

## Comparing the Contribution of General Vocabulary Knowledge and Academic Vocabulary Knowledge to Learners' Academic Achievement

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**Abstract :** Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List (AWL) believed to be essential for students pursuing higher education and helps differentiate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) from General English as a course of study, and it is thought to be important for comprehending English academic texts. It has been described that AWL is an infrequent, discrete set of vocabulary items unreachable from general language. On the other hand, it has been known for a period of time that general vocabulary knowledge is a good predictor of academic achievement. This study, however, is an attempt to measure and compare the contribution of academic knowledge and general vocabulary knowledge to learners' GPA and examine what knowledge is a better predictor of academic achievement and investigate whether AWL as a specialised list of infrequent words relates to the frequency effect. The participants were comprised of 44 international postgraduate students in Swansea University, all from the School of Management, following the taught MSc (Master of Science). The study employed the Academic Vocabulary Size Test (AVST) and the XK\_Lex vocabulary size test. The findings indicate that AWL is a list based on word frequency rather than a discrete and unique word list and that the AWL performs the same function as general vocabulary, with tests of each found to measure largely the same quality of knowledge. The findings also suggest that the contribution that AWL knowledge provides for academic success is not sufficient and that general vocabulary knowledge is better in predicting academic achievement. Furthermore, the contribution that academic knowledge added above the contribution of general vocabulary knowledge when combined is really small and noteworthy. This study's results are in line with the argument and suggest that it is the development of general vocabulary size is an essential quality for academic success and acquiring the words of the AWL will form part of this process. The AWL by itself does not provide sufficient coverage, and is probably not specialised enough, for knowledge of this list to influence this general process. It can be concluded that AWL as an academic word list epitomizes only a fraction of words that are actually needed for academic success in English and that knowledge of academic vocabulary combined with general vocabulary knowledge above the most frequent 3000 words is what matters most to ultimate academic success.

**Keywords :** academic achievement, academic vocabulary, general vocabulary, vocabulary size

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