Vietnamese EFL English-Majored Students' Perceptions of Academic Vocabulary in Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Academic vocabulary is used extensively in argumentative writing to enhance the clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of the writing. This study examines the perception of academic vocabulary among EFL English-majored students, specifically on the importance of confidence and difficulties in using vocabulary, the perceived effect on writing, and the ways of learning it. The research designed combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the instruments used included a 20 item self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with 218 participants. Using descriptive statistical analysis, the study found that although the students appreciated the importance of academic vocabulary in enhancing their arguments, a majority of them had problems in selecting the right words, made mistakes, and even distinguished between general and academic vocabulary. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data also revealed the challenges encountered by students and the learning strategies they preferred, such as explicit instruction, structured exercises, and online resources. The results of the study showed that implementing systematic academic vocabulary teaching in writing courses may help students to gain confidence and competence in writing arguments. The implications for teaching highlight the importance of focused vocabulary teaching and learning to assist EFL learners in academic settings.

TÓM TẮT

Từ vựng học thuật được sử dụng rộng rãi trong viết văn nghị luận để nâng cao tính rõ ràng, sự mạch lạc và tính thuyết phục của bài viết. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện để tìm hiểu nhận thức về từ vựng

học thuật của sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh (sinh viên chuyên Anh), cụ thể là về tầm quan trọng của sự tự tin và những khó khăn trong việc sử dụng từ vựng, tác động cảm nhận được của nó đến việc viết và các phương pháp học từ vựng. Thiết kế nghiên cứu kết hợp cả phương pháp định lượng và định tính, các công cụ được sử dụng bao gồm bảng câu hỏi tự xây dựng gồm 20 câu hỏi và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc với 218 người tham gia. Sử dụng phân tích thống kê mô tả, nghiên cứu phát hiện rằng mặc dù các sinh viên đánh giá cao tầm quan trọng của từ vựng học thuật trong việc nâng cao các luận điểm của họ, phần lớn trong số họ gặp khó khăn trong việc chọn từ đúng, mắc lỗi và thậm chí phân biệt giữa từ vựng chung và từ vựng học thuật. Kết quả phân tích dữ liệu định tính cũng tiết lộ những thách thức mà sinh viên gặp phải và các chiến lược học tập mà họ yêu thích, chẳng hạn như phương pháp giảng dạy rõ ràng, bài tập luyện tập theo cấu trúc và tài nguyên trực tuyến. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng việc triển khai giảng dạy từ vựng học thuật một cách hệ thống trong các khóa học viết có thể giúp sinh viên tự tin và thành thạo hơn trong việc viết luận tranh luận. Từ đó có thể thấy, kết quả nghiên cứu này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của việc giảng dạy và học tập từ vựng tập trung để hỗ trợ người học EFL trong môi trường học thuật.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to incorporate academic vocabulary into the learning process in order to improve the quality of argumentative writing among English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. A good grasp of academic vocabulary helps students to express their ideas clearly, support their claims effectively, and make their writing more compelling and coherent [4]. Argumentative writing is one of the most common types of writing in academic discourse, and students are expected to develop well-evidenced claims in formal language. However, EFL learners are often inconsistent in choosing appropriate academic vocabulary, which affects their ability to express complex ideas concisely [11],[16]. These challenges can be attributed to low exposure to academic texts, poor vocabulary teaching and learning procedures, and the learners' low confidence in using complex lexical items in writing [9].

The reviewed literature also reveals that vocabulary learning is critical for the development of writing skills. For instance, Schmitt and Schmitt [20] point out that indirect learning strategies such as explicit instruction help learners to use academic terms effectively. Furthermore, the Academic Word List (AWL) has been identified as a useful tool in helping students develop their vocabulary for academic

writing [5]. However, some EFL learners still experience difficulties in identifying, employing, and distinguishing the academic vocabulary they can use in writing [25]. These challenges may result in students' tendency to use simpler words, thus leading to less complex and powerful writing [6].

