

Unveiling the Lecturers' and Students' Needs in English for Public Administration Program: Essential Vocabulary Topics, Instructional Methods, and Learning Challenges

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Abstract

The lack of attention given in scholarly research to the particular requirements of Public Administration has resulted in a knowledge deficit to meet students' interests in this discipline. Prior research has predominantly examined the quantitative dimensions of vocabulary acquisition while neglecting to adequately consider the qualitative aspects, including comprehension and language use, in a contextually appropriate manner. This study aims to fill in these knowledge deficits by investigating vocabulary topics related to Public Administration, evaluating existing instructional approaches and challenges, and suggesting enhancements to bolster students' English language proficiency in Public Administration. The study employs a qualitative

methodology, including an open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interviews with four lecturers and 100 first-year students from three universities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The findings revealed that the English for Public Administration curriculum requires a diverse vocabulary of topics from administration, management, and governance to more nuanced areas such as economics, finance, taxation, social and ethics, technology and digitalization, leadership, and regulation and law. Various teaching and assessment strategies regarding instructional methods, including interactive and collaborative methods, technology integration, and contextual learning, suggest the importance of engaging students with diverse and practically relevant content to prepare them for the multifarious nature of public sector roles. Students, however, found some challenges in the complexity of the Public Administration vocabulary, highlighting the need for tailoring educational strategies, such as project-based learning and vocabulary reinforcement techniques, to overcome these obstacles. The study's findings have substantial implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, and lecturers specializing in public administration education.

Keywords: *public administration, vocabulary acquisition, instructional methods, qualitative methodology, language proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of English proficiency for students, especially those pursuing specialized academic and professional objectives in Public Administration, is undeniable. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an essential educational approach designed to meet the unique linguistic needs of learners. Strevens (1988) defines ESP as targeted language instruction that goes beyond general language skills to address specific linguistic needs and preferences, incorporating structured language instruction, specialized vocabulary, and subject-specific skills.

Mastering specialized vocabulary is crucial for academic success and professional efficacy in the classroom. Lecturers and students acknowledge that a strong command of this vocabulary is crucial for understanding complex concepts, effective communication in professional settings, and bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, as Arias-Contreras & Moore (2022) noted. In Public Administration, high proficiency in English is essential for professional engagements and academic contexts, as emphasized by Jordan (1997)

and Gnyawali (2010), who noted the necessity of English in almost all administrative functions, from communicating with foreign bureaucrats to drafting proposals.

Despite its recognized importance, many students need help acquiring a comprehensive vocabulary in Public Administration, hindering their academic progress and professional growth. This gap underscores the need for targeted language instruction that addresses these challenges. Scholars such as Arias-Contreras & Moore (2022) and Kareva (2013) highlight the critical role of English proficiency in navigating the complexities of academic and professional environments effectively.

This study was motivated by the need to bridge the gap between general English proficiency and the specialized vocabulary demands for Public Administration. The research aims to explore essential vocabulary topics for students, examine lecturers' instructional methods, and identify the learning challenges students face in this field to fill knowledge deficits left by previous research. The expected outcomes of this research will enhance the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by tailoring language instruction to meet the precise demands of Public Administration program, improving students' mastery of relevant terminology, and equipping lecturers to manage challenges in English for Public Administration classes effectively. Therefore, the study addresses the following research questions (RQs):

1. What essential vocabulary topics are necessary for students studying Public Administration in English?
2. How are these vocabulary topics currently taught and assessed in Public Administration programs?
3. What challenges do students face in acquiring and using English vocabulary in Public Administration?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary topics of English for public administration

Vocabulary topics encompass specialized terms, phrases, and terminology pertinent to various academic disciplines (Koltsova & Koltcov, 2013; Nurlybaeva, 2022). In English for Public Administration,

specialized terms are crucial for understanding and engaging in public sector activities (Awaah, Okebukola, Alfa, et al., 2021; Awaah, Okebukola, Ebisin, et al., 2021; Morse & Stephens, 2012). This lexicon covers public policies, administrative roles, government organization, legal terms, and financial management (Farmer, 1995; Koltsova & Koltcov, 2013; Nurlybaeva, 2022). Proficiency in this vocabulary is essential for students and practitioners to analyze administrative scenarios, make informed decisions, and ensure transparency and ethical governance in their professional roles (Kareva, 2013).

