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A MODIFIED SEMANTICS MAPPING STRATEGY BASED ON AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO ENHANCE THE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT

by

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Abstract:

Vocabulary plays an important role in mastering language. Many students have low capability in vocabulary mastery. In this research, the authors aim to improve students' vocabulary mastery by teaching the students through a modified semantics mapping strategy based on an interactive approach. The authors employed quantitative research with an experimental design. The subjects of this research were the second-grade students of SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung. A vocabulary test is used as the instrument of this research. The data were obtained from the pre-test and post-test. Independent group t-test in SPSS was used to analyze the data. The results show a statistically significant difference in vocabulary achievement between the experimental and control classes. It is revealed from the t-value, which is higher than the t-table with a significance level of less than 0.05 (9.865>2.005) (0.000<0.05). As a result, the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that a modified semantic mapping strategy is better than a semantic mapping strategy in enhancing students' vocabulary achievement. Furthermore, using a modified Semantics Mapping Strategy based on teaching vocabulary is more effective in encouraging students to be involved in teaching-learning activities than using Semantics Mapping Strategy.

Keywords: *interactive approach: semantic mapping; vocabulary*

Abstrak:

Kosakata memainkan peran penting dalam menguasai bahasa. Banyak siswa memiliki kemampuan yang rendah dalam penguasaan kosakata. Dalam penelitian ini, penulis bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa dengan mengajarkan siswa melalui strategi pemetaan semantik yang dimodifikasi berdasarkan pendekatan interaktif. Para penulis menggunakan penelitian kuantitatif

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dengan desain eksperimental. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas dua SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung. Tes kosakata digunakan sebagai instrumen penelitian ini. Data diperoleh dari pre-test dan post-test. Uji-t kelompok independen pada SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam pencapaian kosakata antara kelas eksperimental dan kontrol. Hal ini terungkap dari nilai-t, yang lebih tinggi dari tabel-t dengan tingkat signifikansi kurang dari 0,05 (9,865>2,005) (0,000<0,05). Akibatnya, hipotesis diterima. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pemetaan semantik yang dimodifikasi lebih baik daripada strategi pemetaan semantik dalam meningkatkan prestasi kosakata siswa. Selanjutnya, penggunaan Strategi Pemetaan Semantik yang dimodifikasi berdasarkan pengajaran kosakata dinilai lebih efektif dalam mendorong siswa yang terlibat dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar dibandingkan dengan menggunakan Strategi Pemetaan Semantik.

Kata kunci: *pendekatan interaktif: pemetaan semantik; kosakata*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary items play an essential role in affecting the life of every language skill among learners of ESL/EFL in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Alhaysony, 2012). High language competence, especially in English, needs to start with vocabulary because it is a fact known by the character: vocabulary serves as the base that learners need to master so that they will be able to learn the four skills effectively. Al-Humaidi and Al-Hadlaq (2015) researched vocabulary growth in the EFL writing classroom. The research reviewed the existing literature on vocabulary teaching and learning research. They present emphatically the need for vocabulary in the linguistic development of L2 learners. Alqahtani (2015) researched the importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. He reviewed the existing literature regarding teaching techniques used by English teachers. He highlighted the evolving understanding of vocabulary learning's importance in language acquisition. In essence, Thatsani (2018) aims to achieve empirical data and analyze the effect of vocabulary and grammar on students' reading comprehension. Her research participants were ninety students from three state senior high schools in south Jakarta. She used vocabulary tests and reading tests as an instrument of the research. She found that there is a statistical correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension. She implies that vocabulary mastery is fundamental to language skills. This means the learners should have many vocabulary words to support their ability to master English.

However, despite the importance of vocabulary, many learners seem to lack vocabulary. Tang (2007) conducted exploratory research to determine the English vocabulary size of primary and junior secondary school students. Two Hong Kong primary schools (Prim A and Prim B) and two Hong Kong secondary schools (Sec A and Sec B), with 449

students, participated in this study. This research used two test instruments: L_Lex of the Lingua Vocabulary Tests V and Vocabulary Levels Test. It established that ESL learners have limited vocabulary sizes and impoverished vocabulary knowledge. She found that most ESL learners still see vocabulary as the most challenging part of language learning. Sudarman and Chinokul (2018) employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to investigate English department students' mean vocabulary size and mastery level. Thirty-three students from the first-year batch majoring in the English education department at Kutai Kartanegara University participated in this study. The instrument used in this study was the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT). The finding showed that the participants had a very low mastery level. They did not even master the 2,000 or 3,000 high-frequency word level, nor the academic vocabulary level. Siregar (2020) assessed the vocabulary size and level of 40 second-semester EFL students at a private university in West Java, Indonesia, using the Vocabulary Size Test by Nation and Beglar and the Vocabulary Level Test by Webb Sasao and Ballance. She found 75% know limited words from high and midfrequency vocabulary lists. It implies that some factors are involved in vocabulary gains or losses. One of the crucial factors is teaching strategies, which are among the significant factors.