Due to the above issues, this study aims to examine the perceptions of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing among EFL English-majored students. More specifically, it looks at their perception of the role of academic vocabulary, their self-efficacy and problems in employing it, the effects they think it has on their writing, and the strategies they use to learn vocabulary. From the students' perspectives, this study aims to find out how vocabulary instruction for academic purposes can be enhanced to benefit EFL learners. The results of the study contribute to the current research on vocabulary learning and academic writing, and the findings have implications for teachers and curriculum planners.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Introduction to Academic Vocabulary in EFL Contexts

The teaching of academic vocabulary in EFL contexts is an important part that should not be taken for granted. Academic vocabulary is essential in allowing students to properly interact with academic texts and produce their work in writing and speaking. In EFL contexts, the development of vocabulary is not only about looking up words and their meanings, but also understanding how to use them appropriately. This complexity makes it important to use proper

strategies in teaching vocabulary specifically for the EFL learners' situation.

A major difficulty in teaching academic vocabulary is the students' failure to use appropriate strategies to comprehend and retain the information. Almuhammadi also highlights the need to consider the strategies that learners employ in acquiring new words and encoding the information, while indicating that a needs analysis can be used to develop effective vocabulary instruction for the Saudi EFL setting [2]. Similarly, Astika and Kurniawan stated that learning vocabulary is a slow process and is important for the development of language fluency and actual communication. This is why educators need to organize vocabulary teach-ins that are not based on the students' memorization of the words. Furthermore, the integration of morphological knowledge into vocabulary instruction has been found to increase lexical complexity and the overall quality of academic writing produced by EFL students. Research by Thanh and Yen reveals that understanding the morphological structure of words can greatly affect students' writing quality and their capacity to express complex ideas [22]. This result is in concordance with the remaining literature that supports a systematic way of teaching vocabulary, with morphological awareness as one of the components.

The integration of media such as videos and technology such as apps in teaching and learning vocabulary has been found to be beneficial as well. Al-Jarf's research on the application of language learning apps like Quizlet revealed that these apps are helpful in enhancing the vocabulary development of EFL learners [1].

These tools are fun and entertaining to use and also offer students ways to practice at home which helps to reinforce learning. This is also supported by Guaqueta and Castro-Garcés in their study on the effectiveness of language learning apps as didactic tools for teaching and learning vocabulary in EFL settings [8]. Furthermore, the research proves that the use of strategy-based approaches in teaching vocabulary helps EFL learners improve their recognition and recall of academic words. Awabdeh et al. performed a study to determine the effectiveness of using explicit strategies in teaching students, and the result showed that the use of strategies enhanced the students' receptive vocabulary knowledge [8]. This is because vocabulary should be taught in a way that is deliberate and structured so that learners can understand more about the meanings of words and how they are used.

In conclusion, teaching academic vocabulary within EFL settings is a complex process that needs a systematic approach incorporating suitable methods, technology, and morphological knowledge. By identifying the specific challenges of EFL learners and applying research-informed strategies, instructors can enhance their students' vocabulary growth and language development to a large extent.

1.2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for vocabulary knowledge in EFL contexts can be effectively understood through the lenses of the framework [16], the AWL [4], and vocabulary learning strategies [20]. Each of these frameworks contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how vocabulary can be taught and learned in

academic settings. Within the framework proposed [16], vocabulary knowledge is categorized into three components that are interrelated and supportive of each other, namely form, meaning, and use. The 'form' aspect of the model focuses on the phonological and orthographic features of words, which are important in terms of identifying and producing words correctly. The 'meaning' component includes the literal as well as the figurative meaning of words, which is important in comprehension as well as production. Lastly, the 'use' component consists of knowledge of how words are used in various settings, including their part of speech and typical companions [18]. This framework highlights the stepwise nature of vocabulary learning, as students need to interact with words in multiple ways that move beyond the basic level of recognition and include elaborative rehearsal and meaningful context learning [23], [24].

