

TEACHING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN EFL CLASSROOMS: CHALLENGES AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

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Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan universitet talabalari uchun akademik lug'atni o'qitishning ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda talabalar duch keladigan asosiy qiyinchiliklar, jumladan, abstrakt terminlarni tushunish, lug'at boyligining yetishmasligi va tarjimaga ortiqcha tayanish holatlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, akademik lug'atni rivojlantirishda kontekstual o'qitish, keng qamrovli o'qish, hamkorlikdagi o'quv faoliyati hamda mustaqil ta'limning samaradorligi yoritiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: akademik lug'at, EFL, ingliz tili ta'limi, oliy ta'lim, lug'at boyligi, akademik savodxonlik.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается значение обучения академической лексике студентов, изучающих английский язык как иностранный. Анализируются основные трудности, возникающие при освоении академической лексики, а также эффективные методы её преподавания. Особое внимание уделяется контекстному обучению, экстенсивному чтению и активному использованию словарного запаса в учебной деятельности.

Ключевые слова: академическая лексика, EFL, преподавание английского языка, высшее образование, словарный запас, академическая грамотность.

Abstract. This article examines the importance of teaching academic vocabulary to university students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study explores common challenges associated with academic vocabulary acquisition and discusses effective instructional strategies. The findings indicate that contextualized learning, extensive reading, collaborative activities, and learner autonomy significantly contribute to academic vocabulary development and academic literacy.

Keywords: academic vocabulary, EFL, English language teaching, higher education, vocabulary acquisition, academic literacy.

Introduction. Vocabulary is one of the most important components of language proficiency. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners face difficulties in understanding texts, expressing ideas, and participating effectively in communication. In higher education settings, students are expected to read scholarly articles, write research papers, and engage in academic discussions. These tasks require not only knowledge of general English but also mastery of academic vocabulary.

Academic vocabulary consists of lexical items that frequently occur across academic disciplines and are essential for understanding academic texts and producing formal written work [1]. Words such as “analyze”, “interpret”, “evaluate”, “justify”, and “significant” appear regularly in textbooks, journal articles, and lectures. Therefore, developing academic vocabulary is crucial for students' academic success.

Despite years of English language study, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties when encountering academic texts. Limited academic vocabulary often results in poor reading comprehension, ineffective writing, and reduced participation in classroom

discussions. Consequently, language teachers must implement effective strategies to facilitate academic vocabulary acquisition.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges associated with academic vocabulary learning and identify instructional practices that support vocabulary development among university students.

Research questions:

1. What challenges do EFL students face in learning academic vocabulary?
2. Which instructional strategies contribute most effectively to academic vocabulary acquisition?
3. How does academic vocabulary instruction influence students' academic language proficiency?

Methods. This study employed a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through an analysis of relevant literature concerning vocabulary acquisition, English language teaching methodology, and academic literacy. In addition, classroom observations from university EFL courses were examined to identify common instructional practices and learning difficulties.

The selected literature included scholarly books and journal articles focusing on vocabulary learning strategies, lexical competence, and academic language development. Classroom observations concentrated on teaching techniques used to introduce, practice, and assess academic vocabulary.

The collected information was categorized into two major themes: challenges encountered by learners and effective instructional strategies implemented by teachers. Comparative analysis was then conducted to identify patterns and relationships among the findings.

Results. The analysis revealed several significant challenges related to academic vocabulary acquisition.

Firstly, many students demonstrated difficulties in understanding abstract academic terminology. Unlike everyday vocabulary, academic words often possess multiple meanings and require contextual interpretation [2]. For example, the word "evaluate" in academic contexts implies critical assessment rather than simple description.

Secondly, students frequently relied on direct translation from their native language. Although translation may provide initial understanding, excessive dependence on this strategy often leads to inaccurate usage and misunderstanding of contextual meanings.

Thirdly, limited exposure to authentic academic materials restricted opportunities for repeated encounters with target vocabulary. Research suggests that multiple exposures are necessary for long-term vocabulary retention [3].

Another challenge involved insufficient opportunities for active vocabulary use. Students who rarely participated in discussions or academic writing activities

demonstrated slower lexical development than those who regularly practiced using new vocabulary items.

Several effective instructional strategies were identified during the analysis.

Contextualized vocabulary instruction emerged as one of the most successful approaches. Rather than teaching isolated word lists, instructors introduced vocabulary through authentic academic texts, enabling students to observe lexical items in meaningful contexts.

Extensive reading activities also contributed significantly to vocabulary development. Students who regularly read academic articles, essays, and textbooks encountered target vocabulary repeatedly, thereby strengthening retention and comprehension.

Vocabulary notebooks encouraged learners to record definitions, examples, collocations, and personal observations about newly learned words. This strategy promoted active engagement and independent learning.

Collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, presentations, and peer review sessions created opportunities for students to use academic vocabulary in communicative situations. Such activities enhanced both lexical knowledge and communicative competence.

Discussion. The findings support previous studies emphasizing that vocabulary acquisition is a gradual and cumulative process [2; 3]. Academic vocabulary cannot be effectively acquired through memorization alone. Instead, learners must encounter words repeatedly across various contexts and actively apply them in meaningful communication.

One of the most important implications of this study is the need to integrate vocabulary instruction into all language skills. Reading activities expose students to academic vocabulary, while writing tasks encourage productive use. Similarly, speaking and listening activities reinforce understanding and facilitate retention.

The results also highlight the importance of learner autonomy. Students who maintained vocabulary journals, engaged in independent reading, and reviewed lexical items outside the classroom demonstrated greater vocabulary growth. This finding is consistent with Nation's view that successful vocabulary learning requires both classroom instruction and independent effort [2].

Furthermore, technology offers additional opportunities for vocabulary development. Digital dictionaries, vocabulary applications, online corpora, and educational platforms can provide learners with immediate access to authentic language examples and personalized learning experiences.

Teachers should therefore adopt a balanced approach that combines explicit instruction with opportunities for incidental learning. Such an approach helps students develop not only vocabulary knowledge but also the ability to use academic language appropriately in different contexts.

Conclusion. Academic vocabulary plays a fundamental role in academic achievement and language proficiency among EFL learners. The present study identified several challenges, including difficulties with abstract terminology, limited exposure to authentic academic texts, and overreliance on translation strategies.

The findings indicate that contextualized vocabulary instruction, extensive reading, collaborative learning activities, and learner autonomy significantly contribute to academic vocabulary development. Integrating vocabulary teaching into reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities enables students to achieve deeper lexical understanding and more effective language use.

Therefore, academic vocabulary instruction should be regarded as a continuous and systematic component of English language education in higher education institutions. By implementing effective pedagogical strategies, educators can support learners in becoming confident users of academic English and successful participants in academic communities.

Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro'yxati:

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