Investigating the Significance of Coxhead's Academic Word List for Self-Access Learners

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Abstract

The present study explored Thai EFL university students' perceived benefits of self-learning Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL) (Coxhead, 2000) on their academic communicative skills and whether or not it should be incorporated into academic textbooks. The study employed a mixed-method design. A survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The result revealed that the majority of the participants held positive attitudes toward learning Coxhead's AWL on their own. They agreed that Coxhead's AWL helped them to enhance their receptive and productive academic communicative skills. Participants also acknowledged that incorporating Coxhead's AWL into the academic textbook might help EFL university learners in various ways, particularly to improve their academic reading, listening, writing, and speaking abilities. In conclusion, although this study provides no empirical evidence of how knowledge of AWL helps improve students' academic communicative skills, the study provides some practical guidelines for self-access contexts and a theoretical basis on how AWL is viewed by EFL university students along with a new direction to future research.

Keywords: Coxhead's (2000) AWL, self-access learners, academic words, receptive and productive skills, Thai EFL

Since vocabulary knowledge reflects the proficiency of the target language to a certain extent, irrefutably, vocabulary knowledge has become the stepping stone to language learning. To acquire effective and accurate language communicative skills, be it receptive or productive, lexical knowledge is indispensable (Stæhr, 2008). Although not until the 1980s (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011), its significance and roles in language communication skill development have caused appreciable discussions among the cross-language scholars and educators in the ESL and EFL milieus over the past few decades (Lee et al., 2019). Consequently, many researchers (e.g., Matthews & Cheng, 2015; Peters & Webb, 2018; Wangdi, 2020) on English language acquisition have attempted to disseminate the significance of vocabulary in language development skills to the widest possible range. Nevertheless, vocabulary acquisition is still a

big challenge among ESL and EFL language learners, owing to a de-emphasis on learning vocabulary (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011). Thus, teaching and learning vocabulary has become a major topic of hot discussion in the ESL and EFL education settings (Choo et al., 2017).

In response to the growing popularity of vocabulary knowledge and its significance on language communicative skills, Nation (2006) has estimated a minimum requirement of 8,000-9,000-word families for reading and 6,000-7,000-word families for listening to attain 98% of word coverage. Despite a slight difference in the word size, Laufer and Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010) also gave a similar suggestion that the language learners should acquire 8,000-word families including proper nouns to cover 98% of the reading texts, if not at least 4,000 - 5,000-word families for 95% of the text coverage. Further, Kalajahi and Pourshahian (2012) also believed that it is vital for ESL and EFL learners to procure at least 3,000-word families to execute the basic communicative tasks efficiently and 8,000-word families to achieve better language skills. Supporting this fact, several studies have consistently demonstrated that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of second language learning (Asyiah, 2017; Mustapha, 2011).

Although many researchers have strongly acknowledged vocabulary knowledge as a vehicle for one's mastery of the target language (Asyiah, 2017), however, the discussions and claims seem to be one-sided based on the beliefs and findings of the educators and researchers, but not from students who were asked to learn on their own. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring Thai EFL learners' attitudes toward Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List (AWL) and its benefit in enhancing their receptive and productive academic skills. The study was needed because academic words have become extremely significant for university students. The university students are subscribed to many academic tasks which need higher-order word knowledge to comprehend academically related tasks such as academic literature reading, writing reflections/reports, attending academic workshops/conferences, and academic presentations (Srikrai et al., 2016).

Literature Review

Self-Access and Vocabulary Learning

Although literature lacks a clear definition of self-access because of its complex, multi-faceted, and multi-disciplinary nature (Mynard et al., 2022), it is often used synonymously with

autonomous learning where learners have the freedom to choose their learning materials to aid their classroom-based learning. The benefit of self-access learning is that it helps learners to develop a sense of control over their learning (Mynard, 2019), and they can learn independently at any given time from any place. Self-access learning is particularly found helpful in improving learners' vocabulary knowledge. In this context, investigating the impact of weekly computer-based self-access learning on students' vocabulary retention, Dreyer (2014) highlighted that there was a strong correlation between students who learned vocabulary on their own to their short-term vocabulary retention. Further, in addition to vocabulary learning (Aydın & Tütüniş, 2021), self-access learning is also believed to help learners attain better writing ability (Handford et al., 2021); motivate learners to learn the English language (Schneider et al., 2018); enhance English language competency (Yarwood et al., 2019), and so forth. For these benefits it has on students' language learning, self-access learning has become quite popular recently in the English language teaching (ELT) field, particularly in the EFL context.