Existing theoretical frameworks of Public Administration vocabulary

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights that learning is most effective when instruction occurs within the social context relevant to the content, emphasizing the importance of social contact and cultural environments in mastering specialized language, especially in fields like Public Administration (Heberle et al., 2020). Complementing this, Krashen's input hypothesis stresses the necessity of "comprehensible input" for language acquisition, underscoring the need for language exposure so students can understand and relate to, thereby aiding in the mastery of complex Public Administration terminology (Misnawati et al., 2023; Sun, 2020).

Sweller's cognitive load theory advises that educational materials should avoid overwhelming students with excessive jargon to prevent cognitive overload, thus optimizing learning efficiency (Schnotz & Kürschner, 2007). Lastly, Contextual Learning Theories (CLT) suggest integrating academic content with real-life applications, enhancing vocabulary comprehension in practical settings like policy analysis and budgeting, thereby preparing students for professional roles (Mooij, 2007).

Previous studies on the importance of specialized vocabulary and their impact on the success of students

First, Bailey & Heritage (2008), Guerrero (2004), and Schleppegrell & de Oliveira (2006) discuss the importance of proficiency in academic language as essential for understanding academic literature and engaging in academic discourse, which is crucial for academic success. This discourse guides acquiring an academic lexicon (Short &

Fitzsimmons, 2007). Second, Snow (2010) highlights that a lack of familiarity with academic vocabulary, including generic and discipline-specific terms, poses a significant barrier to student achievement. This introduces the problem that studies aim to address: improving academic vocabulary to enhance academic performance.

Third, Nagy & Townsend (2012) contribute to the understanding by demonstrating the importance of specialized terminology in English for specific purposes, underscoring its influence on academic achievement. Fourth, Alshafi (2023) provides empirical evidence by examining the correlation between specialized vocabulary proficiency and academic achievement among university students in Saudi Arabia in learning English as a foreign language. The findings indicate a strong correlation between specialized vocabulary proficiency and academic success.

Fifth, Qian (2002) and subsequent researchers like Loewen & Ellis (2004), Masrai et al. (2021), Milton & Treffers-Daller (2013), and Szabo et al. (2021) have focused on the broader impact of vocabulary size on academic achievement, with the consensus that larger vocabulary size is a strong predictor of academic success. Together, these studies build a comprehensive picture on how academic vocabulary impacts student performance, underlining the need for educational strategies that enhance vocabulary learning to support academic success.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This study aimed to assess the vocabulary needs of students and lecturers in Public Administration programs, utilizing a cross-sectional research design across three universities in Indonesia. It focused on first-year students, highlighting the stage in the curriculum where English for Public Administration is first introduced. One hundred first-year students consisting of 63 males and 37 females aged 19 to 20, participated. These students had yet to gain prior exposure to Public Administration English before university. Additionally, four lecturers participated in in-depth interviews to provide deeper insights into the specific vocabulary requirements. Participants gave informed consent, ensuring their readiness for involvement in the research, which sought to gain a detailed

understanding of the initial educational needs within Public Administration. This feedback was intended to inform potential adjustments to curriculum and instructional methods.

The researcher used a qualitative approach with an open-ended questionnaire in the form of the free-response model that guides and allows respondents to offer any answer they wish to the question (Creswell, 2012; Neuman, 2014) to gather students' experiences, challenges, and suggestions regarding English learning in Public Administration. Furthermore, an in-depth interview was used to explore lecturers' insights related to the same data through data triangulation. The sample was selected using purposive sampling by inviting all participants to provide valid data related to the variables of this study to ensure relevance to the study's objectives. While findings were context-specific, they provided a foundational understanding of similar settings, with broader applicability suggested for future research.

Data Collection and Analysis

To undertake this study, researchers obtained permission from three universities to involve students and lecturers in exploring the vocabulary needs in Public Administration courses. Students responded to eight open-ended questions during a 120-minute session to thoroughly address three research questions. Additionally, four lecturers participated separately in-depth interviews via Zoom, each lasting 60 minutes, where they answered a consistent set of nine open-ended questions. This format allowed for detailed, specific insights while maintaining a uniform framework for comparison.

