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THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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Annotation: This article examines the role and importance of academic vocabulary in English language learning. It discusses the classification of vocabulary, highlights the significance of academic word lists, and explains why academic vocabulary is essential for comprehension and communication in academic contexts. The article also presents the author's perspective on effective vocabulary learning strategies.

Introduction

In today's globalized world, English has become the dominant language of education, research, and international communication. For learners who aim to study in English-medium institutions or engage in academic work, mastering general English is not enough (Nation, 2001). A deeper understanding of academic vocabulary is essential for success. Academic vocabulary enables learners to comprehend complex texts, express ideas clearly, and participate effectively in academic discussions (Coxhead, 2000). This article explores the nature of academic vocabulary, its importance, and its role in English language learning.

Academic vocabulary refers to words that are commonly used in academic contexts, including both written and spoken communication. These words frequently appear in informational texts, textbooks, exams, and various instructional materials across different subjects. When learning academic vocabulary, students also explore the origins of words and understand that many words can have multiple meanings.

We do not always use academic vocabulary; it is typically applied only in specific contexts. For example, it is commonly used when writing research articles, delivering presentations on academic topics, and participating in scientific conferences. Using academic vocabulary appropriately demonstrates a speaker's or writer's advanced language proficiency. However, not everyone has a sufficient command of academic vocabulary or uses it effectively. To develop the ability to use such language, a specialist needs to learn more academic words and gradually incorporate them into daily practice. Only through consistent use can one's academic vocabulary expand over time.

Many people may wonder where and how academic vocabulary can be learned more quickly and easily. The answer is that, in today's technologically advanced world, there are numerous language-learning applications and programs that are easily accessible. Each learner can choose a platform that suits their needs and use it to study a wide range of academic words and learn how to use them effectively.

However, simply memorizing vocabulary makes it difficult to retain academic words for a long time. Better results can be achieved by using them regularly in small amounts each day. With consistent practice, these words gradually move from a learner's passive vocabulary into their active vocabulary, allowing them to be used more naturally and frequently in both speaking and writing.

Academic learning plays a crucial role in language learning because it provides a structured and systematic way of understanding how a language functions. Unlike informal

learning, academic approaches focus on grammar rules, vocabulary development, and language accuracy, which help learners build a strong foundation in the target language (Richards &

One major benefit of academic learning is the development of critical thinking skills. Through analyzing texts and interpreting meanings, learners improve their ability to think deeply and express ideas clearly. This is especially important in fields such as Linguistics, which studies the structure, meaning, and use of language in detail (Crystal, 2003).

In addition, academic learning improves formal communication skills such as essay writing, report writing, and academic presentations. These skills are essential for success in higher education and professional environments (Hyland, 2019).

It also enhances reading and writing abilities by exposing learners to academic texts, research articles, and literature. This exposure helps expand vocabulary and improves comprehension and writing style (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Academic learning provides clear objectives, structured curricula, and assessment methods such as exams and assignments. These elements help learners track their progress and achieve measurable improvement.

When learners acquire the first 2,000–3,000 high-frequency words in English, they reach an important milestone (Nation, 2001). At this stage, it becomes necessary to shift focus toward more specialized vocabulary, particularly for those aiming to study or work in academic environments. One of the most effective directions for further vocabulary development is academic vocabulary, which serves as a bridge between general English and subject-specific terminology (Coxhead, 2000).

Academic vocabulary has been described in various ways, including “sub-technical vocabulary,” “semi-technical vocabulary,” and “generally useful scientific vocabulary” (Nation, 2001; Baker, 1988). Despite differences in terminology, these labels refer to a similar group of words that frequently appear across academic texts but are less common in everyday language. Examples include words such as *accumulate, achieve, complex,* and *proportion*. These words are not tied to one specific discipline, making them highly valuable for learners across different academic fields (Coxhead, 2000).

Traditionally, vocabulary in academic texts is divided into three levels: general service vocabulary, academic (sub-technical) vocabulary, and technical vocabulary (Nation, 2001). General vocabulary includes everyday words, while technical vocabulary is specific to particular disciplines, such as medicine or engineering. Academic vocabulary, however, occupies a middle ground. It is widely used across disciplines and plays a crucial role in expressing abstract ideas, processes, and relationships (Coxhead, 2000).

Research has shown that a relatively small but carefully selected vocabulary can be extremely powerful. For example, studies suggest that around 2,000–2,500 well-chosen words can be sufficient to explain complex scientific ideas in simplified English (Nation, 2001). This highlights the efficiency of focused vocabulary learning. Later developments, such as the University Word List (UWL) and the **Academic Word List (AWL)**, further demonstrated that academic vocabulary accounts for a significant portion of academic texts—approximately 8–10% (Coxhead, 2000). This is a substantial percentage compared to lower-frequency general vocabulary.