Academic Words

Academic words are a component of academic English - a variety or a register of English used in professional books and characterized by specific linguistic features associated with various academic disciplines (Singhal, 2004). Most of the English academic words are derived from the 425 million Corpus of contemporary American English that is believed to be directly linked to academic success (Gardner & Davies, 2014). Generally, academic words can be classified in one of two ways: (1) as domain-specific academic words that are used to imply subjects that occur frequently in an extensive range of academic genres. These are the most encountered words variously known as technical words, content-specific words, Tier 3 words and technical terms, on the other hand, (2) general academic words are those relatively rare with specific meanings in different contexts, have abstract definitions, and are challenging to master (Townsend, 2009).

Coxhead (2000) Academic Word List

Coxhead's (2000) AWL is believed to be the most appropriate academic word list for learners with academic objectives, for English for Special Purpose (ESP) and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) students. It is an enhanced and agglomerated new academic word list

from 3.5 million Corpus English words, and an extension to West's (1953) General Service List (GSL), to which she relates them as cross-disciplinary and all-purpose terms that appear frequently and uniformly across a wide range of academic materials (Vongpumivitch et al., 2009). It covers roughly around 8.5 -10 % of those running words in the academic text. Coxhead's (2000) AWL is a contemporary and more representative corpus word list, which occurs at least 100 times in the corpus and a range of at least 15 or more of the 28 subject areas within the four genres of the corpus: arts, commerce, science, and law (Vongpumivitch et al., 2009). It consists of 570 academic word families covering approximately 10% of the total word corpus and 1.4% of the total words of a fiction corpus of equal size, excluding the most frequent 2000 words (Ilangakoon, 2012).

Academic Word Knowledge and Receptive Skills

Poor acquisition of academic word knowledge is one reason that has explicitly posed immense difficulties for English language learners in comprehending academic reading materials (Sibold, 2011). Perfetti and Hart (2002) asserted that knowledge of word skills strongly determines one's ability to read and comprehend. They also highlighted that readers with limited word skills are likely incompetent and exhibit poor reading comprehension skills. Thus, English language learners, in general, need a huge number of words to attain effective reading comprehension skills. Nation (2006) has estimated that at least 8,000-9,000-word families must be acquired by the learners to have better reading comprehension. It was later conceded by Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010) that knowledge of 8000-word families is the sine qua non for language learners to comprehend 98% of the reading text. Further, in line with the importance of word knowledge in reading comprehension, many studies (e.g., Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Paige & Smith, 2018; Stæhr, 2008) in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) contexts have also vehemently acknowledged a positive correlation between word knowledge and reading comprehension.

Although fewer research studies were found examining and suggesting word knowledge as a strong predictor of one's listening comprehension (Bonk, 2000), in the light of the listening context, assimilating umpteen word knowledge has become crucial for learners to achieve effective listening skills. Teng (2014) asserted that English language learners need abundant word knowledge to have better listening comprehension. Also, Nation (2006) has estimated that

English learners must acquire an average of 6,000-7,000-word families to deal with spoken texts (listening) with 98% of the text coverage. Few research studies have also shown a positive correlation between word knowledge and listening comprehension (e.g., Noreillie et al., 2018; Stæhr, 2008).

Academic Word Knowledge and Productive Skills

The researchers have conducted an intensive study, particularly on the context of writing and have highly acknowledged the importance of academic word knowledge. (e.g., Johnson et al., 2016; Karakoç & Köse, 2017). One of these is an empirical study conducted by Stæhr (2008) with 88 EFL secondary students in Denmark, the researcher concluded that there is a strong correlation between the knowledge of words that learners had obtained to that of their writing performance. Additionally, numerous studies are demonstrating a strong correlation between students' vocabulary knowledge and their writing performance (e.g., Choi, 2017; Hasan & Subekti, 2017; Johnson et al., 2016). Also, Coxhead (2012) found the students had an equal sense of belief that they require a huge number of academic words to achieve quality or higher-order writing.

