
Academic word list coverage in published articles written by Uzbek EFL undergraduates: a corpus-based study

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Annotation

This article investigates the use of academic vocabulary in research papers written in English by Uzbek EFL students through a corpus-based approach. The main objective of the study is to determine the level of Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) coverage in student research writing and to identify lexical variation across individual papers. For this purpose, a small corpus consisting of ten research articles produced by Uzbek undergraduate students was compiled and analyzed. The texts were processed using Compleat VocabProfiler, an online lexical profiling tool based on Nation's frequency lists. Particular attention was given to the Academic Word List, which contains 570 word families commonly found in academic discourse. The findings indicate that the mean AWL coverage across the corpus was 9.07% of total running words. The highest recorded value reached 14.67%, while the lowest result was only 2.01%, demonstrating considerable variation in academic vocabulary use among the analyzed papers. Such variation suggests differences in lexical competence, familiarity with academic writing conventions, and topic-related vocabulary demands. The study highlights the importance of explicit academic vocabulary instruction, corpus-informed teaching methods, and systematic support for academic writing development in Uzbek higher education contexts.

Keywords

Academic vocabulary, Academic Word List, corpus analysis, EFL writing, lexical richness, academic literacy

Ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o'rganuvchi o'zbek bakalavr talabalari tomonidan yozilgan ilmiy maqolalarda Akademik so'zlar ro'yxati qamrovi tahlili: korpusga asoslangan tadqiqot

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Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqola o'zbek talabalari tomonidan ingliz tilida yozilgan ilmiy maqolalarda akademik leksikaning qo'llanilish darajasini korpus asosida tahlil qilishga bag'ishlangan. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000)

tarkibiga kiruvchi akademik birliklarning talaba yozuvlarida uchrash chastotasini aniqlash hamda turli maqolalar o'rtasidagi leksik farqlarni qiyosiy jihatdan baholashdan iborat. Tadqiqot uchun o'zbek EFL talabalari tomonidan yozilgan o'nta ilmiy maqoladan iborat kichik hajmli korpus tuzildi. Ushbu matnlar Compleat VocabProfiler dasturi yordamida tahlil qilindi va unda Nation tomonidan ishlab chiqilgan chastota ro'yxatlaridan foydalanildi. Tahlil jarayonida faqat 570 ta akademik so'z oilasini o'z ichiga olgan Academic Word List birliklari asosiy mezon sifatida olindi. Natijalar akademik leksika ulushi o'rtacha 9.07% ni tashkil etganini ko'rsatdi. Eng yuqori ko'rsatkich 14.67%, eng past natija esa 2.01% bo'ldi. Olingan ma'lumotlar talaba ilmiy yozuvlarida akademik lug'atdan foydalanish darajasi sezilarli darajada farqlanishini ko'rsatadi. Tadqiqot natijalari oliy ta'limda akademik yozuv ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish hamda Academic Word List asosida maqsadli lug'at o'qitishni kuchaytirish zarurligini tasdiqlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar Akademik lug'at, AWL, korpus tahlili, EFL yozuv, ilmiy maqola, akademik savodxonlik

Анализ охвата Академического списка слов (AWL) в опубликованных научных статьях узбекских студентов-бакалавров EFL: корпусное исследование

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Аннотация

Данная статья посвящена исследованию использования академической лексики в научных работах, написанных узбекскими студентами, изучающими английский язык как иностранный. Основной целью исследования является анализ степени представленности слов из Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) в студенческих исследовательских статьях и выявление различий в уровне академической лексической компетенции. Для проведения анализа был сформирован небольшой корпус, включающий десять исследовательских работ студентов. Тексты были обработаны с использованием онлайн-инструмента Compleat VocabProfiler, основанного на частотных списках Nation. Особое внимание было уделено словам, входящим в Academic Word List, которая включает 570 наиболее частотных академических словесных семей. Результаты исследования показали, что средний уровень покрытия академической лексики составил 9,07% от общего количества слов в корпусе. При этом максимальное значение достигло 14,67%, тогда как минимальный показатель составил лишь 2,01%. Полученные данные свидетельствуют о значительной вариативности

использования академической лексики в студенческих научных текстах. Анализ также позволил выделить три группы текстов в зависимости от уровня использования AWL: высокий, средний и низкий.

