

Using a Dictionary of Synonyms

Levels

Intermediate +

Aims

Distinguish synonyms
Use a monolingual dictionary

Class Time

30–45 minutes

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Resources

Dictionary of synonyms
Page from a reading text or previous student writing assignment worksheet (see Appendix below)

This activity is to introduce the students to a helpful vocabulary learning tool, a dictionary of synonyms. The students will also be made aware of the need to make distinctions among largely synonymous words.

Procedure

1. Show the students a dictionary of synonyms. Invite the students to suggest one English word to look up.
2. Ask one student to look up the word the others suggested. Write four or five synonyms for the word on the blackboard. Ask the students to suggest any differences between the synonyms.
3. Pass out a text (either a previously completed student writing assignment or a short selection from a reading task) with one key word marked. Have the students complete the worksheet on the word marked.
4. After completing the activity, ask the students to repeat the same procedure with other words from the text.

Caveats and Options

Instead of working alone, the learners can be divided into groups of three or four. Ask them to work together on a key word.

**Appendix:
Sample
Worksheet:
Distinguishing
Synonyms**

1. Write down the key word from the reading text that you will look up in the dictionary of synonyms. Next to it, write at least three words of which this key word reminds you.

2. Look up the word in a dictionary of synonyms. Write four synonyms on the lines below. Next to each word, explain the difference between it and the key word written in No. 1.

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

3. Write down one of the five words above that you feel best fits the context. Explain why.

Contributor

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