

Content Analysis of the Vocabulary Items in “Action Pack” for Sixth Grade in Jordan

تحليل محتوى لمفردات كتاب اللغة الانجليزية Action Pack6 للسف السادس الأساسي في الأردن

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the extent of suitability of the new vocabulary items to the main topic of each unit and the extent of presenting these new vocabulary items in appropriate contexts and situations in the Jordanian "Action Pack 6" Pupil's Book. The researcher analyzed the content of the 20 units of "Action Pack 6" Pupils' book by identifying the criteria of the analysis which is based on the load suitability and the appropriateness of the vocabulary items presented in "Action Pack 6" to the level of the students. The categories of analysis which included the selection of vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson and the presentation of the new vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations, while the unit of the analysis was the word. After collecting the required data, frequencies and the percentages of these categories were calculated. The findings of the study revealed that the vocabulary load is suitable to the students' level and to the topics of the units. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the vocabulary presented in "Action Pack 6" Pupils' book is appropriate to the students' real life and context.

Keywords: "Action Pack", content analysis, vocabulary.

المخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في مدى ملاءمة المفردات الموجودة في كتاب الصف السادس الأساسي (Action Pack 6) للمواضيع الرئيسية المطروحة في الوحدات الدراسية في كتاب الطالب ومدى ملاءمة عرض هذه المفردات الجديدة في السياق وفي المواقف لمستوى هؤلاء الطلبة. وقام الباحث بتحليل محتوى وحدات الكتاب العشرين من خلال معيارين أساسيين وهما مدى مناسبة حمل المفردات ومدى مناسبة المفردات لمستوى طلاب الصف السادس الأساسي. وتكونت فئات التحليل من: اختيار المفردات المناسبة لموضوع الدرس، وتقديم المفردات في السياق والموقف المناسب، وكانت وحدة التحليل هي الكلمة. جُمعت البيانات وحُللت وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة مناسبة حمل المفردات لمستوى الطلبة ومناسبتها

أيضا لمواضيع الوحدات الدراسية. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أيضا أن المفردات الموجودة في كتاب الطالب للصف السادس الأساسي كانت مناسبة للسياق والحياة الواقعية للطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: Action Pack، تحليل المحتوى، المفردات.

background and Introduction

Acquisition and teaching of vocabulary are the main substantial concerns in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL hereafter), is under examination. The role of vocabulary instruction in an EFL context has been for decades a major debate for students and teachers alike. Researchers have debated whether vocabulary should be taught deductively or inductively. Traditional or even novice teachers have adopted the view of teaching vocabulary deductively due to the fact that they lack the necessary training on the most up-to-date methodologies and strategies in TEFL or they just attempt to teach vocabulary as they were taught.

Before the 1980s, the Jordanian EFL teaching was dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM hereafter). What was emphasized in the GTM is grammar and lexical accuracy, attention was given to form rather than meaning, explanation and memorization of individual words and their usage. For vocabulary teaching, a direct method was usually adopted, generally focusing on spelling, meaning, and usage with little or no attention paid to pronunciation (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979).

Textbooks are the most regularly used in the teaching process. They are valuable sources of knowledge which are considered to be the easiest to obtain and they become dispensable aids to help students in obtaining clear concepts of the subject matter. The textbook also plays an important role in teaching; it facilitates students' learning activities because a course book offers advantages which constitute useful resources (Jakovos, 2000).

Berelson (1952) states that content analysis is a systematic, replicable technique for condensing many words of a text into less content categories based on overt rules of coding. It makes inferences

which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection.