While previous studies have identified vocabulary mastery as crucial, some researchers also indicate that traditional teaching methods, such as rote memorization and repetition, are insufficient. Yang and Dai (2012) and Mediha and Mede (2014) criticized these conventional approaches for focusing solely on memorization rather than understanding vocabulary in context, leading to low retention and ineffective language acquisition. Yang and Dai (2012) researched vocabulary memorizing strategies by Chinese university students. They used a questionnaire to obtain the data. The research participants were sixty-eight students (32 English majors and 36 non-English majors). They found that the typical conventional way focuses on how much vocabulary students can memorize. Mediha and Mede (2014) compared traditional and contextualized methods for teaching vocabulary to 40 ninth-grade students. After four weeks of instruction and pre-and post-tests, students using literary texts in context performed better than those taught with traditional methods. Despite recognizing these issues, there is a gap in research on the effectiveness of more interactive and engaging teaching strategies in vocabulary acquisition. This study addresses this gap by modifying the

Semantic Mapping Strategy to include interactive elements, enhancing vocabulary retention and student engagement.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a modified Semantic Mapping Strategy based on an interactive approach in improving vocabulary achievement among students. The study aims to determine whether this modified strategy leads to better vocabulary retention and higher levels of student interaction compared to the conventional Semantic Mapping Strategy. The expected contribution of this research is to provide evidence for the efficacy of interactive teaching methods in vocabulary acquisition, thereby offering a practical solution to the limitations of traditional vocabulary instruction.

Several pieces of research have been carried out regarding the efficacy of the semantic mapping strategy in teaching vocabulary. In their study, Badr and Abu-Ayyash (2019) compared semantic mapping and rote memorization on vocabulary retention in 30 male grade 12 students in Sharjah, UAE, divided into experimental and control groups. After a three-week intervention between pre-and post-tests, results showed that both strategies improved retention, with semantic mapping leading to more significant gains. A study by Al-Khasawneh and AlHawamdeh (2023) at King Khalid University examined the impact of semantic mapping on vocabulary mastery using a quasi-experimental design with 60 students split into control and experimental groups. Pre- and post-tests showed that semantic mapping significantly improved vocabulary, with the experimental group outperforming the control. Udaya (2022) examined the impact of semantic mapping on vocabulary mastery with 60 students, showing it significantly improved vocabulary retention compared to traditional methods. A study with 30 seventh-graders in Telangana found that semantic mapping and wordlists enhanced vocabulary recall while semantic mapping was more effective. Darussalam (2022) conducted a case study that examined the use of semantic mapping in vocabulary teaching at SMK Negeri 1 Tanah Grogot, involving 27 English Club students. Using triangulation—observations, interviews, and questionnaires—the study found that semantic mapping effectively represented ideas, facilitated brainstorming, motivated concept exploration, encouraged pair communication, and promoted active participation in discussions. Faruk et al. (2023) This research explored the relationship between semantic mapping and student memory and its impact on English vocabulary mastery. Using a

descriptive qualitative method, the study involved 20 tenth-grade students at MA Raudhatut Tholabah, with data collected through observations and interviews.

The findings showed that semantic mapping effectively increased students' vocabulary. Other studies that support the effectiveness of the conventional Semantic Mapping Strategies include one by Abdelrahman (2013). This study used a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of semantic mapping on vocabulary learning among 50 male EFL students at Al-Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University. The experimental group used semantic mapping, while the control group used traditional methods. Pre- and post-tests showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group. The study concludes that semantic mapping is an effective vocabulary teaching method for EFL learners. He noted that cooperative learning played a key role in vocabulary instruction. Dilek and Yürük (2013) compared the effectiveness of the Semantic Mapping Technique with traditional methods for vocabulary learning. They examined the relationship between students' beliefs and strategy preferences.

