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## MODULE

# 2

### Learning Intention

We are learning the process for direction instruction of words and the importance of modeling word solving to support students' use of strategies to solve for word meanings.

### Success Criteria

We have successfully completed this module when

1. We can explain the difference between incidental and explicit word learning.
2. We can articulate an approach to direct instruction of words.
3. We can describe the importance of modeling word solving using context clues, morphology and word parts, and resources.
4. We can identify opportunities to help students make connections among words and review words they have previously learned.

# Make It Transparent

## How to Use Direct Instruction and Model Word Solving



Photo by Ralph Blanchard.

## Case in Point

Marc Elliott’s history class is studying economic and social change in the United States post World War II. As part of that instruction, students are learning about the significance of Mexican immigration and its effect on the agriculture industry following the war. Mr. Elliott has selected an article for students to read, but some of the language he knows is key to understanding the context is unfamiliar to his students, so he decides to provide direct instruction of the most challenging words prior to having his students read the text.

The words he selects are *bracero*, *repatriation*, *substandard*, and *enticement*. Mr. Elliott consults a couple different online student dictionaries to create a definition for each of the terms. As part of his direct instruction, he has the students add the terms to the vocabulary journals that they have been keeping since the beginning of the year. For each term in their journals, the students write a definition in their own words, draw a representation or picture of the term, and write or draw connections they make to the term such as a personal connection, an analogy, or a connection to a related word or concept.

After students read the article, he plans for them to discuss comprehension questions. Among the questions he prepared, he made sure to include some that would allow for students to use the new vocabulary words in context as part of their response.

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# Vocabulary Development

For academic vocabulary instruction to be most effective, students need to be able to understand the meaning of words in context and by their definition, experience words across multiple contexts/domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), have repeated exposures to words, and make connections among words and to broader concepts. While this depth of word learning may feel a bit overwhelming, if you look at vocabulary development in its simplest form, there are essentially two ways that students learn new words: incidental word learning and explicit word learning (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1** *Incidental Versus Explicit Word Learning Opportunities*

Vocabulary Development	
Incidental Word Learning	Explicit Word Learning
Notice and discuss unfamiliar words during daily interactions with students	Direct instruction in pronunciation, word meanings, parts of speech, etc.
Wide reading of text that introduce new words and concepts	Word-solving strategies
Listening comprehension and discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using context</li><li>• Using word parts</li><li>• Using resources (e.g., dictionary)</li></ul>
Wordplay and games	Peer interactions that require word usage

## INCIDENTAL WORD LEARNING

Vocabulary demand far exceeds the capacity of any teacher or school to directly teach each word students will need to know, and yet many students seem to acquire a rich vocabulary that outstrips the amount formally presented. This largely occurs as a result of incidental word learning, which is the vocabulary development that occurs when students aren't actively trying to learn new words (Karami & Bowles, 2019). Research and experience tell us that incidental word learning plays an important role in students' vocabulary development and mainly occurs through discussion and listening and through wide reading. In fact, a meta-analysis on incidental word learning while reading suggests that students learn about 15 percent of the unknown words they encounter during reading (Swanborn & de Glopper, 1999). Students need repeated exposures in authentic contexts to really understand words. It's a numbers game, really—the more texts students come in contact with, the more exposure they have to familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary. Over time, they acquire new words and deepen their understanding of partially known ones. This will be explored further in **Module 5**.

## EQUITY AND ACCESS

As noted in this playbook, wide reading is not the only way to learn new vocabulary. Developing readers especially need a variety of word-learning opportunities, because they often do not possess the decoding or inferencing skills, and may not have sufficient background knowledge, to derive meaning from unknown words within a text. And, because reading can feel challenging or frustrating to them, they often don't choose to engage in enough wide-reading time or to read complex enough text that would benefit their incidental word learning.

Listening and discussion are powerful tools to use to develop and practice new vocabulary. One of the easiest ways to do this is by incorporating complex language into interactions with students. For example, you can tell your first period class that they look *lethargic* coming into class as they drag their feet and slump into their chairs first thing in the morning. Or remark to your second graders how you love their *energetic collaboration* as they work on a group project in class.

Building students' oral vocabularies also sets the stage for student success in reading comprehension. As Graves (2016) points out, "Children cannot read grade-level materials without developing grade-level vocabularies, and many children need to substantially build their stores of words to achieve grade-level vocabularies" (p. 70).

