

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR AGRICULTURE

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Abstract This paper is aimed to highlight the need of extending a general academic vocabulary to the students of agriculture study program on English materials. It is focused in presenting vocabulary used mostly for specific purposes, namely agriculture. Academic vocabulary should be suitable for all the needs of the students from all cycles, although here we are referring to the bachelor one, whether it is used in classes, for reading the agriculture materials or just practicing the theories on the field, or even when the students are prepared for facing the real world of work. A good knowledge of the English academic vocabulary in the field of Agriculture will improve all the skills of the students: speaking skills (speaking with fluency, good pronunciation, good conversation with specific agriculture terms), as well as reading ones and comprehension (understanding the main ideas of the text, presenting reports in/from the field, skimming and scanning activities). Furthermore, we have noticed that a lot of words of general use started to have academic meaning in our corpus, and that is why we consider to be taken into account as academic vocabulary. Consequently, we have identified the need to create field-specific academic word lists, to be used when teaching English to agriculture students, giving them the possibility to assimilate these words and to incorporate them in their day-by-day English vocabulary use. Delivering to the students an academic English vocabulary from a specific field, namely here, agriculture will contribute to complete their profile, helping them to become professionals, in an international labor market, where specialists are required. English teachers from Agriculture field could implement the use of academic vocabulary based on the variety or diversity of agriculture terms, being aware that vocabulary learning strategies must be purposefully taught, to improve the existing situation, and contribute to their professional profiles.

Keywords: English, academic, vocabulary, teaching, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Academic vocabulary in teaching English for Agriculture is very important to be implemented in nowadays teaching methods and materials, from the early beginning (CARTER et al., 1988). Students, teachers and researchers in each discipline use academic writing and vocabulary to convey ideas and make arguments and engage in academic conversations. Academic writing and vocabulary is characterized by evidence-based arguments, the exact choice of words, specific to the appropriate field of Agriculture, like the ESP language, logical organization of words, based on agriculture's specific fields and areas, and an impersonal tone, of course (BAKER et al., 1988). Although it was sometimes thought to be so long or inaccessible, strong academic vocabulary is the exact opposite: it informs, and gives a clear and specific meaning, in a direct way, allowing the student to engage in a conversation or to formulate phrases within a scientific dialogue.

Agricultural science courses comprise a wide area of organic sciences relying on many sectors and with utilization in agricultural procedures. Specific classes reaching this subject of study comprises animal husbandry, main horticulture, as well as soiling and insecticides. Excepting this type of classes, some others that can be provided, comprising flora

and fauna study, environment, climate change and gestion of natural resources. Landscaping is also part of the classes which might be provided within the wide are of Agriculture (EDWARDS et all., 1981).

The reasons for which the students might have the choice of studying all the above mentioned sciences related to agriculture, are diverse, either to complete their professional profile and become true specialists within the areas they have chosen, or to develop their knowledge about the environmental sciences (BUSKIST et all., 2001).

Most of them, after graduating these specific areas and having a recognised degree within the field of Agriculture, will become either farmers, advisers in public offices from chambers of agriculture, or consultancy offices, or employees in public/private organisms, such as companies, NGOs, at national or international level.

However, all the provided classes, open new opportunities for the attendees, giving them a global overview of the worldwide agricultural context. Classes are offered also on line, which may be considered an opportunity in the current and future context (FERGUSON, 2002).

Even if one may say that academic vocabulary is meant only for specialized discussions, or for publications, English for agriculture, taught using academic vocabulary, leads to framing the personality of the future engineer, actual student, towards a professional and a specialist, not only in knowing how to implement the acquired knowledge but also how to transmit it and express it, either in writing but also when speaking and communicating.

On the other hand, English language is the most used and taught and we could also say that it is one of the most significant academic languages. It includes specific terms, and it may seem that using English academic vocabulary may seem more complicated, but more intelligent at the same time. It also confers self-confidence and self-esteem. Using academic vocabulary generally, but especially in Agriculture gives no place for rhetorical or flowery speech. Students may find it difficult but it has been proved that it is in the same time , psychologically fascinating, and it appears that we trust more complicated languages.