A quantitative research design was used. Thirty-two pre-intermediate English students from Selcuk University participated. Data was collected using a two-part questionnaire, and t-test analysis of pre-and post-test results revealed that Semantic Mapping was more effective than traditional techniques in improving vocabulary learning. Vigeleyn. Nikijuluw and Cangkat (2018) conducted research aimed at enriching students' vocabularies by implementing the Semantic Mapping Strategy with 20 tenth-grade students (4 males and 16 females) at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon. Using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design in collaboration with the English teacher, the study found that 70% of the students met the success criteria in both the first and second cycles. However, they reported that Semantic Mapping often involved individual work, with little or no student interaction.

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in semantic mapping strategy and interactive teaching approaches. According to Richards (2001), as cited in Sabrina and Sinurat (2020), cooperative learning, which includes techniques like Semantic Mapping, promotes structured group work and interactive learning. Loewen and Basturkmen (2005) emphasized the importance of interactive teaching in language acquisition, noting that students engaged in group activities tend to pay more attention to language forms and

discourse. Amiruddin et al. (2022) further highlighted the value of interactive learning in promoting practice, autonomy, and motivation among students. Zheng and Cheng (2018) said peer interaction supports language learning and development while helping learners gain essential life skills like communication, compromise, and diplomacy for building and maintaining social relationships. Kohn and Vajda (1975), as cited in (Tavares, 2019), explained that group interaction within the ELL classroom is important because it allows students to manipulate and modify language to understand one another. These theories support modifying the Semantic Mapping Strategy to include more interactive elements, making the learning process more engaging and effective.

In summary, vocabulary mastery is critical for language acquisition. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to support vocabulary retention and student engagement adequately. This study addresses these shortcomings by modifying the Semantic Mapping Strategy to include interactive elements. The research seeks to answer the question: **Is there any significant difference in vocabulary achievement between students taught with the modified Semantic Mapping Strategy based on an interactive approach and those taught with the conventional Semantic Mapping Strategy?**

METHOD

Design

This research was in SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung. The authors employed quantitative research with an experimental design. It attempted to analyze the effectiveness of a modified semantic mapping strategy to enhance vocabulary achievement. So, this research design employs quantitative research with two pre-test and post-test design groups. Therefore, the authors can calculate the result of the pre-test and post-test after giving the treatment. Independent variable (X) is the treatment of a modified semantic mapping strategy. In contrast, the dependent variable is the students' vocabulary achievement (Y).

Participant

The population of this research was the second-grade students of SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung. There were seven classes of the second grade in that school. The number of students in each class was around 29 to 30. Concerning the design, the authors took

experimental and control classes. The use of two classes is to see the difference between the modified strategy and the original one. The authors used purposive sampling to determine the research sample. It was used because there were only two second-grade classes in the school, and the English teacher recommended a specific class as an experimental class. The second-year students were chosen because they had studied English for one year at junior high school and still had a chance to apply the vocabulary learning strategy proposed in this study.

Instrument

The instrument used in this research was a vocabulary test designed for EFL students. A try-out test is administered to ensure that all the test items are proper. Ten questions were eliminated out of 50 questions. The authors used content and construct validities to measure whether the vocabulary test was of good quality or not. The split-half technique was used in this research based on the Pearson Product Moment Formula to estimate the reliability of the vocabulary test. The normality distribution test was a test to measure whether the data had a normal distribution. The homogeneity test was used to measure whether the obtained score was homogeneous or not. The test was a cognitive, closed-ended test with 40 multiple-choice questions, each offering four options (A, B, C, and D). The test items focused on content words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They were selected based on the students' learning modules to match their proficiency level. Expert judgment is used to ensure the validity of the test, including lecturers from STKIP Bandar Lampung and graduate students from Lampung University. These experts confirmed that the test items were valid and measured what was intended. The data collected from the test were ordinal, representing the ranking of students' vocabulary proficiency.

Data collecting technique

Data collection techniques were tested. The test is to measure students' mastery of vocabulary. It consists of two parts: pre-test and post-test. First, it was a pre-test. The pre-test shows or determines the student's initial ability in the subject. Both classes, the control class and treatment class, had the same treatment when conducting the pre-test. The second was the post-test. It was conducted on both control and treatment classes. The result of teaching in the traditional way was given to the control class, and the treatment class was conducted after treatment. A post-test is used to determine the impact of the treatment in the treatment class.

