise in slow, average, and above-average classes, I know that students enjoy this kind of challenge. The benefits are also very easily seen in social and classroom conversation.

All spellings used correspond to British forms because I will continue to teach in British speaking countries.

COMPLETED CROSSWORD:

