

# The Contrastive and Contextual Analysis of the Verb *Run*

Arina Isti'anah

English Letters Department, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta.  
arina@usd.ac.id

## Abstract

*Words become the source for understanding the meanings of language. In relation to the study of meanings, this paper attempts at presenting the contrastive and contextual analysis of the verb RUN. The contrastive analysis is conducted in order to find the distinctive features of the word RUN and its synonymous words. After finding out the features differentiating the verb RUN, the contextual analysis is conducted. The contextual analysis displays the features which take place in the verb RUN in various fields. Based on the analysis, RUN has features of "manner", "agent", "situation", "distance" or "duration", "direction" and "purpose". The feature AGENT dominates the feature of RUN in the contexts which equals 28%. The context of initiating the action causes the appearance of the feature AGENT. The feature distance or duration appears the least in the context of regular activity. The occurrence of the same feature in different contexts proves that a word shares the same feature in the different context, in other words, overlapping features happens.*

**Key words:** semantics, contrastive, contextual

---

## Introduction

Language cannot be separated from human beings since it connects people. By language, people can direct the ideas in their mind. Language consists of its elements due to its primary function in communication. The elements found in a language are sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts. Its element in the language is not a simple one because it contains the rules which are quite complex. As the example, in studying the sound of language, the processes how the sounds are produced, what speech organs involved are also observed. The study of words is also prominent in language study. It involves the properties of how the words are composed and related to others. When words come to the real context, the meaning of the words will be more obvious.

This paper attempts at analyzing the contrastive and contextual analysis of the verb *run*. By doing the analysis, it is expected that the readers of this paper can see how a

word has various features and meanings. Therefore, their knowledge in language will improve. This paper also presents the meanings of the verb *run* in the real context, meaning that the verb is taken from various fields. However, before going to the analysis, the theories of semantics, componential, contrastive and contextual analysis are elaborated so that the core of the analysis can be absorbed better. The theory of semantics becomes the background why this paper is worth studying. The understanding of componential and contrastive analysis illustrates how a word is composed by its features. The contextual analysis understanding shows how a context can enact the different meaning, but is possible to have the same features.

## 1. Semantics

Words are found in the dictionary so that it becomes the source to find the meanings. However, human beings are also capable to describe the meanings of words since human

beings are the language users. Fromkin (2000) says, "To understand a language we need to know the meaning of words and the morphemes that compose them (151)." Therefore, words are the element of a language which cannot be denied. Words enable things and ideas to define. Furthermore, Fromkin (2000) says that we also must know how the meanings of words combine into phrase and sentence meanings. Finally we must interpret the meaning of utterances in the context in which they are made (151). Based on that statement, the knowledge of word meanings are the foundation in interpreting meanings in the greater contexts. Therefore, the analysis of the contrastive and contextual analysis of *run* is fruitful.

Finch (2005) argues that semantics deals with the ways in which words acquire meanings (136). Words are the tools to describe meanings, even though in certain case contexts are also important in order to describe the meanings. Semantics can be concluded as the study of the linguistic meaning of morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences. Many people assume that semantics only deals with meanings of words. However, there are some types of semantics as proposed by Fromkin, namely lexical semantics and phrasal or sentential semantics. Lexical semantics deals with the meanings of words and the meaning relationships among words. Phrasal or sentential semantics concerns with the meaning of syntactic units larger than words (152). People can find the meanings of words easily from the dictionaries. However, as suggested by Fromkin (2004), human beings are walking dictionaries because they know the meanings of thousands of words. Therefore, words meanings are part of one's linguistic competence. The term *lexicon* is the mental storehouse of information about words and morphemes (152).

## 2. Componential Analysis

The meanings of words have properties namely *semantic properties*. Fromkin (2004) argues that the presence of one semantic property can be inferred from the presence or absence of another (155). As the example

is the word *father*. Some properties are found, such as "male", "mature", and "animate". Those features are necessary to define in order to find the distinctive meanings of the synonymous words. The features are also needed to conduct in order to find the same features of other words. When *father* is compared to *boy*, both of them have distinctive feature of "mature", and similarity in "male".

Siewierska in Katamba (2009) states that classical componential analysis involves comparing a set of words in a semantic field in pairs and distinguishing between them in terms of a set of binary features (195). A very simple example is below.