On the other hand, speaking is a multifaceted skill that is difficult to assess, limited studies were found examining the relationship between the knowledge of words to oral performance (Oya et al., 2009). Nonetheless, a few research studies have managed to examine the relationship between learners' word knowledge and oral performance by employing the most persistent assessment such as reading aloud the texts, and picture narratives and the general obtained proficiency tests scores by the learners (Uchihara & Saito, 2019). Having said that, Koizumi and In'nami (2013) divulged that the learners' word knowledge is directly linked to the oral proficiency of the language.

Besides many research studies on the significance of word knowledge in the EFL context, none of the studies discussed thus far have focused on Thai EFL university's attitudes towards Coxhead's (2000) AWL. Therefore, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions.

RQ1. To what extent do Thai EFL university students believe that knowledge of AWL helps them to enhance their academic receptive skills?

RQ2. To what extent do Thai EFL university students believe that knowledge of AWL helps them to enhance their academic productive skills?

Methodology

The present research attempts to identify the EFL self-access learners' beliefs and attitudes toward Coxhead's (2000) AWL through a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

Participants

The participants of the study were 163 (56 male and 107 female) EFL university students aged 17-25 from Prince of Songkla University based in Songkhla province, Thailand. They were in different years of study ranging from 1 to 4 years, majoring in different fields. They spoke Thai and English as their first and foreign languages, respectively. Before distributing questionnaires on Coxhead's 157 (word-families) AWL, a survey of the questionnaire was distributed using a convenience sampling technique to investigate participants' knowledge about Coxhead's AWL to avoid response bias. According to the survey, 43.6% of the participants found incognizance of AWL. To this response, first students were briefed about the AWL, upon which they had to learn at least 50 AWL words a week on their own using sources that are easily accessible in and outside the classrooms such as the library, online resources, textbooks, etc. for approximately three months (one semester to be precise). However, for this study, follow-up self-assessment tasks in the form of MCQ using quizzes, socrative, and google forms were developed and made accessible for the students to help them self-assess their learning progress by the classroom teacher, who was also a researcher. Every week students self-assessed themselves on 15 random words out of 50 through the self-assessment tasks developed by the researcher. And the teacher monitored their self-assessed tasks, upon which students with scores less than 60 percent were asked to do the self-assessment again. The re-assessment task was done primarily to make sure that what they perceive about AWL holds some truth.

As for interviews, although 12 out of 163 participants consented, only nine of them reported for the interview. These participants were interviewed for 10 - 15 minutes using semi-structured interviews to develop a deeper understanding of their attitudes towards Coxhead's

(2000) AWL. The participants who joined in for the semi-structured interview were referred to as (e.g., p1, p2, … p9).

Instruments

The present study incorporated two instruments to collect the data, (1) a 5-point Likert questionnaire (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). It was adapted from Choo et al. (2017). It consisted of 17 items investigating students' beliefs and attitudes on the significance of Coxhead's (2000) AWL towards their academic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and three demographic items for age, gender, and year of study. The questionnaire was in the English language; (2) a follow-up semi-structured interview to support quantitative data. The participants were all interviewed in the English language.

Data Collection and Analysis

Since the present study was carried out amidst the Covid-19 crisis, all data were collected electronically. It took approximately two and a half months for the researcher to collect the full data sets, longer than expected time because most of the participants (students) were engaged with their online classes and other academic works. Also, because of technical glitches, a couple of times, we had to cancel and reschedule the interviews.

The questionnaire (Google form) was shared through a QR Code and a Google Form link with the university students by the researcher, who is also a lecturer in the selected context. For ethical considerations, participants were given an option not to participate and respond to questionnaires if they were not comfortable. Also, participants were informed that their identity would not be disclosed and no personal data would be shared. Although the electronic questionnaire was distributed to more than 200 university students using the convenience sampling technique, only 163 of them responded to it. The responses were then imported to the spreadsheet and later to the SPSS software for analysis. Firstly, a descriptive percentile for each item was computed to investigate the participants' beliefs and attitudes towards the significance of AWL on their academic receptive and productive skills. Secondly, the recorded interview responses, collected from nine participants were coded, collated, and interpreted to answer the research questions.