In the 1990s, the communicative approach greatly impacted Jordanian EFL teaching. This approach focuses more on the language use than language form and more on language fluency than language accuracy (Brown, 1987). Following this approach, EFL teachers taught vocabulary in context and usually instructed students to guess the meanings of new words in context. Zimmerman (1997, p.17) declared that although the lexicon is arguably central to language acquisition and use, vocabulary instruction has not been a priority in second language acquisition research and methodology. Supporting this notion, Nation (2001) discussed the main points in designing the vocabulary component of a language course and focuses on the importance of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning (pp. 394-406). Folse (2004, p.viii) suggested that students appreciate good instruction in vocabulary, which includes teaching words that students need to know, giving many good examples of the words, and holding students accountable for the words through appropriate practice activities and systematic testing. Furthermore, Nation (2001) stated that foreign/second language learners need an ample repertoire of vocabulary in order to be communicatively competent. Decarrico (2001, p. 285) stated that vocabulary acquisition is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first, second, or foreign. Similarly, Decarrico (2001) and Nation, (2001) emphasized the idea that, if learners lack vocabulary knowledge, they soon discover that their ability to understand or express themselves clearly is imperfect.

Vocabulary acquisition plays an important role in mastering a language. A learner with a reasonable repertoire of vocabulary will not perform well in all aspects of the language. Yang (1997) concluded that many college students still encounter difficulties in reading their English textbooks because of their limited repertoire of vocabulary. Thus, improving vocabulary skill between English language learners is a problem faced by many schools. Several problems and limitations have been related to the factors contributing to the level of learning vocabulary. Some researchers, for example, lack evidence

of students' success on vocabulary learning and other language skills where vocabulary is needed (Sothan, 2015).

Educators in the field agree that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful foreign language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts (Laufer and Nation,1997; Nation, 2001; Maximo,2000; Read, 2000; Gu, 2003; Marion, 2008; Susanto, 2016). Learning vocabulary plays a dynamic role in all language skills (Nation, 2001). Furthermore, al-Qahtani (2015) , pointed out that the acquisition of adequate vocabulary is crucial for successful foreign language use because without an extensive repertoire of vocabulary, learners will not be able to use the language communicatively. Nation (2001) and Alqahtani (2015) argue that second language learners rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest hurdle for learners to overcome. Maximo (2000) explained that a large vocabulary repertoire is vital for the mastery of a language since language learners carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem for them. Similarly, Meara (1980) reported that vocabulary has been acknowledged as language learners' greatest source of problems. Berne & Blachowicz (2008) reported that teaching vocabulary may be challenging because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and learning. Similarly, Thornbury (2002) and Walters (2004) agreed that teaching words is a central part in learning a language as languages are based on words.

Magableh (2000) revised the functional English language of first commercial secondary class. The results revealed lack of grammar, role-play, punctuation, spelling, phonetic transcription of the vocabulary, tests, visual aids and dialogues. The results also indicated that the materials were stimulating and reasonably sequenced.

Zawahreh (2012) analyzed the content of Action Pack7 to find out to what extent that vocabulary items meet the criteria proposed compared to those criteria proposed by Al-Momani (1998) which included a ten-item scale.

The findings of the study revealed that most of the new vocabulary items in Action pack 7 met the criteria of the analysis with a percentage ranged between 100% - 82 and there was no balance in the distribution of the new vocabulary items and the parts of speech within the modules analyzed. Islami (2019) qualitatively analyzed the extent of using authentic materials in Action pack .12 He concluded that the content of Action Pack 12 was highly authentic having a reliability of .79.50% Al Khazaleh (2020) analyzed the authenticity of the reading texts of the student’s book in Action Pack .7His study that revealed that the reading texts of the student’s book in Action Pack 7 had a high degree of authenticity.

Al-Smadi, Batineh & AlHawamdeh (2021) analyzed the pronunciation and spelling activities presented in Action pack 10. They concluded that Action Pack 10 includes pronunciation and spelling activities in a separate section with one activity in each unit for teaching pronunciation, and each activity focuses on meeting one pronunciation outcome.

