



What Is Nuance in English? How Do “Bad” and “Wicked” Differ?

S06E14 | For teachers to adapt to their learners

Purpose

Nuance is a small difference in meaning, feeling, register or use. Two words may look like synonyms but behave differently depending on the speaker, situation and tone. The clearest way to teach nuance is to start with the meaning needed in the learner’s immediate context, then widen the picture.

Try this in your next lesson

Context: Where did the learner meet the word?

Our suggested routine

Teach the useful difference first. Save the linguistic rabbit hole for when it actually helps.

- ☐ Context: Where did the learner meet the word?
- ☐ Core meaning: What does it mean in that sentence?
- ☐ Feeling: Does it sound positive, negative, neutral, formal or informal?
- ☐ Contrast: What nearby word would make the difference clear?

After the attempt

What worked? What needs another model or a smaller step? Note one change for next time.

Read the full explanation and examples:
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