Findings

Table 1

Participants' Responses to the Significance of Knowledge of AWL and Academic Receptive Skills

Items	5(%)	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Reading					
1. Knowledge of the AWL will help me understand better when I read academic materials (textbooks, journal articles and academic publications)	17.8	39.9	31.3	8.0	3.1
2. Knowledge of the AWL will help me be more confident in my ability to read academic materials.	19.0	46.0	27.6	6.1	1.2
3. Knowledge of the AWL will help me identify the important points in academic materials better.	18.4	50.9	23.9	6.1	0.6
4. Knowledge of the AWL will help me read more effectively.	22.1	48.5	21.5	7.4	0.6
5. Knowledge of the AWL will help me review lecture notes more effectively.	13.5	49.7	30.7	5.5	0.6
6. Knowledge of the AWL will help me do skimming and scanning more effectively.	20.2	42.9	30.7	5.5	0.6
Average	**18.5**	**46.3**	**27.6**	**6.4**	**1.1**
Listening					
7. Knowledge of the AWL will help me better understand lectures.	12.5	49.1	21.5	5.5	2.5

8. Knowledge of the AWL will help me be more engaged during lectures.	12.3	49.1	33.1	4.3	1.2
9. Knowledge of the AWL will help me better differentiate verbal messages of fact, inference, opinion and judgment.	15.3	46.6	30.7	6.1	1.2
Average	**13.4**	**48.3**	**28.4**	**5.3**	**1.6**

Note: 5-strongly agree; 4-agree; 3-slightly agree; 2-disagree; 1-strongly disagree

The descriptive statistics, in percentages presented in Table 1, show that more than half (63.25%) *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that the knowledge of AWL helps them to improve their receptive skills (reading and listening). For academic reading, 64.8% of the participants s*trongly agreed* and *agreed* that knowledge of AWL helps them perform better in academic reading-related tasks. Likewise, 61.7% *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that knowledge of the AWL helps them to understand lectures and other academic-related verbal messages better. However, very few of them were expressing reservation to the above supposition that the knowledge of AWL is useful for their academic receptive skills. There were 7.5% (reading) and 7.9% (listening) participants, respectively who *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed*.

Table 2

Participants' Responses to the Significance of Knowledge of AWL and Academic Productive Skills

Items	5(%)	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Writing					
7. Knowledge of the AWL will help me use more appropriate academic words in academic writing.	23.3	41.7	28.8	3.7	2.5
8. Knowledge of the AWL will help me be more confident in my ability to write academically.	21.5	42.3	28.2	6.1	1.8

9. Knowledge of the AWL will help me write more effective sentences in terms of academic writing.	18.4	50.3	25.8	4.3	1.2
10. Knowledge of the AWL will help me produce better written academic assignments.	16.6	52.1	24.5	5.5	1.2
Average	**19.9**	**46.6**	**26.8**	**4.9**	**1.7**
Speaking					
11. Knowledge of the AWL will help me use more appropriate words in academic presentations.	15.3	51.5	28.2	3.1	1.8
12. Knowledge of the AWL will help me be more confident in my academic presentations.	15.3	47.2	31.3	4.9	1.2
13. Knowledge of the AWL will help me communicate my intended message more effectively.	12.9	47.9	32.5	6.1	0.6
14. Knowledge of the AWL will help me better understand the difference in terms of delivering messages of fact, inference, opinion and judgment.	14.1	52.1	25.8	6.7	1.2
Average	**14.4**	**49.7**	**29.5**	**5.2**	**1.2**

Note: 5-strongly agree; 4-agree; 3-slightly agree; 2-disagree; 1-strongly disagree

Similarly, although few participants *slightly agreed* and *disagreed* with the AWL and its benefits in writing and reading skills, more than half (65.3%) of the participants *strongly agreed* and *agreed* with the benefits of Coxhead's (2000) AWL in improving their productive skills (writing and speaking). Of the 163 participants, 66.5% of them affirmed (*strongly agree* and *agree*) that knowledge of AWL helps them produce better and more effective written work. Likewise, some participants (64.1%) *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that knowledge of AWL will help them to be better English academic presenters and communicators.

