

Academic Vocabulary Acquisition Difficulties for Saudi Postgraduate Students in New Zealand Universities

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Abstract

Education outcomes for L2 students in academic preparation programs, undergraduate studies, and graduate work are directly influenced by the learning and use of academic vocabulary. Among 15 Saudi graduate students studying in New Zealand, this study investigated at their perspectives with academic vocabulary learning. Students in Saudi Arabia who are enrolled at New Zealand universities were asked about their difficulties in learning academic vocabulary. According to this study, a new perspective on academic vocabulary can be gained by studying students' assessments of their problems in learning academic vocabulary. Four research questions are the focus of the study: 1) When it comes to mastering academic vocabulary, what are the most common challenges faced by postgraduate students? 2) What methods do these Saudi postgraduate students employ in order to increase their knowledge of academic language? 3) Do students who perceive the most difficulty in learning a new language likely to have had the least effective ways for learning vocabulary. 4) Saudi graduate students confront what kinds of problems in learning academic vocabulary? Academic vocabulary is typically a problem for graduate students in a number of areas. These challenges were addressed utilizing a qualitative approach, that comprised an exploratory study, personal face-to-face questions, and a group discussion. A wide range of academic circumstances were found to be problematic for all 15 participants, regardless of language proficiency. It was difficult to find time to read for writing when there was so much emphasis on paraphrasing. (Hirvela, 2016) Aside from that, participants had no prior experience with academic vocabulary learning and only a limited number of strategies at their disposal to assist them. In contrast, the results of this study do not support the concept that merely being revealed to academic language can increase the chances of incidental vocabulary development; somewhat more, they recommend that deliberate vocabulary knowledge is needed, so such learning should be based on sound academic skills, including the use of vocabulary study materials; and unsuitable vocabulary acquisition strategies could indeed risk causing unhappiness and loss of vocabulary knowledge.

Keyword: Saudi students, list of academic words, academic vocabulary acquisition

1. Introduction

Postgraduate Saudi students in New Zealand institutions are the focus of this study, which examines their difficulties in learning academic vocabulary. Students' educational outcomes are directly influenced by the development and use of academic vocabulary in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Rather than relying on academic vocabulary experts, this study argues that students' viewpoints on the difficulties they have in learning academic vocabulary can provide a wider look.

Research on L2 vocabulary can be categorized into three groups: choice, learning, and assessment (or evaluation) (Bogaards & Laufer, 2004; Laufer, 2014). Learning and trying to teach of the subject is the greatest place to locate existing research on academic vocabulary. A lot of attention has been paid to the challenge's students face and the strategies they use to acquire a foreign language while obtaining postgraduate degrees in various fields of expertise. While academic word lists serve an important role in helping students who speak English as a second language (EAL) acquire academic vocabulary, the investigation also notes that teaching and learning are linked (Coxhead, 2000, 2011, 2016a; Gardner & Davis, 2014). Additionally, academic vocabulary literature has a debate on the significance of a discipline-specific vocabulary, as indicated by the AWLs. This study acknowledges this debate (Hyland & Tse, 2007). There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as pupils who have passed the International English Proficiency Assessment Program (IELTS) just at levels required across all four

areas (see Read, 2015). In spite of the fact that even on Learning Environments give students with academic aid, the majority of students who discover themselves in this circumstance must continue to study academic vocabulary under their own, especially if they have previously met the criteria for admission to the school.

1.1 Rationale for the Study

According to Gelb (2012), many Saudi students are unable to comprehend what they read because they lack the ability to read and write in the English language.

The current research focuses on Saudi students who enrolled in graduate programs at New Zealand universities. According to the findings, even if students' viewpoints should be handled with caution, they offer a unique perspective that might supplement other studies. It's widely acknowledged that these difficulties are likely to stem from 2 different sources:

- 1) Using effective vocabulary-building methods (Nation & Nation, 2001).
- 2) In order to succeed in postgraduate study, one must become familiar with the various forms of academic literacy that exist within the institution (Gardner & Davies, 2014).

