

Handout 1: Categories of Natural Context

1. **Directive:** There is enough information to lead students to the correct meaning of the word or the word is explicitly defined/explained in the text.
Target Word: *amendments*
Example: After more than 200 years, the United States Constitution continues to work. Our Founding Fathers made sure that it could be changed to meet the needs of our country by allowing a system for adding amendments. Amendments are sections added to a law or a rule to change it. In more than 200 years, only 27 amendments, or additions, have been made to our Constitution.
2. **Nondirective:** The context does not assist the reader in determining the meaning of the target word.
Target Word: *frail*
Example: Jamie was excited to be visiting his grandparents after so many years. He scanned the crowd waiting in the airport lounge until he recognized the worn brown bomber jacket, he remembered so well from his childhood walks in the woods. It was his grandfather's favorite memento from his flying days. As he raced to embrace him, Jamie noticed the woman standing by his side. Could this frail woman be his grandmother?
3. **General:** The context provides readers with adequate information to give them a general idea of the word's meaning.
Target Word: *wincing*
Example: The political candidate, filled with confidence and energy, came to the podium. He answered questions without saying anything controversial and seemed to be pleasing the crowd. The last question of the press conference included new information about the corruption of a former employee. His campaign manager's face tightened as he wincing in reaction to the unscripted answer of his candidate.
4. **Misdirective:** The context leads the reader toward the incorrect meaning of the word.
Target Word: *exhilarated*
Example: The climb up the mountain took longer than John and Patrick expected. The cliffs were steeper than Pete remembered, and they had to walk an extra mile because the path was impassable at one point. It was Jake's first experience mountain climbing, and he was exhilarated at the end of the day.

Handout 2: Criteria for Selecting Words

When choosing words to teach, it is important to consider:

1. The category of natural context

- a. Text Factors: misdirective, nondirective, directive, general
- b. Explicitly teach words in the misdirective and nondirective context categories.

2. The importance of the word

- a. Determine if the word is conceptually central for understanding the selection by:
 - Asking yourself: Is the word critical (i.e., conceptually central) for understanding the selection?

3. Students' knowledge of and exposure to the word by:

- a. Considering the students' grade
- b. Asking yourself: Have the students had previous experience or exposure to this word?

4. Importance of the word for future learning by:

- a. Asking yourself: Is the word important for students to know 5 years from now?

5. These words may:

- a. appear frequently in the text, and/or
- b. be bolded.

Tiers

Three tiers are used to describe the usefulness or utility of words:

1. **Tier 1** are the most basic words (e.g., *book, run, flower, talk, desk, house*). Students rarely need to be taught these words.
2. **Tier 2** are high frequency words for mature language users and are found across a variety of subject areas (e.g., *encourage, situation, fortunate, volunteer, adequate, vociferous, satisfactory*).
3. **Tier 3** words are used infrequently and are often limited to a specific subject area (e.g., *carburetor, ventricle, kurtosis, chlorophyll, archipelago*).

Handout 2: Steps for Selecting Words to Teach

Directions:

1. Choose a reading selection.
2. As you read the selection, jot down 10 words (without analyzing them) that you would want to consider teaching.
3. Select words that you think are important for understanding the text.
4. Follow steps 1-3 below for each word you select to determine if it requires instruction for students to comprehend the text.
5. If, after completing these steps, you still do not have 10 words selected for instruction, choose 10 more words from the selection, and repeat the steps below.
6. Use the Word Analysis Table on the next page to enter your decisions.

Step 1: Consider the text factors.

- a. Does the word belong in the misdirective or nondirective category?
- b. If yes, enter the category in the Category of Natural Context column on the Word Analysis Table and proceed to the next step. This word may be one your students will need to know to understand the text.
- c. If the word is in the directive or general category, analyze the next word on your list.

Step 2: Consider the importance of the word.

- a. Is the word critical (i.e., conceptually central) for understanding the selection?
- b. If the word is conceptually central, enter *yes* in the Conceptually Central to Understanding the Text column on the Word Analysis Table and proceed to the next step.
- c. If the word is not conceptually central for understanding the selection, analyze the next word on your list.

Step 3: Consider the student factors.