Before data collection, all 17 questions were validated by two English language teaching experts from a prominent State University in Makassar, South Sulawesi. This validation confirmed the relevance and appropriateness of the questions, ensuring they were effectively crafted to elicit meaningful responses.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis as per Braun & Clarke (2006), which involved identifying and conveying themes that emerged from the data, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. This analysis was supported by using N-Vivo software to enhance the precision and efficiency of data processing, though thematic findings

were manually verified to avoid software biases (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014). This rigorous analytical process, incorporating both technological and manual review, ensured the credibility of the findings and facilitated a nuanced understanding of the lexicon used by Public Administration students and educators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several significant vocabulary topics necessary for students enrolled in English for Public Administration based on lecturers' and students' perceptions are presented in [the Supplementary Materials](#). The tables of essential themes mentioned are systematically classified into several sections, exemplifying the multifaceted and all-encompassing essence of the discipline.

The critical vocabulary topics that are necessary for students in English for Public Administration

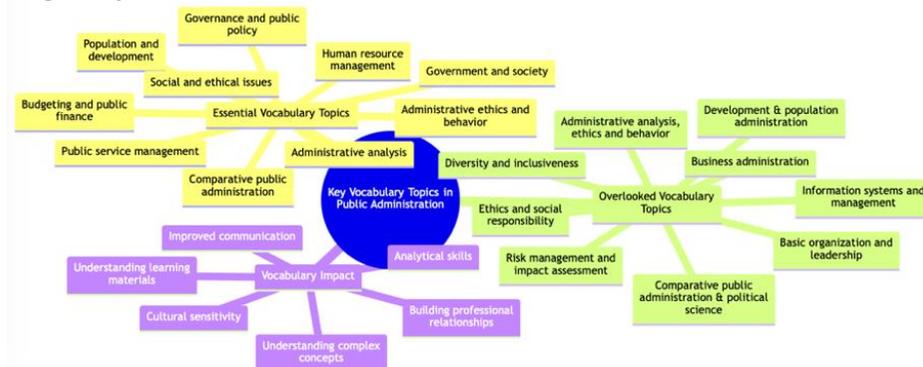


Figure 1. Lecturers' response (RQ 1)

Figure 1 showed that a deep understanding of certain vocabulary areas was integral to academic and professional success. Those findings delineated several critical areas, each constituting a fundamental aspect of the PA curriculum. The vocabulary list emerged under the essential areas of public administration vocabulary. It advanced overlooked topics (Table 1), showing the breadth of knowledge required to manage public sector personnel and institutions effectively. The study also highlighted how a robust vocabulary enhances students' ability to

excel in PA studies and their professional lives. Mastery of specialized vocabulary aids significantly in understanding complex concepts and enhances analytical skills, enabling students to analyze public issues critically. Moreover, strong communication skills fostered through mastery of relevant terminology ensure effective professional interactions and help build productive relationships.

Table 1. The essential vocabulary list emerged from the lecturers

The essential vocabulary		The overlooked vocabulary	
- Budgeting	- Organizational culture	- Accountability	- Organizational culture
- Bureaucratic systems	- Organizational structure	- Business process	- Organizational diagnostics
- Change management	- Policy analysis	- Conflict of interest	- Political economy
- Civic engagement	- Political systems	- Crisis management	- Public sector innovation
- Corruption	- Public accountability	- Customer relationship	- Public trust
- Data management	- Public administration models	- Data governance	- Regional policy
- Decision-making processes	- Public policy frameworks	- Decentralization	- Strategic alignment
- Demographic transition	- Public sector	- Demographic economics	- Sustainable development
- E-governance	- Public-private partnerships	- Digital transformation	- Talent management
- Economic development	- Revenue	- Diversity	- Transformational leadership
- Economic models	- Service delivery	- E-government services	- Transparency
- Ethical governance	- Social equity	- Equality	- Urban governance
- Ethics	- Stakeholder engagement	- Ethical dilemmas	- Workforce planning
- Expenditure	- Stakeholders	- Governance models	
- Fiscal policy	- Sustainable development	- Impact analysis	
- Government institutions	- Tax compliance	- Inclusiveness	
- Human capital	- Transparency	- Integrity	
- Human resource management	- Urban planning	- Mitigation	
- Information systems		- Open innovation	
- Justice			
- Leadership styles			
- Local governance			
- Organizational behavior			

The findings confirm that a comprehensive understanding of specific vocabulary topics is indispensable for PA students. This knowledge not only supports academic achievement but also lays a solid foundation for a successful career in public administration. Including these essential vocabulary domains in curriculum design is crucial, ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of public service and contribute effectively to the field.

