

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY: HOW TO TEACH AND STUDY IT

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**Abstract.** Academic vocabulary is considered the most important factor in increasing learners' lexical competence, critical thinking, and making decisions, mainly at primary school, secondary school, and university. Therefore, there have already been numerous investigations related to this topic. However, when it comes to teaching and studying academic vocabulary in the education system, there would be some problems about what kinds of instructions should be utilized by educators and what sorts of methods are proper for learners. Moreover, not only native students but also international university students might face difficulties with studying and understanding English academic vocabulary. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to shed more light on the importance, facilitations of academic vocabulary in the teaching and studying process by reviewing what have been found previously, through analysis of theoretical frameworks. The paper will also focus on how to teach academic vocabulary to adult EFL and ESL learners at intermediate level and also secondary school ELL learners.

**Key words:** Academic vocabulary; lexical competence; critical thinking.

### АКАДЕМИЧЕСКАЯ СЛОВАРЬ: КАК ЕЕ ПРЕПОДАВАТЬ И ИЗУЧАТЬ

**Аннотация.** Академическая лексика считается важнейшим фактором повышения лексической компетентности учащихся, критического мышления и принятия решений, главным образом в начальной, средней школе и университете. Поэтому уже было проведено множество исследований, связанных с этой темой. Однако когда дело доходит до преподавания и изучения академической лексики в системе образования, могут возникнуть некоторые проблемы с тем, какие инструкции должны использовать преподаватели и какие методы подходят учащимся. Более того, не только местные студенты, но и иностранные студенты могут столкнуться с трудностями в изучении и понимании английской академической лексики. Таким образом, цель статьи - пролить больше света на важность и облегчение использования академической лексики в процессе преподавания и обучения путем обзора того, что было обнаружено ранее, посредством анализа теоретических основ. В документе также основное внимание будет уделено тому, как преподавать академическую лексику взрослым учащимся EFL и ESL на среднем уровне, а также учащимся ELL в средней школе.

**Ключевые слова:** академическая лексика; лексическая компетентность; критическое мышление.

Academic vocabulary refers to the set of words that are linked to academic discourse and can be utilized in many disciplines. According to what Nation (2001, p.4) claims, academic vocabulary is variously known as "useful scientific vocabulary, sub-technical vocabulary, semi-technical vocabulary, specialized non-technical lexis, and frame words". Paquot (2010) depicts academic vocabulary as being "a set of alternatives to refer to those activities that characterize academic work, organize scientific discourse, and organize the rhetoric of academic texts" (p. 28).

However, these definitions are general and do not specify what constitutes academic vocabulary. Baumann (2010) defines academic vocabulary as "the complex process for learners who encounter the words when they read real informational text".

Meanwhile, some authors define the definition of the academic vocabulary differently, based on the source and context in which the term is used. In accordance with what has been suggested by Gottlieb, Carnuccio, Ernst-Slavit & Katz (2006) academic vocabulary is "utilized to acquire a new or deeper understanding of content related to the core of curriculum areas and communicate that understanding to others. Students must also utilize it to effectively participate in the classroom environment" (p. 7).

Besides, we need to understand how much academic vocabulary plays an essential role in a student's academic achievement. Because the stronger a student's vocabulary skills, the more likely they may succeed. Academic vocabulary is vital to succeeding in an academic career, so it needs to be taught and studied (Nushi, M. 2016). Furthermore, on the importance of vocabulary knowledge, Nation (2010) also claims that learning English vocabulary, especially academic vocabulary, is one of the most essential tasks encountered by English learners. Alternatively, Harmon, Hedrick, and Wood (2005) have emphasized that if students are not familiar with vocabulary in their professions, they do not become masters of their field.

These authors have linked the importance of academic vocabulary to an academic career. However, some other writers think that another aspect of the importance of academic vocabulary is based on academic experience. According to Friedberg, Mitchell, and Brooke (2006), "in order to obtain knowledge through independent reading and participate in meaningful discussion in the classroom, students must master the complex words and phrases that characterize the language of school" (p. 1). The main reason why academic vocabulary is exceedingly vital is that it can be utilized as an intellectual tool to inspire students' critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills (Washburn, 2009).

How is Academic vocabulary studied?

During the process of learning English, the most of the learners have to learn new words, also they always encounter general and academic vocabulary when they study subjects which are taught in English language. Moreover, they would use variety of ways to memorize especially, academic vocabulary, because these words seem them more complex to learn. However, they might use irrelevant methods to learn academic vocabulary. For instance, elementary levels of learners just write unfamiliar words and their translation on the notebooks, but they cannot use them in the oral and written speech properly.