Follow-up Interview Analysis

Knowledge of AWL Enhances Academic Reading Skill

For the reading skills, most of the participants agreed that knowledge of Coxhead's AWL helped them enhance their reading skills. The participants pointed out that reading is always taxing and challenging for non-English speakers because of inadequate word knowledge. By learning Coxhead's academic words on their own, they agreed that it helped them improve their ability to comprehend the reading discourse of the textbooks. Also, they commented that they could deal better with some academic-related materials such as journal articles, and other online resources. Above all, they strongly agreed that word knowledge is an important aspect of academic reading skills.

> For me, the biggest problem that I find in reading others' work or research articles is vocabulary. However, after learning Coxhead's AWL, I felt like I could understand reading better (p1).

Knowledge of AWL Enhances Academic Listening Skill

Likewise, nearly all participants agreed that the knowledge of Coxhead's AWL helped them have better academic listening skills. The participants specifically highlighted that the knowledge of AWL increased their understanding of classroom lectures, especially when presented by foreign lecturers. One of the participants commented on her agreement stating that the knowledge of AWL will particularly be helpful for Thai learners when they attend conferences, research presentations, seminars, etc. Another reason why they perceived that AWL helped them to enhance their academic listening was, they found AWL a more technical and formal word, rather than just a common word that they use while having a conversation with their cohorts or in daily life.

> I think it really helped me a lot. Before, many times, I cannot understand what other people speak in English because I do not know the meaning of the words in the sentence (p8).

Although most of the participants did agree that knowledge of Coxhead's AWL helped them improve their academic listening skills, one of the participants had just partial agreement. She stated that:

> I partly believe that Coxhead's AWL had helped me improve my listening skills because I still believe that I need to learn more vocabulary and not just AWL to improve my listening skills (p6).

Knowledge of AWL Enhances Academic Writing Skill

Further, the majority of the participants also agreed that learning Coxhead's AWL improved the quality of their writing assignments such as essays, reports, reflections, etc. They felt like the AWL helped them to be more creative and add more complexity to their writing as they had more choice of words unlike before. P7 stated that:

> Umm… I think knowledge of Coxhead's AWL helped me write better. The problem that I faced writing assignments, essays, and reports for some subjects is that I do not know many words and their synonyms. If I know more words and use them in writing, I think it will make my writing more creative and professional (p7).

Knowledge of AWL Enhances Academic Speaking Skill

Generally, the participants agreed in improving their speaking skills through knowledge of Coxhead's AWL. The participants believed that the use of AWL in their daily conversation or during an academic presentation at the university may help them become more eloquent and professional English speakers. Although the enhancement in their confidence in speaking was the primary reason that the participants had stressed, they also felt that adequate knowledge of Coxhead's AWL would result in better understanding and learning of the course modules, because they can confidently ask questions to the teachers in the classroom if they do not understand.

> I think it can enhance students' speaking skills. The students may have more confidence if they have more words...although it requires a lot of practice and experience to be able to perform well (p9).

Students' Perceptions of Including Coxhead's (2000) AWL in the University's Academic Textbooks

Further, participants were asked for their opinions on including Coxhead's AWL in the university's academic textbooks. In doing this, nearly all participants were in favor of including Coxhead's AWL in their academic textbooks. They stated that including it in the textbook can be useful in various ways; however, some participants commented that they could not ensure its

effectiveness in students' learning outcomes because Thai students are generally not serious about the English language. Further, they also said that Thai students have a negative attitude toward textbooks. So, they commented that its effectiveness would depend on the individual learners.

> Well, I do believe that is definitely going to be helpful for the students, however, on the effectiveness I'm not very sure how effective it's going to be because usually, the attitude of Thai students towards textbooks is not very good, they will consider it very boring or not very interesting. So, to be able to educate them on that, we might need different approaches to deliver and educate them with the academic word list (p6).

Other benefits that the participants perceived of including Coxhead's AWL in the textbook were: The opportunities to learn more new words and the enhancement in English communicative skills.

> Yes, if we include these words in the textbook or teaching materials, it may help us to have better English communicative skills like reading, listening, speaking and writing (p2).

Lastly, one participant expressed that Coxhead's AWL should be included in high school textbooks so that it would be helpful for the students when they transition from high school to the university level.