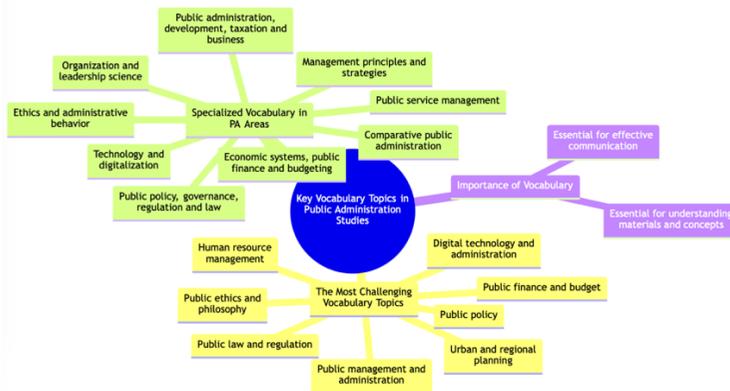


Figure 2. Students' response (RQ 1)

Figure 2 highlights various challenging vocabulary topics, which have a unique set of terminologies that students need to master to engage with the course content and discussions effectively. Regarding areas requiring specialized vocabulary, students pointed out several key domains, all identified as sectors where a strong command of vocabulary is crucial (Table 2).

Students overwhelmingly agreed that a strong command of relevant terms is essential for understanding complex materials and concepts and for effective communication. Being proficient in the specialized language of their field allows students to engage more deeply with the subject matter, perform better academically, and prepare for professional challenges post-graduation.

Table 2. The essential vocabulary list emerged from the students

The most challenging vocabulary		The required vocabulary	
- Accountability	- Political philosophy	- Big data	- Leadership theories
- Administrative law	- Public ethics	- Budget allocation	- Legislative process
- Auditing	- Public finance	- Budget forecasting	- Local governance
- Budgetary control	- Public management	- Business analytics	- Local infrastructure
- City planning	- Public policy	- Capital markets	- Onboarding process
- Cybersecurity	- Public sector	- Corporate strategy	- Organizational behavior
- Decision trees	- Public sector accounting	- CSR	- Organizational restructuring
- Digital divide	- Public sector innovation	- Customer satisfaction	
- Digital governance		- Cybersecurity	
- E-governance		- Deflation	
		- Demographic transition	
		- Digital governance	

The most challenging vocabulary		The required vocabulary	
- Environmental policy	- Public sector reforms	- Educational governance	- Performance management
- Fiscal policy	- Recruitment	- Ethical dilemma	- Policy oversight
- Governance	- Regional development	- Fundraising	- Political ideologies
- Government regulations	- Revenue forecasting	- Good governance	- Political systems
- Green policies	- Social justice	- Inflation	- Public fiscal management
- Labor law	- Stakeholder analysis	- International law and administration	- Public sector ethics
- Legal	- Statutory interpretation	- IT	- Service blueprint
- Legislative drafting	- Sustainability		- Statutory interpretation
- Legislative oversight	- Transportation policy		- Talent management
- Organizational behavior	- Urban planning		- Urban sprawl
- Policy analysis	- Urban sustainability		
- Policy cycles	- Zoning laws		

The study's findings directly address the research question on the essential vocabulary topics necessary for students studying Public Administration in English. The study confirms that a deep understanding of specific vocabulary areas is crucial for academic and professional public administration success. This is evidenced by Figure 1 and 2, which indicates that mastery of specialized vocabulary not only aids in understanding complex concepts but also enhances analytical skills and communication abilities. These capabilities are indispensable for students aiming to excel in public administration studies and effectively engage in their subsequent professional lives.

