

Introducing the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP)
to students: an attempt at enriching students'
written language

Final report

Chonticha Amkham

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1. Practical context

This research report describes a study which stemmed from a need to support students' English writing and productive vocabulary learning. I will begin by outlining the background context and the underlying principle of the study.

I am currently teaching in the Bilingual department of FarelCollege, the Netherlands. Our school is a secondary school with approximately 1,700 students. Here we offer students a variety of curricula, most of which are tailored to students' interests and their academic ability. Bilingual education is provided to students who belong to the most able academic stream and who have voluntarily chosen an education in which English is used as a medium of instruction.

As required in the educational benchmark of Bilingual Education in the Netherlands (European Platform, 2012) the students must attain the B2 CEFR level by the end of their third form. Therefore, it is obligatory that all Bilingual students at FarelCollege participate in the First Certificate in English (FCE) exam at the end of their third year.

As an English teacher and FCE trainer I discerned that most of my students - notwithstanding their high fluency and excellent comprehension of the English language – demonstrated a rudimentary use of vocabulary in productive skills, especially in writing. Unsurprisingly, the results of the FCE pre-testing and FCE exams in the past two years have indicated our students' writing ability to be at the lower end of level B2. According to the comments we received from the Cambridge Pre-testing Centre, the level of their vocabulary needs to be improved.

Based on my observations, the students often had the tendency to overuse certain common lexis: "Cycling is good for your health. Eating healthy food is also good." This was a prime example of their lack of ability to replace "good" with a different word which also carries a positive meaning. So far as writing was concerned, their use of language could have been described as "too simple" and "too repetitive".

2. Overall aims of research

The research was grounded in the belief that students' repetitive use of common lexis could have been caused by the absence of a word pool which students could draw from to express themselves in writing. Support for this belief was provided by Diez-Bedmar (2006), who noted that without access to a wide range of vocabulary items, students tend to produce language with less sophisticated appearance. Another cause of this problem could have also been limited practice to use the targeted words (Capel, 2010; Flinspach & Scott, 2010). Needless to say, in order to tackle these discrepancies, a word-rich resource should be provided to scaffold students' productive use of varied vocabulary.

Due to the growing use of students' direct access to web-based corpora and online academic word lists in writing pedagogy (Boulton, 2009; Cobb 2010; Yoon & Jo, 2014), I had become intent on exploring the impacts of one such resource - The English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) - on the vocabulary and writing skills of my students. The EVP is an interactive online resource which establishes words and phrases known by learners at each CEFR level (Capel, 2010a; 2010b; 2011) and I felt it would provide my students with a vocabulary pool of a manageable size. This study was guided by three main research questions:

1. Do students attempt a wider range of vocabulary with less common lexis when they use the EVP during the writing process?
2. How do students make use of the EVP during writing?
3. What are students' opinions about the EVP?

3. Background reading

3.1 English Vocabulary Profile (EVP)

The EVP is a large database containing entries of vocabulary, which are derived from corpus-based evidence and are scrupulously monitored by experienced lexicographers so that they mirror authentic use of everyday language.

Widely used by educators, exam writers, materials developers and teachers, the EVP provides its users with interactive functions such as the presentation of words with multiple meanings across different CEFR levels, audio and written pronunciations, real examples of words used in sentences and different filters including parts of speech, affixes and topics. Due to its user-friendly interactive features, which are mostly absent in other web-based corpora, I assumed the EVP would lend itself to being utilised by secondary school students as a supporting tool in their writing process.

Moreover, one of the key features of the EVP is the presentation of the CEFR levels of words and phrases. In the compiling process, words are categorised based on the actual senses they carry. For instance, the word “blue” stretches across all the six CEFR levels. This word is taught at A1 level as a colour adjective, whereas it is used at C2 level in the expression “to feel blue”. It does not take much to assume that high-frequency words are likely to belong to the lower end CEFR levels, whereas less common and academic words will fall within the higher range.

According to Capel (2010a; 2010b; 2011), the disparity between receptive and productive language of these “known” words categorised at each CEFR levels is rather unclear. Being able to arrive at the meanings of unknown words when reading or listening does not necessarily mean that learners are able to recall them when speaking or writing. My research aimed to bridge this gap by challenging learners to utilise words at the target CEFR levels in their writing.