Ключевые слова *Академическая лексика, Academic Word List (AWL), академическое письмо, корпусный анализ, английский язык как иностранный, лексическая компетенция, узбекские студенты*

Introduction

Academic vocabulary plays a crucial role in effective academic writing. Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List (AWL) consists of 570 word families frequently found in academic texts. Mastery of academic vocabulary enhances clarity, precision, and disciplinary credibility (Hyland, 2004; Nation, 2013). However, Uzbek EFL learners often demonstrate uneven academic lexical development due to limited exposure to authentic academic discourse. Corpus-based analysis allows objective measurement of lexical coverage and variation.

Research questions:

1. What is the average AWL coverage in Uzbek EFL research papers?

2. How much variation exists among papers?
3. What differences can be observed between low- and high-AWL papers?

Research methods

The corpus consisted of 10 research papers written in English by Uzbek EFL students. The total word count ranged from 518 to 2,308 words. Texts were analyzed using Compleat VocabProfiler based on Nation's frequency lists. Only AWL tokens (570 families) were considered.

AWL percentage was calculated as: $(\text{AWL Tokens} / \text{Total Tokens}) \times 100$.

Article		Total Words	AWL Tokens	AWL %
A1	Is Uzbek society masculine?	817	107	13.10
A2	Stylistic differences between English print advertisements and social media advertisements.	2261	80	3.54
A3	Innovative approaches in foreign language teaching.	1594	32	2.01
A4	The importance of Persian language in understanding classical Eastern literature.	518	40	7.72
A5	The features of teaching vocabulary in context for B1 level students.	619	56	9.05
A6	Styles of teaching English to young learners.	1161	74	6.37
A7	Improving students' language skills through new integrated approaches in modern language teaching.	1882	276	14.67
A8	Disadvantages of learning and teaching foreign languages unbased cultures.	1816	219	12.06
A9	The sociopragmatic description of speech in English and Uzbek dramas.	2308	256	11.09

A10	Phonological and morphological typology in authentic English materials: implications for teaching.	1206	134	11.11
Mean		-	-	9.07

Table 1. AWL Coverage in 10 Research Articles

Research results

As illustrated in Figure 1, the distribution of AWL coverage varies considerably across the analyzed research papers. The mean AWL coverage was 9.07%. The highest value was 14.67%, and the lowest was 2.01%. The range

(12.66) indicates substantial variation across papers.

Classification:

High AWL group (>11%): A1, A7, A8, A9, A10.

Medium group (6–10%): A4, A5, A6.

Low group (<5%): A2, A3.