Data analysis technique

Analyzing data was an essential step in this research. Setiyadi (2006) says that data analysis is the process of organizing the data to gain regularity in the pattern and form of the research. The authors followed several steps to research the effectiveness of the Semantic Mapping strategy. First, the vocabulary test scores were tabulated and analyzed. The analysis involved several key aspects, including the reliability and validity of the vocabulary test, the test's difficulty and discrimination power, the normalized gain, and the normality and homogeneity of the test data. To address the research question, which aimed to determine the difference in students' vocabulary achievement between those taught with the modified Semantic Mapping strategy based on an interactive approach and those taught with the conventional Semantic Mapping strategy, an independent t-test was used. Finally, the authors made inferences about the differences in vocabulary achievement based on the independent t-test results, with the hypothesis testing conducted accordingly.

Ho: There was no significant difference in vocabulary achievement between students taught with the modified Semantic Mapping strategy based on the interactive approach and the Semantic Mapping strategy.

H1: There was a significant difference in vocabulary achievement between students taught with the modified Semantic Mapping strategy based on the interactive approach and the Semantic Mapping strategy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The objective of this research is to find out whether there is a significant improvement in students' vocabulary achievement after implementing a semantic mapping strategy based on an interactive approach compared to the group taught using the conventional semantic mapping strategy. The following table compares the students' vocabulary achievement in the pre-test and post-test of both classes.

Table 1.

Comparison between students' vocabulary achievement in the pre-test and post-test

	Control	***Experiment***

	Pre-test	***Post-test***	***Pre-test***	***Post-test***
Minimum score	***17.5***	***40***	***30***	***60***
Maximum score	***57.5***	***60***	***60***	***85***
Mean score	***32.94***	***43.48***	***53.12***	***73.30***

The descriptive information for the student's vocabulary achievement after being taught through the modified Semantics Mapping Strategy based on the interactive approach and those taught with the Semantics Mapping Strategy was presented in Table 1. As the table illustrates, there are 28 students in both groups, and the mean score of the experimental group is higher than the control group's mean score (73.30>43.48). In addition, the minimum score of the experimental group is 60, whereas the minimum score of the control group is 40. Besides, the maximum score of the experimental group is 85, whereas the maximum score of the control group is 60. On the other hand, some students' vocabulary achievements in the control group were still below the minimum completeness of mastery learning for SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung. In contrast, the students' vocabulary achievement in the experimental group was above the minimum completeness of mastery learning for SMPN 37 Bandar Lampung, 76.

An independent group t-test on SPSS version 17 was used to analyze the difference in vocabulary achievement between students taught using the modified semantics mapping strategy based on the interactive and semantics mapping approaches. It is a statistical technique aimed to test the comparative hypothesis and examine whether there is significant difference between the means of two independent groups.

Table 2. Result of Independent Group T-test

Independent Samples Test

				t-test for Equality of Means				
		t-Value	T-Table	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
								Lower / Upper
n gain	Equal variances assumed	9.865	2.005	54	.000	45.5243	4.6149	36.2719 / 54.7767

Equal variances not assumed	9.865	2.005	47.760	.000	45.5243	4.6149	36.2441	54.8044

However, derived from Table 2. the students' vocabulary achievement shows a statistically significant difference between those taught with the modified semantics mapping strategy based on the interactive approach and the semantics mapping strategy. It is revealed from the t-value, which is higher than the t-table (9.865>2.005) with a significance level of less than 0.05 (0.000<0.05). As a result, the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

Regarding the independent group t-test result, it is revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in students' vocabulary achievement between students taught with a modified Semantics Mapping Strategy and those taught using a conventional Semantics Mapping Strategy. The finding emphasizes the critical role of teaching strategy in enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

Both groups displayed improvement in students' vocabulary achievement. This aligns with results from previous research that demonstrated the efficacy of semantic mapping in enhancing vocabulary learning. Abdelrahman (2013) found that the difference in the mean scores between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant. Dilek and Yürük (2013) found that, according to the t-test result, students' vocabulary achievement was statistically different between the experimental and the control groups. Badr and Abu-Ayyash (2019) found a trend of improvement in students' vocabulary achievement after using the semantic mapping strategy. Udaya (2022) claimed there was a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores achieved by the experimental group students. Al-Khasawneh and AlHawamdeh (2023) found from the data analysis that there was a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in the post-vocabulary test. According to Graves (2008,p.56, as cited in Faruk et al., (2023), semantic mapping is one of the most powerful approaches to teaching vocabulary because it engages students in thinking about word relationships. It thus enables them to better understand word meanings by developing their conceptual knowledge about the words.