1.2 The Research Issues

Students' struggles with studying new vocabulary and the broader problems of postgraduate students are the focus of this study, which seeks the answers to the questions:

- 1) Where do students have the most difficulty with academic language acquisition in postgraduate programs?
- 2) What kinds of difficulties that postgraduate students in Saudi Arabia experience when it comes to learning academic vocabulary?
- 3) What methods do these Saudi postgraduates employ in order to increase their knowledge of academic language?
- 4) Do students who experienced the most difficulties in vocabulary acquisition have the least effective strategies for learning vocabulary?

The answers to these four questions help narrow down the study's goals, which in turn helps researchers choose the best research methods and techniques (McDonough & McDonough, 2014). According to Merriam, 2009, a qualitative approach design was used to examine the data collected and understand the research problem. Using a descriptive online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview, Saudi postgraduate students are expected to benefit from this case study design. Results from this qualitative approach, which cannot be applied directly to a broader population, may assist EAP programs as well as intellectual English courses in general (Merriam, 2009).

1.3 Outline of the Research

The study's background, study objectives, and research design were all put out in the introductory chapter of the research. Academic vocabulary acquisition, teaching, and learning, as well as the role of vocabulary knowledge in developing academic literacy, are examined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 gives details about the study's design and methodology. The ethical concerns and the processes employed to demonstrate how these were handled are outlined in detail. Instruments for data collecting and its reasons for their use being explained, along with data-analytical processes. The findings from the questionnaires of the participants are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter summarizes the findings, discusses the research's limits, and offers recommendations for further studies.

2. Literature Review

The topics covered in this chapter are important to the present research. Second language (L2) learners of English will find this definition and contrast helpful in their understanding of academic vocabulary.

2.1 Academic Vocabulary

Certain fields of study, including medical, architecture, or computer programming, utilize the term "technical vocabulary," which relates to the terminology and abbreviations employed in those fields of study (Coxhead, 2000; Nation, 2013). For example, the phrase "accumulate" is more commonly encountered in academic writings than non-academic ones, as explained by (Nation, 2013, p. 16). Technical terms, as defined by Nation (2013), are words used only within a specific field's language. There are many technical terms that are subject-specific and only have definitions that make sense to individuals who know about that particular area of competence.

Consequently, the use of this word is more prevalent in some disciplines than others. Some of the words mentioned on the AWL in Chung and Nation's (2003, 2004) investigations have been demonstrated to be present in many discipline-specific texts. "The degree of relatedness of a given word in the field to the subject matter" might help distinguish among academic and technical vocabulary (Nation, 2013, p. 304). Generally speaking, a word is considered to be technical vocabulary if it is essential to grasping the gist of a subject in a book when used in the context of that discipline (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013).

The general characteristics of academic terminology have been investigated. According to Lindstromberg (2022), there are several examples of phrases that are hard to imagine: abstract, difficult to conceptualize, low frequency, etc. Furthermore, according to Lindstromberg (2022), some L2 students may be able to talk fluently, but still find academic literature difficult to understand. Too few possibilities for students studying English as a second language (L2) to connect with academic books and academic terminology. Geva, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Schuster, 2000 have shown that non-native English speakers may struggle to comprehend academic texts because they lack experience with academic language. Research shows that academic vocabulary development is directly linked to academic reading comprehension.

2.2 Academic Word List (AWL)

Academia uses a wide range of words and terms, as previously said, including both generic academic vocabulary and specialized technical language relevant to each discipline (Coxhead, 2000, 2011, 2016a, 2016b) (Hyland & Tse, 2007; Nagy & Townsend, 2012). The Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000, 2011, 2016a, 2016b) and subsequent work on the selection and prioritizing of academic vocabulary have made a significant contribution to the field of academic vocabulary learning (Coxhead & Hirsh, 2007; Greene & Coxhead, 2015). All academic disciplines are represented in Coxhead's list of 570 broad academic word families. Coxhead and Nation (2001) estimate that this list contains 10% of all academic text terms. Coxhead and Hirsh (2007), on the other hand, compile a list of 318 lexical items, that represents only 4% of a scientific corpus not included in AWL.

2.3 Research on Second Language Academic Vocabulary

Second/foreign language education research throughout the 1970s and 1980s was primarily focused on developing a framework for integrating language and content. This trend reflected the difficulties that content teachers in English-speaking countries would confront in classrooms with a rising number of pupils who spoke limited English. These studies have indicated that the students in this study's focus group will simultaneously learn academic content from the school curriculum as well as English as a second language (Schmidt & Blumenthal, 2022).