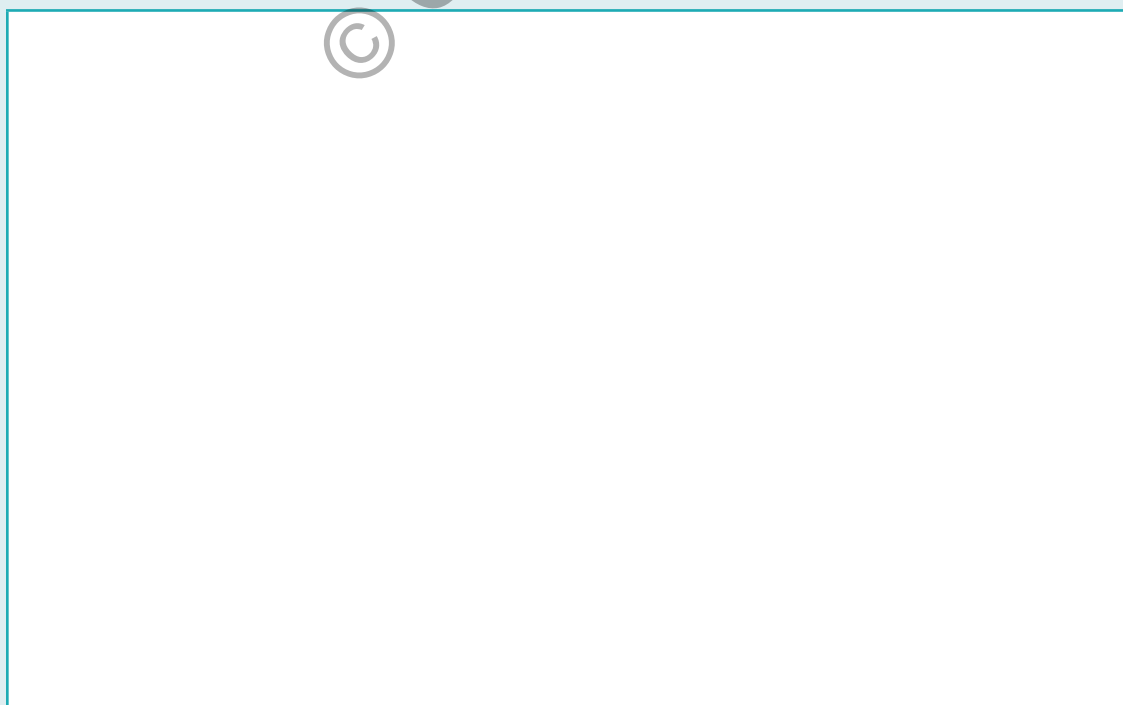
Developing students' vocabulary through listening and discussion is especially important for young learners, because the text they can read independently—a significant source of new vocabulary for older learners—is largely based on decodable words and high-frequency words, which typically already exist in students' oral vocabularies when they enter school.

## EQUITY AND ACCESS

It is especially important for multilingual learners and students with limited vocabularies to develop their receptive oral vocabulary—the words they understand when heard—and their productive oral vocabulary—words they accurately use in speech—before they can apply their understanding to reading or writing. For students with severely limited oral vocabularies, significant attention should be paid to learning vocabulary from the basic/most-frequent English word lists. This is important for verbal communication as well as early reading skills. (See **Module 1** for more information about word lists.)

## THINK AND REFLECT

How do you currently promote incidental word learning in your classroom? What other ideas do you have?



## EXPLICIT WORD LEARNING

As mentioned in **Module 1**, being intentional about word selection and the methods of instruction used to develop students' vocabularies is necessary to support students' overall academic vocabulary development (e.g., Bowne et al., 2017). Students need multiple and varied exposure to vocabulary, so having a wide range of word learning strategies and experiences can help build the depth of word knowledge needed for reading comprehension. The other modules in this playbook focus on additional methods of explicit word learning (e.g., word parts, word-learning strategies, building word consciousness, peer interactions, wordplay and games), because dependence on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning (National Reading Panel, 2000).

### NOTES

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# A Process for Direct Instruction of Words

Direct instruction is typically best suited for highly technical Tier 3 words or less-frequent Tier 2 words because of how specialized these words are within their content area (e.g., earth science, history, biology, government) and how infrequently students are likely to encounter them. Students may be able to use other word-learning strategies to support their understanding of the words, such as word parts or context, but generally direct instruction is the most efficient way to address word meaning. The key lies in analyzing which words are worthy of instruction and distinguishing between the need for direct instruction versus developing students' word-solving skills. When the target words contain unfamiliar morphology or nondirective or misdirective context clues, word solving is not likely to work, and direct instruction is the better choice.

There are a variety of ways to use direct instruction to teach new words, but here is one research-based process that has worked in many classrooms (Marzano, 2020):

**Step 1: Provide a description, an explanation, or an example of the unfamiliar term.** This description should be in student-friendly language and should recognize whether the term holds multiple meanings in different contexts or content areas (e.g., custom). The use of student dictionaries can be an important resource for creating this definition. But make sure that the students are pronouncing the word several times.

**Step 2: Have students restate the definition, explanation, or example in their own words.** This step helps students think deeply about the meaning of the word and internalize the information so that they can create their own definition or explanation. As long as students do not have any misconceptions or missing information, any way they choose to restate the definition or explanation should be accepted.

**Step 3: Have students create a nonlinguistic representation of the word in a way that makes sense to them** (e.g., picture, symbol, or graphic). Using a nonlinguistic representation provides students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the word and an alternative method to express connections to other academic concepts. Again, having students pronounce the word helps them move the word into their sight vocabulary.

## EQUITY AND ACCESS

In Step 2, consider allowing students to include slang, home/primary language (translanguaging), cognates, or other personal connections as part of their definition or explanation of the word. This helps students build connections to themselves and other academic concepts. Using a nonlinguistic representation of the word in Step 3 allows students with limited language (in English, their primary language, or both) to make deeper connections to the word.

