AN INVESTIGATION INTO ENGLISH VOCABULARY AND LEXICAL ACTIVITIES IN "GLOBAL SUCCESS" ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS (GRADE 3, 6, 10)

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Abstract. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in English textbooks, and evaluating its suitability is essential for effective teaching and learning. With various English textbook series currently in use in the Vietnamese educational context, assessing their effectiveness remains critical. However, there exists a scarcity of published studies that evaluate the recently introduced English coursebook series, "Global Success." This research focuses on the vocabulary system and language activities in the Global Success 3, 6, and 10 textbooks used within the 2018 Vietnamese National Curriculum with the aim of identifying the vocabulary levels required for each grade, based on the British National Corpus (BNC)/Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) list of high-frequency words, the Academic Word List (AWL), and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Additionally, the study examines the diversity of language activity types in the textbooks based on Jack C. Richards' (2006) classification *"Communicative language teaching today"*. The research employs a quantitative and corpus-based approach to analyze the vocabulary and language activities in the textbooks. The findings show that Global Success 3 had the most vocabulary included in 1000 frequency words, the academic vocabulary in the three course books of the Global Success series was remarkably low, and there is an abundance of advanced lexical resources. Moreover, a lack of communicative activities in the book "Global Success 10" has been detected in this study. Based on these findings, the researcher proposes several recommendations for improving the quality of the textbooks, ultimately improving vocabulary teaching and learning in Vietnam, including simplifying the text for low-level students, including more academic words in teaching vocabulary using the Academic Word List (AWL), and enhancing communicative practice activities.

Keywords: English vocabulary, textbooks, frequent vocabulary, academic words, corpus, academic word list, Vietnam, coursebooks.

1. Introduction

During the current international integration era, English plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication, with the vocabulary being regarded as a crucial part of learning and teaching English. A large vocabulary size assists students in better comprehension and second language use (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2014) [1, 2].

The implementation of the new General Educational Program 2018 entailed the development of new English language curricula, textbooks, and foreign language programs. In this context, textbooks delineate the goals and aims of the curriculum (Sheldon (1988) [3]), and offer a

roadmap for educators on the content to be delivered and the methods to be employed in the teaching process. The insights provided by scholars such as Shield & Dole (2013) [4] and Fan & Zhu (2007) [5] underscore the significance of coursebooks in shaping the learning experience for both teachers and students, thereby fostering a conducive environment for effective language acquisition and development.

However, there has been a lack of published research examining the assessment of the recently introduced English coursebook series entitled "Global Success", of which Prof. Dr. Hoang Van Van is the general editor. The series was implemented through close cooperation between the Vietnam Education Publishing House and two leading global publishers, namely Macmillan Education (for primary school levels) and Pearson Education (for lower secondary and upper secondary school levels). This paper applies the 6-level Foreign language Competency Framework *Vietnamese Standard of English Proficiency* and other related theories, which contain the dimensions of vocabulary in teaching and learning, to evaluate the vocabulary items and learning activities of this language component of the "Global Success" of Grade 3, 6, and 10 - the first grades of the three educational levels in Vietnam, which aim to help students reach English levels A1, A2, and B1, respectively.

2. Content

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. The importance of coursebooks in teaching foreign languages

Coursebooks are indeed considered the backbone of any English Language Fluency (ELF) program, serving as the primary instrument to enhance the lexical proficiency of second language (L2) learners and assuming a pivotal role.

2.1.2. Background of EFL programs in Vietnam

Due to Vietnam's history, English was not widely used until the 1990s, coinciding with several key events: the fall of the Soviet Union, the economic reforms of Doi Moi (began in 1986), and the improvement in the relations between the US and Vietnam. Since then, English has become pivotal for Vietnam's international cooperation, globalization, modernization efforts, and social and economic development [6]. In the education system, this shift led to the development of new English language curricula, textbooks, and foreign language programs.

After numerous revisions, the government reviewed and adjusted to introduce the General Education Curriculum for the English subject. The 2018 General Education Curriculum is an education and training orientation program for all school levels issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam on December 26th, 2018 according to Circular No. 32/2018/TT- Ministry of Education and Training on "promulgation of general education program" [7]. The primary objective of the English General Education Curriculum [7] is to assist students in acquiring and enhancing their communication skills as well as linguistic knowledge.

