

UNIT 3. SMART AGREEMENTS

Objective: to guess meaning from context

Computers

Imagine that you are studying English at a small college in the Midwestern United States. The local newspaper rarely has news about your native country. In fact, it prints very little foreign news, but this does not **bother** or worry you at all. You sit comfortably in your apartment, turn on your personal computer, and ask for the foreign news. The screen is immediately filled with news from all over the world.

Computers have created an information "superhighway". Today, computers can work together – they can network with each other. The worldwide computer network is called the **Internet**. Using the Internet, you can find all kinds of information and news from people and countries around the world.

The computer is a wonderful machine. It is the most important invention since the type of engine used in cars. It has had a great effect on science, industry, business, medicine, and education. Soon it will touch the lives of everyone, even people in distant villages. The computer is a **revolutionary**- bringing great changes - invention.

The oldest kind of computer is the **abacus**, which has been used in China since the sixth century. In the 17th century an adding machine was invented. The first large, modern computer was built in 1937. Computers improved quickly. A few years later a computer could do 5,000 additions per second. Now the computation are so fast they are measured in **nanoseconds**. (A nanosecond is one billionth of a second!)

Today all computers are **stored-program computers**; that is, they have a processing unit, an arithmetic and logic unit, and a memory. Computers are getting smaller and smaller, and computing faster and faster. Even in a large computer, the part that does the actual computing is about the size of the end of a finger.

(Adapted from Ackert, Patricia & Nebel A.L. Insights and Ideas Harcourt Brace & Company 1996 pp. 220-221)

Exercise 1

Read the passage above and find the meaning of the bold words by using context clues.

1. bother =
2. the Internet =
3. revolutionary =
4. abacus =
5. nanoseconds =
6. stored-program computers =

Exercise 2

In each of the following items, there is a word you may not know. Guess the meaning of the word from the context of the sentences. Then compare your work with another student.

1. What does “stoop” mean?

The old man walked slowly along, all stopped over and leaning on a stick.

2. What does “squall” mean?

When they saw the squall coming, the sailors took down the sail and headed for the port.

3. What does “gush” mean?

When the fountain was turned on, the water gushed up several feet into the air.

4. What does “rugged” mean?

Susan and her husband led a rugged life in small village, with no electricity and no running water.

5. What does “imp” mean?

What an imp he was! Little Tommy was always getting into trouble, but making us laugh about it.

6. What does “soggy” mean?

The study window had been left open during the storm, and my papers were a soggy mess.

7. What does “eaves” mean?

Some birds had built a nest high up on the eaves of our house.

8. What does “porch” mean?

On nice days, Mr. Bruce always sat out on his porch and watched the people pass by.

Exercise 3

Read each sentence below and write down the closest meaning type of context clue that helps you define the meaning of the key term.

1. Rama loves to buy **exotic** food; vegetables and herbs from China, spices from India, olives from Greece, and cheeses from France.

- a) Expensive
 - b) Seasonings
 - c) Rare
 - d) From other places
2. Emotionally disturbed people may be troubled by **morbid** thought. For instance, they may often think about suicide or murder.
- a) Disturbing
 - b) Dealing with death
 - c) Psychologically ill
 - d) Scary
3. At first the surgery seemed to be successful. But several hours later, the patient's condition began to **deteriorate**, and it continued to worsen over the next few days.
- a) Stabilize
 - b) Surprise everyone
 - c) Change
 - d) Decay or decline
4. Jack is an **indulgent** father. For instance, he lets his daughter stay up as late as she likes and he never insists that she does her homework.
- a) Lazy and caring
 - b) Stupid and kind
 - c) Strict and mean
 - d) Lenient and tolerant
5. Languages **evolve** over time, as you can see if you open a page of *The Canterbury Tales*, written about six hundred years ago by the English poet Chaucer. It is barely recognizable as English today.
- a) Develop
 - b) Age
 - c) Increase complexity
 - d) Regress
6. The decision Veronica made to study instead of going out for pizza with her friends was **prudent**. She got an A on the exam, while her friends all got D's.
- a) Anti-social
 - b) Careful and wise
 - c) Selfish
 - d) Calculating
7. Whenever something bad happens to Jennet, she says it is the fault of **destiny**. But I prefer to take charge of my own life rather than simply blaming fate.
- a) Bad luck
 - b) Evil caused by someone
 - c) Poor planning
 - d) Event that happens regardless
8. Ali's uncle died when he was a baby, but his aunt told him so many stories about his uncle that Ali feels he knows his uncle well. For example, one **anecdote** was about how his uncle cried with joy when Ali was born.
- a) Medicine or cure
 - b) Biographical account

