



Learn English Through Stories

Intermediate Vocabulary

**Adopted and modified by
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<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Using a Dictionary by K S Sandhu

Banta was a student in year ten at a school in Birmingham. He was from a Punjabi family and liked English, but sometimes the words confused him. One Monday, his teacher, Mrs Sushma, said, "Today we learn how to use a dictionary. It helps with spelling, pronunciation, meanings, and parts of speech."

Banta opened his English dictionary and his bilingual dictionary (English to Punjabi). Mrs Sushma wrote three words on the board: know, lead, and bank.

First, she explained silent letters. "Look at 'know'. The 'k' is silent. We say /noʊ/, not 'k-no'. Many English words have silent letters. For example, in 'doubt' the 'b' is silent, and in 'listen' the 't' is silent. Punjabi students sometimes add extra sounds because Punjabi has different rules. Use the dictionary to see the pronunciation. It shows /noʊ/ with symbols or a recording."

Banta wrote in his notebook: know – silent 'k', meaning: to understand or remember something.

Next, Mrs Sushma talked about parts of speech. "Dictionaries tell us if a word is a noun, verb, adjective, etc. This helps us use it correctly."

She pointed to lead. "Look! 'Lead' can be a noun or a verb. As a verb, it means to guide someone: 'I lead the team.' (present tense). The past is 'led'. As a noun, it means a heavy metal: 'Lead is in some old pipes.' Or it means the front position: 'He is in the lead.'"

Banta checked his bilingual dictionary. For the verb: lead - (agvae karnaa). For the noun (metal): (surma). He understood: one word, many meanings!

Then came bank. "This word has multiple meanings," Mrs Sushma said. "First meaning: a place for money – 'I go to the bank.' Second meaning: the side of a river – 'We sat on the river bank.' Third: to tilt, like an aeroplane – 'The plane banks left.' Always check the context!"

Banta smiled. "Miss, English words are like Punjabi words sometimes – one word, different jobs!"

Mrs Sushma nodded. "Yes! Now, types of nouns. Nouns name people, places, things, ideas. There are common nouns (general, like 'city', 'boy') and proper nouns (specific, like 'Birmingham', 'Banta' – always with capital letter). Also

concrete nouns (you can touch: 'book', 'pen') and abstract nouns (you cannot touch: 'love', 'happiness'). Collective nouns are groups: 'team', 'family'."

She gave an example sentence: "The team (collective noun) plays in the city (common noun) near Birmingham (proper noun)."

Banta practised. He took a new word: comb. "Miss, I thought it was 'komb'! But dictionary says silent 'b' – /kəʊm/. And it is a noun: a thing for hair. But also a verb: to comb your hair."

"Very good!" Mrs Sushma said. "Now spelling mistakes. Many Punjabi students write 'recieve' instead of 'receive'. Remember: i before e, except after c. Dictionary shows correct spelling. Also, words like 'beautiful' – not 'beautifull' with two 'l's at the end."

The class did an activity. Mrs Sushma gave sentences with difficult words. Banta used his dictionaries to find:

- Parts of speech (noun? verb?)
- Meanings (which one fits?)
- Pronunciation (any silent letters?)
- Punjabi translation (if needed)

One sentence: "I doubt he will climb the high mountain."

Banta checked: doubt – silent 'b', verb (shakk karnaa). Climb – silent 'b', verb (chadhnaa).

He wrote correctly and felt happy.

At the end, Mrs Sushma said, "Dictionaries are your best friends. Use English one for grammar and meaning, bilingual one for quick Punjabi help. Practice every day!"

Banta went home thinking, "English is hard, but with dictionary, I can win!" He opened his book and looked up five new words. He knew now: silent letters, multiple meanings, parts of speech, noun types – all become easy with practice.

A What dictionaries do I need?

A **bilingual** dictionary [using two languages] is easy for you to understand, and quick and easy to use. A dictionary in English will give you reading practice in English and many more examples of how words are used. If possible, use both. These are good dictionaries in English for your level, and most of them are available online:

- Cambridge Learner's Dictionary Oxford Wordpower Dictionary
 Longman Active Study Dictionary Macmillan Essential Dictionary

B Information in dictionaries

If you **look up a word** [find a word in a dictionary] using the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary*, the information is shown like this:

The screenshot shows a dictionary entry for 'fun' with the following annotations:

- pronunciation using phonemic symbols** (see page 247): points to the phonetic transcription /fʌn/.
- a definition explains the meaning**: points to the first definition: 'enjoyment or pleasure, or something that gives you enjoyment or pleasure'.
- bold italics show common word partners** (see Unit 74): points to the phrase 'Have fun!'.
- part of speech (= noun)**: points to the word 'noun'.
- [U] tells you that fun is uncountable** (see Unit 86): points to the symbol '[U]'.
- fixed phrases using the word are shown in bold** (see Units 75-6): points to the phrase 'for fun/for the fun of it'.
- examples are in italics**: points to the example sentence 'The other children at school used to make fun of his hair.'

