

Learn Academic Words In Practice

Book 2

یادگیری کلمات آکادمیک
به صورت کاربردی
(کتاب دوم)

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Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the fundamental aspects of language learning. One challenge faced by most language learners is knowing what words are worth learning, especially in reading and writing academic texts (Shaw, 1991). Most university students and those preparing for international English language exams like IELTS and TOEFL might encounter difficulties in terms of mastering the academic words underlying the skills tested in these exams. What makes learning academic words difficult for many university students is the low frequency of academic words compared to general words.

To cover this need and to provide learners with the essential words for the mastery of academic words, several researchers have developed academic word lists (Campion & Elley, 1971; Xue & Nation, 1984); however, they lacked consistent principles of selection. A reliable source of selection for academic words should comprise frequently occurring words in many kinds of texts as well as those which are restricted to a particular register (Atkins, Clear, & Ostler, 1992; Biber, 1993; Praninskas, 1972, Sinclair, 1991). The academic word list (Coxhead, 2000) was developed based on a corpus based study. It was compiled from a corpus of 3.5 million running words of academic texts in Law, Arts, Commerce, and Science through examination of its frequency and range of words. The academic word list (AWL) consists of 570 word families accounting for 10 percent of academic texts (Coxhead & Nation, 2001). In addition, Cobb and Horst (2004) indicated that the knowledge of the AWL played a pivotal role in the comprehension of the medical texts. In their corpus of 190425 running words, the AWL accounted for 10% of the medical articles including the abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections. Moreover, Mudraya (2006) found similarities between her corpus of engineering English texts and those of the AWL. Also, Vongpumivitch, Huang, and Chang (2009) explored the frequency and range

of the AWL words in the Applied Linguistics Research Articles Corpus and found that they accounted for 11% of the entire corpus of applied linguistics.

Thus, the AWL can be really effective in setting goals for academic courses and developing materials for teaching and learning English. However, the AWL should not be interpreted as learning a decontextualised body of vocabulary. Instead, materials should be developed and designed with optimal conditions for learning the AWL. That is, opportunities for repeated exposures of the academic words should be optimized. An increasing number of ESL textbooks focusing on the AWL have been recently published, such as Schmitt and Schmitt (2005), Huntley (2005), Wells (2007), and Burgmeier and Zimmerman's *Inside Reading* series (2007). However, they have focused on an incidental and indirect coverage of the AWL.

Academic Word List in Practice has been developed to cover direct teaching of and optimizing the conditions for learning academic words. Research studies have confirmed that materials focusing on the direct and intentional instruction of language features, and vocabulary in particular, result in more optimal learning than courses relying on incidental learning. (Ellis, 1990; Long, 1988). The aim of the book is to improve English Language Learners' repertoire of academic word list not just at the knowledge level but also at the levels of comprehension, application, and synthesis.

Academic Word List in Practice is a series of ten volumes setting short term vocabulary learning goals based on the AWL subdivisions. The AWL has been divided into 10 rank ordered sublists containing 60 items according to the decreasing frequency of word families. This volume focuses on the second sublist. The 60 items of this list plus the first sublist account for half of the total coverage of the AWL (Coxhead, 2000).

Academic Word List in Practice provides learners with visual comprehension texts, examples in use, concept maps, excerpts from the literature, and practical exercises. Visually mediated examples can contribute

to the learners' retention of the academic words with an appropriate level of contextualization. Besides, the images in the book have been piloted for several times to be checked for their level of assimilation and suitability for the context of each word. In addition, the use of concept maps can form an episodic buffer of the network of each academic word; thus, a synthetic image of each academic word comprising the word itself and its closely related words can emerge in learners' mind which can set the stage for a meaningful learning. Besides, practical exercises raise the awareness of the AWL and facilitate the formation of a schematic view towards the AWL in learners' mind, which underlies the main skills of academic listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

I hope that this volume can contribute to a practical insight into the AWL words as well as providing the university students with a comprehensive knowledge of the second sublist of the AWL.

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