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Semantic Features Analysis as Strategy in Learning English Vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is the key of language. It is the one basic component to develop English as a foreign language at elementary, intermediate, or advance levels. It plays important roles to support other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary mastery is one aspect of languages to be taught to the students who want to learn English. The mastery of vocabulary determines the mastery of four language skills. To master vocabulary the student should have ability in understanding and using vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery itself deals with words and meaning. There are so many technique can use to learn vocabulary, such as word list, flashcard, visual imagery, semantic mapping, and many others. One of the techniques as strategy in learning vocabulary is Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA). This paper will be explained about understanding of Semantic Feature Analysis and the purpose and procedure of Semantic Feature Analysis.

Keywords:
Vocabulary; Semantic Feature Anaysis

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INTRODUCTION

English is an international language. As we know that English has an important role as a media of communication in creating relationship, exchanging information and of course in interacting with other people. In globalization era, Indonesian must able to master English both oral and written. They must fluent in four basic skills of English such

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as speaking, writing, listening and reading. That is why English is essential to teach in early age of children.

Nowadays, mastering English language is very important for most people, especially students. English is given in every stage of school in order to make English be familiarized for the beginning to give the basic knowledge to the young learner. English is taught in Elementary school, Junior High school, Senior High school, University and even now in the kindergarten or preschool.

Vocabulary is the key of language. It is the one basic component to develop English as a foreign language at elementary, intermediate, or advance levels. It plays important roles to support other language skills such as listening, speaking reading, and writing.

According by Beck & McKeown (as cited in Marulis & Neuman, 2010) say that vocabulary is at the heart of oral language comprehension and sets the foundation for domain-specific knowledge and later reading comprehension. Vocabulary is an inseperable part of any language learning process. It would be imposible to learn a language without vocabulary (Bruton, 2009).

McCarthy has a statement about the importance of vocabulary, he states “No matter how well the students learns grammar , no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meaning, communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way (McCarthy, 1990: iii).

Vocabulary is also as the fundamental component to enable the students to speak English (Richards, 1976). With a good vocabulary students can understand well what teacher says during the learning process. As a result, student can receive the material delivered better. Beside this, good vocabulary makes possible to the student to make conversation and can apply it in their daily live

Vocabulary mastery is one aspect of languages to be taught to the students who want to learn English. The mastery of vocabulary determines the mastery of four language skills. However, in mastering the four language skills, the students should develop their vocabulary first. It is impossible to use language skillfully when the students have limited numbers of vocabulary stock in their minds.

To master vocabulary the student should have ability in understanding and using vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery itself deals with words and meaning. The students are not only expected able to select the words are suitable to the context but also they are expected to be able to use the words for communicating and expressing their idea both in oral and written forms. To master vocabulary, students should be able to recognize the vocabulary in its spoken and written form, spell and pronounce it correctly, relate it to appropriate objects or concepts, use the vocabulary in the grammatical form, recall it correctly, know in what ways it can combine with others words, also aware of its

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connotation and association, and use it in appropriate level of formality and appropriate situations (Wallace, 1982:27)

In addition, the more words the students have, the more accurately they may express something. To accomplish a satisfactory result in improving the English vocabulary, a teacher needs various techniques or methods to improve students' vocabulary.

Nowdays, there are so many ways and strategies have been implemented to improve the ability of brain in memorizing and understanding things like in the case of vocabulary enrichment such as the application of Keyword Method (Avila and Sadoski, 1996), Mnemonic Method (Raugh and Atkinson, 1975), Incidental Learning (Day et al., 1992) and many more.

There is no one technique or method that is more excellent over to the other methods. It is only method that is appropriate to the time of activity and for certain activity. One of the ways that is considered as effective way is using Semantic Mapping. The most popular of all semantic mapping strategies is Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA). Semantic mapping strategy involves drawing a diagram/chart of the relationships between words according to their use in a particular text and it is best introduced as a collaborative effort between the teacher and the class (Stahl and Vancil, 1986). This strategy incorporates a variety of other memory strategies such as grouping, using imagery and associating and elaborating (Keshavarz et al., 2006). Semantic mapping has been used in a variety of ways, including the following: It has been used as a means of improving the teaching of study skills, as a framework for identifying the structural organization of texts, as a strategy to promote reading comprehension of learning disable students, and many more (Keshavarz et al., 2006).

