ESOL 40 Reading Terminology

		Stems
Antonym	Predicting	Suffixes
Context clues	Prefixes	Summarizing
Idiom	Previewing	Synonym
Inferences	Roots	Topic
Main idea	Scanning	Topic sentence
Parts of Speech	Skimming	Word forms

1. Important words to know while reading or writing a paragraph, an article or an essay.

Topic sentence

A topic sentence is the sentence in the paragraph which gives the main idea of the paragraph. A topic sentence might be the first sentence in the paragraph, but it could also be one of the other sentences in the paragraph. A topic sentence will state both the topic of the paragraph and its main idea. Some paragraphs do not have topic sentences.

Main idea

The main idea is the most important idea in a paragraph or a reading. If a paragraph has a topic sentence, this sentence will tell you about the main idea.

Topic

The topic is the *subject* of the reading. It is usually a few words, not sentences. When we know what the writer wants to say about a particular topic, then we know the reading's main idea.

 For example: difficulties of being an immigrant, camping trip etc.

2. Useful terms to understand readings better

We will use these terms to help develop our reading skills.

1. VOCABULARY

<u>Context clues</u>

Use context clues to help understand difficult vocabulary. The words and sentences around the word you don't know may be enough to get an understanding of the new word. Try to develop your contextual skills so that you don't have to rely on the dictionary.

<u>Parts of speech</u> (Word forms)

Understanding the part of speech of a word may also help us to understand it. Knowing parts of speech also helps to understand sentence structure. The principal parts of speech we need to know are the content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs). We can often tell a word's part of speech by its **suffix.**

<u>Prefixes and Suffixes</u>

A **prefix** is something that is added to a word to change its meaning.

For example, the '-**un**' in 'unimportant' means '**not**.'

A **suffix** is a *word ending*. Suffixes have meaning, but they also may signals a word's part of speech.

For example, the '-**ment**' ending in 'development' tells us that the word is a noun.

A good knowledge of prefixes and suffixes helps vocabulary development.

<u>Roots</u> (Stems)

The **root** or **stem** is the main part of a word. Knowing the meaning of a particular root may help you to understand many words. For examples, the words 'important,' 'portable,' 'export,' 'porter,' all have the root '<u>port</u>,' which means 'carry.'

2. CONTENT

Making inferences

Writers often don't say their ideas in words. Often ideas are implied and the reader has to make an **inference** in order to understand the writer's true meaning. An inference is an '*educated guess*' based on the information available.

 For example, a writer may not say clearly whether he/she likes or dislikes a certain idea, but the writer's examples and language may lead us to make an *inference* about his/her opinion.

Scanning

We *scan* readings in order to find information *quickly*. Generally, we only look for keywords and phrases. This skill is useful when there is limited time, such as on a test, or when looking for specific information. For example, train schedule.

Skimming

We *skim* readings when we are interested in getting the general but important ideas of a reading. When we skim, we look for the topic sentences in each of the paragraphs and to understand the *main idea* of the whole reading.

Previewing

An important part of reading is *previewing*. Before reading an article, we look at the title (and also subtitle), think about the topic. This helps us to get some ideas about the topic before we actually start reading.

Predicting

While we are reading, we should pause at regular intervals (every paragraph, or every few paragraphs) to predict,or guess what will happen next.

This exercise takes us away from the actual text and has us reviewing our understanding in our own minds. It also serves to maintain our interest in the material. Our predictions may turn out to be wrong, but they help us to be more involved in the reading process.

<u>Summarizing</u>

If you want to present the ideas in all or part of an article in a shorter form, you can summarize it. Summarizing involves mentioning the main ideas only. Don't use specific examples. Use your own words as much as possible.

3. LANGUAGE

We will use some special terms to refer to different kinds of language.

<u>Idiom</u>

Idioms are expressions of one or a few words which has a *different meaning* other than the real meaning of the words they have.

For example: "It rained cats and dogs" or "I'm fed up with your complaining."

<u>Synonym</u>

A **synonym** is a word that means the ***<u>same</u>*** as another word.

For example, "*big*" is a synonym for "*large*".

<u>Antonym</u>

An *antonym* is a word that means the **<u>opposite</u>** of another word.

For example, *"small"* is the opposite of "*big*".