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Introduction

Effective instruction in adolescent literacy does not rely on one strategy alone. Reading, writing, listening and speaking all contribute to vocabulary acquisition. The subtleties of vocabulary development do, however, lend themselves to both direct and indirect instruction. Most struggling readers can, and do, read printed words. Their difficulty is not in articulating, or even spelling, the printed text. The challenge to this learner is an inability to understand, process, and communicate the ideas expressed by the words.

The nature of this problem in adolescent literacy reaches deeper than a student's comprehension. The inability to comprehend text impacts a learner's ability to actively learn new words. The result is that a student will struggle to understand, learn, and communicate concepts in all subject areas. This is our call to action. This is the rationale for providing teachers like you with the resources you need to not only provide students with direct, explicit vocabulary instruction, but to provide you with the materials for students to transfer strategies to the content areas.

This title focuses on helping students to develop their ability to understand, analyze, and apply figurative language. Figurative language is the use of a non-literal statement to symbolize meaning that enhances an idea. It has been cited in many studies as serving a role in reading comprehension, fluency, language abilities, and life experience. For learners, skillfulness in understanding and using figurative language enriches academic and social development. Specifically, figurative language is important for increasing oral communication, reading comprehension, effective writing, and vocabulary acquisition.

The 20 lessons set forth in this book will provide students with models for instruction and application of figurative language in a variety of contexts organized around reading, vocabulary, and writing. Used to extend and enhance your existing curriculum, each lesson is intended to target instruction of a specific figure of speech. Activities and instruction range from 20 to 50 minutes to complete.

Translating Doublespeak

Class Configuration

Time required:

25 minutes

Structure:

pairs (activity sheet), group (discussion)

Materials:

- 1 copy of the activity sheet for each student

Learning objectives:

- Students will "translate" twelve examples of doublespeak.

Standards

IRA/NCTE

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

McREL

Language Arts: Standard 5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Laying the Groundwork

Accessing students' prior knowledge will help them to develop new skills. Before starting this lesson, make sure students understand that people often use euphemisms when they are uncomfortable with speaking plainly, or when they must say something, but can't (or won't) say it directly. Corporations, governmental agencies, and military organizations often fall into this second category, using doublespeak in an effort to say something without really saying anything.

Students should be familiar with the following vocabulary:

euphemism	use of an inoffensive word or phrase to express something that people often find uncomfortable or embarrassing to say
doublespeak	language that is deliberately designed to disguise its real meaning using euphemism

Translating Doublespeak

Teaching Tip

This activity can be expanded or enhanced by encouraging students to collect examples of doublespeak from newspaper and magazine articles or online, and then using these terms to write a poem or lyrics for a song.

Instructional Guide/Procedure

- Ask students to form pairs and distribute a copy of the activity sheet to each student.

- Review the directions at the top of the activity sheet. Spend time reviewing the examples provided, making sure that students understand the task. (5 minutes)

- Have pairs write the meaning of each doublespeak example. (15 minutes)

- Ask a few volunteers to share some of the meanings they wrote. (5 minutes)

- As students are completing the activity, remind them to do the following:

    - Think about the literal meaning of the doublespeak words/phrases.

    - Remember the context (corporate, government, or military).

    - Base the meaning on previous experience and knowledge.

Supporting All Learners

- Students who are struggling with this activity will benefit from working through one or more examples with assistance before finishing the activity with a partner.

- Support English language learners by leading them through this activity as a group. You may need to provide an example of each doublespeak term used in a sentence where the context will help the students determine the meaning.

- Challenge students who are ready for more by asking them to coin three doublespeak terms related to school.

Translating Doublespeak

Assessment

There are various ways to assess student understanding beyond their completion of the activity sheet. Choose one or more of the following methods to evaluate their learning:

- Conduct observations while students are working.

- Ask students to use each doublespeak term in a sentence.

- Have students find and bring to class 2–3 examples of doublespeak they hear or read.

Answer Key

Responses may vary slightly, but should include the following information:

Corporate Doublespeak	Meaning
make redundant	lay-off or fire
replacement workers	strike breakers
negative contributions to profits	lost money
orderly transition between career changes	unemployed
Government Doublespeak	**Meaning**
budget surplus	profit
special interests	representatives or lobbyists for large corporations or powerful groups (e.g., oil, National Rifle Association)
regime change	removal, by force, of an existing government.
death tax	estate tax
Military Doublespeak	**Meaning**
collateral damage	killing of innocent by-standers
friendly fire	accidental attack by allies
pre-hostility	peace
asymmetric warfare	conflict in which opposing sides are greatly mismatched (The weaker side generally resorts to guerilla tactics to stay in the fight.)

Name _____ Date _____

Translating Doublespeak

A **euphemism** is use of an inoffensive word or phrase to express something that people often find uncomfortable or embarrassing to say. Familiar euphemisms include the following:

Euphemism	Meaning
pass away	died
gone to heaven	died
washroom	toilet/bathroom
not the sharpest tool in the shed	not very smart

Doublespeak is language deliberately designed to disguise its real meaning using euphemism. Corporations, governmental agencies, and military organizations often use doublespeak. For example, the corporate term *downsize* usually means "to fire."

In this activity, you and your partner will use the chart on the next page to write the real meaning of the doublespeak words and phrases provided.

Name _____   Date _____

Translating Doublespeak

Corporate Doublespeak	Meaning
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Government Doublespeak	**Meaning**
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