- c) Example
 - d) Joke
9. Ivan is a wonderful piano player. But Jerry is more **versatile**; she sings, acts, paints, and writes poetry, and also plays the piano.
- a) Talented
 - b) Show off
 - c) Superior skills
 - d) Many abilities
10. This third grade was full of **precocious** children. One child had learnt to read at two and another could do algebra at age 6.
- a) Backward
 - b) Active
 - c) Ahead
 - d) Pretty
11. I expected truthfulness from a doctor; I was shocked by his **mendacity**.
- a) Duplicity
 - b) Meanness
 - c) Candidness
 - d) Knowledge
12. When my grandfather meets someone with that much knowledge in a field, he finds that their **erudition** frightens him and he is inclined to withdraw.
- a) Rudeness
 - b) Scholarliness
 - c) Illiteracy
 - d) Age
13. When going to an office party you should show your best **decorum**, for example, dress your best, drink and eat moderately, and be sure to thank the host before you leave.
- a) Civility
 - b) Decorations
 - c) Party moves
 - d) Rudeness
14. We thought that the mother would be very **distraught** at hearing of her husband's accident; however, she took the news quite calmly.
- a) Tranquil
 - b) Angry
 - c) Disgusted
 - d) Anxious
15. It is refreshing to students so excited, so **zealous** in doing their homework.
- a) Zany
 - b) Dedicated
 - c) Indifferent
 - d) Jealous

Exercise 4

Read each sentence or paragraph and circle the correct answer.

1. The archaeologist carefully removed the tome from its ancient resting place and proceeded to read the pages related to marriage in ancient Greece. What does the word *tome* probably mean?
 a. pen b. weapon c. book d. sausage

2. The Navajo language is an unwritten language of extreme complexity with no alphabet or symbols, and is spoken only on the lands of the Navajo Nation in the American Southwest. During World War II a Navajo code was created for the U.S. Navy. This code was virtually undecipherable to anyone except Navajo speaking persons. What does the word *virtually* probably mean?
 a. pleasant b. almost c. never d. always

3. Lakes occupy less than two percent of the Earth's surface, yet they help sustain life. For instance, lakes give us fish to eat, irrigate crops, and generate electrical power. What does the word *sustain* probably mean?
 a. support b. obstruct c. prolong d. destroy

4. The ancient Greeks pioneered many of the kinds of writing we consider standard today. They wrote speeches, plays, poems, books about science and learning, long histories of the things that happened to them. What does the word *pioneered* probably mean?
 a. complicated b. developed c. destroyed d. explored

5. Fifty-five mostly prominent, male delegates attended the Philadelphia Convention in 1787. About seventy-five percent of the delegates had served in Congress and others were important people in their home states. These men are often referred to as the Framers of the Constitution. What does the word *prominent* probably mean?
 a. unimportant b. unknown c. common d. important

6. Bats that eat fruit and nectar spread seeds and help flowers grow. Without bats many important plants would not thrive. What does the word *thrive* probably mean?
 a. flourish b. die c. wither d. deteriorate

Exercise 5

Underline the correct words in the letter.

