



## THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING VOCABULARY IN ACADEMIC CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

*The article analyzes various tests, the purpose of which is to measure knowledge of academic vocabulary among students studying English at various university faculties.*

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, socio-economic life in our country is gradually stabilizing, the statehood and international status of Uzbekistan is strengthening. Trends in economic growth and active inclusion of Uzbekistan in dynamic global processes require a sharp increase in its competitiveness on the world stage, growth in the culture of production and consumption, and education.

The general direction of modernization of education implies systemic and organic changes in education in order to bring it into line with the requirements of modern life, the creation of a culture of mechanisms for the constant renewal of education.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the priority directions in the modernization of education is the idea of competency-based education (N.V. Kuzmina, A.V. Khutorskoy, B.D. Elkonin, N.A. Petrovskaya, V.A. Bolotov, E.M. Muravyov, O .V.Akulova) [1-6]. The main goal of the competency-based approach can be defined as the formation of certain competencies of students, i.e. abilities to apply knowledge in specific activities, in real life situations.

Vocabulary control was previously carried out using various tests that measured students' knowledge of commonly used, specialized and especially academic vocabulary. There were different types of tests. But, unfortunately, the tests did not correspond to the communicative approach to learning a foreign language. Testing has not kept pace with the changing view of the role of vocabulary in communicative activity. The emphasis was mainly on knowledge of individual words. Knowledge of individual words, of course, is a key element, but with a communicative approach it is important: first, the ability to produce these words in speech during the communication process, second, it is necessary to know not only individual isolated words, but also phrases, and sometimes it is useful to memorize entire blocks, where individual units of vocabulary form a single whole.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



In this work, we will try to understand the nature of these areas and understand how vocabulary knowledge should be assessed.

Vocabulary assessment - goals and objectives

Let's look at familiar types of tasks offered to assess vocabulary knowledge.

The first type of task involves matching words and definitions, as in the example below [2]:

- 1.Environment
2. Principle
3. Response close detailed study of something
4. Factor a set of laws for a country
5. Analysis surrounding area of conditions
6. Legislation

This task is compiled according to the format of Nation (2001:416-424) Vocabulary Levels Test.

Words in the left column are taken from the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000), and brief definitions are given in the right column. The task is to indicate the number of the word that corresponds to this definition. The task is deliberately presented in a simple format so that in a relatively short time it is possible to test a relatively large number of words and calculate how many words students know. Therefore, the word in the test is presented in isolated form and the definitions are as short as possible.

The second type of task can be illustrated by the following example:

He told me about his dilemma.

- A. a serious disease.
- B. a difficult choice.
- C. a legal problem.
- D. a strange dream.

In this case, the keyword "dilemma" is presented in context, but it sounds deliberately neutral, and does not provide a clear clue to the meaning of the word. Here is a less artificial approach to presenting vocabulary. The purpose of the task is to assess whether the student knows the meaning of a word without additional information from the sentence in which the word appears.

The following example can be given:

*Let us analyse how different countries allocate scarce among competing uses.*

Here the task is to test knowledge of the word "resources". This type of task relates to productive knowledge, that is, the student must substitute the correct word, and not just know its meaning.

Compared to the previous task, it is important that the student must understand the first and second parts of the sentence, and especially the words "allocate", "scarce", "competing uses" in order to correctly use the word "resources".

In this case, the task becomes more complicated: knowledge of not only a single keyword is tested, but knowledge of academic, in this case, economic vocabulary, knowledge of set phrases and the ability to use academic vocabulary in context.



The examples above demonstrate three key characteristics of the traditional approach to vocabulary testing:

**Discrete approach:** knowledge of individual words is considered in an independent construct. The goal is simply to measure, to “calculate” vocabulary knowledge. In this case, the task is not to assess vocabulary in relation to communicative use [5].

**Specific:** Focuses on a range of words on a specific topic or may be a range of words covered in class.

**Context-dependent:** Each keyword is presented as an element or given in a sentence short enough to provide a clue to the word's meaning. The role of context here can be quite varied.

In the work “Teaching a foreign language. A broad approach to vocabulary testing.” John Reid (Victoria University of Wellington) develops this topic in the direction of creating new types of tasks when testing vocabulary.

Table 1. Approaches to vocabulary assessment [5]

<u>Discrete</u> Measuring knowledge of vocabulary as independent lexical units.	<u>Contextual (Embedded)</u> Measuring vocabulary knowledge in a broader, specific context.
<u>Selective</u> Measuring knowledge of special lexical items	<u>Comprehensive</u> Measuring vocabulary knowledge, which takes into account knowledge of vocabulary in a broad context (reading and listening tasks) or tasks that require the test taker's response (written or oral).
<u>Context independent</u> Measuring knowledge using an item where the test taker can provide an answer independent of any context.	<u>Context dependent</u> A measure of knowledge that assesses a test taker's ability to correctly use lexical items in a specific context.

The discrete approach can be supplemented with a contextual one if the task is focused not only on vocabulary knowledge, but also on the ability to use academic vocabulary when performing tasks that require mastery of macro skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. An example is the IELTS oral exam format, where the examiner evaluates each candidate according to four criteria: fluency and coherence, vocabulary, grammar (variety of grammatical structures and accuracy) and pronunciation.

According to D. Reed, vocabulary assessment is a contextual measurement, because The examiner assesses how adequately the candidate uses vocabulary to convey information and ideas. Thus, the main thing here is oral skills, and not separate knowledge of vocabulary, so the examiner gives a single score for oral performance, and not four separate ratings from which this score is composed. Contextual vocabulary assessment is also part of the analytical assessment of written assignments.

In the second part of the table, D. Reed shares a selective and comprehensive approach to assessing vocabulary knowledge. While traditional tasks test knowledge of individual



keywords, an integrated approach takes into account knowledge and ability to use all units of vocabulary that the test taker uses when performing a written or oral task. A comprehensive assessment can be carried out in two directions: quantitative (statistical calculation) or qualitative (using a rating scale or some individual approach of the examiner). The statistical approach includes various points: the number of lexical errors, variability (the proportion of different words, synonyms used in oral and written speech), lexical complexity (the proportion of unusual and rarely used words, words belonging to the list of academic vocabulary), lexical density (the ratio of content and function words).

### CONCLUSION

Modern methods of teaching a foreign language offer a large number of different types of test tasks, the purpose of which is to measure knowledge of vocabulary.

Recently, special attention has been paid to the creation of tests to check how deeply students have mastered academic vocabulary and special terminology. The choice of test depends on the level of students, as well as on what stage of study the test is offered and what purpose it serves.

However, we notice that there are practically no test materials to measure knowledge of economic vocabulary. When creating these types of tests, we follow the requirements of international testing standards. The advantage of our tests is the ability to use them in a computer version. The computer version of the test allows you to effectively test a large number of students at the same time and measure knowledge of special vocabulary.

To develop various competencies, in particular communicative competence, language proficiency is necessary, i.e. mastery of four types of speech activity, which is impossible without the correct lexical structuring of a statement, and, consequently, knowledge of the necessary vocabulary and the ability to use it in professional communication situations.

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