<i>man</i>	: + male, +mature
<i>woman</i>	: -male, +mature
<i>boy</i>	: +male, -mature
<i>girl</i>	: -male, -mature

The componential analysis above shows how words share the distinctive features. Binary features can be applied well in such words. The analysis above obviously shows how a word is composed by its feature in the sense of /+/- or /-/. However, in the synonymous words like *run*, *catch*, *escape*, and *gallop* will face difficulty if they are analyzed using binary features as above mentioned. Therefore, the contrastive analysis is needed.

## 3. Contrastive Analysis

Nida (1975) says that for the analysis of distinctive features or components of meaning, the relation of contiguity is decidedly the most important. It is said so because contiguity represents the relations between closely related meanings occupying a well-defined, restricted semantic domain, and exhibiting certain well-marked contrasts (18). Some synonymous words such as *run*, *gallop*, *catch* and *escape* have contrastive features. Even though the meaning seems the same, each word has different important feature which differentiate one another.

Each meaning is distinctly set off from other related meanings by at least one important feature (Nida, 1975:18). The

words *run*, *gallop*, *catch* and *escape* constitute such a cluster of contiguous meanings. Those words have the same features in the angle of body movement, but different in the sense of purpose, for instance. However, the relation of contiguity does not apply to the words *run*, *gallop*, *catch* and *escape*. What can be applied are the meanings of those words which are related. It means that they share certain common features and constitute a single semantic domain.

Nida (1975: 32) clarifies that in examining and describing of the semantic components, to unite meanings as different senses of the same lexical unit and to separate them as distinct meanings are needed to involve. Therefore, the contrastive analysis is prominent. In the discussion part later, the contrastive analysis is conducted to the same lexical unit of the verb *run*. The features composing the verb *run* are also found.

#### 4. Contextual Analysis

The obvious feature of the relation of meaning is the tendency for meanings to overlap (Nida, 1975:16). It cannot be denied that the meaning of a word only does not stand itself. When the same word occurs in the different context, the feature of the meaning also appears. Nida (1975: 138) suggests that in concerning the contextual meaning of the verb *run*, the classification and analysis are those which are non-idiomatic uses. Therefore, this paper only focuses on the contextual analysis of the verb *run* which does not constitute the idiomatic expression.

Some sources are involved in the contextual analysis of the verb *run*. The sentences are found in the academic articles, short stories, news and books. By involving various fields, the better understanding of the contextual analysis is expected to achieve. After presenting the contextual meanings of the verb *run*, finding out the feature of its context is conducted. By doing so, the percentage of features of the verb *run* in the context can be concluded. The percentage will show how the semantic feature overlaps in meanings.

## Discussion

Nida (1975) says that one aspect of language which complicates the study of meaning is that even a single meaning of a term may include enormous range of referents, meanings objects to which such a form refer (13). The verb *run* may refer to quickly movement by legs. It may also be related to human or animals as the objects who do the activity. That illustration show how a word may create various referent, and therefore meanings. The following parts present and discuss the contrastive and contextual analysis of the verb *run*. Each part exhibits the table of either contrastive or contextual analysis of the verb *run*.

### 1. Contrastive Analysis of *Run*

In relation to the verb *run*, some words are assumed to have similar meanings. Even though the meanings are similar, there are some distinctive features which differentiate one word to another. Finding out the distinctive features of the verb *run* is important to conduct so that the readers can see how a word is composed by its features. The semantic features also differentiate the meanings even though two words are assumed as closely related. Table 1 below shows the distinctive features of the verb *run* and its synonymous words.

**Table 1. The Distinctive Features of the Verb *run***

No	Words	Distinctive Features					
		Manner	Agent	Situation	Distance or Duration	Direction	Purpose
1	escape	quickly, careless	human, animal	dangerous situation	long	from somewhere	to get out of certain situation
2	catch	quickly	human & animal	sudden	short, long	in particular	to get something
3	gallop	fast, quickly	horse	plain	long	forward movement	plain
4	race	fast	human	against someone	long, short	particular	sport, competition
5	rush	quickly	human	hurry	short	go somewhere	go or do something
6	sprint	very fast	human	hurry	very short	particular	sport, get something
7	jog	slowly, steadily	human	plain	short	somewhere	exercise
8	scamper	quick	child/ animal	plain	very short	no particular	playful, frightened
9	spurt	quickly	human & animal	start move, regular step	short	go somewhere	plain
10	trot	slowly	horse, four legs animal	regular step	short	go somewhere	plain
11	tear	quick	human	dangerous, careless	long	go somewhere	drive

The table above shows that those synonymous words are distinctive in the angles of manner, agent, situation, distance, direction and purpose. Nida (1975) says that the meanings of words which share certain features with them but contrast with them in respect to other features (32). The situation of the word *escape* is in dangerous situation, whereas in the word *catch* the situation is sudden. In the sense of direction, *escape* derives from somewhere, while *catch* goes to particular direction. In the purpose feature, *escape* aims at getting out of certain situation, while *catch* aims at getting something. When those words are analyzed using componential analysis, it will be as follows.