Using a specific and general academic English vocabulary in the field of agricultural sciences and when teaching all the related classes, gives a clear overview on the importance of the need of having specific vocabulary and word data basis, wordlists, and a much closer approach of the students to the academic corpus of all the research papers and articles within the field of agricultural sciences. Analysing the importance of all specific word data basis within the filed, one may notice that it is highly recommended to know and learn all the meanings, because most of the words have specific meanings and connotations, being included in the academic area, together with their technical meaning (MOORE, 2004).

Especially non-native English speakers have increased their interest in the last couple of years, on the specific vocabulary and its academic component, requested when doing research and scientific papers.

Additionally we noticed that a lot of words having general utilization got academic significance within the corpus, being consequently regarded as part of academic vocabulary. Recent research prove the intention and the importance of producing area-particular academic word data basis that, according to our opinion, could include the most used academic vocabulary in order to express the rhetorical side of the research area.

Most of those interested in learning and acquiring specific vocabulary are graduate students but also those who perform research in contexts where English is a foreign language (EFL), because their interest in publishing in English language touches and involves academic vocabulary, being a must in achieving a scientific paper.

Academic vocabulary represents an important part from the sub fields of vocabulary, respectively, high frequency words, academic vocabulary, technical vocabulary and low frequency words, where part of the English language was reunited in order to create pedagogical purposes (BAUER, et al., 1993). The high frequency words and the academic ones were gathered in more vocabulary lists, Coxhead's AWL (2000) and West's GSL (1953), being taken into account as priority when teaching vocabulary classes, including shaping and increase of development materials.

Academic vocabulary started to be considered and analysed to be common to academic texts from different types of texts and areas, resulting that, when compared with technical one, it is much more preferred and accessible for a foreign language professor, this observation pointing out its advantage. (NATION et al., 2001)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Some of the most useful methods when preparing lessons for students, namely, when choosing texts to be studied and analyzed, could involve the following steps:

1. **Identification** of the specific fields of expertise, with proper short examples.
2. **Explanation** using common synonyms, giving again examples.
3. **Translation**, into mother tongue, with multi sense exemplifications.
4. **Rephrasing** with own words, most of the meanings.
5. **Practicing and exercising** with gap filling exercises.
6. **Role play** activities in small or medium groups of students with given words.

These methods could be used for different levels from beginners to advanced students, increasing the level of difficulty according to the level of the class/group.

There are several areas of expertise in the agriculture and several fields, and consequently, academic vocabulary should be taught according to each one of them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

When teaching Academic English vocabulary with specific purposes, such as in our case, Agriculture, once we have identified the target areas, according to the study program we refer to, and of course, the study cycle, namely, bachelor, master of PhD, the structure of the teaching class and the methods themselves are different and more or less complex.

The academic vocabulary is not the same, as the degree of complexity of the study cycles is.

Using academic vocabulary in teaching English for bachelor could not be the same as for master, respectively PhD.

Developing Vocabulary Particularities, tips and hints:

- Words must be used in separate sentences. In the beginning, practice [speaking-speechmaking](#). Then, note and mark the phrases and the sentences. By using all the words several times, it will enable recognition and remembering of the new ones.

- Only after making several sentences, you should make an attempt in writing an entire paragraph with identic words.

- Acquire all the meanings of the synonyms and antonyms with the help of an on line Thesaurus, or a data basis glossary in order to enrich all vocabulary for agriculture and related sciences.

- Particular equipment may be learned with the help of a visual dictionary.

- Interaction with co-workers may lead to acquiring new words and their meanings' use in different contexts and situations, and asking them about the use of different senses might also enrich your vocabulary and knowledge.

The importance of academic English

- The course might be not a long academic course that requires students to achieve specific tasks to obtain a passing score. Courses usually take several months of work per week to complete.

- What does it mean, an academic English course? The focus of the academic English course is to provide students with more knowledge and understanding of English so that they can write academic papers and academic papers proficiently and competently. Through the topics covered in this study plan, students will learn how to fully express their ideas, how to increase their educational vocabulary, how to organize certain types of writing, how to avoid grammar and punctuation errors, and how to analyze certain types of text (KNIGHT, 2001).