Dear Iza,

I must tell you the news I finally asked Miranda to go out with me – you know, that attractive/ugly woman from the office. As it was a special/ordinary occasion, I booked the best theater tickets possible and Miranda wore a new dress. It was a comedy, 'Laugh a Minute', and we certainly did that. It was really serious/funny. Afterward, we went to favorite restaurant and as usual the food was delicious/disgusting. I was particularly full/hungry – no lunch – so I ate lots. The trouble was, it was a bit expensive and I didn't have enough money for the bill. But Miranda is very generous/mean and she paid. When we left restaurant it was raining. There was no money left for a taxi so we had to walk home. Miranda seemed a bit upset. I don't know why. I thought it was a great/terrible evening.

I'll let you know how things continue.

Love,
Michael

Exercise 6

Directions: choose the appropriate letter to identify an approximate definition for the underlined word.

- The millionaire industrialist liked to think of himself as an art expert, who could match wits with artists and critics alike, but those truly
1. knowledgeable about modern art thought differently. To them, he was just another rich dilettante, a man who perfectly illustrated the old saying: "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

Approximate definition:

- a. amateur
- b. professional
- c. person of great taste
- d. skilled craftsman

2. The new flight instructor was fond of the pilot who had hired her, but his dilatory way of speaking drove her wild. Every sentence he spoke had, at the very minimum, three pauses. By the time he finished a thought, she was drumming her fingers in irritation.

Approximate definition:

- a. snappy
- b. quiet
- c. slow
- d. sophisticated

3. Queen Marie Antoinette's refusal to wear traditional court attire was indicative of her rebellious spirit, for she was, from the beginning, not inclined to do what was expected of her. Unfortunately, the people of France, who mistrusted poor Marie for being Austrian rather than French, were not charmed by her untraditional ways. For them, dressing like a member of the court symbolized a readiness to assume her proper role as queen.

Approximate definition:

- a. significant

- b. symbolic
- c. part
- d. supportive

4. People suffering from manic depression have powerful mood swings and are given to vacillation. One day they might be upbeat and enthusiastic, ready to pursue and succeed at any number of projects. The next day they are sunk in misery, convinced that nothing but failure awaits them.

Approximate definition:

- a. fear of the unknown
- b. anger
- c. going back and forth
- d. lack of motivation

5. Ostensibly the new college president was a no-nonsense businessman, who wasn't about to fund any programs that didn't directly train students to compete in the job market. But since there were rumors that he also loved novels, ballet, poetry, and the theater, members of the liberal arts department were optimistic about their future funding.

Approximate definition:

- a. Secretly
- b. In speeches
- c. Apparently
- d. Quietly

6. In the morning, the doctor had tended her patients with what seemed to be endless energy and concentration. But in the afternoon she was overcome with a powerful feeling of lassitude, and she feared that she, too, had been struck down by the deadly virus.

Approximate definition:

- a. anxiety
- b. well-being

- c. despair
- d. fatigue

7. In a democratic society, everyone has a right to propagate new ideas even if those ideas are unpopular with the majority.

Approximate definition:

- a. publicly criticize
- b. celebrate
- c. make widely known
- d. develop from scratch

8. Even now, when more and more men are undergoing cosmetic procedures to improve their appearance, a man who wears makeup or perfume in public will probably encounter problems. But in the milieu of seventeenth-century France, men of high birth wore perfume to cover up body odor and rouge to brighten their lips and cheeks. Rouge for high-born men was simply the fashion (along with long curly wigs) and perfume was necessary because deodorant had not been invented.

Approximate definition:

- a. atmosphere
- b. chaos
- c. triumph
- d. downfall

9. In the mid-nineteenth century, con men traveled from town to town peddling phony medicines, which supposedly cured everything from arthritis to baldness. But for the tonics' consumers, the medical efficacy of these potions may not have been a key issue. Those all-purpose tonics contained a high percentage of alcohol that, momentarily at least, must have made consumers feel a good deal better.

Approximate definition:

- a. ingredients
- b. effectiveness

- c. nature
- d. taste

10. Because he liked to present himself as a connoisseur, who preferred only the best in fine food and wine, the food critic for our local paper was embarrassed to be spotted at a dingy diner, where the special of the day was a spam omelet and french fries heavily laced with cheese whip.

Approximate definition:

- a. creator
- b. critic
- c. writer
- d. expert