According to the conceptual framework established by Lo & Leung (2022), for example, teachers in ESL classrooms must work together with content teachers to identify the goals of their classes. Mathematics, science, history, and other academic subjects have to be taught in a way that could be understood by pupils with minimal English proficiency. Content-obligatory language (COL) and content-compatible language (CCL) were the terms coined by Snow and her colleagues. Language that is required for pupils to be able to acquire, understand, and interact about a specific curriculum area is referred to as "the important language" (p. 206). According to Snow and researchers, kids who learn content-obligatory language have a better understanding of the structure and function of language. Aside from these benefits, learning how to utilize rhetorical devices to accomplish certain linguistic functions, such as persuading and narrating are also learned with time.

These academic words and phrases are often used to explain, characterize, and defend scientific activity. Several of these terms, according to McLean (2013), can be used in a variety of contexts by experts and writers across a wide range of disciplines. Coxhead's (2000) AWL has as its primary goal a broadening of perspectives in academia. L2 postgraduates and non-English-speaking research scientists can utilize the AWL as a guide to read and comprehend what they want and need to read and write what they need to write from this perspective. As a result, the AWL could be a helpful tool for non-native English speakers who want to learn about a particular discipline and show off their abilities in that field.

2.4 Academic Vocabulary and Achievement

Academic vocabulary plays an important part in academic achievement, and studies have shown a strong correlation between academic success and the capability to read and understand a huge amount of written literature (Neugebauer, 2008; Gardener & Davis, 2014). When learning a new language, it's important to build a strong academic vocabulary (Snow & Kim, 2007; Pulido, 2009) so that you can understand the content of academic books and discussions and be able to read huge amounts of material within English (Shen, 2013). University students, especially those at the master's level, can attain desirable outcomes if they are able to fully

understand ideas, understand arguments and begin to realize the effects of their own studies, that are the key cognitive tasks which are impossible without comprehensive academic language (Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014).

2.4.1 Academic Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Archer and Hughes (2011) have presented an explicit method to academic vocabulary learning in order to help students learn academic vocabulary. Using a five-step instructional approach, students are guided through the process of learning a new word by first learning how to say it correctly, then hearing examples of the word in context, then using the word in real-world context, and finally being evaluated and given feedback if they have a better understanding of new vocabulary item.

Studies on the potential for acquiring academic vocabulary when reading texts in English have found that teaching new terms in context supports two objectives: learning literacy and coping with new words. Learners are encouraged to focus on the morphological function of vocabulary using this method. The roots, affixes, and prefixes of a word are all examples of morphological units of meaning (Nagy, Carlisle, & Goodwin, 2014). Roots and suffixes predominate in academic vocabulary (Nippold & Sun, 2008). To help students improve their vocabulary and comprehension, Lesaux, Keiffer, Kelley, and Harris (2014) used morphological analysis in their lesson. This research found that students' understanding improved when they tried to guess the meaning of unfamiliar terms in a book. Although this method appears to be helpful, the process of learning vocabulary is a complicated one, as mentioned earlier. First, the learner must be capable of understanding and using the new words item in an another setting, either in a discussion or in writing, before the term may be considered fully learnt. Learners may be unable to master new vocabulary and syntactically difficult language if they aren't given enough exposure using the new words they encounter when doing a reading comprehension exercise (Lesaux et al., 2014). Postgraduate students are also affected by this. When it comes to reading comprehension tasks, students at the university level may be able to receive a good grade by figuring out what an unknown word means based on its context. Nevertheless, they may forget what they've just learned or they may retain the word but not apply it in their own writing.

2.5 *The Challenges of Learning Academic Vocabulary*

Another issue is the amount of academic terminology that pupils need to acquire. Schmitt (2008) examines the difficulties of learning new vocabulary and concludes that the greatest obstacle is the sheer volume of language that must be learned. He makes the case that when it comes to learning a language, it's crucial to consider the scope of one's vocabulary. To put it another way, the more vocabulary we have, the better we are at interpreting between spoken written language and our capacity to participate in conversations. The quantity of words which an English learner must absorb cannot be accurately determined, as Schmitt (2008) argues. However, according to Schmitt (2008) an L2 learner who knows 10,000 word families will be able to deal with a variety of language-related situations more easily than someone who knows 114,000 word families, as suggest by studies such as (Goulden, Nation, & Read, 1990; Nagy & Anderson, 1984). This vast range of vocabulary is regarded adequate to meet the challenges and expectations of tertiary education in terms of language. Studies like Laufer (as cited in Schmitt, 2008) reveal that many students fail to memorize even a good percentage of this quantity if we presume that this level of vocabulary is necessary for academic success.