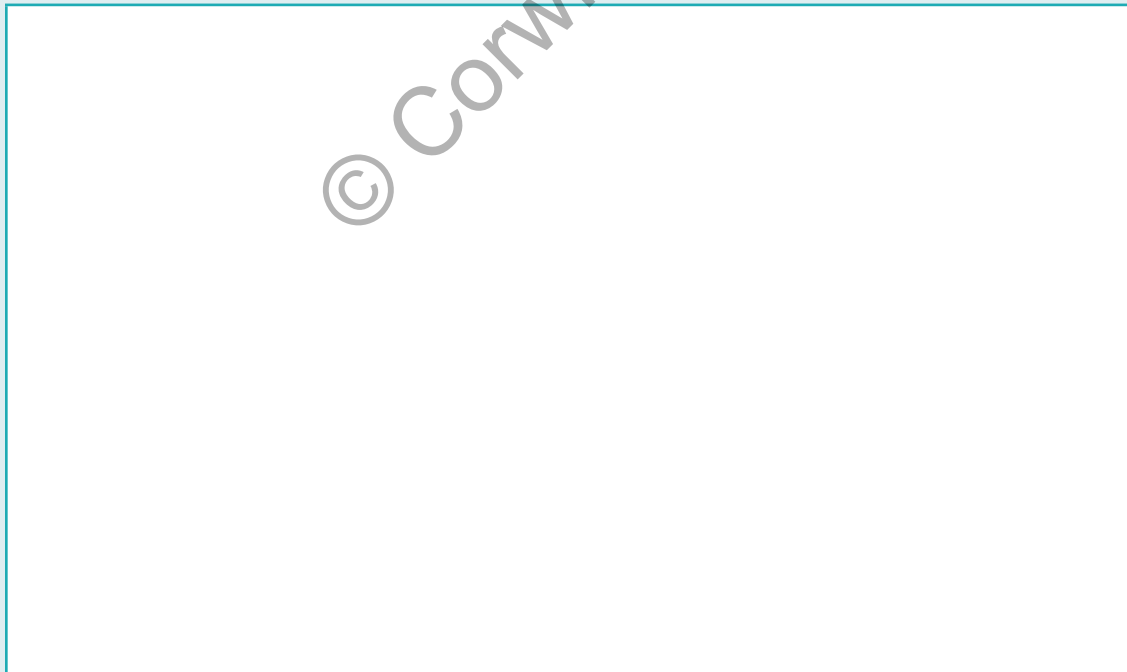
At first glance, this process may seem simple. And, in theory, it is. However, let's consider some nuances identified by Jenkins and Dixon (1983) based on the word(s) needing to be taught. The type and/or depth of description you share with your students will depend heavily on which these categories the new word(s) fall into.

1. The new word has an easy synonym or descriptive phrase that represents a familiar/known concept. For example, the word *grasp* can easily be described as *holding tightly*.

2. The new word has an easy synonym or descriptive phrase, but it is likely not a word that students are familiar with. For example, the word *ridiculous* can easily be described as *ludicrous*; however, students may not be familiar with that word, so additional descriptors such as *unreasonable* or *completely silly* may need to be used.
3. The new word does not have an easy synonym or descriptive phrase, but students do have background knowledge/familiarity with a concept that you can connect the new word to. For example, the word *drought* doesn't really have a specific synonym that relates to it, but students can connect the word to the idea of going without something, such as water, and relating that to the idea of a desert or a potted plant that has died.
4. The new word does not have an easy synonym or descriptive phrase, and the students have no background knowledge to connect to for understanding it, or it represents a completely unknown concept. For example, the word *denominator* is not typically used outside of math instruction and has specific meaning in that context. Students need explicit instruction about fractions to understand the word's meaning.

### THINK AND REFLECT

Think about the above three-step process for direct instruction of words. How could this work in your own classroom? What, if any, changes would you make to best support your students?





# The Importance of Modeling

Humans have a profound ability to mimic what they see others say and do. This innate ability has served our species well for tens of thousands of years; it's how we learned to communicate and how we transmit information from one generation to the next. Through observations of others—our parents and caregivers, for example—we acquire certain behaviors. As we observe others, we incorporate their models into our behavior. Who can forget the viral TikTok video of the toddler who mimicked Mom's exasperated grunts as she picked up toys from the floor? We remember an episode of *America's Funniest Home Videos* where a young boy was "golfing" in his backyard. His mother asked, "Can you golf like Daddy?" Immediately, the child slammed the golf club to the ground and yelled, "Damn it!" Yes, that's how Daddy plays golf.

Of course, most of the behaviors we incorporate into our patterns are more adaptive than our father's golfing performance. Just think back on all the things in your life you've watched another person do before you tried it on your own—skiing, playing tennis, using chopsticks for the first time. Most of us have vivid memories of learning to ride a bike or a parent patiently (or not!) teaching us how to drive a car. But learning to read? We might have a few flickering memories of pretend reading, phonics lessons in first grade, but then it's kind of a fast forward to full-tilt reading of *Charlotte's Web* or *The One and Only Ivan*! What happened in between? Alas, reading isn't a physical behavior. It's a cognitive one, a thinking task, and as such is invisible to others. As a result, we cannot directly demonstrate it. We have to talk about it. As Duffy noted,

The only way to model thinking is to talk about how to do it. That is, we provide a verbal description of the thinking one does or, more accurately, an *approximation* of the thinking involved (since there is no one way to do any reading task). (2003, p. 11)

Of course, good teachers have always modeled to facilitate learning. Modeling has been used to improve student behavior (Wilford, 2007), to support new learning and procedures (Schmoker, 2019), and teach students how to have literature discussions (Recksiek, 2005). Expert teachers know that modeling is a critical phase in developing student independence. Expert teachers also know that modeling alone is insufficient to change achievement. Students need opportunities to apply what they've seen modelled and to receive feedback on their attempts, and time to consolidate their understanding.