Reviewing the related literature, this study may be one of the few in Jordan that analyzed the vocabulary items in the Action Pack series, Action Pack 6 in particular. Thus, the study is meant to provide EFL teachers and textbook writers with insights into the frequencies, and percentages of vocabulary load and suitability presented in Action Pack 6.

Significance of the Study

Hopefully, the findings of this study would be beneficial for the four interested groups of the Jordanian Action Pack 6 comprising pupils, teachers, supervisors and the curricula decisions makers. Pupils may benefit from knowing the amount of vocabulary items which are suitable to the topic of each lesson in each unit and to what extent they are appropriate to their level, values, and relevance to their real life and environment.

Teachers may benefit from the findings in making plans to select the best teaching strategies. Supervisors may utilize the findings to make decisions about how teachers are successful in

applying the appropriate vocabulary teaching strategies. Finally, it may help curricula decision makers to decide to what extent “Action Pack 6” is suitable to pupils’ level.

Objectives

This study aims at analyzing “Action Pack 6” Pupil’s book which is considered as a main textbook for teaching English language as a foreign language in the public schools of Jordan. Questions of the study

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the vocabulary load of “Action Pack 6” suitable for each lesson in each unit?
2. To what extent are the vocabulary items of “Action Pack 6” introduced in appropriate contexts?

Limitations of the study

This analysis is only devoted to the Jordanian “Action Pack 6” Pupils’ Book.

Definition of terms

1. “Action pack”: It is a series of twelve books prescribed by the Jordanian Ministry of Education from first to twelve grade students. It includes student’s book, activity book, teacher’s book and cassettes.
2. Load suitability: the number of the new words introduced in every lesson seems to be reasonable for the students.
3. Appropriateness of context: The vocabulary items are introduced in appropriate contexts and situations.

Criteria of analysis

The criteria of the analysis were the load suitability and the appropriateness of the vocabulary items presented in “Action Pack 6” to the students of Grade 6.

Categories of analysis

This study adopts two categories of analysis based on Skierso (1991): Textbook Selection and Evaluation.

The categories of this study were the following:

1. Selection of vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson.
2. Presentation of the new vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations.

Unit of analysis

The word is used as a unit of analysis in this study.

Reliability of the content analysis

In order to establish the reliability of the content analysis, the analysis was repeated after one week by using the same definitions, criteria, categories and unit of analysis to calculate the intra-rater reliability co-efficient (agreement percentage) between the two analyses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Intra-rater reliability (agreement percentage)			
Intra-rater percentage	Selection of vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson.	Presentation of the new vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations.	Average Percentage
	95.4	98.6	97

Table 1 shows that the reliability coefficient of the whole analysis was 97 which is considered appropriate for the purpose of the study.

Data

The data under analysis is the Pupil’s Book of “Action Pack 6” which consists of 20 units.

Findings and Discussion

Findings related to the first question of the study: To what extent is the vocabulary load of “Action Pack 6” suitable for each lesson in each unit?

To find out the extent of the appropriateness and the selection of the load of the new vocabulary items presented in the first ten units of “Action Pack 6”, frequencies and percentages were calculated as shown in Table2.

Table 2

Frequencies and percentages of vocabulary items in units 1-10

Categories	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Total
Selection of new vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson.	18	17	16	0	16	15	15	0	15	15	127
Presentation of the new vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations.	18	15	15	0	14	15	13	0	15	15	120
Total	36	32	31	0	30	30	28	0	30	30	247
Percentage	14.6	12.9	12.5	0	12.1	12.1	11.3	0	12.1	12.1	100

Table 2 shows that the total number of new vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson is 127 with frequencies ranging between 0 to 18 while the total number of the new vocabulary items which are presented in appropriate contexts and

situation is 120 with frequencies ranging between 0 to 18. The total number of both categories is 247 with frequencies ranging between 28 to 36. The percentages of both categories range between 0 and 14.5.

Findings related to the second question of the study: To what extent are the vocabulary items of “Action Pack 6” introduced in appropriate contexts?

