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E-Voc Strategies to Develop Academic Vocabulary for EFL Working Learners

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Abstract:

The growth of working students in college increases significantly. This issue ignites lectures to find a suitable teaching strategy. ICT is a sophisticated medium to stimulate EFL lecturers and students to learn vocabulary. One of the products of ICT is e-voc strategy. An e-voc strategy is an electronic-based strategy used by lecturers to enhance students' capability in learning vocabulary. The strategy covers the areas of applications, sources, and vocabulary instruction. This article shares the benefits and drawbacks of the e-voc [14] strategies both for lecturers and students especially to develop their understanding about academic vocabulary. A survey of students' responses and discussions on their participatory process leads to insights on how the e-Voc strategy helps achieve the required competences.

Key words: e-voc strategies, ICT, EFL, academic vocabulary, working learners

Introduction

Teaching academic vocabulary for working undergraduate students will be more challenging than teaching regular students. Working learners are individuals already in the workforce who are needed wage earners for themselves or their families. A working learner can be married or single, male or female, or a child living with a parent whose earnings are critical to family income (Soares, 2009). [12] More students are working, and they are working more hours than ever before. Many can afford to attend only part-time, extending the years until they graduate and more come to our campuses underprepared for college. More are overwhelmed by too many choices and too little structure, causing aimless wandering and wasted semesters and years. All of this adds up to more and more time. When students' life fills up with jobs, relationships, marriages, and children, the students will put their education life as a second priority.

Teaching English in a country where English as a foreign language will have extra works to do to find out viable ways to teach the subject, engage students in the instruction, and get them to use the vocabulary. In a situation where the learners are working students, lectures needs strategies and policies to teach academic vocabulary considering some of crucial issues on working students, such as: often coming late to class, skipping some meetings in a semester, and having not enough time to do class assignments. Those factors should be taken into consideration in making policies and constructing strategies for teaching academic vocabulary. [13] According to Flynt and Brozo academic vocabulary is word knowledge that makes it possible for students to engage with, produce, and talk about the text that are valued in school (2008). Academic vocabulary is used in academic situations, such as: doing written assignment, reading internet articles, reading subject textbooks, reading non-fictions, and listening to prepare lectures. It is believed that teaching academic vocabulary with good strategies will help students to easily acquire it for their success in academic life.

The main problem in teaching academic vocabulary for working learners is that many words that need to be taught but the students only have a limited time in the classroom. Based on the situation described above, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) will become a good solution to cope with this issue. The world moves rapidly into digital media and information. [19] The role of ICT in education is very essential and more educational systems will apply ICT in teaching learning in the 21st century. [19] The use of ICT in education lends itself to more self-based learning settings. [16] Becker (2000) found that ICT increases student engagement, which leads to an increased amount of time students spend working outside class. One of the products of ICT is e-Voc strategies to enhance teaching learning academic vocabulary. [0] An e-Voc strategy is an electronic or technology-based strategy that lectures can use to develop students' vocabulary learning and interest in words (Dalton & Grisham, 2001). [0] The use of term e-Voc is both to highlight that the strategies rely

on digital tools and resources and to suggest the evoking of learning potential that is possible when technology and media are part of the instructional mix. [15]►
    A persistent question for parents and educators has been whether work harms educational performance or expectations for further education. [7]► Understanding who works, why, and the effects that work has on academic success and college financing may help institution leaders and policy makers craft policies to help [8]► students balance their need and desire to work with their academic priorities. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to find out e-voc strategies (applications, sources, and vocabulary instruction), the benefits, and the drawbacks.

Theoretical Framework

Academic Vocabulary

    Traditionally, L2 vocabulary knowledge has been regarded as consisting of two types: (a) receptive (or 'passive') knowledge, where learners recognize and understand words when they come across them, and (b) productive (or 'active') knowledge, where learners are able to use words in speaking and writing, with correct control of collocation, register and word-grammar. [4]► The English Language has a very large vocabulary, estimated to between 450,000 and 750,000 words. [4]► English has evolved from contact with Anglo-Saxon English, Spanish, French, Greek and Latin to name a few. [4]► Vocabulary Intervention involves three tiers: Tier 1 is basic words, Tier 2 is high frequency words used in many settings. [4]► There are approximately 7,000 words in Tier 2, and Tier 3 is low frequency words which are specific to classes.
    Academic vocabulary, as the most challenging aspect of English language learning, has received much attention in the last few decades. From these findings, it can be said that academic words play an important role in academic texts and material as well syllabus designers and teachers' direct attention to these words can lead to a better understanding of these words, hence, students' development in their writing and reading. [2]►