In this book, we give modeling bigger billing than it has received in other books on vocabulary, because students do so much better when they've heard and watched others identify and solve unknown words and can then mimic those *procedures* for discerning meaning. We've got to get away from the mindset that vocabulary instruction is only about teaching specific words. It's also about teaching specific strategies for approaching all words and remembering that the more we talk about and express an excitement and curiosity about new words (called *word consciousness*), the more our students will absorb this attitude and bring it to bear in their own reading and writing (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2005; Lane & Allen, 2010).

**Students do so much better when they've heard and watched others identify and solve unknown words and can then mimic those *procedures* for discerning meaning.**

## EQUITY AND ACCESS

We've found it helpful to preteach the vocabulary or word-learning strategy to developing readers and multilingual learners in advance of our modeling, so they have more time to absorb the concept. Visuals, movement, and sentence frames are good tools to use during preteaching. This scaffold also serves as an opportunity for students to benefit from repetition by increasing the number of exposures they have to a word or a word-solving strategy.

Again, it is so tempting to teach specific words, especially within the content areas, and keep moving forward, covering that curriculum. But in the end, this shortcut fails us because our students wind up dependent on us, and they flounder in the reading we assign because we haven't given them the mental models for solving unknown words *while engaged with texts*.

## THINK AND REFLECT

What kind of teacher modeling do you currently use in the classroom? How does it relate to what has been shared so far in this module?



### Case in Point

As teachers share texts with students, they demonstrate the ways in which they solve for unknown words. Of course, teacher modeling with texts is not limited to vocabulary work; teachers also model comprehension, text structures, and text features, in addition to vocabulary. But in this book, we'll focus on vocabulary. Let's listen in on a few examples to get a sense of what modeling word solving might look like.

Susan Chee is reading from *The Incredible Journey* (Burnford, 1960), which reads,

It would have been impossible to find three more contented animals that night. They lay curled closely together in a hollow filled with sweet-scented needles, under an aged, spreading balsam tree, near the banks of the stream. The old dog had his beloved cat, warm and purring between his paws

again, and he snored in deep contentment. The young dog, their gently worried leader, had found his charge again. He could continue with a lighter heart. (p. 101)

Pausing, the teacher commented, “I appreciate how the author reminded me about the word *contented*. I know from this sentence that she’s using the word to mean that the animals are satisfied with the way things are right now. They’re not quite happy, but they’re also not scared. I have this image in my mind that they’re all safe again and that they’ll continue the journey after they have a little rest.”

Lenora Ledesma projected a section of the text *Extreme Weather* (Farndon, 2007), noticed the word *hailstones*, and read aloud the passage that explained them. In doing so, she pointed out the way that the author defined *hailstones* in the text:

Thunderclouds don’t just rain down drops of water. They drop balls of solid ice called hailstones, too. They are typically as large as peas, but sometimes as large as apples. Hailstones form in thunderclouds because the clouds are so tall that the upper levels are very cold, and so turbulent that they can hold an ice ball aloft. (p. 39)

Following the reading, Ms. Ledesma noted her appreciation that the author “helped out by very clearly explaining the word *hailstones*. I’m sure that I could have taken a guess by looking inside the word. I know what hail is, we have that, and I know what stones or rocks are, but the context helped me realize that there weren’t really small rocks in the hail, but rather they were larger pieces of hail that form specifically in thunderclouds.”

While reading *Firegirl* (Abbott, 2006), Jeff Olson read the sentence, “The skin was all rough and uneven” (p. 33) and said “Uneven, not even. I don’t think this means odd, as in odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9. I think that the author really does mean not even, not flat, not smooth. It seems that Jessica’s face was really damaged pretty seriously from the burns.”

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# Modeling Strategies for Solving Words

“Word-learning strategies are mental processes that a learner employs when he or she comes across an unknown word while reading” (Graves et al., 2018, p. 534). These strategies are important for all students but are particularly important for students with limited vocabularies. Graves (2016) developed guidelines to consider when modeling word-learning strategies with students:

- Motivate students to engage with the strategy by explaining the why—the value—of it.
- Provide students with a description of the strategy so that they understand how and when to use it.
- Model the strategy using authentic text.
- Provide students time to practice the strategy using a short piece of text.
- Use the gradual release of responsibility model to guide students’ use of the strategy over time.
- Discuss the strategy with students, and help them reflect on how it’s working for them.
- Over time, encourage students to integrate strategies to solve for unknown words—one strategy may not work.
- Provide opportunities for students to apply word-learning strategies using new texts.

We have organized teacher modeling of word-solving strategies into three components: context clues, morphology and word parts, and resources. More generally, we suggest that students learn to look inside the words (morphology and word parts) and outside the words (context clues and using resources).

## CONTEXT CLUES

One of the ways that readers figure out unknown words is through the use of context clues. This is an example of an outside-of-the-word strategy. The goal of modeling context clues is to provide students with enough examples so that they can use this approach independently. Of course, context clues don’t work every time, and students need examples of when this approach fails and what else they can do. Before we consider when to use context clues, let’s note when they don’t work. In their study of basal reading programs, Beck et al. (1983) identified four categories for natural contexts:

- Misdirective
- Nondirective
- General
- Directive

Of these four categories, some are helpful and others are not. The continuum of contexts they identified spans from misdirective to nondirective to general to directive.