3.1 Correct the spelling mistakes. Use a dictionary to check your answers.

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 allways | always | 6 confortable | comfortable |
| 2 realy | really | 7 accomodation | accommodation |
| 3 unfortunatly | unfortunately | 8 beautifull | beautiful |
| 4 expecially | especially | 9 unbelivable | unbelievable |
| 5 cloths | clothes | 10 necessary | necessary |

3.2 In the word *island* /'aɪlənd/, the letter 's' is silent (not pronounced). Use your dictionary to find the silent letters in these words.

- 1 knee 2 comb 3 castle 4 salmon 5 receipt



C Defining words

'Defining words' are words that dictionaries use when they **define** [explain] the words in the dictionary. Some of these are quite common.

emphasise [give something more attention and importance], e.g. My teacher has always emphasised the importance of writing down new words in a notebook.

relating to or **connected to/with** [having a relationship with someone or something], e.g. *musical* is connected with / related to *music*

amount [how much there is of something], e.g. £5 million is a large amount of money.

official [done by the government or someone in authority], e.g. A passport is an official document.

behave [do or say things in a particular way], e.g. People can behave strangely when they're nervous.

Exercises

3.3 Complete the dictionary definitions using words from the box.

connected with emphasise relating to behave official amount

- 1 **industrial** /ɪnˈdʌstriəl/ 1 adjective *connected with* industry
- 2 **sum** /sʌm/ noun [C] an of money
- 3 **pretend** /prɪˈtend/ verb [I,T] to as if something is true when it is not
- 4 **certificate** /səˈtɪfɪkət/ noun [C] an document that gives details to show something is true
- 5 **not at all** /nɒt ət ɔ:l/ used instead of ‘no’ or ‘not’ to what you are saying: I’m not at all happy about it
- 6 **legal** /ˈli:ɡəl/ adjective the law

D Using a dictionary

- When you use a dictionary to check the meaning of a word, put a **tick** (✓) next to it. Each time you return to a page with a tick, **see** [find out] if you remember the word.
- When you meet a new word or phrase in a text, first try to **guess the meaning** [try to think of the meaning when you don’t know it]. Then, use a dictionary to see if your **guess** was correct.
- Don’t just read the dictionary definition. Example phrases and sentences show you how a word or phrase is used, and they help you to understand the meaning more clearly.
- If you look up a word in a bilingual dictionary and get two or three different translations, check these words in an English dictionary to see which translation is the best one for the situation.
- Remember that many words have more than one meaning. The first meaning in the dictionary is not always the one you want. You may need to read through the different meanings.

3.4 Answer the questions, and use an English dictionary to check the answers.

- 1 What does *puppy* mean? *It’s a very young dog.*
- 2 Is the correct spelling *organize* or *organise*?
- 3 What part of speech is *extremely*?
- 4 What kind of noun is *advice*?
- 5 What preposition follows the verb *rely*?
- 6 Look up *friend*, and then the words in **bold** that are often used with it. Can you complete these phrases? *She’s an friend; he’s my friend; you friends with people.*

3.5 Match the sentences on the right with the different meanings of *post* on the left.

post¹ /pəʊst/ noun

<p>1 System [no plural] UK (US mail) the system for sending letters, parcels, etc <i>Your letter is in the post.</i> <i>I’m sending the documents by post.</i></p>	<p>3 Job [c] formal a job <i>A part-time post.</i> <i>A teaching post.</i></p>
<p>2 Letters [u] UK (US mail) letters, parcels, etc that you send or receive <i>Has the post arrived/come yet?</i></p>	<p>4 Pole [c] a long, vertical piece of wood or metal fixed into the ground at one end. <i>I found the dog tied to a post.</i></p>

- 1 He’s applied for a post overseas.
- 2 Did you send the cheque by post?
- 3 I tied the flag to a post.
- 4 We haven’t had any post yet.

Answers

Unit 3

- 3.1** 2 really 5 clothes 8 beautiful
3 unfortunately 6 comfortable 9 unbelievable
4 especially 7 accommodation 10 necessary
- 3.2** 1 knee (k) 2 comb (b) 3 castle (t) 4 salmon (l) 5 receipt (p)
- 3.3** 2 amount 3 behave 4 official 5 emphasise 6 relating to
- 3.4** 2 The 'z' spelling is usual in American English, but both are possible in British English.
3 an adverb
4 uncountable
5 on
6 She's an **old** friend; he's my **best** friend; you **make** friends with people. You may also have found these common word partners (a **close** friend, a friend **of mine**)
- 3.5** 1 definition 3 2 definition 1 3 definition 4 4 definition 2