As a previous graduate student too, I would confirm the fact that many overseas postgraduates have anticipate changes the vocabulary sophistication and intricacy of academic literature. In light of this, students confront serious challenge in the reading of lengthy academic books, the delivery of oral presentations, the composition of academic work assignments, the development of research projects and integrity applications, and the composition of a dissertation or thesis. This indicates that the academic vocabulary needed for postgraduate study at universities is related not only to student aims but also, more practically, to the intellectual reading instruction (Hyland, 2012; Wingate, 2018) that are mandated by these institutions.

The current study aims to fill two major gaps in our knowledge. To begin with, it contributes to the expanding body of study on Saudi students in English-medium universities and second, hence the need to explore concerns of "learnability and teachability" (Flowerdew cited in Coxhead, 2016b, p. 177), an approach which may be successfully applied to academic vocabulary research. Most of the research on how students learn academic vocabulary has not included perspectives from students themselves. This is an unfortunate because student perspectives can inform educators about the purpose of knowing academic vocabulary as well as the difficulties that students face in the process.

3. Methodology

The difficulties that postgraduate students from Saudi Arabia face when attempting to learn academic vocabulary in Nz universities is the focus of this study. With this particular objective, we were able to decide on a reliable research methodology and set of methods to use throughout (McDonough, 2014). The research problem was defined in Chapter 1, and a subjective case study approach was used to conduct the empirical investigation (Merriam, 2009). In Chapter 3, we discuss the rationale for the study, the methods used to gather and analyze data, some of the ethical problems that arose, and the limitations of this descriptive qualitative design.

3.1 Questioning Issues

Two questions were asked at the outset of this study to better comprehend the difficulties students have while trying to understand academic vocabulary and to put this approach within the concerns of postgraduate students, as discussed in Chapter 1.

- 1) When it comes to mastering academic vocabulary, what are the most common challenges faced by postgraduate students?
- 2) Do students who perceive the most difficulty in learning a new language likely to have had the least effective ways for learning vocabulary?

To learn more about the strategies these graduate students use to overcome the difficulties of learning new words, two further questions were asked.

- 3) What methods do these Saudi postgraduate students employ in order to increase their knowledge of academic language?
- 4) Saudi graduate students confront what kinds of problems in learning academic vocabulary?

An empirical case study approach was used to explore into these issues through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both individuals and a focus group (Merriam, 2009).

3.2 Participants

Only Saudi Arabian students studying in New Zealand universities were eligible to take part in the research. The study had a total of 15 willing participants. Qualitative research participants aren't a huge worry because of the small sample size (Englander, 2012). Mackey and Gass (2015) contend that establishing the validity of this study requires determining the number of participants, not because of the problem of generalizability. Saudi Students in New Zealand's Facebook page, university message boards where Saudi Students Association gatherings are conducted, and notice boards in public settings (e.g., cafes, mosques, etc.) where Saudi students gather were used to recruit participants.

Two of the research participants lived 6 or 8 years respectively inside the Different Cultural context. They had already finished their undergrad in New Zealand and then enrolled in postgraduate courses, which necessitated a considerable period of time. Because they were in Nz on student visas when the study was conducted, these two participants cannot be classified as new arrivals. In contrast to the other 13 participants, all of whom had gotten their bachelor's degrees from Saudi Arabian universities, these students were relatively fresh to tertiary education in New Zealand. The most common majors among the participants were business/management and engineering. After seven years of study in Saudi Arabia's education system, participants were able to meet IELTS standards for postgraduate courses in New Zealand universities, however the amount of time spent on academic study-related tuition prior to arriving in New Zealand varied. The study had 11 male participants and four female participants.

