Title	Bridging the Vocabulary Gap for English as an Additional Language Learners
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Citation	Bulletin of the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University. Studies in integrated arts and sciences , 4 : 5 - 6
Issue Date	2023-12-31
DOI	
Self DOI	
URL	https://ir.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/00054951
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Relation	

学位（博士）論文要旨

Bridging the Vocabulary Gap for English as an Additional Language Learners

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論文の要旨

This thesis investigates the vocabulary knowledge of English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners studying at international schools in Japan. My goal in writing the thesis is to provide these learners with the support that they need to be successful in the classroom. To do this, I investigated two different but connected strands of research: an investigation of the vocabulary knowledge that EAL learners currently possess and an examination of the vocabulary that these learners require to be successful in the classroom. In the final part of the thesis, to bridge the gap that exists between the vocabulary that EAL learners know and the vocabulary they need to succeed academically, I discuss the development of the International School Academic Vocabulary Lists, a set of domain-specific word lists designed specifically to support EAL learners in the classroom.

The first two experimental chapters of the thesis deal with measuring EAL learners' vocabulary knowledge and determining how this will influence their ability to succeed in the classroom. I did this in two stages. In the first stage, I used a battery of assessment tools to examine the importance of vocabulary for EAL learners' reading comprehension. This investigation showed that vocabulary was the single biggest predictor of EAL learners' ability to understand the content of written texts. I then examined the vocabulary knowledge of EAL learners and looked at the coverage this vocabulary knowledge would give them over the texts that they are expected to read in the classroom. This analysis made use of a large corpus of academic texts taken from a representative sample of the subjects that international school students would be likely to study. This analysis allowed me to determine two important facts. First, EAL learners do not possess the vocabulary knowledge necessary to comprehend the textbooks they are required to read without significant support from their teachers. Second, the gap between what EAL learners know and what they would need to know to be able to understand these texts is too great to be covered by existing word lists.

In the next two chapters, I addressed this issue by compiling a representative corpus of textbooks (the International School Corpus of Academic Texts, IS-CAT) and developing a set of domain-specific word lists from this corpus that can be used in the classroom. In Chapter Five, I detail my initial attempt to build a corpus of international school textbooks and create a more appropriate word list from this corpus. For this chapter, I compiled these initial word lists following the traditional methodology that researchers have used to develop word lists. This methodology involves the use of

frequency and range to select the words that would be most useful to know when reading in a specific domain. The word lists that I developed in this chapter were successful in providing much greater coverage of the IS-CAT than existing word lists such as the Academic Word List (AWL). However, I was able to identify some issues that needed to be addressed with these word lists, including my use of the outdated General Service List to remove high-frequency words, the use of words instead of lemmas as a unit of counting, and the exclusion of high-frequency words with academic meanings from the word lists.

I address these issues in Chapter Six by using more modern techniques to create a new set of IS-AVL. In this chapter, I show that these updated word lists not only provide greater coverage than the word lists I compiled in Chapter Five but also provide greater coverage over the IS-CAT than competing word lists such as the AWL, Middle School Vocabulary Lists, or Secondary Vocabulary Lists (SVL).

Through an analysis of the coverage the IS-AVL word lists provide over the various subcorpora of the IS-CAT, a parallel corpus, and a corpus of non-academic texts, I am able to show that these word lists have the potential to provide a valuable tool that can be used to support EAL learners in the classroom.

I end the dissertation with a discussion of what still needs to be done to be able to effectively use these word lists to support EAL learners in the classroom. I also explain how the lists I developed in this dissertation will allow teachers to identify the vocabulary that EAL learners need to succeed in the classroom. I hope that the insights from this dissertation, and the word lists I have compiled, will provide additional tools that can be used to help teachers to support their learners in the classroom, making it easier for EAL learners to get

the educational experience that they deserve.