



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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One Approach to Vocabulary Feature Analysis

Feature analysis is intended to provide students with a systematic teaching procedure for exploring, reinforcing, and organizing vocabulary concepts. It consists of various steps.

1. **Category Selection:** It is best to begin with a topic familiar to the students. The sample used here is Planets of the Solar System.
2. **List Category Terms:** The teacher provides terms for concepts or objects connected to the category topic. Students can contribute their own terms. (e.g., Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars)
3. **List Features:** Decide what features to explore. It is best to start with only a few features and add more later in the lesson. (e.g., hot, cold, big, small, life-supporting) Create a matrix based on these elements.

	Planets				
	hot	cold	big	small	life
Mercury					
Venus					
Earth					
Mars					

4. **Indicate Feature Possession:** Guide the students through the matrix, helping them decide whether each planet possesses each of the features. Model aloud for the students the way in which this occurs. Use a simple plus/minus system to begin (+/-). A plus means that the category item usually has the feature; the minus sign means that it doesn't. the presence of the same sign in opposite features can indicate a third feature: the planet is neither big or small—it is medium sized.

	Planets				
	hot	cold	big	small	life
Mercury	+	-	-	+	-
Venus	+	-	-	-	-
Earth	-	-	-	-	+
Mars	-	-	-	+	-

5. **Add Terms/Features:** The matrix can be easily expanded by adding new terms to be explored. It is easy to add the names of the other planets. It is also easy to add more features to be analyzed. These could be rings and moons.
6. **Complete and Explore Matrix:** The final step is to complete the expanded matrix and form generalizations about the category terms.

Following the examination of the completed matrix, students should be guided by the teacher to notice similarities and differences among the planets. Asking questions to motivate the students' observations will lead to productive discussion of the topic of planets. Finally, have the students make their own connections by noting similarities and differences. Some questions you could ask students are Which planets are the coldest/ Which have moons? How is Pluto different from Mars/ What makes Earth a unique planet? Which planet is most like Earth?

When the exploration is completed, direct the students to read the text to verify the categorizations.

Post-reading activities with Feature Analysis revolve around a discussion of the accuracy of the categorizations in pre-reading. Corrects are made if support from the text is cited.

Additionally, students can further expand the matrix by adding text knowledge they have picked up while reading. The final corrected and expanded feature matrix is then copied into students' notebooks as additional reinforcement and a source of study.

The purpose of categorization is to help student develop their vocabulary by attending to relationships among words. Eventually, students should be able to apply the strategy independently in their reading assignments.