**Misdirective context clues** are those in which the reader would assume an incorrect definition from the words surrounding the target or unknown word. Here is an example:

*It’s hard to imagine James was an anchorite. He’s so full of life and love of people. He often is the last to leave a party.*

In this sentence, readers might assume that an *anchorite* was someone who liked being around people and not that it means a person who lives in seclusion usually for religious reasons. The words around the unknown word convey a different message and are therefore misdirective.

**Nondirective context clues** are of little or no assistance to the reader. These clues fail to help the reader make meaning. For most readers unfamiliar with the terms *loquacious*, *melancholy*, and *pococurante*, the context in the example that follows doesn't help the reader understand the words being used to describe Jessica in this example.

*Jessica seems to change based on her environment and whom she's with. She can be loquacious, melancholy, or pococurante.*

**General context clues** provide readers with some information, but not a level of detail that would allow them to identify specific nuances or connotations of the words. Consider this example:

*Justin ambled to the stable, not at all in a hurry to get himself on another horse.*

Readers have a sense that *ambled* means to have moved slowly. But readers may not understand that the word more specifically connotes an unhurried or leisurely walk and that the author is playing with the word, because *ambled* is also used to describe an easy gait, especially that of a horse.

**Directive context clues** are the most helpful for a reader. These clues provide readers with information that they can use to determine the word's meaning, and even the nuances of the word, from reading around the word. Consider the word *gauche* in the following sentence:

*Joan's behavior, licking the spoon, telling toilet jokes, and criticizing the food during dinner, is tacky, crude, and even vulgar, to the point of being gauche.*

Readers unfamiliar with the word will easily sense that the writer has chosen a word that conveys distaste and a lack of social polish.

Given that there are so many context clues that don't work, it seems reasonable to add a note of caution about spending too much class time trying to teach students to use context clues. Or rather, we must balance it with teaching students how to determine *if* the context clues are going to help them; sometimes students get trapped in erroneous meanings because they think context clues will always work. When you consider that our students are reading widely, seeing all kinds of words in different contexts, then it becomes clear we must teach them how to muddle through all kinds of idiosyncratic contexts, some helpful, some not. As Beck et al. (2002) asserted, we don't want students to learn words only *in* context; we need to teach them how to learn words *from* context. There are a number of texts, especially informational texts and textbooks, in which authors purposefully embed words in context to help readers comprehend.

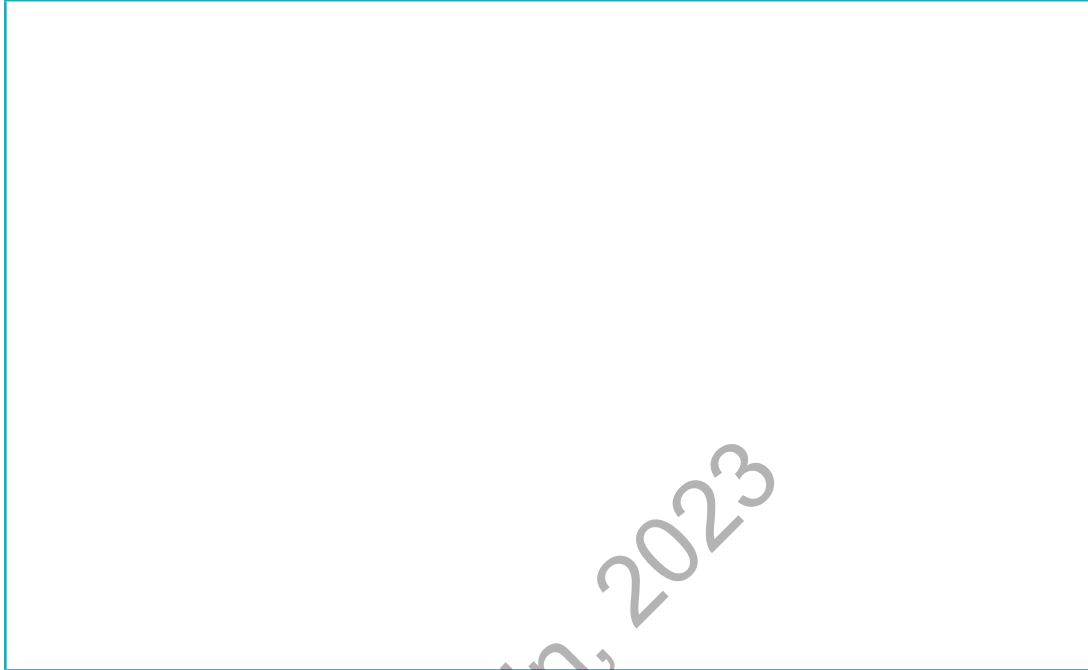
As such, the use of context clues should not be left to chance, and this is where teacher modeling comes in. Modeling the ways in which authors provide context clues helps students develop their skill in using context to discover words and their meanings. (See Figure 2.2, on the next page, for types of context clues.)