3.3 Study Design

Subjects were recruited to engage in the study by e-mailing the researcher to express their interest in participating in the investigation. The Written Consent and the Participation Information Form were delivered to study participants through email, and they were then requested to complete a Google Forms-created online survey. The demographic and educational questions were included in the survey. How long they've been in New Zealand, what country they studied in for undergrad, how long they've been studying English, how important academic vocabulary is to them, what strategies they use to learn English vocabulary, and why they chose New Zealand to pursue a postgraduate degree. Next, semi-structured interview with individual participants were conducted as a result of this background information.

After completing the survey, each participant was offered a personal interview session of up to an hour in duration. By asking open-ended questions, the researcher was able to steer the interview in a new direction if

necessary. The research topics were on four main areas, methods for memorizing words, methods for memorizing educational vocabulary, methods for improving reading skills, and the effect of learning and residing in an English - speaking environment on memorizing academic vocabulary.

3.4 Methodology for the Study

A descriptive case study approach was used, as previously mentioned (Merriam, 2009). The case study method may be linked back to the constructivist approach (Yin, 2015). According to this worldview, how anything is "real" depends on the person who is experiencing it. As a type of study, it is narrow in scope and often employs solely qualitative methodologies (Merriam, 2009). This methodology allows researchers to focus on a specific phenomenon and specific people inside a specific setting. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to gain insight into how a cohort of graduate students approached the process of expanding their academic lexicon. So, a subjective case study method was adopted, and the findings were interpreted via a constructivist perspective. This research adopted this method in an effort to better comprehend, from the students' point of view, the difficulties involved in learning academic language.

3.5 Methods

Research methods, as opposed to research strategy, refer to the overall methods used to collect and analyze the data in the study.

3.5.1 Data

(1) Online surveys and semi-structured interviews are used to collect biodata and other related details from my participants prior to their arrival in New Zealand. (2) As the dialogue and discussion developed, more in-depth questions were asked (Creswell, 2012). A total of 60 minutes was spent conducting the interviews in each session. (3) Nearing completion of the study, a follow-up interview process was done in order to see if they had been able to stretch their vocabulary acquisition skills and/or alleviate their difficulties. The focus group lasted about 30 minutes, and the conversations were held in Arabic to prevent confusion between the participants. The researcher recorded, transcribed, and translated the focus group dialogues into English with the participants' permission before analysing the data.

3.5.2 Data Analysis

I began the data analysis process by carefully reading the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups in order to code the vital information. These themes were then applied to the decoded data. I conducted the interviews at the same time that I conducted the analysis (Creswell, 2007). This was done since the analysed data analysis from the interviewees might show that more interviews are needed. NVivo 10 software was my first suggestion for storing and organizing the evaluated data (Bazeley, 2013). NVivo is just a qualitative data archiving, storage, and analysis program. But after beginning the study, I chose to use colour coding plus pen and paper tactics since I found them to be more efficient. The knowledge of the data collected was checked using a member checking technique. As a part of this method, I requested the participants to verify my interpretations of their responses to address the questions and check whether those interpretations mirrored what they stated (Creswell, 2012).

3.6 Limitations

In addition to those relating to qualitative case study approaches, it is also suggested that case study has some benefit in that it is often applicable to other similar situations (Holliday, 2004). However, the utilization of interview data has its limitations. The interview, for example, is simply a semblance of the truth. According to Richards, (2003), interview results are not always "the truth" about a phenomenon or subject under examination, but rather what participants believe to be the truth. The information gleaned through interviews is also highly subjective, and the words spoken may have been motivated more by emotion than rational considerations (Merriam, 2009). The researcher had a particularly tough time getting interviewees to engage in the focus group interview. The participants generally agree with each other in their comments, which were short and to the point.

This chapter has offered a summary of the methodologies and methodology, and highlighted the importance of qualitative research in answering the research questions. Participants' demographics and the strategy used to recruit them are described in detail.

4. Findings

The results of this research are summarized in this chapter. Four research questions from the Methods chapter guide this chapter's structure. To support the findings, qualitative data collected from participant interviews (P1-P15) was referenced. Defined by II and FGI, respectively, are the individual interview and the group interview. Listening and speaking, and also reading comprehension, appear to be the most difficult aspects of the

study for participants. However, educational vocabulary was not specifically addressed as a barrier, presumably because participants felt the more communicative parts of language to be of greater importance right away, even though this was emphasized. However, academic vocabulary was a common theme in all comments since without it, academic success is impossible (Schmitt, 1997).