The AWL [4] is important because it identifies a set of words frequently used in a variety of academic texts across different subject areas. The AWL consists of 570-word families that are not part of the 2000 most common words in English, making it particularly useful for EFL learners aiming to perform well in academic settings. These words can thus be incorporated into curricula to help learners enhance their academic literacy, as they are crucial for academic discourse. Research has also shown that AWL size is positively related to academic performance, supporting the significance of vocabulary teaching and learning [4].

Vocabulary learning strategies [20] are also incorporated into the present model to explain the

ways through which learners can acquire and retain academic vocabulary. These strategies are divided into direct and indirect strategies, emphasizing the importance of teaching vocabulary learning strategies. The direct strategies include repetition, mnemonic devices, and the use of vocabulary notebooks, while the indirect strategies involve more general language use, such as reading and conversation. For effective vocabulary instruction, these strategies should be integrated to achieve both depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge, ultimately benefiting learners' academic writing and comprehension skills [23], [24].

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of vocabulary knowledge in EFL contexts, as proposed, offers a good starting point for understanding the phenomena under review.

1.2.3 Academic vocabulary in rgumentative writing

The role of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing is crucial, as it enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of arguments and reflects the writer's proficiency in academic discourse. This discussion synthesizes various studies that explore the challenges and strategies associated with the use of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing, particularly within EFL contexts. Argumentative writing is a genre that requires students to express their position on a particular issue and back up their position with logical reasoning and evidence. Studies have pointed out that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are likely to experience challenges in this genre, specifically in developing a coherent argument and using appropriate language [14]. This challenge is

further exacerbated by the fact that students are expected to engage critically in the topics, which means that a rich vocabulary is required to express complex ideas [19]. The ability to formulate complex arguments is closely related to the students' control over academic vocabulary, which is the means of expressing their thoughts and persuading the audience.

Research also stresses the need for planning in the writing process, as more structured approaches can enhance students' performance in argumentative essays significantly [19]. This planning phase helps students to sort out their ideas and choose the right words that are relevant to the claims they are going to make. Besides, other studies emphasize the necessity of systematically integrating academic vocabulary learning into the writing process [19]. They claim that students should not only know the terms but also know how to use them within the context of their arguments.

The difficulties that EFL students face in argumentative writing often involve vocabulary, grammar, and text structure problems. Research indicates that EFL learners are constrained by vocabulary problems that affect their ability to make correct and effective arguments [19]. This result is supported by findings that stress the importance of focused vocabulary teaching to fill these gaps [2]. These challenges can be reduced through the inclusion of academic vocabulary teaching within writing programs to assist students in developing better, more organized, and persuasive argumentative writing. However, there is a gap in the literature on how students' learning of academic vocabulary through structured pedagogical approaches can enhance

their argumentative writing skills, which remains underexplored. Furthermore, the importance of the AWL cannot be overstated in this context. The AWL helps students build their academic vocabulary, which is essential for success in argumentative writing. By expanding their lexical repertoire, students can formulate their arguments more effectively and precisely. This is especially important in EFL contexts, where students may not have significant exposure to academic language [4], [21].

In conclusion, the acquisition of academic vocabulary is crucial for improving the argumentative writing skills of EFL learners. Educators can contribute to the improvement of students' writing skills by identifying challenges related to vocabulary use and incorporating structured vocabulary teaching into the curriculum. These findings also reveal the significance of a systematic approach to teaching academic writing in EFL contexts, one that takes into account the relationship between vocabulary knowledge, writing strategies, and argumentation skills.

1.2.4 EFL learners' perceptions of academic vocabulary

EFL learners' perceptions of academic vocabulary are crucial for understanding how they approach vocabulary acquisition and its application in academic contexts. This discussion synthesizes various studies that explore the significance of academic vocabulary, particularly the AWL, and how learners perceive its relevance to their academic success.

The AWL, introduced as a foundational resource for EFL learners, identifies words that are commonly used across a range of academic disciplines. The AWL comprises 570 word families that account for a significant portion of the vocabulary found in academic texts, making it essential for learners aiming to enhance their academic literacy [3]. Research indicates that familiarity with the AWL correlates positively with academic performance, as students who actively engage with these words tend to perform better in reading and writing tasks [8], [15]. For instance, studies highlight that low-frequency academic words from the AWL are often unknown to learners, suggesting a gap in vocabulary knowledge that could hinder academic success [12],[13]. This underscores the necessity for targeted instruction on the AWL to improve learners' comprehension and production of academic language.