These findings resonate with previous studies emphasizing the role of specialized vocabulary in enhancing comprehension and performance in specialized fields; public administration is no exception. For example, a study by Al-Mutairi (2024) highlighted that crucial vocabulary learning in language education enabled students to understand specialized vocabulary in various domains linked to academic success, cognitive development, and overall language proficiency. Similarly, Roche & Harrington (2013) highlighted the substantial impact of general vocabulary knowledge on academic success, estimating its contribution of about 25% to

variance in GPA scores across disciplines, so they emphasized the importance of comprehensive vocabulary in academic programs.

The research confirms the indispensable role of specific vocabulary in Public Administration education, aligning with previous studies that recognize the importance of linguistic proficiency in specialized fields. Integrating comprehensive vocabulary topics into the curriculum remains a critical strategy for preparing students effectively for their future roles in public service. This conclusion is both supported and expanded upon by prior research.

The way the vocabulary topics are currently taught and assessed in English for Public Administration

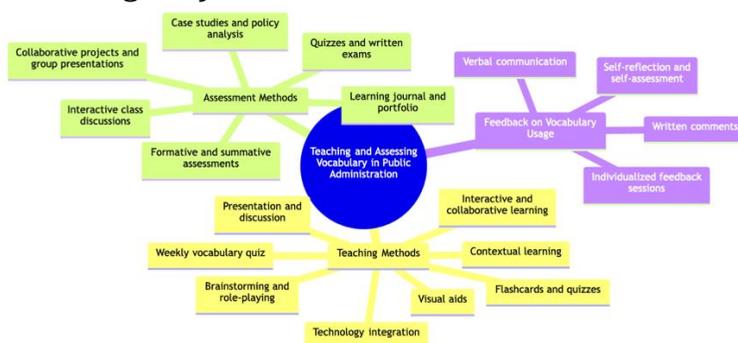


Figure 3. Lecturers' response (RQ 2)

Figure 3 illustrates the varied strategies lecturers use to teach specialized vocabulary in Public Administration, ensuring students learn the terms and understand their practical application. Interactive and collaborative methods, including weekly vocabulary quizzes, presentations, and discussions, are commonly employed to engage students and actively test their knowledge. Integrating technology, such as digital flashcards and visual aids, enriches the learning experience. Additionally, contextual learning techniques like scenario-based teaching, brainstorming, and role-playing enable students to practice vocabulary in simulated real-life contexts.

Similarly, assessment strategies are equally diverse, utilizing formative and summative approaches to evaluate students'

understanding and mastery of vocabulary. These include interactive discussions, case studies, policy analysis, and collaborative projects, which help assess students' vocabulary application in complex situations. Individual quizzes and written exams measure retention, while learning journals and portfolios are reflective tools for tracking progress. Feedback on vocabulary used in assignments and verbal interactions is crucial, with written comments and verbal feedback during classes or individual sessions guiding student improvements. Self-reflection and self-assessment are also encouraged to promote deeper internalization of vocabulary and its correct usage in professional settings. This comprehensive approach to teaching and assessing vocabulary reflects a dedication to effectively preparing students for future careers in public service. It aligns with the study's goals to evaluate and enhance instructional strategies in Public Administration programs.

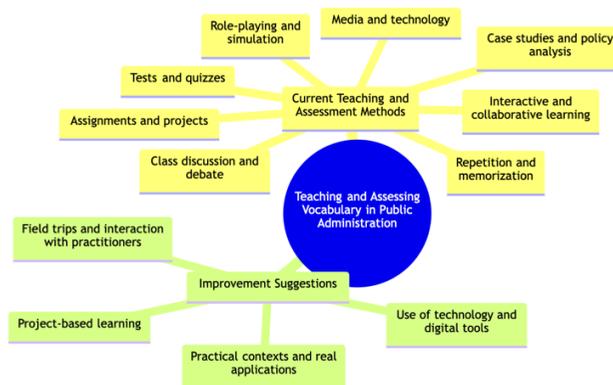


Figure 4. Students' response (RQ 2)

Figure 4 highlights students' perspectives on the instructional approaches and resources lecturers use in public administration programs. Dynamic teaching and assessment methods include class discussions, debates, assignments, and projects integrating vocabulary into academic and real-world contexts, enhancing understanding and retention. Case studies and policy analysis allow for practical vocabulary application in analyzing complex situations. Role-playing and simulation exercises mimic

professional environments, aiding in practical vocabulary application. Additionally, technology is increasingly used, making vocabulary learning more accessible through social media, apps, and online platforms, while traditional methods like tests and quizzes assess retention.