- Achieving academic English courses can help students improve the way they organize themselves, their management of time, but also the language skills, and the capability to read and write in a professional English, college level, with appropriate vocabulary. All of them, even native English speakers, can taken advantage of having academic English courses.

- Course fees may vary depending on the type of the institution but also on the time necessary for each student to achieve the duties. In order to have a clearer overview, they should try to define their priorities, either to try to learn by following additional classes on line or to attend the classes. Having the possibility in an university to provide at the English classes academic English for Agriculture will attract the students more, spare money for their families and create professionals for the very start.

- Students who have completed academic English courses can use their improved language, literacy and communication skills to find careers in various professional fields, such as business, administration, education, public service and entertainment. Graduates can choose to serve as office administrators, project managers, human resources directors, school office managers, customer service representatives, and even writers and editors for local publications.

- Achieving academic English courses can help students learn the basic practical and professional skills required in the day by day activity in specific professional surroundings and environment.

- An university with specific faculties and study programmes, may introduce in the teaching of modern English language one ESP module for medium and advanced levels, optional class or on line course, dedicated to those who intend to become professionals on an international market in a continue development and with more and more high demands of polyglot specialists.

Some word meanings in the AgroCorpus There were academic words from the AgroCorpus that were used with technical rather than academic meaning. The word culture provides an example of a word from the AWL used with technical meaning in the field studied. When observing the frequent sequences of words that accompany this word, or its clusters (DORNYEI, 2001), it was revealed that culture was used with meanings associated with agriculture, meaning “cultivation of plants” (blueberry cell cultures, cultures were grown, cultures were maintained, cultures were incubated, size fractionated culture) and to biology (the culture medium, chitin broth culture, block liquid culture), meaning “experimental growth of microorganisms in a nutrient substance” (HUTCHINSON et al., 1987). This example adds further evidence to the point made by Hyland and Tse (2007) that disciplines use words with preferred meanings and collocational behaviour, as well as to the problems of homography identified by both Gairns, R. & Redman, (GAIRNS et al., 1993) and Jordan (JORDAN, 2007). Also, the collocations of the word strategy in our corpus further add to the examples provided by Gairns, R. & Redman, to illustrate the tendency of words to have field-related collocational patterns. These authors found marketing strategy in business, learning strategy in applied

linguistics and coping strategy in sociology. In the AgroCorpus, the common collocates were specific to the field, such as control strategies, management strategies, and adaptation strategy.

Frequency of the ten top families from the AWL and the GSL with academic meaning in the AgroCorpus.

Words from the AWL		Words from the GSL with academic function	
Significant	1912	Used	4013
Analysis	1542	Treatment	3429
Data	1502	High	2649
Site	1247	Experiments	2424
Area	1105	Different	2314
Variation	992	Table	2053
Response	982	Increased	1784
Similar	947	Effect	1756
Sequence	849	Low	1669
Environments	799	Applied	1601
Total	11,877	Total	23,692

CONCLUSION

All the given results are able to give us very specific data and correlations between the taught subjects including academic vocabulary, highlighted and classified according to different study programmes and curricula, particular for Agriculture and related fields.

Our learners are a clear example of students that acquire their language as they need it for their specific purposes, and do it by contributing their knowledge of science, of their specific topic of science, and of what it means to do science, although they are usually unaware of even basic grammatical rules.

Our results also lend support to the argument that vocabulary should be taught considering the students' specific target context, (McKAY, 2006). The argument in favour of the use of a general academic word list may be valid in contexts where English is a second language, as is the context of academic writing courses for international students in English-speaking countries (DUDLEY-EVANS et al., 1998). These courses address learners of different linguistic backgrounds and different fields of study.

A specific focus on academic vocabulary involving a reduced – though with high coverage – list of words, allows for the possibility that the learners contribute their vast knowledge of their specific fields. In this way, both motivation and self-esteem may be increased, since the learners would be exposed to lexical items that they are somewhat familiar with, that they can recognize as part of the texts that they manipulate. In our view, a list of academic words should be a set of options to build the rhetoric of a text, providing all the necessary word data basis, including different criteria of classification, according to the specificity of the audience and the profile of the class of students, their interest and profile.

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