

UOW College Hong Kong / Community College of City University
Student English Enhancement Unit (SEE U)
Daily English Practice

Week 6

#79 Binary Opposition

Skills/ Objectives: To train students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills

PART 1: Before you read...

Preparatory questions

1. Do you tend to think of things in opposite pairs? Like, if you are not a man, you are a woman? Or, if you are not being rational, you are being emotional?
2. How can we overcome such simplistic ways of thinking, given our understanding that the world is actually more complex than binary pairs?

Vocabulary

1. Tendency (noun): likelihood
2. Established pattern (adjective + noun): a particular way in which something is organized, accepted by most people
3. Privileged (adjective): having an advantage
4. Coded (verb, past participle): written in secret language
5. Values (noun): people's beliefs about what is important in life

Answer(s) to the relevant questions above will be provided in the next exercise.

Answers to relevant questions in the preceding set of exercises:

Question 3: Key in a sentence. Have it translated into another language. Try the button with two arrows pointing both ways ←→. This way you "shuffle" those two languages. As you do so you find these things happening: 1. Your original sentence gets worded a bit differently—this helps with paraphrasing, an important skill in writing academic papers; 2. Your faulty sentence gets fixed—this helps with your grammar.

PART 2: Article for Reading

This article explains what binary thinking is, and gives examples of binary oppositions from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*:

Binary Opposition:

<http://mrhoyesibwebsite.com/Critical%20Theory/Discourse/Binary%20Opposition.htm>

(Click the link to read the article)

PART 3: Speaking Skills

Listen to first 1:20 minutes of the following recording:

A Tale of Two Cities (Full Audiobook): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcFZUIdb7mw>

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”

And try and repeat with emotion these immortal lines from what is probably one of the most famous novels of all time.

PART 4: Listening Skills

1. Binary Oppositions in *Pride and Prejudice*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOXWd48ng44> (4:25 minutes)

This video gives good examples that explain what binary opposition means.

Further Discussion

Write a short response to the following question:

Think of more examples of binary oppositions in everyday life.

Send your writing to: see.u@cccu.edu.hk.

Our SEE U teachers are always ready to give feedback.