

## THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL LEXICON IN INCREASING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

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### Abstract:

Proficiency in English language depends on the knowledge of its vocabulary possessed by the second and foreign language learners and even the native speakers. Though developing the vocabulary is vital, it poses several problems, especially, to non-native students of English. Students with a low vocabulary knowledge show weak academic performance in different courses related to the language skills, linguistics, literature, and translation at the university level of education. This study, in particular, aims to investigate the problems faced by English

**Keywords:** English majors, vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary-learning problems, vocabulary-learning strategies.

In learning a mother tongue or any foreign language, vocabulary is the most significant component. Language acquisition cannot take place without learning its lexis with unlimited shifts in meaning caused by various contextual variables (Yang & Dai, 2012). Vocabulary is one of the most essential parts, along with phonetics/pronunciation and grammar, required to learn a foreign language (Pan & Xu, 2011). In addition, vocabulary is the basis for language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without learning the vocabulary, it is difficult to attain any language proficiency. Vocabulary is the basis of acquiring a second language. Rohmatillah (2017) asserts that without learning the vocabulary communication in the second language becomes harder. Further, vocabulary knowledge is an integral part of the language; it is central to communicative competence. Low vocabulary knowledge poses severe problems to its learners, which consequently impedes the learning of English language (Alqahtani, 2015). Schmitt (2002) argues that vocabulary plays a vital role in teaching and learning the second language as lexical knowledge is fundamental to communicative effectively. The language of the human beings depends on the vocabulary used or gained. Thus, without vocabulary, the learners will be demotivated to use the language (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The term vocabulary has a variety of meanings proposed by teachers. To some, it represents sight-word vocabularies as the immediate recognition of words by students. Others describe it as meaning-vocabularies representing the words understood by students; it is also considered as listening-vocabularies or students' understanding of the heard and spoken words. The content teachers further describe it as an academic vocabulary that reflects the content-specific words or students' understating of the oral and print words (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2011). Hiebert and Kamil (2005) provide another definition for the term

vocabulary, which is the knowledge that the learners should have about the meanings of words. They argued that words come into two types, oral and print and the knowledge, too, comes in at least two types: receptive (understand or recognize) and productive (write or speak). The oral vocabulary belongs to a set of words for which the learners know the meanings while speaking or reading orally. The print vocabulary consists of words for which the learners know the meanings when they write or read silently. To Hiebert and Kamil, the productive vocabulary is a set of words that are well-known and used frequently by the learners in speaking or writing. The receptive vocabulary is a set of words, which are less frequent and for which learner assign meanings while listening or reading (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Also, the vocabulary has two types as active and passive. The active vocabulary refers to the words taught to students, and they can use these words in speech or writing as oral or written expressions. The passive vocabulary refers to the words that students recognize and understand in a context. Such a passive type of vocabulary occurs in a listening or reading material (Harmmer, 2007). Besides, Webb (2009) advocates that students recognize the receptive vocabulary when it is used in a context, i.e. the one seen in a reading text and the one that cannot be produced by students in a written or spoken form. To Neuman and Dwyer (2009), vocabulary refers to the words in spoken (expressive vocabulary) and listening (receptive vocabulary) forms that the learners need for a competent interaction. Hatch and Brown (1995) consider vocabulary as a group of words that the language users use differently. Vocabulary knowledge usually indicates the learners' progress. Learning the vocabulary has always been a skill taught and evaluated in other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Schmitt, 2000). Instead, it promotes the development of language skills (Mart, 2012). To its limitations, this study focuses on emphasizing the problems faced by the students in learning the English vocabulary. It is suggested that the future research should examine in detail the reasons behind vocabulary-learning problems. Also, the future studies may investigate teachers' perspectives on instructional methods they use inside the language classrooms and the problems they face in teaching vocabulary to students. Hopefully, this study will raise awareness in students, highlight the importance of learning the vocabulary, and motivate the students to overcome their problems by following the proposed strategies. This study also recommends that PSAU English teachers and students should work together and find all possible means that can facilitate the students to enrich their vocabulary knowledge.

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