Say or Tell

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Target Students: Lower-intermediate

Corpus used: Corpus Concordance English

Class duration: 35 mins

Materials: Worksheet 2_say or tell

Aim: Emphasize the semantic and phraseological differences between the verbs *tell* and *say*

I. Individual Work

Can you spot the errors? Look at the sentences in the pictures and tick the correct ones.

II. Pair Work.

Read Disney *Frozen* script lines below and see if you can find the answers to Question I.

1	ELSA: **Tell** the guards to open up the gate.
2	ANNA: Okay, just **tell** me one thing: What was happening on the North Mountain? Did it seem magical?
3	KRISTOFF: Hm. So **tell** me, what made the queen go all ice-crazy?
4	KRISTOFF: You don't **tell** him what to do!
5	ANNA: Elsa! Elsa! Elsa, it's me, Anna—Your sister who didn't mean to make you freeze the summer. I'm sorry. It's all my f-f-fault. … Of course, none of this would have happened if she'd just **told** me her secret.
6	They **say**, 'Have courage', and I'm trying to -- I'm right out here for you — Just let me in.
7	ANNA: Okay, can I just **say** something crazy?
8	ANNA: No. Whatever you have to **say**, you—you can **say** to both of us.
9	HANS: You **said** she'd never hurt you.

III. Group Work.

Now put the two words into the online corpus, look at the examples in it and try to work out their difference. Groups can then feedback to each other, explaining the words.

First go to http://www.lextutor.ca/conc/eng/.

Type in the word *tell* in the "keyword" box, choose corpus "2k Graded Corpus (920,000)", hit the "Go concordancer" icon.

IV.   Pair Work.

Check your understanding. Circle **T** for True or **F** for False for each statement about **say** or **tell**.

Differences between **say** and **tell**

a) The word *tell* need a person as object before reporting what was said.	T	F
b) The word *tell* do not need a person as object and its object is usually what has been said.	T	F
c) The verb commonly used for reporting what someone says is *say*.	T	F
d) The word *tell* never has a person as the object. You *tell* something or something to somebody.	T	F

V.   Group Work. Try it yourself.

Try to summarize the use patterns of the two words. Groups can then feedback to each other, explaining the words. The first example of each word has been done for you.

tell

Meaning	use pattern	Example
to say sth to sb, usually giving them information	1.tell sb	*Don't tell him.*
To order or advise sb to do sth		

say

Meaning	use pattern	Example
Speak words	Say + direct object (sth)	*She said sorry.*
Say direct speech		
to speak or tell sb sth		

VI.   Individual Work.

Which word fits all the gaps in each set, **tell** or **say**?

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 Holmes said.  'I wrote to them.' 'What did you    _____  ?' 'I asked them about the man in the adv
How many students live upstairs? Three, did you    _____  ? And they all go past your door.' 'Yes,'
 she answered.  'A woman knows.  But he doesn't    _____   or do anything.' 'What's his job?' Holme
f your beard, Bob,' he said.  'I know it's you.    _____   hello to my new wife!' Our friend pulled
et love?' 'I don't know.  It's too difficult to    _____  . . . 'When Helen travels through Europe
et love?' 'I don't know.  It's too difficult to    _____   exactly.  But it's going to be a good ti
obably Angela James, twenty-one.  Hmm.  Shall I    _____   something to her about that case? No, no
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s name.  After that, it was easy.' 'Will you    _____   Miss Sutherland all this?' I asked. 'No,' Ho
 you can help.' 'All right,' Holmes said.  '  _____   me.  What happened?' 'Tomorrow is the first
en he said, 'I'll help you, Mr Soames.  Now,    _____   me something.  Did anybody visit you in your
'Please close the door,' Holmes said.  'Now,    _____   me - what really happened yesterday?' Banni
There's nothing more?' 'No, sir.' 'Then I'll    _____   you,' Holmes said. 'When you sat down on tha
u're talking now,' Holmes said.  'Gilchrist,    _____   us! It's not a secret now.' Gilchrist put hi
 but you're sorry now. .  I know that. I'll    _____   Mr Soames the story.  You can
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VII.   Pair Work – I am an Examiner! (See Worksheet_ I am an Examiner!)

Each one (examiner) of the pair develops a test paper with 10 fill-the-gap

questions from the corpus for the words **tell** and **say**, then answer each other's test paper (full

mark: 10 points) and discuss.