**ienglish**

LIFE IS THE CLASSROOM - IMMERSE YOURSELF

**Terry:**
What do you have there?

**Rebecca:**
Oh, it's a mystery novel. I'm almost at the end!

**Terry:**
Ooo, sounds interesting.

**Rebecca:**
I love a good mystery – Agatha Christy, Sherlock Holmes...CSI.

**Terry:**
Yeah, CSI – Crime Scene Investigation – I watched a great episode on TV last night. I love how they get the bad guy by following the evidence – fingerprints, DNA samples - looking at clues.

**Rebecca:**
You know, this happens with learning a language too. Sometimes you don't understand a word but you can guess what it means by looking at clues. Not CSI, but LSI – Language Scene Investigation.
The Language Scene is the context surrounding the unknown word or expression. There are clues that can help you figure out the meaning.

**Terry:**
This episode is all about guessing the meaning of new words by looking at the clues that surround them! Once again, this strategy works with the receptive skills – listening and reading. So let's address each skill separately. Let's start with listening.
When you hear a new word or expression and you don't know what it means, you may be able to guess by looking at the clues. Look around you. You can get a lot of information from the scene.

For example, a father is reading the newspaper at home in his favourite chair, and his son approaches him. Looking at the clues, you might be able to guess what the boy would say.
"Dad, can I have some money?"
Or "Dad, can I borrow the car?"

But what kinds of clues will help you? Crime Scene Investigators know what to look for- what about Language Scene Investigators?

**Rebecca:**
We suggest that you spot the clues in four main areas.

And to make it easy to remember, the first letter of each word spells the word SPOT. Here are the 4 areas to spot clues:
S – setting (when & where is the communication happening)
P – people (who is speaking)
O – outlook (what's the feeling – attitude, mood, or tone)
T – topic (what is the theme)
Spotting the clues doesn't tell you exactly what is being said, but it narrows down the possibilities.  You will be able to piece together the details, and then add to that what you already know about the world. This will greatly improve your ability to guess at the meaning of unknown words.

**Terry:**
First we have the S, which stands for 'setting.'  This is where and when the communication is taking place. Setting is the environment – physical surroundings, background noises, clothing and other visual clues. The setting suggests what the topic might be.  For example, if the setting is a men's locker room, the conversation may likely be about sports.

In fact, language is often connected to settings.

**Rebecca:**
We've seen this idea before when we looked at culture.  Culture gives us different scripts for different scenes.   We will say things differently, depending on the occasion – depending on where we are and who we are communicating with.

**Terry:**
Let's demonstrate this with an activity.

Match these sentences to their appropriate settings.
"That was a beautiful ceremony."
"Today, my topic is 'The Successful Entrepreneur'."
"She is a social butterfly."

Even before you hear any language, you can predict what might be said based on the setting.  Setting provides useful information to guess at words that are unfamiliar to you.

**Rebecca:**
So, look for clues in the setting.  Next, we have the "P" – which stands for People.

Who are the people communicating?  What is their relationship to each other?  What is the level of formality between them?  We call this register.  Register shows how formal or casual people are with each other.
Notice clues such as the way people look at each other;  facial expressions like "smiling" or "frowning"; the distance between two people or if they touch.

Another indicator of "formality" is the use of titles such as Sir, Ms, Dr. or Professor.
The type of relationship between the people communicating will determine the range of language you can expect to hear.
Let's look at an example.

A woman is approaching a professor who is working at his desk.  If that person is a student, they may say something like this:
"Professor Smith, I hope I'm not disturbing you.  I was wondering if you could help me for a moment."
The register here is "formal."  The language is appropriate for the relationship – professor and student.
What if the person said:
"James, could you help me with something please."
This is less formal and more familiar.  Perhaps the person is a friend or colleague.

If she said:
"Jo-Jo, I need you."
This might suggest that the woman is a family member or perhaps a spouse.

Terry:
The point is that you can get important clues from understanding the relationship between the people communicating.  When the relationship is more formal, so is the language – the use of titles, longer sentences, and higher level vocabulary.

Rebecca:
When the relationship is more casual, the language is more common; you encounter more slang and the sentences tend to be shorter.

Terry:
The third area to watch for clues starts with the letter "O" – Outlook.