*escape* : + dangerous, + get out of certain situation

*catch* : - dangerous, - get out of certain situation

However, the componential analysis of those two words is not determined as the most appropriate one. Since, the features found in the verbs *escape* and *catch* are various, therefore the contrastive analysis is seen as the best approach.

When the words *escape* and *catch* appear in the contexts as in

- (1) He didn't attempt to touch her again, but he stood squarely in front of her, thwarting her attempts to escape
- (2) We saw the eagle swoop from the sky to catch its prey,

the understanding of the semantic features which the words have can be done. The

feature of “purpose” is seen obviously. Sentence (1) indicates that the feature “purpose” is to get out of something or certain situation. Whereas, sentence (2) indicates that the feature “purpose” is to get something.

The illustration above shares the idea that the meaning of synonymous words can be broken into several features. Finding out the features is important so that the understanding of the words can be fulfilled. As Nida (1975: 111) says that the semantic units share greatest number of common components and differ from another in the smallest number of diagnostic components. The contrastive features presented above exhibit how the small diagnostic components can differentiate the meaning of one word to another.

## 2. Contextual Analysis of *Run*

After analyzing the contrastive features occur in the word *run* and its synonymous words, it is necessary to find out the meanings of the word *run* in context. By conducting the contextual analysis, the overlapping feature occurs in the context can be seen obviously. The table below shows the contextual analysis of the verb *run*. Nida (1975) has defined the contextual analysis of the verb *run*. However, Nida does not provide the feature of the word in the context. Therefore, the table below is the improvement of Nida’s analysis of the verb *run*.

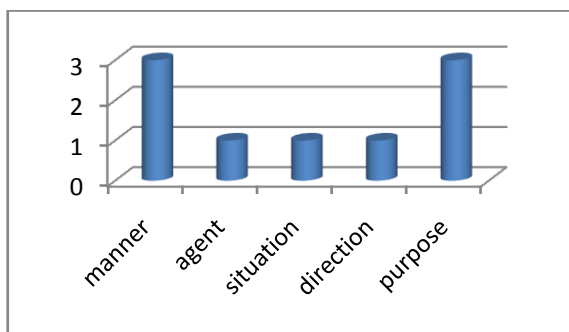
**Table 2. The Contextual Analysis of the Verb *run* by Nida (1975: 141-143)**

No	Contextual meaning	Example	Features
1	Movement in space through the use of the limbs, and with successive instances in which no foot touches the ground	He ran to the house He ran the horse around the track He scored a run in the third riding	Direction
2	Internal or movement of related parts	The motor is running The clock is running fast	Manner
3	Vehicular movement on schedule	The train runs every hour The ferry runs between Staten Island and the Battery	Manner
4	Movement of a liquid or dry mass	The water is running out of the faucet The color is running	Situation
5	Extension	The grain of the wood runs crossways He ran the strap around the box	Purpose
6	General functioning	The office runs well He ran his business poorly	Manner
7	Continuous series of step like actions	Her stocking is running She has a run in her silk hose	Purpose
8	Movement in space, not necessarily as in no.1	He built a chicken run She runs with a touch crowd	Agent
9	Occurrences of special classification	Relating to election to office: He’s running for election Relating to publication: they ran the edition on an offset press Relating to financial operations: the run on the bank was disastrous Relating to contents: the minutes run as follows. Possible figurative meanings: they run the blockade Miscellaneous: the rope ran through a pulley.	Purpose

In Nida’s analysis of the verb *run*, not all distinctive features appear. The occurrence of distance or duration is not seen in the feature

column. Below is the summary of features of *run* in the context.

**Chart 1. Semantic Features found in the Context (Nida, 1975: 138)**



The chart above displays that Nida's contextual analysis of the verb *run* is dominated by the features of manner and purpose. However, what Nida's conducts is not complete yet. Therefore, the table below shows the contextual analysis of the verb *run* which is found in some fields such as short stories, news and articles.

