

Vocabulary Strategies Activity

LEVELS 15, 18, 21

What are Vocabulary Strategies?

Vocabulary strategies are the cognitive steps students can follow to unlock the meanings of unknown words as they read. These cognitive steps involve recognizing that a word is unfamiliar, looking for information that will support an inference into its meaning, hypothesizing that meaning, and then checking the hypothesis against context. At least two sources of information can support students as they infer meaning in context: (1) morphology (the meaningful parts inside words, such as prefixes, suffixes, and base words); and (2) context clues (Ebbers, 2017; Goodwin & Perkins, 2015; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). In Lexia® Core5® Reading, morphological awareness and context clues are taught as two integrated vocabulary strategies.

Why focus on Vocabulary Strategies?

It has been estimated that students must learn approximately three thousand new words each year to keep pace with grade-level curricula (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987). While impossible or impractical to provide direct instruction in every word, instruction can support students to be excellent, independent word learners.

Recent research conducted with linguistically diverse populations shows a reciprocal relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension (Levesque, Kieffer, & Deacon, 2017; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2008; Kirby et al., 2012; Nagy et al., 2006; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012). Morphological awareness allows students to analyze the meaningful parts of unfamiliar words and infer their meanings. This, in turn, supports their ability to understand a text as a whole. Integrating the use of morphological clues with context clues provides a way to confirm the meaning of a morphologically complex word in context (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007).

How does Lexia Core5 Reading address Vocabulary Strategies?

Levels 15, 18, and 21 of Lexia Core5 Reading each contain a Vocabulary Strategies activity. The activities integrate a set of instructional practices recommended by recent literacy research (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Lesaux, Kieffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014; Baumann et al., 2003; Goodwin & Perkins, 2015), and they each present a set of commonly used prefixes and suffixes that increase in complexity as students move up through the levels (Blevins, 2001). In the first two levels, the sequence begins with academic compound words. Following direct instruction in word parts, students engage in a series of scaffolded tasks with each affix set that builds a deep knowledge of the word parts and gradually supports the use of vocabulary strategies in the context of independent reading. Specifically, students combine word parts to create morphologically complex words that answer a question or complete a sentence; apply their morphological knowledge by inferring word meanings in sentences or distinguishing how morphologically similar words (e.g., *magnet*, *magnetic*, *magnetize*) are used differently in context; and apply the cognitive steps for inferring word meanings by integrating morphological awareness and context clues. Students also use their vocabulary strategies by reading and responding to informational passages with morphologically complex words that feature the affixes studied.

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Works Cited

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