Although both groups showed improvement, the experimental group, employing a modified semantic mapping strategy, surpassed the control group. The conventional semantic mapping strategy only focused on individual work, remaining a barrier to knowledge sharing and collaborative learning. The authors' findings also align with the problem that occurred while implementing the traditional semantic mapping strategy conducted by Nikijuluw and Cangkat (2018). They found that the traditional semantic mapping strategy makes learners work individually. In contrast, the modified approach emphasized group dynamics and peer interaction, enhancing students' ability to construct meaning, clarify concepts, and develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary. This suggests that interactive elements significantly influenced vocabulary acquisition. The interactive approach encourages information exchange and problem-solving, addressing limitations pointed out by the previous research by Nikijuluw and Cangkat (2018). This aligns with theories emphasizing the importance of interaction for language learning(Karshen,1985; Rivers, 2000; Liu, 2015).

The authors found that the enhanced vocabulary achievement in the experimental group can be attributed to several interactive elements (Peer collaboration, Teacher-student interaction, Group discussions). Peer collaboration facilitated knowledge sharing, enabling students to collectively learn from each other's insights and problem-solve. Teacher-student interaction provided immediate feedback, clarification, and support, addressing individual learning needs effectively. Group discussions encouraged active engagement with vocabulary, promoting more profound understanding and retention. Ahmed and Hossain (2023) confirmed that this transformation, using an interactive approach in learning, helps learners face all the challenges and constraints to develop a comprehensive learning experience for maximum benefit. Moreover, Giorgdze and Dgebuadze (2017), in their research about interactive teaching methods, found it allows students to have not only knowledge and compassion for others but also be able to make rational decisions in any situation to develop the most acceptable models of thinking, action, and communication. Thus, these interactive components complemented the semantic mapping strategy, creating a rich learning environment that fostered vocabulary acquisition.

The result of the study reveals that the modified Semantics Mapping Strategy with an interactive approach is far better than the traditional approach in enhancing vocabulary achievement. Yang and Dai (2012) and Mediha and Mede (2014) analyze the disadvantages

of the traditional approach. (Yang & Dai (2012) concluded that the typical conventional way focuses on how much vocabulary students can memorize. Mediha and Mede (2014) concluded that the traditional approach was less practical in teaching vocabulary. The interactive component supplied deeper understanding, problem-solving, and collaborative learning in conformity with the theoretical frameworks of the language acquisition process. Based on these study findings, there is a need to infuse some interactive components into vocabulary teaching to ensure effective learning on the part of students.

In conclusion, the modified semantic mapping strategy has more advantages regarding students' vocabulary achievement than the conventional semantic mapping strategy. Besides, the learning experiences of the modified semantic mapping strategy are arranged to increase students' need to attain vocabulary achievement.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The analysis of the independent group t-test shows a statistically significant difference in vocabulary achievement between students taught with the modified Semantics Mapping Strategy based on the interactive approach and the Semantics Mapping Strategy. This indicates that a modified semantic mapping strategy has more advantages for students' vocabulary achievement than a conventional semantic mapping strategy. In addition, learning experiences of a modified semantic mapping strategy are arranged to meet students' needs to increase vocabulary achievement. By the time the students were interested in this kind of teaching, they were more accustomed to composing sentences using the word provided; understand the meaning of the vocabulary; know how to use it properly. Then, the togetherness in doing a particular task is helpful for the students to find ideas and elaborate on the vocabulary through discussion and feedback from the members of the small group or the teacher. This demonstrated that it is a new and challenging way for junior high school students to increase their vocabulary achievement.

Limitation

This research is limited to discussing the effect of implementing the modified semantic mapping strategy based on an interactive approach to students' vocabulary achievement. This research has several limitations. The current study was done with single-

institution data. All the subjects of this study belonged to one educational level only (grade eight). Also, the application of this research is restricted to synonym checking only.

Implication

Important advantages of the Semantic Mapping Strategy, which is based on an interactive approach over and above the conventional Semantic Mapping Strategy, which only enhances vocabulary achievement, exist. This will create a better platform due to more interaction and effective collaboration, meet students' needs, and allow for more effective instruction. Therefore, educators and curriculum developers need to consider this approach as they optimize learning amenities and the long-term development of language.

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