Furthermore, the perceptions of learners regarding academic vocabulary greatly affect their motivation and engagement in using vocabulary learning strategies. This is because metacognitive strategies are important in vocabulary learning, and learners who are aware of how they learn are likely to be more successful [7]. Research also shows that students have a positive perception of AWL independent learning, as they believe it improves their academic communication [15]. Such perceptions are important because they encourage learners to use effective vocabulary learning strategies to achieve better academic results.

Moreover, the way academic vocabulary is taught and learned within specific contexts contributes to learners' perceptions. Some researchers caution against treating academic vocabulary as a fixed list, arguing that academic discourse is complex and varies across disciplines

and contexts [9]. This view suggests that EFL learners may benefit from exposure to discipline-based vocabulary lists, which can supplement the AWL and address their specific academic requirements. For instance, the creation of specialized academic word lists, such as the Science Academic Word List (SAWL), can provide learners with the particular vocabulary they need for their areas of study, thereby enhancing engagement and motivation [10].

In conclusion, EFL learners' perceptions of academic vocabulary, particularly as it relates to the AWL, are shaped by their understanding of its significance in academic contexts, their motivation to learn, and the instructional strategies employed. By fostering positive perceptions and providing targeted vocabulary instruction, educators can enhance learners' academic literacy and overall success in their studies.

1.2.5 Previous studies

The research shows that Vietnamese EFL students have problems learning academic vocabulary, which in turn affects their argumentative writing. Nhan's study also focuses on the cultural factors that affect Vietnamese students' writing and reveals that the students have problems with using vocabulary because they have not been exposed to and/or trained to use this language in academic settings [17]. This is in concurrence with Saputra and Febriyanti, who established that EFL learners make certain errors in their argumentative essays concerning vocabulary, grammar, and organization [19]. These challenges highlight the need for explicit and focused vocabulary teaching and learning sequences that are tailored to the unique linguistic

needs of argumentative writing. Furthermore, this paper reveals that the integration of successful teaching strategies can dramatically improve students' views of academic vocabulary and their writing skills. For example, Mayoo and Eto explained the advantages of incorporating argumentation-focused instruction, which not only enhances students' English language proficiency but also assists them in developing good argumentative texts [14]. This approach helps learners use academic vocabulary in real-life situations, thus giving them a better chance of using the vocabulary correctly in writing. Moreover, the role of morphological awareness in vocabulary growth has been highlighted by Thanh and Yen, who reported that students with better morphological knowledge had more complex and better-rated lexical richness in their academic essays than students with lower morphological knowledge [22]. It is therefore possible that incorporating morphological instruction into the curriculum could help students' vocabulary growth and, consequently, their argumentative writing performance.

In conclusion, Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing are shaped by their experiences with vocabulary challenges, the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and the support they receive from their teachers. By addressing these factors through targeted vocabulary instruction and supportive learning environments, educators can enhance students' academic writing skills and their overall confidence in using English.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Participants

The study comprised 218 English major students from universities in Can Tho City, in the age range of 18-22 years. To ensure that the sample was representative of English majors who write academic arguments, these participants were selected from the population. The criteria for participation required that all participants were currently enrolled in an English major program, had adequate language proficiency, and had been exposed to academic vocabulary. The participants were assigned to different academic years to enable the researchers to gather data from students with diverse experiences of using academic vocabulary in argumentative writing.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Demographic variable	Category	No. of participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	80	36.7%
	Female	138	63.3%
Age	18	40	18.3%
	19	52	23.9%
	20	55	25.2%
	21	39	17.9%
	22	32	14.7%
Language Proficiency	B1 (CEFR)	120	55.0%
	B2 (CEFR)	98	45.0%