4.1 Research Question 1: In Which Aspects of Postgraduate Studies are the Challenges of Learning Academic Vocabulary Mostly Found

This question can be answered in terms of the four macro-skill aspects of communication, namely: 1) listening/reading/speaking/writing. Challenges participants encountered in each of these four categories are detailed in the following subsections:

4.1.1 Listening

Twelve of the fifteen participants who took part in the study stated that they had no idea that listening would be so difficult because they had never encountered any issues in their regular lives. Various academic settings, including classrooms, supervision sessions, feedback with instructors and lecturers, and group discussions, were found to have vocabulary-related difficulties.

Students enrolled in master's and postgraduate diploma programs who were required to complete course work complained that they found lectures difficult to comprehend. They explained that the unfamiliar academic language was to blame for the misunderstanding. Among the examples given by one participant was:

I had trouble following lectures for a long period after starting my program in New Zealand. I was unable to follow lectures since I was unfamiliar with numerous academic terms. (II: P15)

In this study, four of the 15 respondents were PhD students. When they first began their PhD studies, all four individuals found the supervision meetings extremely difficult to follow. Participants P9 and P16 noted that they were unfamiliar with many of the terms their supervisors used throughout supervision. As a result, they found that meetings with their supervisors were usually tense.

The best professors want to work with the best pupils. I'd be disappointing my supervisor if I admitted that my limited language prevents me from comprehending what he's saying. Later, I went back and checked the term that I was unsure of. (II: P5)

Students in master's degree or postgraduate diploma programs also reported having trouble comprehending spoken English due to a lack of specialized academic vocabulary. When they were required to partner up with colleagues who had a greater variety of academic lexicon for group work, or when they received feedback from their professors or tutors, these were particularly difficult situations. One respondent mentioned:

It's awkward to ask a classmate to rephrase what they just said. For some reason, I can never bring myself to do it. I make an effort to cover up the reality that I could not comprehend what was told to me. (II: P14)

4.1.2 Reading

Results also showed how reading was a challenge for participants, particularly when they first began their studies. It took a long time and a lot of effort to look up words they didn't understand while they were reading. Despite the importance of reading comprehension to their academic success, participants stated that they struggled to keep up with their reading because of the significant academic vocabulary required.

Initially, we are required to read a large amount of reading material, including chapters, articles, and even entire novels. Unfamiliar words appear in this subject. I am unable to comprehend the writings unless I am aware of their meanings. As a result, I will need to check the dictionary. Do you have any idea how much time it takes? Due to the short amount of time, this is a nightmare. (FGI: P3)

Reading tasks with academic language may be difficult for anyone, but the PhD and master's students brought up an additional difficulty that the students in the Diploma course didn't notice. The importance of note taking and the necessity to paraphrase readings was emphasized by everybody. The issue of unfamiliar lexicon became more problematic when students had to paraphrase the original material in their own terms, as well as search for strange words in the dictionary, in order to comprehend the content. With that in view, one responder pointed out:

That phrases must be examined, and messages should be comprehended is not the problem here. There is more to the issue than just this tedious job. Any text that we can't fully comprehend will need to be paraphrased. What's worse is that we haven't prepared ourselves for these kinds of tasks. (II: P6.)

4.1.3 Writing

It was observed that all fifteen students found academic writing difficult, even whether they had previously reported that they had difficulty writing in English prior to their arrival in New Zealand. It was shown that problems with paraphrasing, such as utilizing informal language to wrongly paraphrase academic literature, were caused by difficulties with reading comprehension and a lack of knowledge about the distinction among academic and non-academic vocabulary.

To create a literature review, you must first understand and then paraphrase scientific documents like journal articles. There are a lot of great words that we have to check or assume their meanings in order to understand a piece of writing. The text should be paraphrased once it has been fully comprehended (II:P7)

Another participant said:

Making a good paraphrase is a really difficult task. A person should be familiar with synonyms that mean the same or be able to recognize which terms in a synonym dictionary or online are equivalents with the same meanings. (FGI: P11)

4.1.4 Speaking

Oral presentations were found to be particularly difficult, despite the fact that students considered speaking to be the easiest part of their studies. Academic words were a problem for all of the participants who had to give a talk.