> If it is included in the university's course materials, it might be less beneficial because university students... should know how to find or learn these kinds of vocabulary by themselves or from other sources...not only from textbooks. However, for high school students, if the words are introduced, it might be much more beneficial for them later when they are at the university level (p3).

Discussion

Asyiah (2017) and Wangdi (2020) stated that word knowledge is one of the prerequisite language skills that is closely associated with the success of language acquisition. Supporting this, decades of studies have strongly acknowledged the need for adequate words for the betterment of one's language abilities and to meet comprehensible and standard communication

skills (Lee et al., 2019; Matthews & Cheng, 2015; Peters & Webb, 2018). In light of this, this study investigated the EFL university students' attitudes towards Coxhead's AWL, after they had self-learned it, in enhancing their academic receptive and productive skills. Most importantly, the findings have also highlighted the students' perception of integrating Coxhead's AWL in the academic textbooks

To minimize the difficulty of the word learning approach, many studies have developed a list of words covering a wide range of academic areas. One of these, directly related to the present study was Coxhead's (2000) AWL with 570 words-families developed particularly for tertiary level students of all academic disciplines. Besides its contribution to educational research areas, materials designing, dictionary makers, and textbook publishers, Coxhead's AWL has received impressive praise for helping students enhance their academic developmental skills (Coxhead, 2000). In line with previous literature, the present study reassured that Coxhead's AWL knowledge is important for university students. Unsurprisingly, more than half of the participants strongly agreed with the significance of Coxhead's AWL knowledge for the development of their English academic communication skills.

The significance of Coxhead's AWL was further evidenced by participants' responses to the follow-up interviews. Nearly all participants held positive attitudes toward the AWL in enhancing their academic receptive and productive skills. As for the reading skill, in particular, some participants responded that knowledge of the AWL helped them to read academic materials (e.g., textbooks, journal articles, and other online resources) more effectively with a better understanding. The finding was in line with the previous studies that underscored the significance of word knowledge in reading comprehension skills (e.g., Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Paige & Smith, 2018). However, some expressed concern commenting that knowledge of AWL alone would not be enough to be able to meet the targeted standard and that the language learners should learn more words than just Coxhead's AWL, particularly for English proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. This somewhat indicated that learners in the context value proficiency test scores more than anything. Future research investigating the importance of proficiency test scores in both academic and working environments would be an interesting study. Nevertheless, it was clear that learners of context understood that they require a huge amount of word knowledge to attain a reasonable reading comprehension ability. Likewise, for listening too, the majority of the participants agreed that

knowing AWL helped them, especially in the classroom when they had to deal with foreign teachers. But some participants still expressed their concerns that learners would need to acquire more words in addition to Coxhead's AWL to be able to yield better listening comprehension skills.

Further, participants also reported that Coxhead's AWL helped them improve their academic writing skills, which arguably is the biggest problem among second/foreign language learners (Wangdi, 2022). They stated that the knowledge of Coxhead's AWL gave them additional opportunities to improve their choice of words and sentence structures while writing academic-related assignments, as previous authors have suggested (Choi, 2017; Hasan & Subekti, 2017; Johnson et al., 2016). Likewise, the participants also acknowledged that Coxhead's AWL helped their academic speaking skills. They said that Coxhead's AWL aided them in boosting their confidence in speaking English in cases such as in academic presentations and daily conversations with English speakers. The importance of word knowledge and how it helps improve speaking skills are also highlighted in some other studies (e.g., Kilic, 2019; Koizumi & In'nami, 2013).

Most importantly, Richards (2001) and Knight (2015) have divulged textbooks as standardized, efficient, reliable, and quality sources of information; Hence, keeping this in mind, the present study also attempted to discuss students' perceptions of incorporating Coxhead's (2000) AWL in their academic textbooks. This allowed researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the significance that Coxhead's AWL may have for university students. In doing this, although most of the participants in the present study addressed a need for Coxhead's (2000) AWL in the university textbook, some expressed doubtful feelings in terms of its effectiveness. Firstly, Thai students' existing negative attitudes toward textbooks were highlighted. One of the participants reported that Thai students in general are not fond of reading textbook materials, teachers would need to push them to read and learn from the textbook. It is not surprising because students have access to all kinds of online and printed information. Secondly, another participant reported that Coxhead's AWL would be an appropriate inclusion for high school textbooks rather than for university books. It was also felt that learning Coxhead's AWL in high schools may serve as the prerequisite word knowledge that the students should have before entering universities. Nonetheless, there was a clear indication that Thai

students felt the essence of the need for Coxhead's AWL in the academic textbooks, albeit their opinions differ slightly from each other.