2.2 Instrumentation

This 20-item questionnaire is designed to investigate EFL English majors' perceptions of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing (as shown in Table 2). It consists of two main sections: Perceptions of the importance of academic vocabulary (Items 1-10) and Challenges and strategies in using academic vocabulary (Items 11-20), where learners' views are measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The first section, which is based on a self-report academic vocabulary, including the confusion between general and academic words, difficulties in using the words correctly, and the consequences of having a limited vocabulary for writing effectiveness design, examines students awareness of the role of academic vocabulary in improving coherence, argumentation, and overall writing quality. develop logical arguments and, in turn, their academic performance. looks at how much of a role the mastery of the second section looks at the difficulties that students encounter in using It also academic vocabulary plays in their ability to Furthermore, it examines the extent of students' engagement with academic vocabulary learning strategies, such as word lists, dictionaries, explicit instruction, and self-study methods to see how these approaches are related to their writing development.

Table 2. Description of the questionnaire

Clusters	No. of items	Sample	Source
Importance of Academic Vocabulary	4	I believe that academic vocabulary is essential for writing effective argumentative essays.	Saputra et al. (2021)
Confidence and Challenges in Using Academic Vocabulary	6	I find it difficult to choose the right academic words when writing arguments.	Almuhammadi (2020)
Perceived Impact of Academic Vocabulary on Writing	4	Using academic vocabulary helps me structure my arguments more effectively.	Wangdi & Shimray (2022)
Strategies for Learning Academic Vocabulary	6	I benefit from using academic vocabulary exercises, such as gap-filling and word-matching tasks.	Nurjanah & Setiyaningsih (2022)

Note: The table does not include all items. Instead, only one item from each cluster is presented as a reference

The interview protocol included open-ended questions organized into four clusters corresponding to the questionnaire: Perceptions of Academic Vocabulary Importance, Challenges in Academic Vocabulary Use and Learning Strategies. This approach allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, providing richer, more detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary. The interviews were conducted either in person or via online platforms, depending on participants' availability and preference, ensuring flexibility and maximizing participation. Each interview was recorded with participants' consent, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis. This process aimed to identify recurring themes and patterns, adding depth to the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire.

2.3 Procedure

A 20-item comprehensive questionnaire was developed and made sure to align with the focus of the study, which is the Perceptions of Academic Vocabulary among EFL English majors in their argumentative writing. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections:

Perceptions of Academic Vocabulary Importance and Challenges and Strategies in Academic Vocabulary Use, which included aspects such as students' knowledge of the various types of vocabulary used in academic writing, the role it plays in argumentation, the difficulties that come with using it, and the strategies that can be used to learn it. The questionnaire was administered online which helped in collecting data easily from a large number of participants. The responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to determine the learners' experiences, perceptions, and challenges with regard to the use of academic vocabulary in writing.

To complement the quantitative data from the questionnaire, the third step involved semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants to gather more in-depth, qualitative data on students' perspectives, learning experiences, and strategies concerning academic vocabulary. The interview questions were grouped into four clusters which were in line with the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted in person or by phone or video call depending on the

participants' preferences and availability. All the sessions were video recorded with the consent of the participants, transcribed verbatim and got ready for coding for thematic analysis to identify the themes and patterns.

2.4 Data analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were first converted into a usable form and then entered into a statistical package. Means, frequencies, and standard deviations were first calculated to get a general picture of the students' responses in the study. This step served to determine the mean and dispersion of the perceptions of academic vocabulary in argumentative writing. In order to determine the relationships between different variables such as perceptions of the importance and difficulties of using academic vocabulary, we also used inferential statistical methods like correlation analyses. These analyses allowed for the determination of patterns and relationships in the data set and thus provided a general picture of the participants' group.

In the case of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis was conducted. The interview transcripts were reviewed thoroughly and coded in order to recognize the patterns and themes that were related to the four main clusters of the study. Both inductive and deductive coding were used in the analysis where themes were identified from the data and from theories related to the study. The themes were then grouped into categories which represented the students' perceptions of academic vocabulary, the difficulties they encountered in using it, the ways in which they learned about it, and how vocabulary affected their argumentative writing skills.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results from the questionaire

3.1.1   EFL   English-Majored   students' perceptions   of   the   importance   of   academic vocabulary

Table 3 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the four items measuring students' attitudes toward academic vocabulary.