Figure 2.2 Types of Context Clues

Type of Context Clue	Explanation	Example
<b>Definition or Explanation</b>	The most obvious clue occurs when the author explains the word immediately after its use. Sometimes a form of “to be” is used.	<i>A glacier is a mass of snow and ice.</i>
<b>Restatement or Synonym</b>	Sometimes authors provide a restatement or synonym of the harder word. Often the meaning is right after the unfamiliar word, but it can also be separated by a comma, parentheses, or a dash.	<i>The scientists decided to observe, or watch carefully, the eagle’s nest to record the eagle’s behaviors.</i>
<b>Contrast or Antonym</b>	Some clues provide a contrast for the target word such that readers can infer the word’s meaning while reading. Key words for this type of context clue include <i>but, however, whereas, otherwise, unless, although, while, and instead.</i>	<i>Hector was very gregarious on the first day of school, while Ian seemed very shy.</i>
<b>Inference or Description</b>	Sometimes a word or phrase is not immediately clarified within the sentence. Relationships, while not directly apparent, are inferred or implied. The reader must look for clues before or after the sentence in which the word is used.	<i>Access to clean water would ameliorate living conditions within the village. Clean water would make life tolerable, as residents could focus on other pressing needs such as finding food and shelter.</i>
<b>Comparison</b>	Some clues provide a comparison for the target word such that readers can see how the words are the same or similar. Key words for this type of context clue include <i>like, as, too, similar to, and in the same way.</i>	<i>The glass vase was fragile, similar to the delicate teacups that were carefully placed on the table.</i>
<b>Examples or Lists/Series</b>	Sometimes a word or phrase is clarified through examples. The author may even provide a series of related words that give an idea of the unknown word’s meaning. Key words for this type of context clue include <i>such as, for example, include, and for instance.</i>	<i>A megalopolis, such as New York City, is home to many people, commerce, and entertainment.</i>
<b>Cause and Effect</b>	In this context clue, the reader can infer the meaning of the unfamiliar word by discerning a cause-and-effect relationship in the text.	<i>Due to torrential rains, the river overflowed, and the town was flooded.</i>

## YOUR TURN

Select a piece of text you plan to use with your students. This could be a piece of text they will read independently, read with you, or listen to you read aloud. Examine the text for the different context clue types discussed. How many different types of context clues did you find? How has your understanding of the complexity of the text changed based on your examination?



### Case in Point

Let's consider the impact that teacher modeling can have on the use of context clues from a text. Here is an example from Mina Tran's class, where she read aloud and modeled word learning using *The Crossover* (Alexander, 2014). It's important to note that Ms. Tran did not limit her use of modeling to vocabulary; she also modeled the use of comprehension strategies using this text.

#### Josh's Play-by-Play

The team's in trouble.  
If they don't find an answer soon  
our championship dreams are over.  
Down by three, they're playing  
like kittens, not Wildcats.  
With less than a minute to go

(Continued)

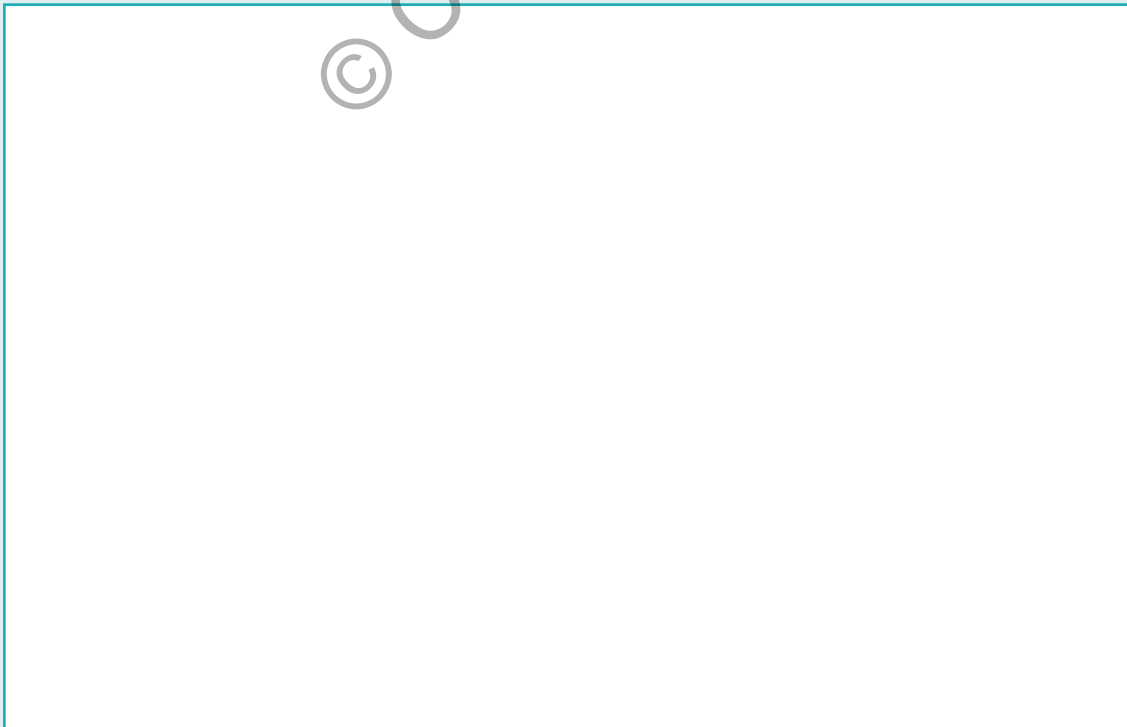
(Continued)

Vondie brings the ball up the court.  
Will he go inside for a quick two  
or get the ball to JB  
for the three-ball?  
He passes the ball to number twenty-nine  
on the right wing  
and tries to dribble out,  
but the defense is suffocating.  
They're on him like  
black on midnight. (p. 177)

Pausing, Ms. Tran commented, "I appreciate how the author gave me a comparison to help me understand the meaning of the word *suffocating*. He compares the way the defense is playing to the blackness of midnight. I have this image in my mind about how pitch black it is outside at midnight and how the dark seems to take over everything. I think that's how the defense is swarming around number twenty-nine in this part of the poem."