To find out the extent of the appropriateness and the selection of the load of the new vocabulary items presented in the last ten units of “Action Pack 6”, frequencies and percentages were calculated as shown in table3.

Table 3
Frequencies and percentages of vocabulary items in units 11-20

Categories	Unit 11	Unit 12	Unit 13	Unit 14	Unit 15	Unit 16	Unit 17	Unit 18	Unit 19	Unit 20	Total
Selection of new vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson.	16	17	16	0	16	14	17	0	17	16	129
Presentation of the new vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations.	17	15	17	0	16	15	18	0	14	16	128
Total	33	32	33	0	32	29	35	0	31	32	257
Percentage	12.8	12.4	12.8	0	12.4	11.3	13.6	0	12	12.4	100

Table 3 shows that the total number of new vocabulary items suitable for the topic of the lesson is 129 with frequencies ranging between 0 to 17 while the total number of the new vocabulary items which are presented in appropriate contexts and situation is 128 with frequencies ranging between 0 to 18. The total number of both categories is 257 with frequencies ranging between 32 to 35. The percentages of both categories range between 0 and 13.6.

The findings of the current study are in line with those of Magableh (2000), Zawahreh (2012), and Al-Smadi, Batineh & AlHawamdeh (2021). It seems that “Action Pack 6” Pupil’s Book presents an ample amount of new vocabulary items which is actually predictable at this early level of learning English as a foreign language since Grade 6 pupils are native speakers of Arabic who have already spent five years of their 12 years journey of studying EFL in the government schools of Jordan. Moreover, this actually goes with “Action Pack 6” authors’ early announcement that this textbook aims at presenting EFL through using the Total Physical Response approach, in which pupils were asked to understand and respond to the new language without actually using it. Thus, they need this reasonable number of new vocabularies in order to respond and understand the language.

Therefore, we notice that the total number which pertains to the selection of new vocabulary items which suits the topic of the unit is 254. This

result seems very reasonable taking into account that Grade 6 students still need to build on their repertoire of new vocabulary items in order to use the language communicatively later on in higher levels. This fact also goes with the general goals of the “Action Pack 6” which explicitly states the importance of adopting the communicative approach, an eclectic blend of complementary methodologies which emphasizes the use of language in order to communicate in culturally significant contexts.

Analyzing “Action Pack 6”, revealed that the textbook introduces a number new of vocabulary items which are suitable to the topic of each unit. For instance, the words; turn (it) on, laptop, light, battery, mouse, store, touch, click(on) and (the) Internet which are introduced in unit 1, page 4 are very much related to the main topic of the unit;” Buying a computer”. The words; keyboard, screen, press, button, and printer which are introduced in lessons 2 and 3, page 9 which consolidate and build on the materials introduced in lesson 1 are also suitable to the main topic of unit 1 which is “Buying a computer”.

As a matter of fact, the researcher found that there were not any new words presented in unit 4 on the pages 16-18. This is actually due to the fact that unit 4 is a revision of units 1,2 and 3 and this unit is dedicated to recycling the vocabulary learnt in the previous units. To support this idea, we observe that the words; battery, child, click

(on), icon, (the) Internet, laptop, light and screen are suitable to the main topic of unit 1 which is "Buying a computer", while; the word; tomorrow refers and suits the main topic of unit 2 "Writing emails and letters". The words sew, teach, and type refer to and suit the main topic of unit 3, "The past and the present". Another example, the words; century, family, important, merchant, museum, rich, souvenir, tourist and village which are introduced in lesson 1, page 23 are related to the main topic of unit 6 "how people used to live". On the other hand, in unit 8, page 31 the researcher did not find any new words, and this is due to the fact that unit 8 is a revision of units 5, 6 and 7 and this unit is also dedicated to recycling the vocabulary learnt in the previous units. For instance, the words; hill, incredible, kilometer, nearly and over are related to the main topic of unit 5, "Describing a place", and they have already been introduced earlier in unit 5, lesson 1, page 9. The words; century, merchant, sick and souvenir are related to the main topic of unit 6 ; "How people used to live", and they have already been introduced earlier in unit 6, lesson 1 at page 23. So, there is no need to introduce any new words since unit 8 is just a revision. One more example, the words; basketball, binoculars, borrow, bring, busy, camera, community, compete, free, pity, plastic, spotty, stripes and stripy which are presented in unit 10, lesson 1, page 38 are related to the main topic of the unit; "Arranging a weekend".