Table 3. Perceptions of the Importance of Academic Vocabulary in Argumentative Writing

Items	No	Mean	SD
1. I believe that academic vocabulary is essential for writing effective argumentative essays.	218	4.32	0.78
2. A rich academic vocabulary helps me express my ideas more clearly in argumentative writing.	218	4.15	0.82
3. Using academic vocabulary makes my writing more persuasive and professional.	218	4.20	0.79
4. I believe that mastering academic vocabulary improves my overall academic writing skills.	218	4.35	0.75

The findings indicate that students generally recognize the importance of academic vocabulary in their writing, with all mean scores above 4.00 on a 5-point Likert scale. The highest-rated statement (M = 4.35, SD = 0.75) suggests that students strongly believe that mastering academic vocabulary enhances their overall academic writing skills. Similarly, students acknowledged that academic vocabulary plays a crucial role in making their writing clearer (M = 4.15, SD =

0.82) and more persuasive (M = 4.20, SD = 0.79). The relatively low standard deviations suggest that students' responses were consistently positive across all items. These findings highlight the necessity of integrating structured academic vocabulary instruction into EFL writing courses to support students in developing stronger argumentative writing skills.

3.1.2 EFL english-majored students' perceptions of the confidence and challenges in using academic vocabulary

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for students' perceptions of their confidence and challenges in using academic vocabulary in argumentative writing.

Table 4. Perceptions of the Confidence and Challenges in Using Academic Vocabulary

Items	No	Mean	SD
5. I feel confident using academic vocabulary in my argumentative essays.	218	3.78	0.91
6. I struggle to use academic vocabulary appropriately in my writing.	218	3.92	1.02
7. I find it difficult to choose the right academic words when writing arguments.	218	3.87	0.95
8. I often rely on basic vocabulary because I lack knowledge of academic words.	218	3.95	1.01
9. I sometimes misuse academic vocabulary in my essays.	218	3.76	1.04
10. I struggle to differentiate between general vocabulary and academic vocabulary.	218	3.82	0.97

The results show that while students have a fair amount of confidence in using academic vocabulary (M = 3.78, SD = 0.91), they also have some problems with its use. The most rated challenge (M = 3.95, SD = 1.01) is that many students use basic vocabulary because they have a limited knowledge of academic words. Moreover, the students also indicated a problem with the correct application of academic vocabulary (M = 3.92, SD = 1.02) and the choice of words for argumentative writing (M = 3.87, SD = 0.95).

These results show that there is a need for specific teaching strategies to improve students' academic vocabulary knowledge. Teaching them specific academic words, how to tell the difference between general and academic vocabulary in context, and structured writing practices may help them overcome these challenges and feel more confident in argumentative writing.

3.1.3 EFL english-majored students' perceptions of the perceived impact of academic vocabulary on writing

Table 5. Perceptions of the Perceived Impact of Academic Vocabulary on Writing

Items	No	Mean	SD
11. Limited academic vocabulary negatively affects my ability to persuade readers.	218	4.08	0.88
12. I believe my writing scores are affected by my academic vocabulary proficiency.	218	4.12	0.85
13. Using academic vocabulary helps me structure my arguments more effectively.	218	4.18	0.80

| 14. I believe that expanding my academic vocabulary will make my writing more sophisticated. | 218 | 4.40 | .72 |

The results show that students are aware of the role of academic vocabulary in their writing output. The highest mean score was recorded for Item 14 (M = 4.40, SD = 0.72), which indicates that most students have a very strong belief that increasing the size of their academic vocabulary will lead to improved writing sophistication. Similarly, Item 13 (M= 4.18, SD = 0.80) shows that students concur that academic vocabulary assists them to organize their arguments correctly.   In addition, students agree that academic vocabulary enhances their writing scores as indicated by Item 12 (M = 4.12, SD = 0.85). Last, the results for Item 11 (M = 4.08, SD = 0.88) shows that students have the view that limited academic vocabulary is a difficulty that hinders them from being able to persuade readers.