Teaching Academic Vocabulary

    Learning vocabulary does not only mean to understand the definition of single words or collocations [2]► but it also requires the knowledge of how words fit into context. Therefore it is very difficult to be fully [2]► mastered by students. Vocabulary learning does not officially count among the language skills (which are listening, speaking, reading and writing) but it might be included there as there is no way of making progress in language without building vocabulary that can be then applied into grammar and create meaningful utterances through which people communicate among themselves. According to Graves (2006), there are four essential components of vocabulary instruction:
    1. Providing rich and varied language experiences.
    2. Fostering word consciousness.
    3. Teaching individual words explicitly.
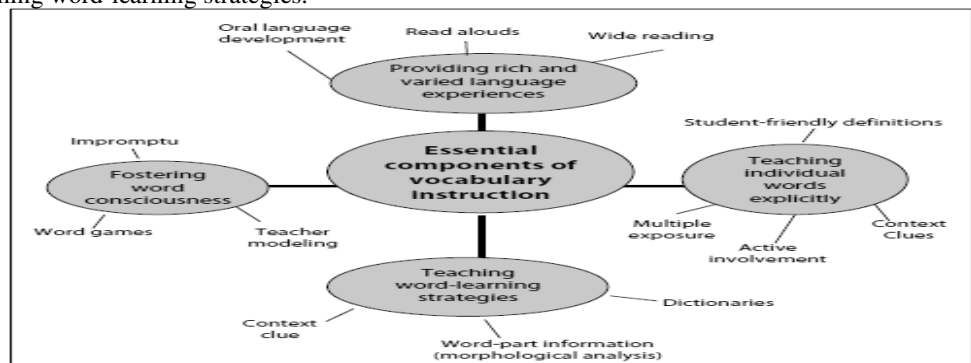   4. Teaching word-learning strategies.

Figure 1. The four essential components of vocabulary instruction. Adapted from Graves, 2006. [5]►

Teaching-Learning Academic Vocabulary and ICT

Technology can be a great asset in EFL classrooms, offering authentic activities and endless resources, for examples: films or videos, applications supporting teaching learning English, podcasts, games, etc., According to Krois-Lindner, the internet has endless possibilities to develop coherent and fully integrated authentic materials suitable for building ESP vocabulary using ICT (2008). In line with Vrasidas and McIssac (1999) who believed that the online environment offers both the teacher and learners a space to share knowledge and interact with each other to facilitate the learning process. It can be said that the online environment can assist students in developing self-regulated learning and it can also encourage teachers to develop teaching academic vocabulary strategies. The success of the use technology to enhance teaching-learning academic vocabulary relies on how teachers are able to create strategy learning approaches to reach the goal since one of the issues emerges in online environment is media-rich environments that are complex and result in information overload (Jereb & Smitek, 2006; Palmer & Holt, 2009).

An e-Voc strategy is an electronic or technology-based strategy that lectures can use to develop students' vocabulary learning and interest in words (Dalton, B. & Grisham, D.L., 2001). The use of term e-Voc both to highlight that the strategies rely on digital tools and resources and to suggest the evoking of learning potential that is possible when technology and media are part of the instructional mix. Dalto and Grisham (2001) have conducted a research in finding e-Voc strategies to build vocabulary. On that research, Dalton and Grisham suggests 10 ways to use technology to increase understanding vocabulary by using technology. In line with the previous research, this paper tries to highlight the e-Voc strategies specifically for academic vocabulary for EFL working students.

Methods

The Course

The course is Basic Vocabulary which is offered for the 1st semester. The class will meet once a week for 100 minutes. In one semester students will attend 14 meetings. During the course, the teachers will introduce 70% of academic and 30% of non-academic vocabulary. Standard competency for this course is students are expected to recognize, understand, and comprehend vocabulary to support their education and working life.