2.1.3. Vocabulary knowledge in EFL learning

2.1.3.1. Lexical coverage and activities

Lexical knowledge plays a crucial role in language teaching and learning (Guan, 2013) [8], classified into vocabulary size and vocabulary depth (Haastrup & Henriksen, 2000; Read, 1993, 2000) [9, 10, 11]. Specifically, the vocabulary size refers to the quantity of vocabulary known by language learners. A large size of vocabulary assists students in better comprehension and second language use (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2014) [21, 249]. Secondly, vocabulary depth relates to lexical knowledge, which ensures that learners use language in appropriate ways based on form, meaning, and use (Nation, 2001; Read, 1993) [1, 10]. A number of studies (e.g, Alavi & Akbarian, 2012; Cheng & Matthews, 2018; Matthews, 2018; Dabbagh, 2016) [12, 13, 14, 15] confirm the

role of vocabulary size in receptive skills (reading and listening) for analyzing texts and interpreting the meaning efficiently.

According to a well-defined framework established by Richards (2006) [16], there are three distinct types of language practice that an activity could potentially cultivate in students: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative. Mechanical activities prioritize accuracy and repetition. Meaningful activities encourage students to establish connections between the vocabulary and underlying concepts. The ultimate goal is communicative activities, where students are challenged to actively utilize the newly acquired vocabulary to express themselves and engage in meaningful communication.

2.1.3.2. Word categories

BNC/COCA word family lists (created by Paul Nation) categorize English vocabulary by frequency. These lists are broken down into sets of 1,000 words each, with the most common words appearing at the beginning. Designed to help people learning English as a second language, the initial lists (1,000 and 2,000 words) focus on practical vocabulary for travel, academic pursuits, and navigating the internet. Additionally, the Academic Word List (AWL) is a wordlist developed by Averil Coxhead at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This wordlist contains around 570 word families, including various forms of the words by analyzing a corpus of millions of words from over 400 academic texts. List one contains the most common words, followed by list two with the next most common, and so on.

2.1.4. Previous studies

A number of research studies have looked into the evaluation of EFL textbooks. Hamilolu and Karlıova (2009) [17] assessed vocabulary selection and teaching methods used in five chosen English language coursebooks. They found that the word lists provided at the end of the examined Student's Books serve as quick-reference tools for self-checking. Sun & Dang (2020) [18] conducted a study in the context of high school education in China, analyzing the vocabulary in a 273,094-word corpus of high school EFL textbooks and assessing the vocabulary knowledge of 265 high school students who used these textbooks. Their analysis revealed that varying numbers of word families were required to comprehend the textbooks to different extents, with no consistent correlation to the textbook levels.

Nguyen (2020) [19] stood out for examining high school English language textbooks published by the Vietnam Education Publishing House. By testing 422 Vietnamese high school students from all three grades using the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), it was discovered that Vietnamese high school students mainly knew the first two lists of 1,000 words. However, this study [19] focused primarily on the reading passages of the textbooks, rather than the whole textbooks, and found that the reading texts did not effectively enhance content and vocabulary acquisition due to an excessive number of unfamiliar words.

Dang (2017) [20] analyzed the textbook "Tieng Anh 12" with a focus on word knowledge, vocabulary learning strategies, and types of vocabulary activities. By utilizing the Range program by Nation (2001) [1] along with surveys and interviews with twelfth graders and English teachers, it was concluded that the lexical input in the textbook was insufficient in terms of word selection and desirable aspects of word knowledge.

According to Richards (2006) [16] in the book "Communicative language teaching today", language practice through lexical activities is divided into three types: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative.

However, there has been a lack of studies on the assessment of the recently introduced English coursebook series "Global Success," particularly regarding the lexical input dimensions present in the three coursebooks, namely "Global Success 3", "Global Success 6", and "Global Success 10". Therefore, this study was undertaken to address this research gap.

2.2. Research questions

The researchers address the following questions to accomplish the above objectives:

Question 1: What are the dimensions of vocabulary included in the English coursebooks "Global Success" Grade 3, 6, 10?

Question 2: In what ways do the vocabulary activities in the coursebooks support students' vocabulary learning?