3.2 Use of sophisticated words in students’ writing: Instruction and tools

A number of studies have been conducted in order to probe into expressive uses of vocabulary which are evident in students’ productive language domain, especially in writing.

Baumann, Ware and Edwards’ (2007) research revolved around a year-long vocabulary instructional programme in which great attention was paid to vocabulary-rich experiences, explicit teaching of target words, word learning strategies and word consciousness. It was revealed that not only did students’ word consciousness increase through the course of the instruction, but also their engagement in word-play and the number of challenging words they attempted.

A similar study was conducted by Flinspach, Scott and Vevea (2010). By counting “rare” words in students’ narratives, they were able to measure students’ breadth and growth of vocabulary knowledge throughout the instruction. Although the gain in rare words was not significant, the three researchers contended that students’ experimentation with words was a demonstration of word learning.

Apart from designed instruction, reference tools were used in other studies. Coxhead’s Academic Word List (2000) was employed with the aim to facilitate the revision process of students’ academic writing work concerning the use of formal vocabulary (Chi, 2010). Yoon and Jo (2014) explored the impacts of corpora on writing and learning skills and drew the conclusion that an interactive aspect of direct access to corpora motivated autonomous learning. According to them, this would benefit students’ linguistic acquisition in second language writing.

Although my study was not entirely related to vocabulary instruction, it was based on the same principle that exposure to a word-rich resource such as the EVP might enhance students' word-learning autonomy, which would be evident in their writing.

3.3 Measurements of sophisticated words in students' writing

From my literature review, I found that the most adopted measurement of vocabulary richness in writing is the frequency count. Kim and Ryoo (2009) analysed college students' compositions using a web-based programme "Vocab Profile" (Cobb, last updated 2015), which is available at <http://lextutor.ca>. This program breaks down vocabulary into four frequency word lists: The most frequent 100 word families (K1), the second 1000 (K2), the Academic Word List (AWL) and "off-list" words (NIL). It goes without saying, the more words categorised in K2 and AWL, the greater vocabulary richness a text is likely to have.

Cited in the work of Lim and Galaczi (2010), a similar approach - that is, the use of words' occurrence - was employed by Schmitt (2005) in analysing written examinee output in Cambridge ESOL's General Examinations. These examinations consist of five levels: Key English Test (KET), Preliminary English Test (PET), First Certificate in English (FCE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE).

It was revealed that as learners advance in proficiency, they are likely to produce more words (tokens) and display a greater range of vocabulary by utilising different words (types) in oral and written output. Lim and Galaczi, however, added that although indications of word frequency are robust, they are "limited" as they are not able to discern how appropriate these words are in their context.

Flinspach et al. (2010) used their own rare word-frequency measure for students' narratives. They, however, indicated that this measure – like any other word-frequency indicator – was insensitive to words with multiple meanings.

Taking its benefits and flaws into consideration, I decided to opt for the same method of measurement – frequency counts - by using "Text inspector" (<http://textinspector.com>). As a joint project with Cambridge University Press, this web tool can categorise words based on the EVP.

4. Methodology

This research was carried out in regular English lessons in the period of May to November 2015. It started therefore at the end of the academic year 2014-2015 and ended just before the middle of the academic year 2015-2016. As part of the English curriculum, students were required to submit a number of in-class writing assignments at B2 level, which had characteristics of FCE written tasks (e.g. essay, report, article, review, email and letter). To ensure that the analysis of writing tasks would yield stable results, they were instructed to write at least 200 words (Kim & Ryoo 2009).

4.1 Research design

Before the EVP was utilised in writing instruction, six training sessions were held. The reason for this was to let all students familiarise themselves with the EVP and to ensure that they could independently use it during their writing process. The lesson plans for these training sessions were adapted from the EVP lesson plan series written by Tilbury, A. (2014, July 1). These lesson plans can be viewed in Appendix 1.

A variation of time-series research designs was chosen in order to eliminate the ethical issue concerning the withholding of the treatment (EVP) from the control group. The participants themselves would then be their own control group (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The eighteen participants of this study were divided equally into two groups. The treatment was alternated (with EVP and without EVP) so that, when Group A used the EVP during their writing process in task 1,

Group B would write as they normally did without the EVP. The reverse took place in task 2. (see task 1 and task 2 in Appendix 2)

After their second writing task all students were allowed to use the EVP. This means that they could voluntarily decide whether to use it or not while carrying out task 3 to task 7.