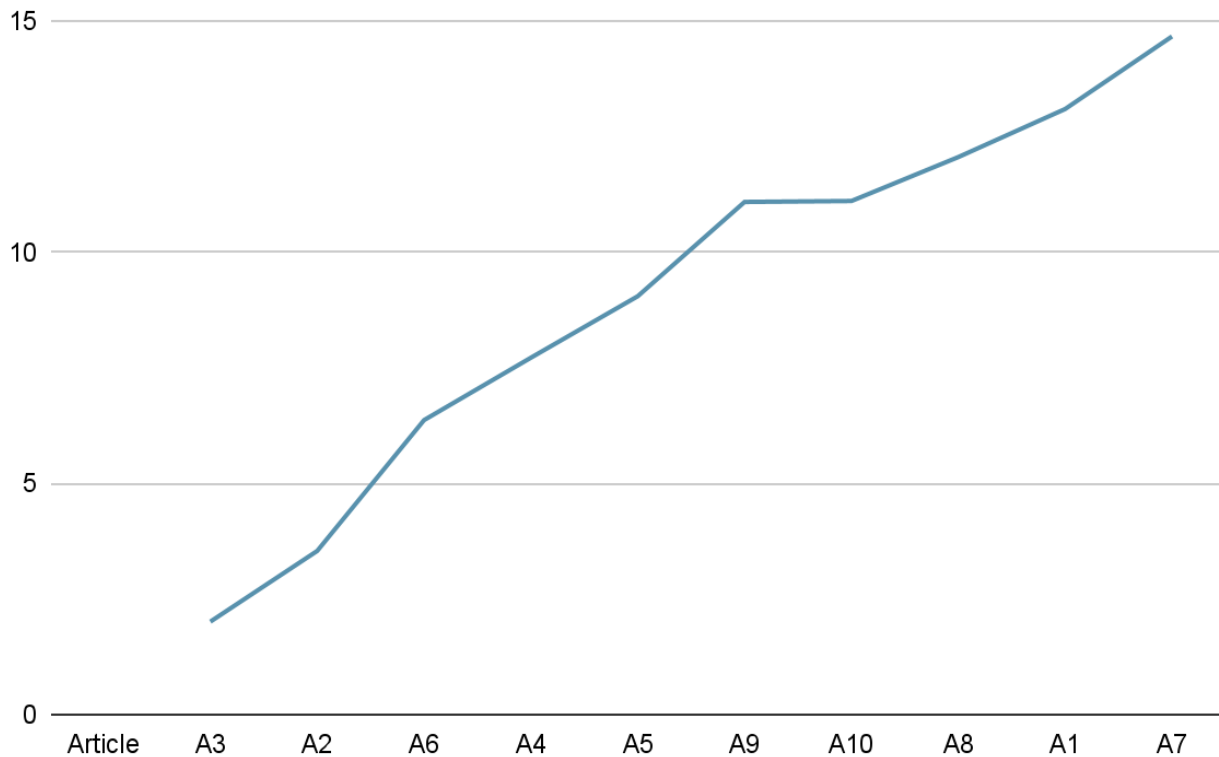


Figure 1. Variation of Academic Word List (AWL) coverage across the analyzed research articles

Discussion

The findings of this corpus-based study reveal considerable variation in the use of academic vocabulary among Uzbek EFL undergraduate writers. Although the mean AWL coverage (9.07%) falls within the range commonly reported in international studies on student academic writing, the distribution across individual papers demonstrates substantial disparity. The difference between

the highest (14.67%) and lowest (2.01%) values suggests uneven development of academic lexical competence.

The high-performing group (above 11%) demonstrates a relatively strong command of academic lexis. These papers likely reflect greater familiarity with research discourse conventions, including the use of abstract nouns (e.g., *analysis, implication, significance*), reporting verbs, and evaluative language. Such

usage aligns with Hyland's (2008) observation that academic writing requires lexical resources that signal argumentation, generalization, and discipline-neutral conceptualization. It may also indicate prior exposure to research-oriented coursework or explicit vocabulary training.

In contrast, papers in the low AWL group (below 5%) appear to rely heavily on high-frequency general vocabulary. This pattern suggests limited integration of academic word families into productive writing. Laufer (2003) argues that vocabulary depth, not merely vocabulary size, plays a decisive role in academic performance. Students may recognize academic words receptively but fail to incorporate them effectively in writing. The low coverage observed in two papers could therefore reflect restricted lexical sophistication rather than overall language deficiency.

The medium group (6–10%) represents transitional performance. These papers contain a moderate amount of academic vocabulary but do not consistently demonstrate lexical density typical of more advanced academic writing. This uneven distribution confirms Nation's (2013) claim that academic vocabulary acquisition requires systematic exposure and repeated contextualized practice.

Another possible factor influencing AWL variation is topic selection. Research papers dealing with theoretical or methodological issues may naturally include more academic lexical items, while descriptive or culturally oriented topics may rely more on narrative language. This suggests that genre and

rhetorical purpose should be considered when interpreting lexical coverage results.

The findings correspond partially with previous corpus-based research indicating that proficient academic writers typically demonstrate AWL coverage between 8% and 12% (Coxhead, 2000; Hyland, 2004). However, the extremely low values found in two papers indicate that some students have not yet internalized the lexical norms of academic discourse. This reinforces the need for pedagogical intervention.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results highlight several implications for Uzbek higher education. First, academic vocabulary instruction should move beyond incidental exposure. Explicit teaching of AWL items, including collocations and phraseology, can significantly improve lexical sophistication. Second, corpus-based tools such as lexical profiling software can be integrated into academic writing courses to provide objective feedback. Third, academic writing instruction should emphasize the functional use of academic lexis in argumentation, analysis, and synthesis.

Overall, the variability observed in this corpus underscores the necessity of systematic academic vocabulary development as part of undergraduate training.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that although the average AWL coverage approaches international norms, significant variation exists. Structured academic vocabulary instruction and corpus-based pedagogical strategies may enhance academic literacy among Uzbek EFL learners.

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