2.3. Materials and Methodology

2.3.1. Materials

This study explores the coursebooks "Global Success" grade 3, 6, 10, whose series have been widely used across all provinces in Vietnam, jointly published by Vietnam Education Publishing House, Macmillan Education and Pearson Education. Regarding Global Success 3 and 6, these textbooks are designed to introduce learners to each unit with a big-picture overview in a *Getting Started lesson*. Then, they delve deeper into Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar through *A closer look* sections. Next comes *Communication*, where students practice all four language skills: Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing. For more targeted practice, Skills 1 and 2 focus on Reading & Speaking and Listening & Writing, respectively. *Looking Back* offers a chance to review the entire unit, while the *Project section* challenges students to work together on a real-world task connected to the unit's theme. Beyond the 12 main units, four *Review* lessons help solidify understanding by revisiting knowledge and skills from previous units through various tasks. Except for the *Getting started, Looking Back, Project and Review* sections, there are some differences in the lessons included in the Global Success 10 textbook compared to those of classes 3 and 6. After *Getting started*, learners dive deep into the *language components, namely* Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar. This is followed by the sections focusing on the four key *language skills*: Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing. *Communication and Culture* aims to expand students' knowledge of different cultures and how to apply that knowledge in everyday conversations.

2.3.2. Methodology

In this study, quantitative methods encompass surveys, experiments, statistical analysis, and mathematical modeling. These methods enable systematic collection and analysis of numerical information, ensuring objective and reliable conclusions. Corpus linguistics uses real-world linguistic data to evaluate linguistic theories, providing empirical evidence for validation, refutation, or refinement. This research study adopts a corpus-based and quantitative approach to analyze vocabulary in the Glossary systems of the textbooks (Global Success 3, 6 and 10) published by the Vietnam Education Publishing House. Approximately 621 words were collected from the glossaries and analyzed using BNC/COCA lists and AWL. The research then progresses to analyze the vocabulary used in the coursebook against the Academic Word List (AWL). The data were also assessed in relation to CEFR levels. Additionally, we also collect and evaluate the vocabulary activities in the textbooks with the vocabulary activity framework proposed by Richard (2006) [16]. Thus, the study would provide insightful feedback on the existing vocabulary exercises and suggest improved alternatives for the student book reprint.

2.4. Findings and Discussion

2.4.1. Research question 1: What are the dimensions of vocabulary included in the English coursebooks "Global Success" Grade 3, 6, 10?

2.4.1.1. An evaluation of vocabulary levels based on the BNC/ COCA lists

Table 1 indicates that the figure for the most frequent 1000 words (1K) in the BNC/ COCA lists in the Glossary of Global Success 3 textbook accounts for 71.20%, higher than those of

Global Success 6 and 10 at 39.78% and 55.3% respectively. Meanwhile, regarding the second most frequent 1000 words (1K-2K) from the BNC/ COCA lists, the highest proportion is for the vocabulary items in the Glossary of Global Success 10, at 29.10%.

Table 1. Vocabulary levels based on the BNC/ COCA lists

	Word counts			Percentage (%)		
	0 - 1K	*1K - 2K*	*Off-list*	*0 - 1K*	*1K - 2K*	*Off-List*
Global Success 3	136	15	40	71.20%	7.85%	20.94%
Global Success 6	66	49	95	31.42%	23.33%	45.25%
Global Success 10	35	64	121	15.90%	29.10%	55.00%

2.4.1.2. An evaluation of Vocabulary Levels based on the AWL
Table 2. Vocabulary Levels based on the AWL

	Word counts	Percentage (%)
Global Success 3	1	0.005%
Global Success 6	4	0.019%
Global Success 10	25	0.113%

As can be seen in Table 2, the highest percentage of AWL vocabulary can be found in the Global Success 10 textbook. The figures for Global Success 3 and 6 are 0.005 % and 0.019%, respectively. Although Global Success 10 contains the highest number of academic words among the surveyed coursebooks, it can be implied that the quantity of academic words included in these coursebooks is relatively low in comparison with the total vocabulary counts.