Implications and Future Research

In line with the findings of Choo et al. (2017), who conducted a similar study in an ESL context, this study also found EFL students held positive attitudes toward the significance of Coxhead's AWL knowledge for their academic communicative skills. These two findings affirm that Coxhead's AWL is extremely significant for university students in both ESL and EFL contexts (Srikrai et al., 2016). Considering its significance in students' academic communication skills, the findings of this study suggest the necessity of teaching Coxhead's AWL extensively to the students in the context, not just as self-access materials like the present study to help them have better academic communication skills. This suggestion can be extended to all ESL and EFL contexts where Coxhead's AWL is kept latent despite it holds immense benefits. This study argues that just like present participants there would be many university students across the globe who are not aware of Coxhead's AWL though it is widely recommended contemporary word lists that are directly linked with academic success (Gardner & Davies, 2014). Therefore, ESL and EFL teachers are recommended to give a close look into the benefits Coxhead's AWL would have for students' academic communicative skills if it is acquired.

In response to these issues, although this study provides no empirical evidence of how knowing and learning AWL helps improve students' academic receptive and productive skills, this study provides a theoretical basis on how Coxhead's AWL can be significantly useful for EFL university students. Also, much of earlier research studies have evidenced that academic word knowledge help improves students' academic communicative skills (e.g., Choi, 2017; Hasan & Subekti, 2017; Johnson et al., 2016; Karakoç & Köse, 2017; Noreillie et al., 2018; Paige & Smith, 2018; Stæhr, 2008). By considering the evidence, this study suggests a need for a strategic approach to teaching and creating awareness of Coxhead's AWL among teachers and university students, in both ESL and EFL contexts. One of the simplest approaches would be incorporating Coxhead's AWL in academic textbooks as suggested by the present participants since textbooks are believed to be a source of standardized, efficient, reliable, and quality information that provides a variety of learning resources to the students (Knight, 2015).

More so, research has proven that self-access learning help learners acquire the aspects (e.g., vocabulary, listening, writing, etc.) of the English language in many ways (Aydın & Tütüniş, 2021; Dreyer, 2014, Handford et al., 2021; Yarwood et al., 2019), institutions are suggested to initiate or set-up self-access learning centers in EFL contexts for the better yield of the target (English) language. From the findings of the present study, it is suggested that the self-access learning center should emphasize and advocate academic words that are frequently used in academic writing, reading, speaking, and listening such as Coxhead's AWL. Practitioners or people who are in charge of self-access learning centers, therefore, need to research how to increase awareness of academic words among learners. As suggested by present participants, incorporating it into the academic textbook might work to a certain extent to help students learn academic words. Further, self-access practitioners are also recommended to develop some follow-up activities or self-assessment tasks just like in the present study to help learners keep the track of their learning progress. Yan (2020) has stated that self-assessment practice is an integral part of self-learning and it positively influences students' overall academic performance. Thus, although self-access learners are those learners who learn independently with or without a little help from instructors, we cannot overlook the benefits of follow-up tasks in the self-access learning context.

Finally, there is a need for further studies on the significance of Coxhead's AWL on students' communicative skills to solidify the claims made in this study. Further, empirical research on whether knowledge of Coxhead's AWL helps students improve their academic communications skills, and investigation of the relationship between the knowledge of Coxhead's AWL and students' proficiency test scores or academic achievements may potentially help consolidate the present findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, knowledge of Coxhead's AWL seems to play a significant role in students' academic communications skills. Therefore, ESL and EFL higher education institutions and instructors are suggested to consider Coxhead's AWL as textbook materials, if not as self-access materials, to help students enhance their academic communicative skills. However, it should be noted that the findings of the present study were limited to students who volunteered and

completed surveys and interviews. Cautious interpretation is recommended before implementing them into practice in different contexts.

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