

Word maps

RdVoc

The purpose of the activity

The learners brainstorm words that relate to a single focus word in order to extend vocabulary relevant to the reading task.

By using a word map, you can find out about the vocabulary the learners have already and link that vocabulary to the reading topic. The word map shows the learners links between words (for example, how several words can be formed from one root or one head word). A word map can also clarify the relevant subject-specific meaning of a word that has more than one meaning.

The teaching points

- Making connections between words.
- Becoming aware that some familiar words may have different meanings in specific contexts.
- Using new words independently.
- Using words from different word classes, for example, adjectives and adverbs, as well as nouns.
- Critically analysing the relationships between words, for example, in discussing the completed word map, are the learners debating whether the meaning of one word is closer than another to the meaning of the focus word? Would everyone agree with the connections?

Resources

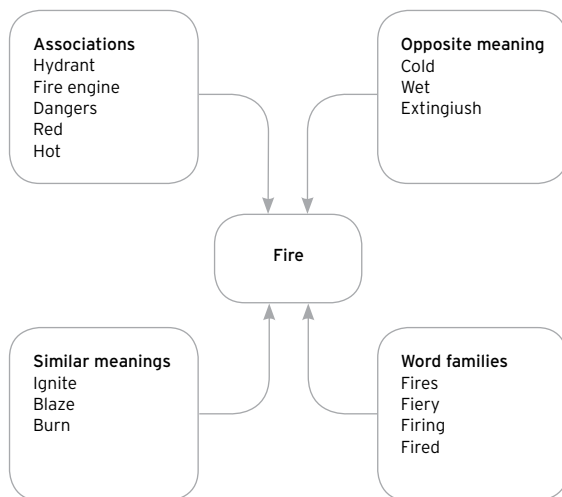
- A reading text, whiteboard, markers.

The guided teaching and learning sequence

1. Identify a key focus word from the text.
2. Decide what the various branches of the word map will be. These could be: the focus word itself used with different meanings; other words that have similar meanings; words from the same word family as the focus word; words that relate to the idea or theme presented by the focus word.
3. Write that word in a central circle on a chart or the board and draw the branches of the map on the board.
4. Identify headings for each branch with the learners before starting the brainstorm.
5. Ask the learners to brainstorm words that relate to the focus word. Record each word on the appropriate branch of the map (see example below). (The brainstorm can be a think-pair-share exercise before a word is contributed to the group discussion.)

continued...

6. Discuss the words on each branch. Discuss new words, familiar words used in new ways and relationships between words.



Follow-up activity

After completing a word-map with a group, you can use it for various purposes with groups and individuals. For example, you could provide a blank word-map structure with labelled branches; the learners could then fill in the spaces.