2.4.1.3. An evaluation of Vocabulary Levels based on the CEFR
Table 3. Vocabulary Levels based on the CEFR

	Percentage (%)						
	A1	*A2*	*B1*	*B2*	*C1*	*C2*	*Off-list*
Global Success 3	72.25%	12.04%	3.66%	1.04%	0%	0%	11.01%
Global Success 6	9.52%	22.85%	30.9%	10.95%	1.42%	0%	24.29%
Global Success 10	0.45%	7.72%	28.18%	27.27%	6.81%	0.91%	28.64%

In terms of A1 level vocabulary, new words from Global Success 3 makes up the highest figure, 72.25%, while the quantity of A2 level words in Global Success 6 is the highest of all coursebooks, about 22,85%. Moreover, Table 3 shows that Global Success 6 and 10 share an approximately equal proportion for B1 level vocabulary, with the former at 30.95% and the latter at 28.18%, which are much higher than that of Global Success 3, at only 3.66%. A similar trend can be seen in the figures of B2 level words in the three textbooks, at 27.27%, 10.95% and 1.04% respectively. Additionally, the proportions of C1 and C2 level vocabulary items account for the lowest in all three coursebooks, ranging from 0.9% to 7%.

2.4.1.4. Discussion

The analysis of the Glossaries across three coursebooks reveals an increasing trend in the number of new words as students progress through grade levels. The complexity of vocabulary also increases. Global Success 3 prioritizes simpler words, while Global Success 6 and 10

introduce more complex vocabulary. Global Success 3 contains the most K1 words, while Global Success 10 the fewest. It is important to consider the significance of high-frequency words for everyday comprehension.

The occurrence of Academic Word List (AWL) vocabulary in three coursebooks of the Global Success series is remarkably low, ranging from 0.005 to 0.115. Even a limited number of academic words would be beneficial for students during their high school education. However, the investigation reveals that "Global Success 3" and "Global Success 6" have less than 0.02% AWL vocabulary, which is lower than expected. To succeed in high school, students need to be exposed to more academic vocabulary. The proportion of 0.113 in "Global Success 10" is deemed insufficient for students entering high school, emphasizing the need for a wider range of academic words.

According to Circular 32/2018 [7], vocabulary instruction in elementary schools aligns with Level 1 (A1 CEFR) and progresses to Level 2 (A2 CEFR) in secondary schools. The high school curriculum aligns with Level 3 (B1 CEFR). However, our analysis of "Global Success 3," "Global Success 6," and "Global Success 10" glossaries reveals higher proportions of advanced vocabulary beyond the curriculum scope. In "Global Success 3," around 16.74% of the vocabulary corresponds to levels A2, B1, and B2. Similarly, in "Global Success 6," levels B1, B2, and C1 make up approximately 43.32% of the vocabulary. This abundance of advanced vocabulary can pose challenges for students with lower proficiency levels. Learning new words becomes more demanding for students with limited working vocabulary size.

2.4.2. Research question 2: In what ways do the vocabulary activities in the coursebooks support students' vocabulary learning?

According to Richards (2006) [16], language practice is divided into three types: Mechanical, Meaningful, and Communicative. This research will analyze the lexical activities of Vocabulary lessons in Global Success 3, 6, 10 to examine the diversity of exercises of each type in these coursebooks.

2.4.2.1. Mechanical practice

Mechanical practice activities are controlled language practice exercises focusing on repetition and mastery of forms that enable students to effectively engage in language use, even if they do not fully comprehend the underlying linguistic concepts (Richards, 2006) [16]. The examined "Global Success" coursebooks contain various mechanical exercises for vocabulary development, such as listening, pointing and saying (Global Success 3, Unit 6), listening and repeating words (Global Success 6 Volume 1, Unit 1), word matching (Global Success 10, Unit 8), categorization (Global Success 6, Unit 9), and sentence completion using learned words (Global Success 10, Unit 8).

2.4.2.2. Meaningful practice

Meaningful practice involves controlled language activities where students make meaningful choices to complete tasks (Richards, 2006) [16]. In these Global Success textbooks , the vocabulary exercises provide students with complete texts to work with, requiring them to understand the meaning of the text and complete sentences or texts using given words (e.g. Read and complete the text, Global Success 3, Unit 11; Complete the text, Global Success 10, Unit 3; Use the words in the box to complete the text, Global Success 6, Unit 7). This challenges their comprehension skills and promotes engagement with vocabulary in a broader context.

2.4.2.3. Communicative practice

Communicative practice, as advocated by Richards (2006) [16], emphasizes authentic communication contexts over scripted drills. Communicative activities like discussions, role-playing, and simulations in the textbook aim to equip students with the ability to confidently use vocabulary in real-life interactions. For example, Global Success 6 (Unit 2, 4 and 10) provides

students with "Ask and answer" exercises. This approach fosters active participation, enabling students to understand others and express themselves effectively in conversations.