3.1.4 EFL english-majored students' perceptions of the strategies for learning academic vocabulary

Table 6. Perceptions of Strategies for Learning Academic Vocabulary

Items	No	Mean	SD
15. I use the Academic Word List (AWL) to improve my vocabulary.	218	3.69	1.05
16. I actively learn new academic words and try to use them in my writing.	218	3.98	0.87
17. I prefer learning academic vocabulary through explicit instruction in class.	218	4.22	0.81
18. I benefit from using academic vocabulary exercises, such as gap-filling and word-matching tasks.	218	4.10	0.85
19. I use online resources (e.g., academic vocabulary apps, websites) to improve my academic vocabulary.	218	3.85	0.99
20. I believe that integrating academic vocabulary instruction into my writing courses would improve my writing skills.	218	4.30	0.74

The results show that "students appreciated the need for systematic approaches to learning the vocabulary" and the mean score of 4.30 (SD = 0.74) given for the statement explained that students are aware that incorporating vocabulary instruction in academic settings will improve their writing skills. Furthermore, it was also noticed that students liked explicit instruction in class (M = 4.22, SD = 0.81) and doing vocabulary exercises (M = 4.10, SD = 0.85), which indicates that they learn better from formal approaches to learning vocabulary. Although these attitudes are positive, students' engagement with independent vocabulary building strategies were rated as moderately effective, including using the AWL (M = 3.69, SD = 1.05) and online resources (M = 3.85, SD = 0.99). These results indicate that there is a need to incorporate a more systematic way of integrating learning tools and strategies related to academic vocabulary into EFL curricula to support independent learning and the development of vocabulary used in argumentative writing.

3.2 Results from the semi-structured interview

The responses from 20 EFL English-majored students reveal crucial insights into their

perceptions, challenges, and strategies regarding academic vocabulary in argumentative writing.

Importance of Academic Vocabulary: Students themselves have agreed that academic vocabulary is important for effective argumentative writing because it makes the writing more coherent and more persuasive as well as professional. They said that without enough academic words their essays would look too basic and too casual. One of the participants said:

"I notice that when I use basic words, my essay sounds like everyday conversation rather than academic writing. But when I use academic vocabulary, my argument seems stronger and more formal." (Participant 14).

Additionally, some students mentioned that professors expect them to use academic vocabulary, and their grades improve when they do so. Another participant shared:

"Using academic words helps me meet the writing standards required in university. My instructor often comments that my essay is well-written when I use precise academic terms." (Participant 3).

These responses show that students have the understanding of the importance of academic vocabulary in academic writing. They have views which are in accordance with the findings of the literature on the use of rich academic vocabulary that enhances coherence, logical thinking, and the quality of writing.

Confidence and Challenges in Using Academic Vocabulary: A number of students felt uncertain about their capability to apply the language of academic writing correctly. A typical problem was the difficulty of identifying the right academic terms to support their claims. One participant said:

"I always feel unsure about whether I'm using the right academic words. Sometimes, I check the dictionary, but I still don't feel confident." (Participant 10).

Several students admitted that they misuse academic vocabulary, which weakens their arguments. One student explained:

"I try to use academic words, but sometimes I don't use them correctly, and my sentences end up sounding awkward." (Participant 7).

Others expressed that they avoid academic vocabulary altogether, relying on simpler words due to fear of making mistakes. Another participant stated:

"I know academic vocabulary is important, but I usually stick to basic words because I'm afraid of using difficult words incorrectly." (Participant 19).

These results show that students require more guidance and practice in a more structured way in identifying and using academic vocabulary. They can be confident that the problem is that they have not been exposed enough to academic texts, have not been explicitly taught, and are afraid of making mistakes.

Perceived Impact of Academic Vocabulary on Writing: In the opinion of students, the usage of academic vocabulary enhances the quality of writing. They said that their essays were more compelling and formal when they used academic vocabulary. One participant commented:

"I noticed a big difference when I started using academic words. My arguments became clearer, and my writing sounded more convincing." (Participant 3).