The Subjects

To recapitulate, the purpose of this study is to produce an overall picture of the use of ICT to develop teaching strategy especially for teaching and learning academic vocabulary (e-Voc strategies). There are 23 students in basic vocabulary class in which 20 students are working students. They are around 18-20 years old. This age indicates that they are familiar with gadgets and digital applications. The writers asked them to fill in questionnaires. The results as the following:

1) 90% spend 1-4 hours a day on internet.
2) 100% have social media accounts.
3) 80% agree to use technology and internet to support education.

From the result of the questionnaires, most of the students consider that internet based learning is very helpful. Regarding that the subjects are working students, they extremely found of implementing ICT-based instruction in the classroom since they are able to learn more in less time.

Data Triangulation

After conducting and observing the application of e-Voc strategies for a semester, the students were asked to fill the survey. Below are the responses of the survey:

1) 75% of the students enjoy the use of internet to increase and understand new vocabulary.
2) 80% of the students strongly agree that they learn more from internet applications and websites suggested by the teachers.

To ensure the data finding that the students really achieved progress in academic vocabulary understanding by using e-Voc strategies, the writer provided two online tests. The first is Receptive

Vocabulary Test from: www.norbertschmitt.co.uk/resource.html, and the second test is Productive Vocabulary Test from www.lextutor.ca/tests/levels/productive/ .

Findings and Discussion

Based on the four essential components of vocabulary instructions proposed by Graves (2006), it is identified four findings that provide e-Voc strategies for teaching learning academic vocabulary. The findings are:

1. To provide rich and varied language experiences related to academic vocabulary, teachers can encourage their students to read in wide areas of topics that have already written in syllabus and continue by discussing in classroom. To support this activities, the e-Voc strategies are:
   a. Encourage students to connect with the world using e-socmed (e.g. skype, myenglishclu.com, etc).
   b. Take education virtual field trip (e.g. Artic Adventure, Museum of Natural History, White House, etc.)
   c. Reading online journals
2. To foster academic vocabulary consciousness, teachers can enhance the awareness or interest of their students in academic words and their meanings, noticing words, and learning new words by using the e-Voc strategies, such as:
   a. Learning from vocabulary games (e.g. learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/vocabulary-games)
   b. Paraphrasing sentences (e.g. csgenerator.com)
3. To teach individual academic vocabulary explicitly, teachers can stimulate students to get in-depth knowledge to understand the meaning of words. Teachers can also select words needed to understand content-specific texts. The e-Voc strategies are:
   a. Learning from visual displays of word relationships within text (e.g.worsift.org)
   b. Expose to academic word list (e.g. englishvocabularyexercise.com)
4. To teach academic vocabulary-learning strategies, teachers can increase their students understanding about components of word structures by explaining about root and affixation process, and word family. The e-Voc strategy for this activity is:
   a. Manage complex information about the selected words by using mind mapping software (e.g. xmind.net/features/, freemind.sourceforge.net)

There is not one best approach to directly teaching academic vocabulary. The method chosen should reflect how extensively we want our students to understand the vocabulary selected (Beck et al., 2002). The lucid syllabus which describes objective of the study and students competency must be used as a benchmark in developing e-Voc strategies. Technology and internet are only tools used to assist and support teaching learning particularly for academic vocabulary easier and more interesting. Teachers have an essential role as an educator as well as a facilitator who provides students with suitable sources and vigorous strategies to reach the teaching learning objectives. Selecting precise websites and online materials will expose students to more academic words. E-voc strategies will ignite students to recognize academic words in interesting ways and they will be able to have many opportunities to apply their knowledge of the words during reading, writing, and discussion with their peers. To implement the e-Voc strategies, it is necessary as well to build strong scaffolding. Scaffolding can assist students on many levels of engagement from technical support content support, procedural support, and encouraging reflecting and rationalizing actions (Reingold et al., 2008).

Instead of the benefits, however, there must be drawbacks in using ITC. It is believed that online environment is media-rich environments that are complex and result in information overload (Jereb & Smitek, 2006; Palmer & Holt, 2009). Students may be overwhelmed by the large amount of information in internet and many junks websites which are very tempting. These negative effects of the online environment must be taken into consideration by teachers in developing e-Voc strategies.

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