Despite the effectiveness of these methods, students see the potential for further enhancement, mainly through more sophisticated digital tools like virtual and augmented reality, videos, infographics, and multimedia content. There is also a demand for more systematic integration of practical contexts and real applications, such as project-based learning and applied tasks, alongside experiential learning opportunities like field trips and interactions with practitioners. These improvements could bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, providing deeper insights into vocabulary usage in government and public administration settings.

The findings effectively address the research question concerning the current instructional methods and assessment techniques used in teaching specialized vocabulary in Public Administration programs. It also aligns with previous studies, where a comprehensive educational experience imparts knowledge and prepares students for real-world public sector challenges. Japar (2018) highlighted the effectiveness of case-based learning in enhancing comprehension and practical application of Public Administration concepts. This aligns with literature stressing the importance of interactive and collaborative learning in PA courses (Alford & Brock, 2014; Flynn & Klein, 2001; Hake, 1998). At the same time, the study suggests a balanced vocabulary learning strategy, integrating both digital and conventional methods, essential for student proficiency in a progressively tech-integrated educational landscape, as Kareva (2013) and Misnawati (2021) noted in their study. Further, assessment practices show a multifaceted approach where participatory and reflective assessments are utilized alongside knowledge-based methods to evaluate students' comprehensive understanding and practical application of PA terminology. The insights align with previous studies that emphasize the integration of digital tools and the need

for regular assessment (Misnawati, 2022), enhancing vocabulary retention, and real-time feedback (Misnawati et al., 2022).

These views reflect a diverse landscape in education strategies, where traditional methods coexist with innovative digital and interactive approaches. The study supports the integration of more sophisticated digital tools and practical application methods to better prepare students for real-world professional challenges in public service. This continuous development in educational strategies is crucial for keeping pace with evolving student needs and technological advancements.

The challenges faced by students in acquiring and using English for Public Administration vocabulary

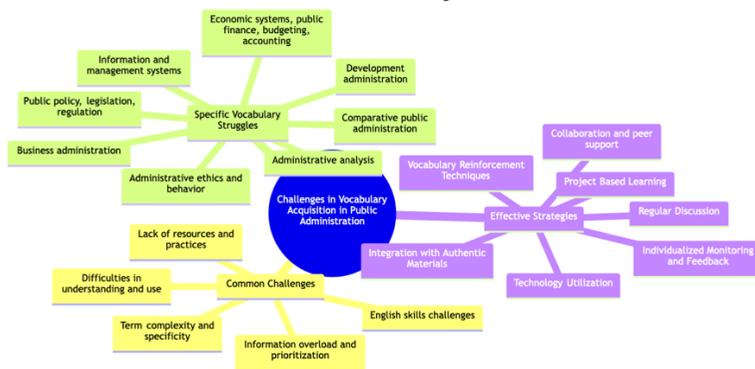


Figure 5. Lecturers’ response (RQ 3)

According to lecturers in Figure 5, students encounter substantial challenges in mastering English vocabulary specific to Public Administration. The complexity and technical nature of terms, coupled with information overload from a vast array of vocabulary, hinder effective learning and application. General English proficiency issues further exacerbate these difficulties, making it challenging for students to understand the nuances of specialized terms in areas like administrative analysis, development administration, comparative public administration, and ethics and behavior, which often require additional focus. Other challenging vocabulary areas include information and management systems, business administration, public policy, legislation,

regulation, economic systems, public finance, budgeting, and accounting. These subjects feature specialized terms that demand a deep understanding of the language and its contextual implications.

To address these challenges, lecturers have implemented various strategies and interventions. Project-based learning methods like creating glossaries and concept mapping offer practical and engaging vocabulary learning opportunities—visual and contextual learning techniques aid in understanding and retaining complex terms. Collaborative learning, classroom discussions, and vocabulary reinforcement techniques like quizzes and games enhance comprehension and usage. Additionally, classroom technology use, individualized monitoring, feedback, and the integration of authentic materials support effective vocabulary acquisition and application.