**Table 3. The Extended Contextual Analysis of the Verb *run***

No	Context	Meaning	Example	Features
1	Authority	To control a business	Duncan and Avis McKelvie, who <b>run</b> the Puffin Dive School in Oban, have a very sensible attitude towards diver training.	Agent
2	Ability	To drive	It is fully comprehensive and covers the mobility supplement holder and two drivers nominated by the holder, so you don't have to be a driver to <b>run</b> a Motability car	Agent
3	Technology	To operate	These are machines that <b>run</b> on IBM software and in other ways appear similar to the equipment of the market leader.	Agent
4	Urgent situation	To challenge	But when they do arise, police and military planners are caught on the horns of a dangerous dilemma: do they smash in quickly and <b>run</b> the risk of death or injury?	Situation
5	One's regret	To be responsible	He never thought I was fit to <b>run</b> a shoe shop.	Agent
6	Certain situation	To face a problem	Public enterprises <b>run</b> little risk of bankruptcy, and if targets are not met, governments usually step in to cover deficits.	Situation
7	Schedule	To take place	The event kicks off Tuesday and <b>runs</b> through Friday.	Distance or duration
8	One's opinion	To be responsible of a job	"The platform he is going to <b>run</b> or announce on Wednesday will tell us what his program is, but whether it's Sepp Blatter or somebody else, I hope the president of FIFA understands the massive image problem that FIFA has and has to go about pro-actively fixing it," Murray told the newspaper in an interview from Zurich.	Purpose
9	Movement	To move quickly	And will you excuse me if I <b>run</b> and jump and do handsprings?	Manner
10	Certain situation	To continue a process	We are <b>running</b> recovery operations.	Agent

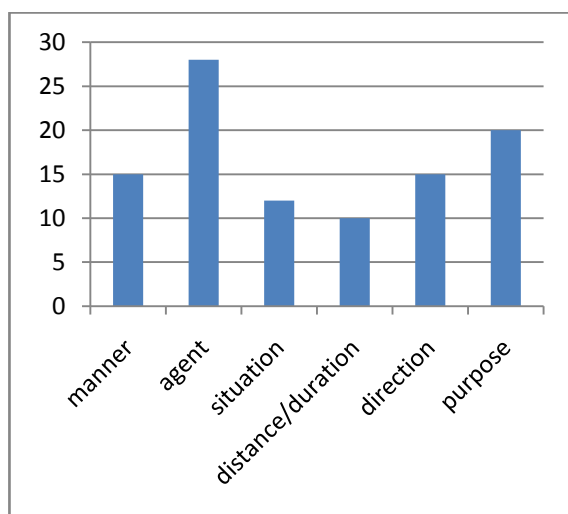
11	Computer program	To perform	There are a lot of activities on the web. Live streaming of the rallies are carried on Internet channels manned by mainstream media companies, while political sites such as The Online Citizen (TOC) <b>run</b> live commentaries of the rallies throughout the night.	Manner
12	Buses' movement	To operate	On both corridors, Transjakarta buses <b>run</b> until 11:30 p.m.	Distance or duration
13	Law policy	To occur	The amnesty will <b>run</b> throughout June, July and August, the trust said.	Distance or duration
14	Business	To face a situation	"The problem is in a normal business, if you <b>run</b> into trading difficulties, you can circle the wagons, you can close some branches that are not profitable, you can get rid of staff and just generally cut the overheads," he said.	Situation
15	Fiction	To open	Together they <b>run</b> a cafe for a varied fairytale clientele.	Agent
16	Adventure	To move in the lower place	HESTER bade little Pearl <b>run</b> down to the margin of the water, and play with the shells and tangled sea-weed, until she should have talked awhile with yonder gatherer of herbs.	Manner
17	Playful	To start	Forth peeped at her, out of the pool, with dark, glistening curls around her head, and an elf-smile in her eyes, the image of a little maid, whom Pearl, having no other playmate, invited to take her hand and <b>run</b> a race with her.	Purpose
18	One's decision	To leave a belief	Certainly my conscience will serve me to <b>run</b> from this Jew my master.	Direction
19	Mystic	To ask someone to move	The fiend is at mine elbow, and tempts me, saying to me, 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,' or 'good Gobbo,' or 'good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, <b>run</b> away.'	Direction
20	Belief	To find a faith	<b>Run</b> to my Lord of Suffolk; let him know	Purpose
21	Body interaction	To leave someone	Chignell tightened his grip on her arm as though he expected her to <b>run</b> away	Purpose
22	Performance	To play	This film will <b>run</b> and <b>run</b>	Manner
23	Exhibition	To hold	I just <b>run</b> local affairs for a dozen or so missions	Agent
24	Physics	To move	Planet X will also <b>run</b> on Apple Quadras now and support Apple monochrome displays	Direction
25	Politics	To move from a place	We are told that unless we make peace with these noblemen, candidates are to be <b>run</b> all over the country	Direction
26	Film	To display	At first, the two parts of the film are simply <b>run</b> in parallel, not fully joined, in a form known as a 'double-head'	Manner
27	Politics	To take place	Yet, one of the catchwords that has been widely heard in Washington and elsewhere during the <b>run</b> up to the war has been the need to create a democratic environment in the Middle East after the war is over.	Situation
28	Education	To be controlled	<b>Run</b> by the Open College of the Arts in association with the Trust, 'The Art of Garden Design' aims to introduce the principles of good, small-scale garden planning through a series of practical activities.	Agent
29	Habit in the past	To move	And they used to <b>run</b> from here to Harwich	Situation
30	Ability	To control	One such black hole could <b>run</b> ten large power stations, if only we could harness its power.	Agent

