Word Learning Strategy: Contextual Analysis

Context clues are words or phrases that give readers hints or suggestions to the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Important Note: There is little research that shows the impact of direct instruction on contextual analysis but the use of this skill has potential to produce long term vocabulary growth (Nagy, 1985, 1987).

There are 6 types of context clues.

Each type should be introduced and practiced individually and then referenced as they appear in texts.

Context clues should not be the primary strategy utilized. Many times, words are not defined through context clues.

6 Types of Context Clues

1. **Definition**- Meaning is defined in the sentence. *Ex- A tent is a dwelling used while camping.*

2. **Appositive**- Clue to the meaning is given within the sentence. *Ex- A radiologist, who will read the x-rays, will call soon with results.*

3. **Synonym**- Use of another word that is similar in meaning or can be compared to the unfamiliar word. *Ex- My boss eats pasta frequently, as often as twice a week.*

4. **Antonym-** Use of another word that is opposite or in contrast with the unfamiliar word. *Ex- I thought the orange would be treacly, but instead it was sour.*

5. **Example-** Provide examples about the unfamiliar words. *Ex- Weather instruments, such as barometers, thermometers, and weather vanes, help meteorologists make forecasts.*

6. **General-** Provide some nonspecific clues to the meaning of an unfamiliar word, often spread over several sentences. *Ex- Einstein rode his bike everywhere. He thought driving a car was way too difficult.*

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