This technique is activity uses a chart or grid to compare words or ideas, which also takes advantage of how the brain organizes information (Anders, Bos, & Filip, 1984). The focus of SFA technique is to help students identify whether a relationship exists between words and other features that have been identified. Words are listed in the left column while the criteria or features are listed across the top. Students have to decide whether each word is associated with the criteria by showing a plus or minus sign.

The technique of SFA involves dividing a longer word list into new, shorter lists by classifying or reclassifying the target language terms according to one or more important attributes. In this way, some degree of context is created. SFA establishes new groups or sets of words which hang together because of some common theme or characteristic, unlike the generally unorganized, de-contextualizing word lists described earlier. The theory seemingly underlying this technique is that grouping makes vocabulary learning easier by reducing the number of discrete elements and-in optimal situations-linking new, target language material with concepts that the learner already knows in his or her native

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language. Despite such potential drawbacks, SFA can indeed be useful. Where SFA might indeed be most valuable is for helping intermediate and advanced learners learn to make distinctions within semantic fields. (Oxford & Crookall, 1990).

SFA has been revered as a powerful strategy that "mimics the way the brain organizes information" (Fisher & Frey, 2004). By offering students a visual representation, via a matrix, on how terms are alike and different, the students are able to analyze the relationships among the given concepts (Buehl, 2001). The context in which students learn new words is extremely important and must be considered in instruction. Because it is important for students to be actively involved in constructing meaning, it is much less effective for teachers to organize the words for students and offer up how the words are related. Although, within the modeling stage this is acceptable, students who can begin to create their own list of features will begin to make connections and internalize the information in a more effective manner (Santa, Havens, & Valdes, 2004; Anders & Bos, 1986).

Based on the explanation above, the writer one of those methods, that is SFA technique, that may be more effective to improve students' vocabulay mastery. The method may gives new atmosphere toward English learning process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This literature-review research examined relevant research articles published in reputable journals or conference proceedings in 2001-2020. The word 'reputable' referred to journals or conference proceedings that are nationally or internationally accredited.

This study analyzed research articles using thematic analysis. The articles were then identified about contributions, problms and pedagogical implications of Semantic Features Analysis in learning Vocabulary.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA) Technique

The Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA) is one of the kinds of Semi-contextualizing techniques. One of the most effective strategies to increase vocabulary comprehension is to use the context that surrounds an unknown word to discover its meaning. And another good technique to use in teaching word or vocabulary that share content is Semantic Features Analysis.

According by Anders "Semantic Feature Analysis strategy engages students in reading assignments by asking them to relate selected vocabulary to key features of the text. This technique uses a matrix to help students discover how one set of things is related to one another". (Anders et al., 1984)

Semantic Feature Analysis, also known as SFA, is a procedure that links vocabulary to the main ideas of a content area text (Santa, Havens, & Valdes, 2004). A technique

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sometimes known as "words grouping ", "semantic grids", or "componential analysis" (Oxford & Crookall, 1990). Semantic Feature Analysis has been revered as a powerful strategy that "mimics the way the brain organizes information" (Fisher & Frey, 2004).

Based on Anders, P.L.,C & Boss, C. S. (1986). Semantic Feature Analaysis is very similar to semantic mapping in that it draws upon students'prior knowledge, teachers the relationships between words in a visual way, and incorporates discussion as a key element. Instead of a map, SFA uses a grid to organize connections between words. The grid is based on a subject or concept. Down the left side, the teacher writes several words related to the concept. Across the top, the teacher writes several features or characteristics that each word may or may not exhibit.

Anders, P. L., &Bos, C. S. (1986) states Semantic Feature Analysis: This prereading strategy teaches vocabulary by activating prior knowledge, making predictions, and by classifying the new words by their features using a matrix.

The Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA) activity uses a chart or grid to compare words or ideas, which also takes advantage of how the brain organizes information (Johnson and Pearson, 1984). The focus of SFA technique is to help students identify whether a relationship exists between words and other features that have been identified. Words are listed in the left column while the criteria or features are listed across the top. Students have to decide whether each word is associated with the criteria by showing a plus or minus sign.

The technique of SFA involves dividing a longer word list into new, shorter lists by classifying or reclassifying the target language terms according to one or more important attributes. In this way, some degree of context is created. SFA establishes new groups or sets of words which hang together because of some common theme or characteristic, unlike the generally unorganized, de-contextualizing word lists described earlier. The theory seemingly underlying this technique is that grouping makes vocabulary learning easier by reducing the number of discrete elements and-in optimal situations-linking new, target language material with concepts that the learner already knows in his or her native language (Oxford & Crookall, 1990).