Before my presentations, I had memorized new words, but when the time came, I forgot them and had to rely on my notes. (II: P1)

Earlier, we demonstrated that academic vocabulary is not a passive process but rather demands for deliberate methods of acquisition (Shen, 2013). It's likely that the person's inability to recall remembered material is due to the fact that the material was stored in cognitive function rather than activated vocabulary.

According to one participant:

In conversations with my superiors, I frequently forgot the new scientific terms I had memorized. A number of times while talking, I blanked out and had to start over because I couldn't think of the words I needed. (II: P12).

4.2 What are the Challenges that Postgraduate Saudi Arabian Students Face in Acquiring Academic Vocabulary

While RQ1's findings have some overlap, this section focuses on three main themes: Ineffective vocabulary learning practices, a lack of training, and a lack of input are all factors that contribute to a lack of academic vocabulary.

The amount of academic vocabulary required

All of the sample respondents agreed that studying the vocabulary of the general English language continues even after fluency in the language has been established. They also had the same views on the need of learning academic English vocabulary in college. One participant, for example, stated:

Many academic terms have multiple synonyms, and mastering them all takes a significant amount of effort. Possibly even after I've completed my courses. (FGI: P14)

4.2.1 Inefficient Vocabulary Learning Strategies

According to findings, participants used only rote memorization, context-based learning, vocabulary note-taking and bilingual dictionaries to learn new words. It's interesting to note that all three types of vocabulary were learned using the same methods by these participants (i.e. general, academic, and technical).

Most of those words learned through such strategies were forgotten by participants, as demonstrated by one of them:

Reading scientific articles is the most difficult job as I need to look many words up. It is also disappointing because I often look up the same words that I memorized before. (II: P13).

4.2.2 Lack of Training and Limited Input

There were only a limited number of opportunities to learn general vocabulary in academic settings, and participants stated that the primary source of vocabulary acquisition was through everyday speech in social situations, which is represented by cognitivism of second-language acquisition (Ellis, 1997). In the words of a fellow participant:

As you go through life, you naturally pick up new words. I'm picking them up no matter where I go or what I do in an English-speaking environment. I don't have to work so hard. (FGI: P3)

4.3 What Strategies do Postgraduate Saudi Arabian Students Use to Learn Academic Vocabulary

RQ3's findings reveal that participants primarily used three methods for learning new words: using a monolingual dictionary or rote memorization to learn new words, as well as trying to translate new items in to the Arabic and guessing their meanings based on context.

4.3.1 Monolingual Dictionaries and/or Translating New Items into L1

A few participants mentioned using dictionary if the meaning of a word was unclear in their native language, but they said they used monolingual dictionaries most often.

One participant noted:

[...] While doing light reading, I would look in the dictionary for new words. (FGI:P8)

4.3.2 Guessing the Meanings of Vocabulary from the Context

Because of inaccurate guesses, participants found that using the taking a guess from context strategic approach could lead to incorrect interpretations of texts.

When the lecturers were lecturing, I paid attention to what they were saying and tried to make sense of the words I didn't understand. I believe it improved my comprehension of lectures. However, it had no impact on my ability to expand my vocabulary. Because I didn't look up and memorize the words in a dictionary. (II: P12)

4.3.3 Rote Memorization of Vocabulary

For each participant, there was a specific word or phrase that they could identify visually but could not remember its meaning.

When my supervisor said the terms that I had remembered, I recognized them but couldn't recall what they meant. (II: P11)

4.4 Do Students Who Report the Most Challenges Tend to Have the Least Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Table 1 Summarizes the techniques and difficulties that participants reported.

Table 1. Vocabulary-Learning Strategies and Obstacles of the Participants

Planning	Challenges
using multilingual dictionaries and translating new items into the first language	loss of the vocabulary Having no idea how many words to use
using context clues to deduce what a word means	Methods that are ineffective Interlocutor understanding is a problem.
Memorizing a list of words and phrases	Texts are difficult to understand. Texts are difficult to paraphrase The difficulty to recall words while speaking.

The results of the research have been summarized in this chapter. Initially, the study indicated that the most common challenges students had in their education were in listening and speaking in academic environments, and in reading comprehension. Interview schedules and a focus group discussion were used to investigate the difficulties of learning academic language.