On the other side, we notice that the total number of vocabularies that pertain to the issue of presenting new vocabulary items in appropriate contexts and situations is 240 which is also reasonable at this early stage of learning EFL. All these new items were introduced in a form of a short story and presented around story frames. The language is presented by English native speakers on the cassette and in speech bubbles on the page. For example, in unit 1, lesson 1, page 4, pupils listen to the story about computers and laptops and follow the text in the speech bubbles as they listen. Moreover, the teacher shows the pupils a flashcard of a computer or point to the relevant picture on the wall chart and then he elicits some suggestions. The words turn(it) on, laptop, light, battery, mouse, store, touch, click (on) and the Internet are suitable to the pupils of Grade Six real life, level and values since most pupils nowadays

have laptops or computers at their homes taking into account that they have already spent five years of studying English as a foreign language and they might have been familiar with these words from their computer classes. In unit 5, lesson 1, page 19 we notice that the words; comfortable, fact, half, hill, hour, incredible, lake, meter, narrow, nearly, over, thousand and top are presented either through a story frame or by using flashcards. This way of introducing new vocabulary items is very much appropriate to the pupils' real life, level and values.

Accordingly, the researcher assumes that since these vocabulary items are taught in a story frame, they will be very easy to be understood by the pupils, for example, the story which is introduced in unit 5, lesson 1, page 19 starts with the question How far is it from Amman to Salt? Which indicates that the context is very much related to the pupil's real life and values because they are already familiar with the cities "Amman and Salt".

In unit 5, lesson 2, page 20, the teacher tells the class that they are going to hear a dialogue and decide the correct answer, then he teaches the vocabulary from the context. In unit 19 lesson 4, page 78, the teacher asks pupils to look at the pictures and then listen carefully to the cassette to decide which picture the speakers are talking about. The pupils guess the meaning of the new vocabulary items through pictures. The pictures which are introduced in this activity are pictures of a doctor, playing tennis, shopping and having dinner with the family. Apparently, all these words are very much related to the pupils' real life, level and values.

Conclusion

The aforementioned discussion indicates that "Action Pack 6" presents a wide variety of new vocabulary items which are related to the main topic of each unit. This fact actually goes with Action Pack 6 pupil's Book design. Action Pack 6 Pupil's Book consists of twenty units. This level focuses on the family in levels four and five, and in particular the brother and sister characters Saleem and Fatima. New language is presented in the context of themes that are familiar to the

age group, for example; Computers, Weekend trips, Plans, Health, and Famous places in Jordan. Indeed, “Action Pack 6” is the sixth level of a twelve-level curriculum for Jordanian learners of English which aims to introduce English gradually and efficiently through a variety of activities, exercise types and songs. It builds upon the vocabulary introduced in the previous levels, and provides further practice in all four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

“Action pack 6” activities not only enable pupils to understand and communicate in English, but also promote a positive attitude towards language learning in general and the learning of English language as a foreign language in particular. Each unit covers six lessons, except Revision units 4, 8 and 12, which cover four lessons, and Units 16 and 20, which cover five lessons. Finally, the findings of the study point out that all the vocabulary items of “Action Pack 6” are presented in appropriate contexts and situations and that they are pretty much related to Grade 6 pupils’ real life, level and values. These findings go with the methodology adopted in this course which is the use of the “communicative approach” to language teaching.

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