Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue on Teaching and Learning of Academic Vocabulary in EMI Contexts

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This special issue focuses on academic vocabulary teaching and learning in English Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts. In this introduction to the special issue, we provide an overview of the articles included and highlight key insights and future directions for research in this field.

Given the dominance of English as the language of instruction across educational levels around the world (e.g., Melitz, 2018) and students' diverse English language learning needs, English language teaching (ELT) and learning in EMI contexts have received considerable research interest. EMI refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in contexts where the first language (L1) of the students is not English. As a recent review of ELT in EMI indicates (McKinley & Rose, 2022), the challenges students face with using the traditional four language skills in EMI settings have been investigated extensively. By contrast, research into students' learning of vocabulary and grammar has been limited. As applied linguists specialising in vocabulary studies, we wished to redress this imbalance and explore vocabulary teaching and learning in EMI settings.

In particular, we were interested in how academic vocabulary (i.e., vocabulary used more frequently in academic writing and speech across disciplines than in non-academic discourse) is learned and taught in EMI contexts. We felt that academic vocabulary is worthy of investigation because, although it poses challenges to both English as a second language and L1 students, it is not typically taught at school (e.g., Beck et al., 2013) or in subject-area courses at university (e.g., Mudraya, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2022, 2023). The result of this endeavour is this special issue of the International Journal of TESOL Studies on Teaching and Learning of Academic Vocabulary in EMI Contexts.

In the first article, titled "'May I basil your house?' Multilingual Writers' Use of Academic, Technical, and Translingual Lexicons through Literacy Autobiographical Writing in a Thai EMI Program", Shizhou Yang reports on vocabulary learning within the classroom context of an EMI program at a Thai university. The article specifically examines how five EFL students used academic, technical, and translingual lexicons in their literacy autobiographies. This work challenges conventional views by advocating for a more dynamic and holistic approach to teaching academic vocabulary in EMI contexts. The article contributes to our understanding of how multilingual students construct their textual identities in EMI programs of study. It also highlights the individualised differences of multilingual students in their learning of academic vocabulary in EMI settings.

The second article, "Validating Pecorari, Shaw and Malmström's (2019) Academic Vocabulary Test – Form 1: Evidence from Rasch-based Analyses and Retrospective Focus-group Interviews" by Chi Duc Nguyen and Hanh Thi Hoang, reports on research in academic vocabulary testing, an area identified as an avenue for future research in Averil Coxhead's review of academic vocabulary research in this special

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issue. In particular, this article examines the construct validity of the first version of Pecorari, Shaw and Malmström's (2019) Academic Vocabulary Test (AVT), which tests the ability to recognise the most frequent meaning senses of general academic words sampled from Gardner and Davies's Academic Vocabulary List (2014). Findings indicate a good fit with the Rasch model and, as expected in multiple-choice tests such as the AVT, a degree of answer guessing by test-takers. This carefully designed, conducted and reported study paves the way for the validation of AVT-Form 2 and for validation research in academic vocabulary testing more generally.

In the third article written by Yun-yin Huang and Hui-Lien Chou, titled "EMI Vocabulary Support in High School Mathematics: A Quasi-experimental Study in Taiwan", the authors explore the role of disciplinary-specific vocabulary instruction in the effectiveness of EMI in high school mathematics education. The study compared learning outcomes between EMI and non-EMI classes and found no significant differences in maths performance. However, vocabulary instruction, particularly through interactive games and authentic tasks, was shown to improve student engagement and motivation. This article contributes to our understanding of teaching and learning academic vocabulary by demonstrating how targeted, game-based vocabulary instruction in EMI contexts can support high school students' mastery of subject content while improving their motivation and engagement.

In the fourth article, "Academic Lexicon Development in an EMI Context: A Study of Pre-Service English Teachers' Lexical Availability," Angie Quintanilla and Steffanie Kloss Medina report on the investigation of lexical availability of pre-service English teachers in an EMI setting. The study used lexical availability assessments to analyse the academic vocabulary knowledge of 350 pre-service teachers. The findings reveal that as students advance in their training, their academic vocabulary expands, showing greater specificity in specialised lexicons such as lesson planning and language teaching methods. The article contributes to our understanding of teaching and learning academic vocabulary by demonstrating how the expansion of pre-service teachers' specialised lexicon correlates with their progress through an EMI curriculum, offering insights into how lexical acquisition may occur incidentally through content learning but may also necessitate targeted pedagogical approaches if milestones are not shown at particular time points.

The fifth article, "Exploring the Instruction of Academic Functional Phrases in an EAP Pre-Sessional Course" by Lu Liu, reports on a qualitative investigation into EAP teachers' instruction of functional phrases, that is, multi-word units that have various pragmatic speech functions, such as discourse organisation and the expression of politeness or stance. Motivated by the fact that using English as a lingua franca (ELFA) instead of a first-language idealisation enables EMI students to express themselves and communicate more effectively, this study examined how much the EAP teachers who participated in the study applied ELFA-aware principles in their teaching. Teachers tended to teach functional phrases in the traditional, prescriptive way even though they wished to integrate ELFA-aware principles in their teaching, perhaps due to their traditional training and to institutional imperatives. The qualitative nature of this study and its brief duration call for longitudinal studies with the same research aims in other educational contexts.

The sixth article, "Current Issues and Future Research on Teaching and Learning of Academic Vocabulary in EMI Contexts", is written by Averil Coxhead, a pre-eminent scholar of English academic vocabulary. It first discusses how English academic vocabulary has been conceptualised. It then points out ways in which English academic vocabulary learning and teaching can be challenging in EMI contexts. It ends with suggesting three future research foci that would benefit English academic vocabulary learning and teaching in EMI contexts: (i) examining English academic vocabulary in EMI teaching materials, (ii) examining students' use of English academic vocabulary in spoken vs written tasks, and (iii) the assessment of English academic vocabulary knowledge in its various conceptualisations and across various EMI student populations.

Lastly, the seventh article, "Insights and Innovations: An Interview with Averil Coxhead on the Teaching and Learning of Academic Vocabulary" is based on an interview of Professor Averil Coxhead conducted by Barry Lee Reynolds and Sophia Skoufaki. The interview explores Professor Coxhead's

experiences and insights on the teaching and learning of academic vocabulary, with a focus on EMI. She discusses the complexities of academic vocabulary, how it differs from general and technical vocabulary, and the role of technology in vocabulary instruction. Professor Coxhead emphasises practical approaches such as using students' prior knowledge, integrating technology, and focusing on meaningful communication in EMI contexts. She also advocates EFL teachers to take a systematic approach to the teaching of academic vocabulary ensuring a balance of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, fluency, and language-focused learning activities.

To conclude, this special issue brings together a diverse range of studies that explore key aspects of teaching and learning academic vocabulary in EMI contexts. The articles collectively highlight innovative approaches, challenges, and future research directions, offering valuable insights for educators and researchers alike. We hope this collection not only advances understanding in this critical area but also inspires further inquiry and practical applications A special thanks also goes to all the peer reviewers of the articles: Imma Miralpeix, Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs, Jack Pun, Golnar Fotouhi, Marta Sánchez-Saus Laserna, Syed Mujtaba, Ali Soyoof, Barry Lee Reynolds, Sophia Skoufaki, Chinedu Januarius Osuji, Simon Smith, Ping Zhao, Geraint Paul Rees, Siaw-Fong Chung, Bojana Petrić, and Quy Huynh Phu Pham. Lastly, we would like to thank (Kevin) Xinghua Liu, the Managing Editor of the International Journal of TESOL Studies, for his unwavering help along the way and Professor Averil Coxhead for her support of the issue.

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