### THINK AND REFLECT

What does it mean to model context clues? Why is this important?





## MORPHOLOGY AND WORD PARTS

In addition to looking outside of words for clues about their meaning, students need models of looking inside words to determine meaning. Providing examples of how to use morphology and word parts ensures that students apply this strategy on their own. For the purposes of this playbook, we're using *morphology* in the linguistic sense, to mean the smallest meaningful units of language. For example, adding an -s to the end of many words adds meaning (plural/more than one), as when *dog* becomes *dogs*. But morphology is more complex than that. Teaching students to look inside words for their morphology and word parts requires a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the language. Figure 2.3 identifies five aspects of morphology and word parts that teachers must be aware of if they are to be able to model this inside-the-word approach to determining word meanings. **Module 3** contains a deeper discussion of the use of morphology and word parts to enhance students' word-learning strategies.

Like context clues, word parts don't always illuminate meaning. For example, there are a number of false cognates that result in misunderstandings. Consider, for example, the word *embarrassed*. It sounds a lot like the Spanish word *embarazada*, which means pregnant. You certainly wouldn't want to confuse these two terms! Whereas *religion* (English) and *religion* (Spanish) mean more or less the same thing, *fabric* and *fábrica* do not (*fábrica* means factory). Using cognates in modeling serves several purposes:

Figure 2.3 Morphology and Word Parts

Component	Definition	Example
<b>Prefix</b>	A word part (affix) added to the beginning of a root or base to create a new meaning. Prefixes give direction, intensify meaning, or negate meaning.	<i>re-</i> meaning again, as in <i>review</i>
<b>Suffix</b>	A word part (affix) added to the end of a root or base word to create a new meaning or change the part of speech.	<i>-less</i> meaning without, as in <i>spotless</i>
<b>Root or Base</b>	A morpheme or morphemes to which affixes or other bases may be added; carries the basic meaning of the word	<i>trans</i> meaning across, as in <i>transcontinental</i>
<b>Cognates</b>	Two words having the same ancestral language and meaning	<i>aeropuerto</i> and <i>airport</i>
<b>Word Family</b>	A group of words sharing a common phonic element	<i>judge, judgment, judges, adjudicate, adjudication</i>

It acknowledges the vocabulary strengths of multilingual learners in your classroom and builds the language knowledge of the entire class. If you have students who speak other languages, learn about the cognates that occur in their home languages. There are a number of resources on the internet for cognates in other languages, as well as false cognates, and we encourage you to take a look at them.

### Case in Point

Ms. Tran also used morphology and word parts—inside-the-word strategies—while modeling using a text about climate change. When she came across the words *destructive* and *deterioration*, she said, “*De-* is an interesting prefix. It means from, down, and away and generally suggests a reversal or removal. That helps me understand the word *destructive*—things being deconstructed, destroyed. It also helps me understand *deterioration*. I know that the root, *-terior*, is related to a geographical area like *territory* and also words like *posterior* and *anterior*, meaning locations. I also know that *-tion* is a process or action. So, *deterioration* means that there is a place that is in the process of removal.”

### RESOURCES

When the first two approaches—context and word parts—don’t provide enough information, teachers model the use of resources. These take readers even further outside the word to determine meaning. Commonly, teachers use peer resources, dictionaries, and the internet in their modeled quests for figuring out word meanings.

When modeling the use of the dictionary, it is important that students understand these key ideas:

- Read the entire definition before assigning meaning to the unknown word.
- Many words have multiple meanings, and all definitions should be considered.
- Reread the sentence where the unknown word appeared to make sure the selected definition make sense.

### Case in Point

While reading the text *Extreme Weather* (Farndon, 2007), Ms. Tran used a peer to model when she called the teacher next door to ask about the word *cirrostratus*. The word appeared in the sentence “Soon, the blue sky begins to fill up with milky veils of cirrostratus clouds, formed lower down on the front” (p. 36). The teacher next door replied on speakerphone and described a very interesting type of cloud, one that is “almost transparent with a whitish veil of fibrous, almost hair-like, appearance. These clouds usually totally cover the whole sky and often produce a halo phenomenon. These clouds are made of ice crystals and are thin. These clouds are in high altitudes, usually between twenty thousand and forty thousand feet.” Thanking her colleague, Ms. Tran added, “I’m never embarrassed to ask a friend about a word. Now I know the word and can help another person—pay it forward, I say. I want to find this kind of cloud and see what else it offers.”

## THINK AND REFLECT

How would you model the use of resources to support word learning in your classroom?  
Are there any other resources you want your students to use besides what has been shared?