This technique requires students to list across the top of a grid a set of words, such as *man, woman, child, dog, landscape, house, furniture, dress, present,* and *voice;* and then list a set of attributes *(handsome, pretty, charming, lovely)* down the side of the grid. Inside the grid, students rate each word (with a + or a -) according to the presence or absence of each attribute, thus creating a matrix of ratings and in effect forming groups of words for each attribute. Such grids, while potentially very useful for upper intermediate and advanced learners who already have a fairly good stock of vocabulary, have been criticized as suggesting a static, prescriptive model for teachers and learners; as not being particularly natural; and as difficult because learners might not have encountered the words in sufficiently varied contexts to be able to rate semantic features appropriately (Greenwood, 2009). Despite such potential drawbacks, SFA can indeed be

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useful. Where SFA might indeed be most valuable is for helping intermediate and advanced learners learn to make distinctions within semantic fields.

Groups can be based on type of word (e.g., all nouns or adjectives), grammatical form (e.g., irregular verbs of a certain kind), topic (e.g., words about weather), practical function (e.g., terms for things that make a car work), language function (e.g., apology, request, demand), similarity (e.g., warm, hot, tepid, tropical), dissimilarity or opposition (e.g., friendly /unfriendly), the way one feels about something (e.g., like, dislike), and so on. Language textbooks sometimes group new vocabulary into thematic sets; and word grouping is often used by teachers in the language classroom.

From some definitions above, it can be concluded SFA is a strategy in which facilitated by teacher and engaged students to understand the meaning of selected vocabulary words, group vocabulary words into logical categories and analyze the completed matrix.

Purposes of the SFA Technique

A Semantic Feature Analysis improves students' comprehension, vocabulary, and content retention. This strategy helps students to examine related features or concepts and make distinctions among them. By analyzing the completed matrix, students are able to visualize connections, make predictions, and better understand important concepts. It can help students gain a deeper understanding of the material by highlighting those features.

Teachers can use this strategy with the whole class, small groups, or individually. Monitoring each student's matrix provides teachers with information about how much the students know about the topic. This allows teachers to tailor instruction accordingly.

Procedures of SFA Technique

Semantic Feature Analysis helps students grasp the "uniqueness" of individual words and aids students in their reading development by increasing their personal and academic vocabulary (Johnson & Pearson, 1978). By following particular steps you will also be able to create and use SFA, you will be able to help students gain insight about the concepts and vocabulary needed in order to comprehend the given text or topic.

a. Select a Category or Topic

   The first step for the teacher is to thoroughly read and review the text(s) the students will be using for the assignment. While reading, the teacher should consider the major concepts and ideas the students will come into contact with during their exploration and reading of the text.

b. Words and Features

   List phrases or individual words that are represented in the text or related to the key concepts of the text. Next, consider each word and determine if it represents large ideas or concept (feature) or if it is more of a detail relating to the primary concept (important vocabulary). (Anders & Bos, 1986). It is important to note that while giving students the "features" during the initial teaching of the strategy is useful, students will benefit far more when creating their own features for the given

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vocabulary words, as they become even more active in their learning. This is a modification you will want to consider as your students become more experienced with the procedures.

c. Create the Matrix

Inside your matrix, add the words that are considered a feature, or superordinate idea across the top and add the important vocabulary, or subordinate concepts, down the left hand column.

d. Code the Matrix

After creating the matrix you will need to make copies for students or complete it as whole group via a projector. While this strategy can be used before reading a piece of text, it can also be useful after or during reading as a way to help students reflect on what they read or connect to what they are reading.

Coding the matrix can be accomplished in many ways. The first suggestion, made by Johnson and Pearson, was to use "+" and "-" to equate to a positive or negative response if the given word had or did not have a particular feature. Others, Anders and Bos (1986), suggested using the "+" and "-" along with a "0", for no relationship, and a "?" if more information is needed or if there is confusion. Although many teachers find "+" and "-" useful, other may be receptive to using more of a Lichert scale, where numbers are used instead of symbols. A rating of "0" would mean there is no relationship found between the vocabulary word and the feature, while a "5" would reflect a high degree on how the vocabulary word is related to a feature.

- ✓ Before Reading

  If used before reading, discuss with students the upcoming text topic and point out to them the vocabulary and features listed in the chart. Create conversation focusing on each word and provide insight on the words. Encourage students to express their own knowledge about the vocabulary words and features. Guide your students, through the use of modeling and scaffolding, on how to explain their rationale for their choices as you code the matrix together.