The study's findings highlight students' multifaceted challenges in mastering Public Administration vocabulary and underscore the effectiveness of tailored educational strategies. By implementing various teaching methods and supporting resources, educators can significantly improve students' vocabulary skills, enhancing their academic performance and preparation for professional roles in public service. This study not only aids in understanding these challenges but also provides practical guidance for educators to optimize their instructional approaches.



Figure 6. Students' response (RQ 3)

Figure 6 highlights students' significant challenges in acquiring and using English vocabulary in Public Administration. Students need

help with contextual nuances, which are essential for interpreting and applying administrative concepts, and face difficulties in memorization, pronunciation, and practical application of terms. These challenges impact academic performance and understanding of complex theories, diminish confidence and participation in class discussions, and necessitate extra review time for comprehension and retention.. The challenges related to vocabulary go beyond the classrooms and can also affect professional settings like workplaces and internships. Students often need assistance in using Public Administration vocabulary accurately, which can impact their ability to communicate effectively during presentations and informal discussions. This not only hinders their professional competence but also makes it difficult for them to integrate what they have learned into their everyday interactions.

The findings explored reveal significant hurdles due to the complexity and specificity of terminology, alongside a general shortfall in English proficiency. This aligns with the research question by directly addressing the instructional gaps and student difficulties within Public Administration programs. This challenge is compounded by a need for more resources and an information overload, leading to comprehension difficulties that impact confidence and learning efficacy. Therefore, strategies employed by educators to mitigate these issues, the incorporation of digital tools, interactive methodologies, and collaborative learning environments, have been echoed by Astri et al. (2023), which respond to students' expressed needs for continual learning and practical application as a comprehensive vocabulary support system for facilitating effective learning.

These approaches align with student-identified struggles concerning term retention and context comprehension. The challenges extend to academic performance, where concept understanding and discussion confidence are impacted, affecting participation and study efficiency. Assessment methods reflect these concerns, focusing on evaluating vocabulary usage within contextually rich settings and case analysis, highlighting the need for students to understand and accurately use PA terminology. The

application of vocabulary in real-world contexts further underscores the relevance of experiential learning, as students indicate difficulty in applying technical terms within professional environments. Similar to the conclusions reached by Abrahamse et al. (2015) and Astri et al. (2022), this underscores the significance of proficient communication within the domain of PA. The two research findings suggest that a comprehensive approach should be taken toward language education in specialized fields. This means that language support should be integrated with specific vocabulary training. These references provide a detailed overview of the various approaches to teaching vocabulary in specialized fields. They also serve as a starting point for improving instructional strategies in Public Administration.

CONCLUSION

The current study illuminates key facets of lecturers' and students' needs in Public Administration (PA) education. The study explores essential vocabulary topics, instructional methods, and learning challenges in Public Administration programs, addressing three main research questions. The essential vocabulary topics for PA students span from administration, management, and governance to more nuanced areas such as economics, finance, taxation, social and ethics, technology and digitalization, leadership, and regulation and law. Various teaching and assessment strategies regarding instructional methods, including interactive and collaborative methods, technology integration, and contextual learning, are highlighted. These approaches aim to deepen students' understanding and practical application of vocabulary. However, students need help with challenges like term complexity, resource scarcity, and general English proficiency. Tailored educational strategies, such as project-based learning and vocabulary reinforcement techniques, are suggested to overcome these obstacles.

While the study provides significant insights into vocabulary acquisition in PA, it has limitations. The respondents' specific educational and cultural contexts may need to be revised to

generalize the findings. Future research should expand to diverse student populations and educational settings to corroborate these findings. The study's findings have substantial implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, and lecturers specializing in public administration education. A proposal has been made to transition towards more interactive and technology-based instructional methods that actively engage students in the learning process. New vocabulary must be accompanied by contextual learning and practical application to ensure that students can understand and effectively use the language in their future careers. The study also emphasizes the need for supplementary resources and assistance, particularly for non-native English speakers who may struggle with the complex lexicon of Public Administration.

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