What do we mean by outlook?  We're talking about the general attitude or perspective of the people who are communicating.  You could describe it as the "mood" or "tone."  For example, are they happy, joking, serious, arguing or sharing a secret?  Again, you can get a lot of information from what is not being said; gestures, body language, facial expressions and tone of voice can provide many clues.

Let's try something; I'm going to say the same sentence a few times, but with a different outlook each time.  See if you can determine the true meaning of what is being said.

"I'm so happy for you."

Rebecca:
It sounds like you're sharing in my joy.  You are genuinely happy for me.

**Terry:**
"I'm so happy for you."

**Rebecca:**
Ooh...you know my secret that others aren't supposed to know.  This suggests that we're close.

**Terry:**
"I"m so happy for you."

**Rebecca:**
Then why are you yelling at me.  This suggests that you are jealous of what I have...that somehow you feel my happiness is a threat to yours.

**Terry:**
"I'm so happy for you."

**Rebecca:**
You don't mean that at all.  You're being sarcastic.
So, even though the words are the same, what is being communicated is different each time based on body language and tone of voice.  Paying attention to the general outlook or attitudes can be very useful in guessing the meaning.

Well, so far we've covered three areas for spotting clues.  The final area starts with the letter T – topic.  Actually, all the others -  setting, people and outlook – lead us to the "topic."  If you can determine the "topic" you can access what you already know about that topic.  This helps you predict what will be said and guess the meaning of words and phrases that you do not know. If there are a few words that you do understand, it's probably enough information to then identify the topic.  Once you have the topic, you have a good chance at figuring out unknown words.

For example, if you heard people talking and recognized the words "January, plane and hotel," you could guess that they are probably talking about a "winter vacation."   Based on the context of the topic, you may be able to guess at words that you've never heard before.

So, SPOT can help you guess at words you don't know:
Setting
People
Outlook
Topic

**Terry:**
If you're still not sure about how to spot the clues, don't worry.  The activities that go with this video can help.  You'll get better at it!

**Rebecca:**

Up until this point, we've looked at clues in spoken language. Now let's focus on guessing by looking at clues when reading.

With reading, you have the extra benefit of seeing the words, sentences and paragraphs in front of you. Also, often when you're reading, you can take time to figure out the meaning of unknown words.
I'm currently reading a mystery novel, a crime investigation story.

Here is a paragraph written by the detective in the story:
"I interrogated the suspect. Even though she was someone thought to be guilty of a crime, she answered my questions willingly and thoughtfully. However, when I found a problem with her alibi, she became unresponsive. I think she might be the culprit."
We've highlighted words that may be "new" to you. If you do encounter a new vocabulary word, don't just check your dictionary right away. Try to guess what it means first!

Let us show you how to guess the meaning.
We suggest that you take these steps:
1.      Identify the part of speech
2.      Examine the text surrounding the word
3.      Notice the root word & affixes
4.      Guess and check with a synonym

**Terry:**

Let's start with the first step – identify the part of speech.

Parts of speech tell you what the word is doing in the sentence, and this can really help you guess its meaning. Of course, the most important parts of speech for meaning are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Usually, these are the types of words that you are trying to guess for meaning.
To review:
A noun is a word used to name a person, animal, place, thing, and idea.
A verb expresses an action – such as 'run or jump' or a state of being – such as the verb "be" or "love."
An adjective modifies or describes a noun. It gives us more information about the noun. Now, an adverb is a word that can modify or describe a verb, an adjective, another adverb or an entire phrase or sentence.

**Rebecca:**

When you're trying to identify the part of speech, pay attention to where the word appears in the sentence in relation to other words around it. Remember the basic structure of a sentence:
Subject – verb – object.
Here is the first sentence of our sample: I interrogated the suspect. "I" is the subject. "Interrogated" must be a verb. There are two reasons to think that "suspect" is a noun. First, it is the object in the sentence. Also, the word "the" comes before "suspect." All nouns can be preceded by an article such as "a," "an," or "the."

So when you are guessing the meaning of a word, you want to make sure that your guess has the same part of speech as the unknown word.

Next, examine the text surrounding the word.  There may be information in the sentence and paragraph that helps you understand the meaning of the unknown word.

**Terry:**
We call these pieces of information "context clues."  There are three common types of context clues – direct, contrast, and indirect.
The first is - direct.  This is when a word is clearly defined or described in the sentences surrounding the word.