31	Computer	To operate	You need DOS version 2.0 or higher, with 512 Kb of RAM and an IBM compatible computer to <b>run</b> the program.	Purpose
32	Company	To make	Since SCOTVEC personnel could not respond to requests from all centers to <b>run</b> staff development events for them, each workshop was developed as a pack of information, examples and activities for participants together with extensive support material so that centres or Regions can themselves organise and run the events.	Purpose
33	Exhibition	To take place	'The Power of the Mask' will <b>run</b> from August to the end of October this year and there will be lots of associated events and activities.	Distance or duration
34	Rules	To use	Bearing in mind the number of private nursing homes that spring up and erm, er, I mean the sort of privately run places er, presumably the local authorities have to give them a license to <b>run</b> , but is there no way that it, can the Fire Service, can our officers go and make an inspection?	Purpose
35	Dangerous	To get out of a place	She struggled not to <b>run</b> screaming from the office, seeing the trip ahead, knowing what would happen, that desire, that overpowering excitement flaring up between them in a hotel bedroom somewhere on the other side of the world, dragging her deeper into a relationship that was already tearing her to pieces.	Direction
36	Finding out a place	To reach	Meanwhile back on the ward, Doctor Beri's bleep goes again... this time it's a call to casualty... and the weary house physician has to <b>run</b> half a mile from one end of the building to the other... along the new corridor linking the old part of the hospital with the new.	Purpose
37	Sport	To move	Both England stars started their careers at Acklam Park, Middlesbrough, and youngsters, aged nine to 14, can now learn to <b>run</b> with the ball and line up for line-outs with the Rugby Union course on the same turf.	Manner
38	Competition	To play	Hateley was one of several players banned from Ibrox until yesterday in the wake of last Saturday's defeat from Celtic that brought to an end Rangers' <b>run</b> of 44 games without loss.	Agent
39	Sport	To leave a place	Latham and Andrew Jones put on 127 for the second wicket before the opener was <b>run</b> out when his partner failed to respond to a call for a run.	Direction
40	Business	To control a business	It is not a simple case that we can <b>run</b> along, sell a few houses, get the capital receipts and suddenly we can go off and have a wonderful program and replace the assets which we have sold and...	Agent

The features which occur in the contextual analysis above can be summarized in the chart below. The numbers presented below correspond in percentage (%).



**Chart 2. Semantic Features found in the Context (Extended)**



The table above shows that “agent” appears most as the semantic feature of *run* found in the context. “Agent” appears as 28%. After “agent”, “purpose” is the next feature which equals 20% in the context of *run*. “Manner” and “direction” have the same percentage, 15%. “Situation” is the feature which is found as 12%. The last feature which appears the least is “distance” or “duration” which equals 10%. Table 3 above displays that the same features can appear in different contexts.