By this way, active vocabulary turns into passive. Tricia A. (2021) has suggested that learning academic vocabulary by making sentences, highlighting unfamiliar words, and doing activities, related to these words is considered effective ways. Besides, at the advanced level, learners might utilize various online tools, especially Google, or traditional dictionaries, to look up unfamiliar academic words. When students use a traditional dictionary, they will purposefully divert their focus from the assignment, which could impede learning.

However, (Nushi, 2016) has recommended online tools such as " Dictionary.com, Merriam-Webster Online, and AskOxford.com that can provide a variety of definitions, examples, illustrations, synonyms, antonyms, and collocations during the English class." Most students tend to make mistakes in learning academic vocabulary because of a lack of knowledge about the

effective methods of learning vocabulary. In this situation, they might rely on teachers' approaches.

How is academic vocabulary taught?

Researchers have long investigated and debated how to present relevant methods and strategies for both ESL and ELL learners in teaching academic vocabulary. Because teaching academic vocabulary to advanced students has its own challenges, and the methods we utilize successfully with lower-level learners are not always suitable for upper-intermediate. Besides, in boosting early vocabulary, educators might select irrelevant strategies.

Firstly, in teaching academic vocabulary, it is important to pay enough attention to target learners and their background knowledge, level of grade, and also peculiarities. In this paper, I have presented researchers' several methods, strategies, and instructions for how to teach academic vocabulary efficiently, especially to ELLs. For instance, to teach academic vocabulary, Sharon Jackson (2010) has used direct vocabulary instruction for fifth-to seventh grade English language learners.

Because it is vital to teach academic vocabulary directly so that students can understand the vocabulary in its academic context, However, it is insufficient to boost students' vocabulary development. Support students' vocabulary growth by getting them involved in discussions, giving them the chance to read a variety of texts, and raising their awareness of language use in everyday life (Sharon J. 2010).

Moreover, Nushi (2016) recommended the Frayer model method to teach vocabulary to ESL students, which is helpful in developing students' vocabulary by providing them with examples and non-examples. Through this method, educators give a variety of definitions of a new word by presenting it from a text book and in their own words. Furthermore, learners might make sentences by using new words. Alternatively, this method is considered absolutely time-consuming and best applied to theoretically proper concepts. In my opinion, this method would serve as a manual for many ESL educators.

Apart from these methods, teachers of young learners should consider how to increase young learners' reading comprehension by teaching vocabulary, which is not only general but also academic vocabulary, and also encourage them to be interested in using these words in oral or written speech (Tricia A. 2021). Yet, the educator needs to choose the proper words to teach them and relevant methods. In teaching academic vocabulary, educators mainly use vocabulary picture cards in order to provide a vital visual aid to support new word learning, and they might consider the peculiarities of young learners (August, 2018).

However, Tricia (2021) has claimed that selecting images clearly is a critical process and often challenging step, and without one or two sentences that depict the picture, the connection to academic words is unclear. So that the image should be more likely to illustrate a context that children can relate to.

When it comes to teaching academic vocabulary to the ELLs, especially international students who study in the other field, such as mathematics, they would come across many challenges in studying math in English, because of the lack of knowledge of math vocabulary. Hence, it causes to misunderstand the theme (Hoffert, 2009). Mostly, educators are required to pay attention ELLs background knowledge to select proper instructions and apps such as Academic Word List (Murrey, 2008).

### Conclusion

According to Nagy & Townsend (2012), academic vocabulary is a crucial component of academic language and must be efficiently acquired with the help of teachers both directly and indirectly. All methods which have been discussed above, are applied widely in classes. Also, most educators utilize them in their English classes. Besides, I identified that skilled teachers always pay attention to the learners' background knowledge to choose proper methods in learning academic vocabulary. In effect, the students eventually would use academic vocabulary properly in variety of disciplines or academic career.

Likewise, we can observe that during the studying academic vocabulary, many secondary language student errors to use academic vocabulary in academic discourse. Although they become familiar with academic words, they cannot use it as active word in their oral and written speech. Hence, in the paper, several effective methods were presented which have been recommended by researchers. I feel that it would be helpful to able to select suitable methods in teaching and learning academic vocabulary. The studied many articles of teaching and studying gave me several essential information which I will utilize in in my teaching process.

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