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NOTES

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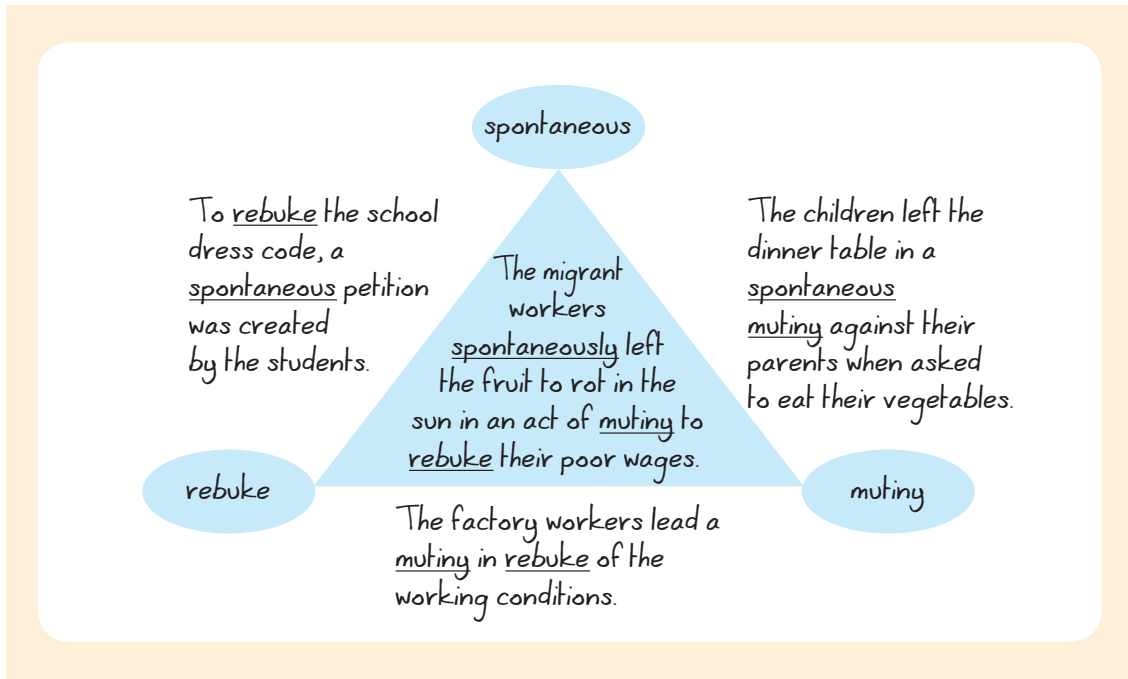
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# Making Connections and Reviewing Word Meaning

As previously stated, learners need multiple exposures to words to make deep connections and promote long-term retention of meaning. Once students have been exposed to new words, periodic active review can help create deeper understanding of the meaning of those words and relationships among them. Here are some review activities that can be used with words learned through direct instruction:

- **Connect Two (Richek, 2005):** Present a list of ten vocabulary words from previous instruction. Students then select two words from the list and share why they feel those words are connected. For young or multilingual learners, consider providing sentence frames to support language development such as, “I think \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are related/connected because \_\_\_\_\_.” Stress to students that there are no right or wrong answers—you are searching to make connections among words, their meanings, and their related concepts.
- **Figurative Fun:** In this activity, students use figurative language to deepen their understanding of word meanings by creating similes, metaphors, or analogies using their vocabulary words. For young or multilingual learners, consider providing sentence frames to support language development, such as these:
  - Simile: \_\_\_\_\_ is like/as \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Metaphor: \_\_\_\_\_ is/are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Analogy: \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Three Lies and a Truth:** This activity involves students identifying the correct definition of a vocabulary word from a set of fake definitions. To play, each student selects one word from the list of previously studied words. They write three fake definitions of the word and one real definition. For each word, the teacher reads or displays the set of definitions. Students get a point if they select the correct definition, and the student with the most points at the end of the game wins.
- **Vocabulary Stories:** In this activity, students are given a set of five to eight related words. Students must make up a story (or write a letter or write a paragraph) using all of the words appropriately.
- **Vocabulary Association Triangles (Silver et al., 2012):** This activity helps students make connections among words and use them in context. To begin, students select three words and place one of them on each of the corners of a large triangle. Students then look at the two words at the base of the triangle and think about how the word meanings are related or how the words can be connected. Along the base of the triangle, students write a sentence that appropriately uses both of the words. This process is repeated for the other two sides of the triangle. To complete the triangle, students write a sentence using all three words in the center of the triangle.



Source: Adapted from Silver et al. (2012).

### YOUR TURN

Select one of these strategies to use with your students. After you've tried it, come back here and reflect on the following questions:

- What went well?
- What challenges did you have, if any?
- What would you do differently next time?

## MODULE REFLECTION

Now that you have finished this module, rate yourself on each of the following success criteria.

I can explain the difference between incidental and explicit word learning.	1	2	3	4	5
I can articulate an approach to direct instruction of words.	1	2	3	4	5
I can describe the importance of modeling word solving using context clues, morphology and word parts, and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
I can identify opportunities to help students make connections among words and review words they have previously learned.	1	2	3	4	5

Now, reflect on your overall learning using the What? So What? Now What? protocol developed by Thompson-Grove (2004).

What?	So What?	Now What?
What did you learn about direct instruction of words as a result of this module?	What is the importance of the information you learned?	You may not yet be at the expert level, as it takes time to integrate knowledge into practice. Use this information to identify areas of continued learning. What actions are you considering based on your learning?



Visit the companion website at  
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