For example, look at the first part of the detective's journal entry:
"I interrogated the suspect.  Even though she was someone thought to be guilty of a crime, she answered my questions willingly and thoughtfully."
If the woman is answering the detective's questions, then the word "interrogate" probably means "to ask a lot of questions."  So the meaning of the word "interrogate" is described in the following sentence.
What about the word "suspect"?  The detective called this woman the "suspect."  Then, in the very next sentence he writes, "she was someone thought to be guilty of a crime."  It's reasonable to think that this is the meaning of the word "suspect" – "someone thought to be guilty of a crime."

So, for both these words, the meaning is defined directly in the text.

**Rebecca:**
The second type of context clue is a "contrast." This is often signalled by the words "whereas," "unlike," "as opposed to" or "however."

This is what the detective wrote next:
"However, when I found a problem with her alibi, she became unresponsive.  I think she might be the culprit."
At first, the detective describes her as being cooperative; she is answering his questions willingly and thoughtfully.  The word "however" indicates that something changes, and she becomes "unresponsive." What does the word "unresponsive" mean?  Well, it seems to be a "contrast" to how she was acting before.  She is not answering willingly or thoughtfully any more.  This gives us a hint at what "unresponsive" means.  We'll look at this word "unresponsive" again in just a minute.

**Terry:**
But let's talk about the third type of context clue – indirect.  We also call this "inference."  This is when word meanings are not directly described, but are inferred from the context.  This involves making an educated guess based on the facts that you know.
For example, the woman is a suspect; the detective thinks she might be guilty.  The detective might think she is innocent at first because of how she's answering his questions.  But when her behaviour changes, the detective writes – "I think she might be the culprit."  What does culprit mean?

Well, the paragraph doesn't directly define it. But indirectly, from the context, I think it's clear that "culprit" means "guilty person." The detective is looking at her response and he thinks she may be guilty – she may be the culprit.

So, we're looking at steps to guessing the meaning of unknown words in text.
1.      Identify the part of speech
2.      Examine the text surrounding the word


**Rebecca:**
Now the third step:
3.      Notice the root word & affixes
The root word is the most basic part of the word. Affixes are short syllables that can be added to the front or back of a root word. A syllable added to the front of the word is called a prefix. A syllable added to the back of the word is called a suffix.


**Terry:**
Sometimes you can guess the meaning of a word by noticing these parts. For example, let's look again at the word "unresponsive." The most basic part of the word is "response." This means "answer." The prefix "un" is added to the word "response" to suggest the opposite meaning – UN-RESPONSE, that is, "NOT to answer." The suffix "ive" makes this word an adjective. So, the word "unresponsive" is describing the woman as being a person who does not answer or react. She has become uninterested or passive.


**Rebecca:**
The last step is to then guess the meaning and check it with a synonym – a word that means the same thing. Let's try this with the word "alibi."

"However, when I found a problem with her alibi, she became unresponsive."
We know the word "alibi" is a noun because it's something that belongs to the woman. It's HER alibi. But there aren't a lot of clues in the context to determine its meaning. And you can't really identify a root word with alibi.
But I have an idea of what it means. I'd like to try inserting a synonym and check to see if it makes sense. I think alibi means "explanation" or "story." So let's plug it in!
"However, when I found a problem with her explanation, she became unresponsive."
"However, when I found a problem with her story, she became unresponsive."
These words work – in fact, an alibi is an explanation, story or account of where and what that person was doing during the time of the crime.

**Terry:**
Let's recap. We are talking about guessing the meaning of unknown words by looking at clues.


First of all, we taught you where to look for clues when listening. We suggested that you spot the clues in four main areas.

S – setting
P – people
O – outlook
T – topic
Spotting the clues doesn't tell you exactly what is being said, but it narrows down the possibilities.

**Rebecca:**

Then, we presented 4 steps for guessing at clues while reading:
1.     Identify the part of speech
2.     Examine the text surrounding the word
3.     Notice the root word & affixes
4.     Guess and check with a synonym

**Terry:**

When you've encountered a new word and guessed at its meaning – take time to record it in your notebook.

**Rebecca:**

Also, remember to do the 3 groups of activities that go with this video - see it, try it, use it.  They will help you get better at being an LSI -  "Language Scene Investigator."
Speaking of "investigator" – I'm going to get back to reading my mystery book.  I think I know who the culprit is!

**Terry:**

Don't give away the ending.  I'd like to read it too.