



## WHICH WORD?

Learners choose which of two (near) synonyms to keep in a reformed version of the English language

<b>Level:</b>	<b>Pre-Intermediate - Advanced</b>
<b>Target Audience:</b>	<b>Secondary, Adults</b>
<b>Language / Skills Focus:</b>	<b>Vocabulary: Synonymous Meaning, Speaking</b>
<b>Activity Time:</b>	<b>25 minutes</b>

### IN CLASS

- 1 Explain that English has many synonyms and near synonyms - give one or two examples such as lorry and truck, or pants (American English) and trousers (British English).
- 2 Ask learners to work in pairs or groups of three. Explain that they should imagine that the vocabulary of English is being reformed - where there is a synonym, only one word is to be allowed in future. They must decide which word should be kept.
- 3 Write up five pairs of synonyms / near synonyms on the board and allow groups 15 minutes for discussion. Good pairs which generate a lot of discussion include the following:
  - home and house
  - child and kid
  - exam and test
  - lavatory and toilet
  - cup and mug
  - companion and partner
  - like and love
  - content and happy
  - radio and wireless
  - dessert and pudding.
- 4 Stop the activity at the end of the time limit, and invite groups to explain and justify their decisions to the whole class. At this point, differences in meaning between synonyms and near synonyms can be explored.

### COMMENT

It is a good idea to allow the use of dictionaries at Step 3 so that meanings can be checked. Also, you should be willing to answer any questions that learners may have about different shades of meaning.

### VARIATIONS

At higher levels, learners can explore much subtler differences in meaning e.g. breakable and fragile or hire and rent. The activity also works well in teacher training when trainees can be asked to choose between pairs such as mistake and error, curriculum and syllabus, assessment and evaluation.

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