- a. Ask yourself if students have had sufficient previous experience with or exposure to the word. Enter *yes* or *no* in the Previous Experience & Exposure column on the Word Analysis Table.
- b. Ask yourself if the word will be important for students to know 5 years from now. Enter *yes* or *no* in the Important to Know 5 Years from Now column on the Word Analysis Table.
- c. If you decided that students have **not** had sufficient previous experience with or exposure to the word **and** it will be important for them to know 5 years from now, teach this word.

Repeat Steps 1-3 for the remaining words you are considering.

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Handout 3: Teaching Conceptually Central Words

Student Friendly Definitions

1. A brief, simple, student friendly definition that relates to the content of the passage.
2. Student friendly definitions contain two important elements.
 - a. Characterize the word: Student friendly definitions describe the word by focusing on specific aspects of its meaning rather than on a general description.
 - b. Characterize the word by asking yourself:
Why do we have this word particularly?
Why do we have such a word?
 - c. Explain the meaning in everyday language: The definition is crafted using words that are part of the student's vocabulary and convey the connotation of the word.

Student Friendly Dictionaries Online

1. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
www.ldoceonline.com
2. Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary
www.learnersdictionary.com
3. Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary
www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-cobuild-learners

Examples Within the Context of the Selection

1. Provides students with one or two examples of the word.
2. For instance:
Target word: enormous
Examples: redwood trees, elephants, skyscrapers

Examples Beyond the Context of the Selection

1. Provide students with one or two examples that are examples beyond the context of the selection.
 - Examples beyond the context help students to formulate a deeper understanding of the word that is logical and unambiguous.
 - Examples beyond the context of the selection also help students who may be inclined to limit a word's connotation to the circumstances the teacher described when introducing the word.

Non-Examples

1. A non-example helps further pinpoint the meaning of the word by providing instances where the definition does not apply.
2. Non-examples help to solidify meanings and prevent misconceptions by explicitly telling students the attributes that are not part of the word's connotation.
3. For instance:
Target word: enormous
Non-examples: ant, the head of a pin, a microchip

A Procedure for Choosing Non-Examples

1. Choose an antonym for the word. For example, tiny is an antonym for enormous.
2. Think of an example of the antonym. An example of tiny is an ant, a pea, etc.
3. So, ant or pea is a non-example of the enormous.

Visual Representations

1. Present students with illustrations or a short video.

Handout 3: Teaching Conceptually Central Words

Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning

1. Provide students with activities that provide multiple meaningful exposures for words to become part of their working vocabulary.

Levels of Processing Vocabulary for Multiple Meaningful Exposures

1. **Associational Level:** Students connect a definition to a word.
Examples: matching exercises, crossword puzzles
2. **Comprehension Level:** Students use definitional information to complete activities such as classifying words into categories or completing graphic organizers.
Examples: semantic map, semantic feature analysis, Frayer Model, concept diagram, Venn diagram
3. **Generative Level:** Students produce novel responses to the word.
Examples: responding to questions, making choices, creating examples

Examples of Generative Activities

1. **Idea Completion** requires students to incorporate a word's meaning into a context to explain a situation.
 - a. The small child was forbidden to play with the matches because...
2. **Questions, Reasons, and Examples** provide opportunities for students to interact with target words by responding to questions and giving examples.
 - a. Why is it good to contemplate the possible consequences of your behavior?
3. **Relating Words** encourages students to explain and justify their responses to questions and choose words that fit the descriptions given in the sentences.
 - a. Would you dread something appetizing? Why? Why not?
4. **Describing/Explaining:** Place these phrases on the word line **Little Endurance** to a **Great Deal of Endurance**. Explain your placement.
How much endurance does it take to....
 1. participate in a decathlon?
 2. undergo an appendectomy?
 3. tolerate a child who is having a tantrum?
 4. listen to an engaging speaker for over an hour?

Little Endurance.....Great Deal of Endurance

5. **Word Associations** require students to associate a known word with a newly learned word to reinforce the meaning of the new word and to promote cumulative review. This helps students embed the newly learned words into their vocabulary. Examples of word associations include the following:

Words: murmur, benevolent, fragrant, vociferous

Which word goes with *flowers*? Why?

Which word goes with *whisper*? Why?

Which word goes with *helping*? Why?

Which word goes with *loud*? Why?

6. **Multiple Meanings** give students practice in applying various meanings to the same word.
 - a. Word: crescent
What does the word crescent mean to a baker, an astronomer, and a mapmaker?