2.4.2.4. Discussion

The vocabulary sections in the explored textbooks encompass a variety of exercises to optimize lexical learning and retention. It combines mechanical drills for cognitive load management with meaningful and communicative exercises for a comprehensive learning experience. The exercises cater to different learning levels, gradually increasing in complexity as students progress through grades. This approach builds a strong vocabulary foundation and challenges students appropriately. However, the observation of a lack of communicative activities in the book "Global Success 10" is a valid concern as communicative activities are essential for language learners as they provide opportunities to use vocabulary in meaningful and interactive contexts.

2.4.3. Implications of the study

Based on our research, specific recommendations can be proposed to significantly improve the book's effectiveness in facilitating vocabulary learning and practice for students.

2.4.3.1. Simplifying the text for low-level students

As the vocabulary evaluation results indicate, it's clear that, to some extent, vocabulary in the examined Global Success coursebooks exceeds their corresponding targeted curriculum level, potentially challenging students. To address this, Global Success coursebooks authors can substitute complex words with simpler ones to improve comprehension. For instance, reading texts should undergo readability analysis using a Readability Analyzer tool, followed by an inspection of word difficulty levels through a Text Inspector tool. Based on these assessments, the texts can be adapted by replacing complex words with simpler, high-frequency vocabulary, ensuring accessibility for students whose vocabulary proficiency falls below the 3,000 most commonly used words. Graded readers are also helpful for students with lower vocabulary proficiency, as they feature repeated words for effective learning. Another approach is to rewrite the text using plain language, reducing cognitive load and enhancing comprehension. These strategies make the book more suitable for the intended educational curriculum.

2.4.3.2. Increasing Academic Words in teaching vocabulary using Academic Word Lists (AWL)

The Academic Word List (AWL) is a significant reference in language learning, capturing essential vocabulary across academic disciplines. However, there may be a gap between the AWL and students' exposure to academic language in textbooks. While Global Success 10 includes some academic words, additional academic lexical items are needed to enrich learners' vocabulary. The AWL's strength lies in its comprehensive coverage and focus on commonly used academic words. Mastering the AWL provides significant coverage in academic texts and boosts confidence and comprehension. Educators should integrate AWL-based strategies into teaching practices. To enhance students' vocabulary range, the "Global Success" series should incorporate more Academic Word List (AWL) vocabulary in their instructions and language activities. This can include analyzing research articles, writing academic essays, and using the target vocabulary in meaningful ways. Educators can also encourage students to encounter AWL words across different subjects, such as science experiments, historical documents, and literary works, fostering a deeper understanding and wider application of the vocabulary.

2.4.3.3. Enhancing Communicative practice activities

Our research reveals a lack of communicative practice in Global Success 10's vocabulary lessons. Thus, we recommend integrating more communicative exercises throughout the coursebook. This would provide students with valuable opportunities to apply vocabulary in real-world scenarios, reinforcing their understanding and retention. It would also foster a student-

centered and interactive learning environment, promoting critical thinking and interpersonal skills through collaborative activities like discussions.

3. Conclusion

This research delves into the world of vocabulary learning within the "Global Success" English coursebooks, showing that "Global Success 3" priorities high-frequency words for building a strong foundation, while "Global Success 10" offers the most AWL words, though still a smaller portion compared to its total vocabulary. Notably, the vocabulary level generally increases with grade level, with some instances exceeding the expected level as outlined by Vietnamese curriculum guidelines (the Circular 32/2018) [7]. The study also highlights that there is a lack of Communicative practice in the Vocabulary lesson of Global Success 10. To improve Global Success coursebooks, some measures can be implemented, such as simplifying texts, including more academic words for students based on the AWL and enhancing Communicative practice activities.

The study has a limited scope, as it only examines a small corpus of three grades from a single set of EFL coursebooks and focuses solely on glossary vocabulary. For further research, the scope should be extended by expanding the range of vocabulary studied or by investigating other coursebook components to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, it is recommended that further studies broaden the scope by considering the entire series of English textbooks across all three levels of education in Vietnam. Alternatively, exploring different corpora associated with various coursebooks and grade levels would provide a broader and varied perspective.

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