5. Discussion

What the study revealed and what its implications are the focus of Chapter Five, which lays out all of the findings in detail.

5.1 The Challenges of Learning Academic Vocabulary

5.1.1 Difficulties with the Four Language Skills

According to this study's findings, academic vocabulary acquisition is difficult for students for a variety of reasons. These include difficulty holding a conversation and listening in academic settings as well as difficulty following along in written assignments that require the ability to read aloud and paraphrase (Hirvela, 2016).

5.1.2 Limited Vocabulary Learning Strategies

A common reading comprehension strategy used by participants of the study was to guess the meaning of unfamiliar terms. Furthermore, they admitted the fact that their guesses were frequently wrong. Readers must

have a high degree of familiarity with a text's running lexical items and multi-word items connected with collocations in order to comprehend it well (e.g. Larson and Smith, 2000; Coxhead, 2016; Hu, 2000; Nation, 2000; Nation, 2006).

5.1.3 Similar Challenges Related to the Use of the Same Strategies

All of the study participants had a lot in common when it came to their struggles and their approaches. This could indicate that the same techniques lead to the same difficulties. Results show that participants often forgot new lexical words that had seen or heard multiple times and sought to store in long term memory, as evidenced by their inability to recall them correctly. A surprising number of participants claimed that they had a significantly easier time remembering and learning technical vocabulary that was special to their fields of study, which supports the idea that many academic vocabularies are best learnt in the setting of discipline-specific research (Hyland & Tse, 2007).

5.2 Limitations of the Study

It is impossible to generalize the findings of this study to communities outside of individuals who were invited to participate (Merriam, 2009), in this case Saudi Arabian postgraduate students at New Zealand universities. Transferability can be addressed in particular research (Edge & Richards, 1998). That is to suggest, language teachers who work with similar pupils in similar settings may find this study's findings useful.

5.3 Implications and Recommendations

Both English-medium tertiary institutions and Saudi Arabia's preparatory programs are addressed in the study. Students in EAL programs should be made aware of the challenges they confront and provided with assistance when they need it, starting with their postgraduate programs. Grad students are expected to conduct much of their own vocabulary learning, therefore they require assistance in improving existing self-study skills and finding outside resources, such as language specialists, when their previously learned strategies don't work as well as they should. Academic vocabulary tools (like the AWL) could be introduced to students at English-medium universities as they begin their studies. The AWL can be used in a variety of fields. Independent study can be aided and facilitated by being aware of and adept at utilizing such resources.

Participants in this study appear to use the same methods they used in Saudi Arabia to learn general vocabulary. It's obvious that this has led to problems. Providing workshops on study skills, with an emphasis on vocabulary building, to all international students seems like a good idea. For academic vocabulary learning, non-credit-bearing workshops may be beneficial. This study would be of great help to Saudi students.

5.4 Further Research

Further investigation is needed to have a more complete picture of the situation.

To begin, the research is based on the personal reflections among 15 Saudi Arabian university students studying in New Zealand. Despite the fact that case study reports might provide valuable information, future investigations with a larger number of participants can provide a more complete picture of the issues experienced. Secondly, there were both male and female participants in this study. To find out if there are any variations between the sexes, further research could focus on one gender or compare the gender component.

Everyone in this study who took part found themselves having trouble learning academic language since they didn't know much about how to do it and didn't have a lot of solutions for dealing with their problems. According to the findings, access to academic vocabulary did not boost the likelihood of students picking up new words on their own. In fact, the findings of the study imply that in order to improve one's vocabulary, it is necessary to employ deliberate learning procedures that include the use of vocabulary-enhancing technologies. In addition, the study found that incorrect vocabulary acquisition methods might lead to frustration and a lack of motivation.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study show that all participants had difficulty with academic vocabulary during the duration of their studies, primarily due to a lack of background information and learning strategies designed to help them overcome these issues. Academic vocabulary exposure did not result in an increase in the probability of spontaneous vocabulary acquisition. Rather, the research implies that deliberate vocabulary acquisition is essential, and that this acquisition must be based on effective learning procedures, such as the utilization of vocabulary acquisition tools. In addition, the research showed that using ineffective methods for acquiring a new vocabulary might lead to frustration and a decline in motivation.

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