There are several reasons why academic vocabulary is essential for learners. First, it appears frequently across a wide range of academic disciplines. This means that learning these words provides a strong return on investment, as they can be used in many contexts (Coxhead, 2000). Second, academic vocabulary makes up a large proportion of academic texts, so understanding it greatly improves reading comprehension (Nation, 2001). Third,

studies have shown that learners often struggle more with academic vocabulary than with technical terms (Hyland & Tse, 2007). This may be because technical terms are usually clearly defined within a subject, while academic words can have multiple meanings and uses depending on context.

Academic vocabulary is fundamental part of language learning. The importance of vocabulary knowledge for students' academic progress is essential because recognizing words in a text provides readers with better comprehension (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Scholars define academic vocabulary differently. According to Antonacci, O'Callaghan, and Berkowitz (2014)'s research about the importance of vocabulary, particularly academic vocabulary, successful content area students all have a strong academic vocabulary knowledge that makes a particular academic discipline easier. Biemiller (2005) agreed that the knowledge of vocabulary may not guarantee success, but the lack of this knowledge can cause their failure. Marzano (2005) claimed that academic vocabulary that may be used in a variety of contexts or specific words that are provided in a particular context can improve the learners' academic performance.

Another important point is that academic vocabulary is teachable. Unlike highly specialized technical vocabulary, which often requires deep subject knowledge, academic vocabulary can be effectively taught by English teachers (Nation, 2001). This makes it a practical and valuable focus in language instruction, especially in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses.

The creation of academic vocabulary lists has typically involved analyzing large collections of academic texts, known as corpora (Coxhead, 2000). Researchers identify words that occur frequently across different disciplines but are not part of basic general vocabulary. Some studies have also compared specialized corpora, such as medical or electronics texts, with general language corpora to better understand how vocabulary functions in specific contexts (Nation, 2001). These approaches have helped clarify the role of academic vocabulary in communication, particularly in expressing processes, relationships, and abstract concepts.

Academic vocabulary is one of the most important yet often underestimated aspects of language learning. Many students focus heavily on grammar or memorizing technical terms, but without a strong command of academic vocabulary, it is difficult to fully understand lectures, write essays, or engage in critical thinking (Hyland & Tse, 2007). Academic words are the tools that allow learners to analyze, compare, evaluate, and explain ideas clearly. Here we can see some frequent academic words that are commonly used in academic texts: *approach, area, assess, assume, concept, establish, method, occur* and etc.

Furthermore, learning academic vocabulary should not be limited to memorization. It requires repeated exposure, active use, and understanding of how words function in different contexts (Nation, 2001). Activities such as reading academic texts, writing essays, and engaging in discussions can significantly enhance this process. Teachers should also emphasize word families, collocations, and multiple meanings to help learners develop a deeper and more flexible understanding of vocabulary.

In the process of teaching and learning languages, both teachers and learners need to pay special attention to vocabulary development. In many cases, language instruction focuses mainly on easily learned and frequently used active vocabulary. This can lead to a superficial understanding of the language and may cause difficulties and awkward situations when using it in more advanced contexts. For example, when writing a research article, relying only on simple, everyday words can reduce its academic value and significance. In contrast, using

academic vocabulary appropriately and effectively enhances the quality of the work and helps produce a well-developed and professional piece of writing.

Teaching strategies is one of the most important topics in teaching academic vocabulary. The two primary methods of word learning, incidental learning and explicit instruction, were outlined by Peregoy and Boyle (2017). The improvement on students' reading comprehension of textbook content can be achieved through explicit vocabulary instruction as well as incidental vocabulary learning (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). A number of effective strategies to teach academic vocabulary are analysed by Nushi and Jenabzadeh (2016). It is used word scaling, analogies, semantic analysis, cognate connection, the Venn diagram, the Frayer model, and four squares that have been applied for the lessons to know which one students have found most useful in language classrooms. However, there isn't one that is useful because learners use different strategies.

In the current era of rapidly developing technology, there are all the necessary and convenient conditions for language learning and teaching. One of the greatest examples of this is Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI provides language learners with unprecedented ease and opportunities in the field of language acquisition. We can also use AI programs to study academic vocabulary; with their help, we can easily find lists of academic words, obtain many examples of their usage, and build our own academic vocabulary base. Many other forms of assistance and convenience can be obtained by using Artificial Intelligence correctly and effectively.

In conclusion, academic vocabulary plays a central role in successful academic interaction. It connects general language knowledge with specialized spheres and enables learners to participate actively in academic communication. Given its importance, both learners and teachers should give it great attention and integrate it into all aspects of language learning.

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