- ✓ During Reading

  If students are familiar with SFA, you may want to consider using it as a "during reading" activity. After creating the grid, provide students with their own copy to use while they read. Discuss with them the vocabulary words and features before reading of the text and remind them to think critically as they read and code the matrix themselves.

- ✓ After Reading

  Students can benefit from using the SFA even after they have finished reading the text. After reading, if SFA was completed during or prior to reading, they will want to review their choices and make modifications. Students may also be able to complete an SFA after reading a piece of text and use it for a study guide or review sheet of key concepts in a lesson.

Semantic Feature Analysis
Math Example

SEMANTIC FEATURE ANALYSIS
QUADRILATERAL EXAMPLE

Features	"Regular" Polygon	All right angles	One pair of parallel sides	Opposite sides are parallel	All sides are congruent
Rhombus	*	*	-	+	+
Square	+	+	-	+	+
Rectangle	*	+	-	+	*
Trapezoid	-	-	+	-	-

Semantic Feature Analysis
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SEMANTIC FEATURE ANALYSIS
QUADRILATERAL EXAMPLE

Features	"Regular" Polygon	All right angles	One pair of parallel sides	Opposite sides are parallel	All sides are congruent
Rhombus					
Square					
Rectangle					
Trapezoid					

"+" means does apply "-" means does not apply

"?" means confusion or question "*" means may or may not apply

Semantic Feature Analysis
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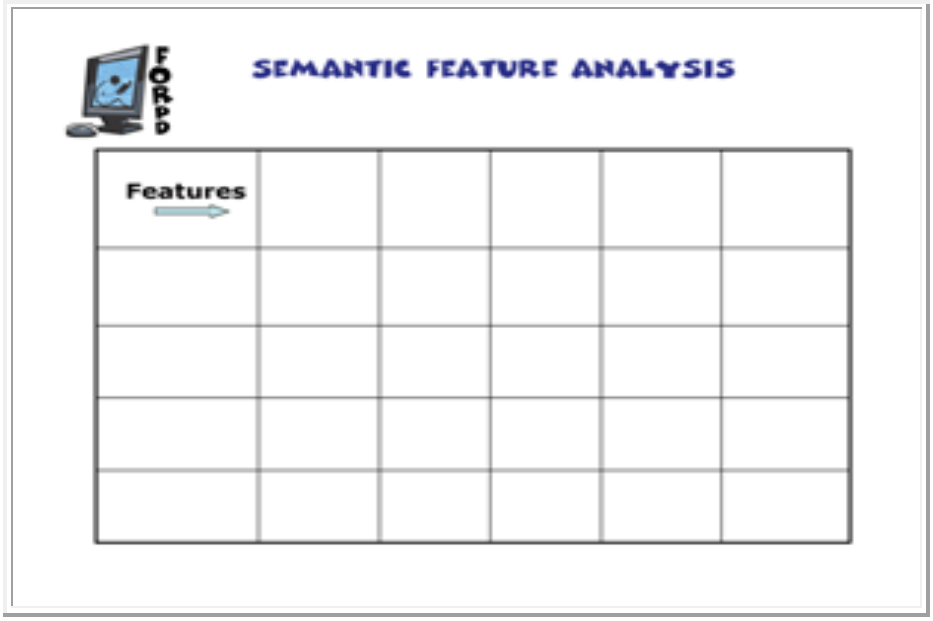

CONCLUSION

English is an international language. The basic unit in learning language is word or vocabulary. Knowing vocabulary has big influence in learning English. Vocabulary is one of the important things in learning English. And It is the key of the language. In addition, the more words the students have, the more accurately they may express something. To accomplish a satisfactory result in improving the English vocabulary, a teacher needs various techniques or methods to improve students' vocabulary.

Nowdays, there are so many technique that teacher can use to improve vocabulay mastery of students, such as word list, flashcard, visual imagery, semantic mapping, and many others.

There is no one technique or method that is more excellent over to the other methods. It is only method that is appropriate to the time of activity and for certain activity. One of the best techniques to improve students' vocabulary mastery is Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA).

SFA is a strategy or technique in which facilitated by teacher and engaged students to understand the meaning of selected vocabulary words, group vocabulary words into logical categories and analyze the completed matrix.

By using Semantic Feature Analysis technique can improves students' comprehension, vocabulary, and content retention. This strategy helps students to examine related features or concepts and make distinctions among them. By analyzing the completed matrix, students are able to visualize connections, make predictions, and

better understand important concepts. It can help students gain a deeper understanding of the material by highlighting those features.

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