The contextual meanings of a word cannot be separated from the contrastive features. Each context represents the feature of the word has. The feature characterizes the meaning since different feature can also define a new meaning. In the examples no.1 and 4, *run* has “agent” and “situation” as the contrastive features. *Run* in no.1 means to control a business in the context of authority. Whereas, *run* in no.4 means to challenge a risk in the context of urgent situation. In meaning no.1, “agent” is assumed as the feature since to control a business needs an “agent”. In other words, “agent” is the feature which characterizes the act of *running*. In meaning no. 4 which means to challenge a risk, “situation” is argued as the features which corresponds the meaning. *Run* can mean to challenge when the typical context underlying the feature is “situation”. We cannot substitute the feature “agent” in the

meaning no.4 because it will change the meaning.

The same contrastive feature may also appear in different context. The example is found in meanings no. 2 and 3. Both share the same contrastive feature, “agent”. However, the meanings are different. The meaning of no.2 is to drive, while no.3 is to operate. It is because of the different context the verb *run* takes place. The context in no. 2 is ability and no.3 is technology. The “agent” is concluded as the feature representing the meaning due to the fact that both contexts need the “agent” to construct the meaning. The “agent” in no.2 is animate, a human who is able to drive. Whereas, the “agent” in no. 3 is inanimate, meaning a machine which is able to operate. It can be assumed that even though the same feature appears in the different contexts, the meanings of a word will be distinctive. Therefore, we can say that context may determine the distinctive meaning of a word.

In meanings no. 30 and 40, they share the same feature, “agent”. The context is different because meaning no.30 has ability and no.40 has business as the contexts. However, they have the same meaning, to control. Sentence no.30 is said as having *ability* context due to the fact that it is because of the “agent’s” ability. The meaning to control refers to what the “agent” does as the ability which marks the context. Sentence no.40 has *business* as the context since the meaning to control refers to business which the “agent” rules. Therefore, the similar meaning may appear in the different context when they share the same feature.

The different context with the same feature can also create the similar meaning. This situation can be found in meaning no. 35 and 39. The context of meaning no.35 is *dangerous* and context no.39 is *sport*. They share the same feature, “direction”. It is chosen as the feature because the meaning is to leave or get out of a place. The context dangerous in meaning no.35 initiates the agent to get out of a place. “Agent” is not assumed as the feature since it does not mark the meaning. Since the meaning is to get out of a place in dangerous situation, therefore “direction” is seen as the appropriate feature. The similar meaning occurs in sentence no.39

even though the context is different. The context of meaning no.39 is *sport* since the circumstance triggering the agent to move. It also explains that meaning can be similar in the different context. However, the semantic feature which corresponds the word also influence the definition of the word being analyzed.

Nida (1975: 141) already presents the contextual meaning of the verb *run*. The meanings presented by Nida also overlap with the meanings displayed in table.4. As the example, Nida defines that *run* can mean vehicular movement on schedule which has "manner" as the feature. The example of sentence is found in table 3, no.2. In table 3, no.7, we can also find the context of schedule. The feature is "direction" or "duration". The meaning is also different because in meaning no.7, *run* means to take place in particular schedule. Even though the features shared by no.2 and no.4 are different; people can see the similarities in the occurrence of *run* which is scheduled.

## Conclusion

The meanings of the verb *run* can be derived from its features and contexts. The same context can cause the different meaning even though the features are also the same. The similar meanings can come from the different context and features depending on what core are marked. The same features do not guarantee the same meanings since the context also takes an important role in finding out the meaning. The overlapping features is found in the contexts due to the fact that the verb *run* has some features. Based on the analysis, the verb *run* has semantic features of "manner", "agent", "situation", "distance" or "duration", "direction", and "purpose". When the verb *run* occurs in various contexts, the features also appear. In the context, "agent" is the most feature which appears, 28%. "Purpose" is the next feature found in the context, 20%. The semantic feature "manner" and "direction" have the equal percentage in the context, 15%. "Situation" and "distance" or "duration" appear as the last two features of the verb *run* in the context which equal 12% and 10%. It can be summed up that a word is composed

by its features. When a word takes place in various contexts, the feature composing the word is also found.

## References

- Curse, D. Alan. *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Finch, Geoffrey. *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Fromkin, Victoria A. *An Introduction to Language 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Victoria: South wood Press Pty Ltd., 2000.
- Katamba, Francis *et al*. *English Language: Description, Variation and Context*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Nida, Eugene. *Componential Analysis of Meaning: An Introduction to Semantic Structures*. Mouton: The Hague, 1975.