Some students observed that their grades improved when they used academic vocabulary effectively. One student shared:

"My teacher told me that my writing improved a lot because I used more precise academic words. I also got a higher score on my last essay." (Participant 17).

However, students with limited academic vocabulary felt their writing lacked depth and variety. Another participant admitted:

*"*Without academic vocabulary, I feel like I keep repeating the same words, and my arguments don't sound strong." (Participant 20).

These responses support the idea that academic vocabulary is a key component of writing success. Students who work with academic vocabulary actively gain advantages in the structure, persuasiveness, and academic performance of their writing. On the other hand, those with limited academic vocabulary have problems with redundancy and a lack of argumentation.

Strategies for Learning Academic Vocabulary: Students reported using various strategies to improve their academic vocabulary. Some relied on the Academic Word List (AWL) to expand their vocabulary (P7). One participant mentioned:

"I use the Academic Word List to learn new words, and it really helps m e recognize important vocabulary when I read academic texts." (Participant 15).

Others preferred explicit classroom instruction, believing it to be the most effective way to learn academic vocabulary. One student noted:

"I remember academic words better when my teacher explains them in class rather than when I try to learn them on my own." (Participant 4).

Interactive exercises, such as gap-filling and word-matching tasks, were also popular methods. A participant said:

"I enjoy vocabulary exercises like matching words to their meanings. It makes learning easier and helps me remember new words." (Participant 16).

Many students used online tools and apps to improve their academic vocabulary. One participant explained:

"I use vocabulary apps and online resources to practice academic words. It's convenient because I can learn new words anytime." (Participant 9).

Most participants agreed that integrating academic vocabulary instruction into writing courses would significantly improve their writing skills. One student emphasized:

"If academic vocabulary was part of my writing class, I think I would improve much faster." (Participant 13).

The responses indicate that while students apply various vocabulary learning strategies, they prefer systematic and explicit instruction as opposed to autonomous learning.

3.3 Discussion

This study contributes important insights into how EFL English-majored students perceive academic vocabulary in argumentative writing and how it helps to increase the clarity, persuasiveness, and professionalism of the text. Despite the fact that students appreciate its importance, many of them have serious problems in choosing and using academic vocabulary correctly, including wrong word choice, the

difference between general and academic vocabulary, and confidence in using them. These challenges are consistent with previous research, which shows that vocabulary limitations prevent students from forming well-supported arguments and expressing complex ideas effectively [19]. Students with better control of academic vocabulary were found to produce better quality writing, with better coherence and argument strength, thus supporting the need for systematic vocabulary teaching as part of the development of academic writing [19].

In order to overcome these challenges, students preferred explicit classroom instruction, structured exercises like gap fillers and word search, and online resources to help them learn new words. The AWL was found to be a helpful addition to the students' lexical inventory, enabling them to express themselves more precisely and sophisticatedly in argumentation. These findings show that there is a need to include systematic vocabulary teaching into writing courses to help students develop their academic writing proficiency, learn to think critically about complex issues, and, in general, be more successful at school.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows the importance of academic vocabulary in the argumentative writing of EFL English-majored students and how it affects the clarity, persuasiveness, and quality of the writing. The results show that the students understood the need for academic vocabulary, but they had problems with choosing the right words, distinguishing general and academic vocabulary, and using them confidently. These challenges may limit their ability to develop coherent and

well-supported arguments and to engage critically with complex issues. However, those students who had a better grasp of academic vocabulary reported better writing fluency, coherence, and argumentative strength. These challenges, however, can be met by participants, who prefer explicit vocabulary instruction, structured exercises, and online resources, with the AWL being a useful way to expand students' vocabulary. Based on these realizations, it is crucial to incorporate systematic academic vocabulary teaching into writing classes to assist students' academic achievement, improve their writing skills, and help them to express themselves properly. As for the future work, it would be interesting to find out how effective other approaches can be for teaching and using academic vocabulary in EFL settings.

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