		Academic year 2014-2015			Academic year 2015-2016	
Pre-experimental phase	Experimental phase				Post-experimental phase	
Six EVP training sessions	(N = 18)	Task 1	Task 2	Tasks 3 - 7	Questionnaire	
	Group A (N = 9)	with EVP + journal	without EVP + journal	All the participants were allowed to use the EVP.		
	Group B (N = 9)	without EVP + journal	with EVP + journal			
	Focus Group (N = 10) Selected from the 18 participants	Stimulated recall interviews				

Figure 1: Research procedure and data collection

4.2 Data analysis

Task 1 and task 2 were analysed using “Text Inspector”, which provides both the “token” and “type” counts of words that appears in students’ writing on each CEFR level. “Token” refers to the actual number of words used in the writing texts regardless of how many times the same words are used, whereas “type” only counts the occurrence of each unique word. In this study the “type” of words was chosen for the analysis as the aim of the research was to identify which words from B2, C1 and C2 levels were used, instead of how many times they appeared in the submitted tasks.

Nevertheless, “Text Inspector” contains one limitation, which could have influenced the findings of this study. Owing to the fact that the programme is not yet able to recognise words which contain several meanings across the CEFR levels (polysemy), it only categorises words that have been entered at the lowest possible CEFR level. As a result of this, it was crucial that each word was thoroughly examined and - if needed – manually amended based on its sense in a certain CEFR level. The raw data obtained from “Text Inspector” were analysed further with a “Matched-pair t-test”. This statistical analysis was employed in order to compare the differences of less common lexis occurring in tasks with and without the use of the EVP.

In order to elicit further in-depth information, ten out of the eighteen participants were chosen as the focus group of the study. These participants were purposively selected based on varying degrees of success in using the EVP during their writing process. The focus group played a crucial role in

identifying how the EVP was used. The research tools used to gather evidence were journals and stimulated recall interviews.

The journals contained students' reflection on how they carried out the written tasks. With some given prompts, students were encouraged to describe how they created the tasks, how they made use of the EVP during writing, as well as which words they chose from the EVP. Students were also required to provide reasons why they decided to use those words. (see guiding journal questions in Appendix 3)

The stimulated recall interviews were conducted individually. During the interviews, students were presented with the written tasks they had earlier submitted. Students were required to report the "thoughts" they had whilst performing the tasks, the strategies they applied, as well as their interaction with the EVP. These interviews were semi-structured. Prior to the interviews, a list of questions was prepared as a guideline. As the interviews were progressing, extra questions were posed in order to probe for in-depth and illuminating information (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Through listening to their thoughts and asking follow-up questions, I was able to gather substantial information about the way students used the EVP. The qualitative data obtained from both journals and stimulated recall interviews were analysed using content analysis

During the post-experimental phrase, all the participants were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire (see Appendix 4), containing both open and close-ended questions. The data obtained from the questionnaire lent itself to a triangulation process with the data obtained from the other research tools. Using a variety of means - in this case, the analyses of students' writings, journals, interviews and questionnaires – enhanced the accuracy of the data and thus led to reliable conclusions (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

5. Findings and discussion

The findings of this research are presented below in relation to the three research questions already mentioned above.

5.1. Less common lexis that appeared in students' written tasks

Having the EVP at their disposal, eighteen students wrote on average 204.94 words (Types = 117.5). This number met the preliminary requirement concerning the word limit of 200 words they were set. However, without the EVP, the number of the words was slightly higher which was 217.83 (Types = 121.83). As indicated by the students, a part of the given time to finish the writing assignments was spent on browsing through the EVP. Therefore, it was logical that when using the EVP, students were likely to produce shorter texts than the ones written without the EVP.

Based on t-test analysis, there was no statistical difference between the number of B2, C1 and C2 words combined in tasks written with the EVP and without the EVP (Change = 0.05 words). Out of curiosity, I decided to break it down into smaller parts and run the analysis for each separate level, as well as for the combination of C1 and C2 levels.

	With EVP Tokens = 204.94 Types = 117.5	Without EVP Tokens = 217.83 Types = 121.83	Change in types (With EVP - Without EVP)	Is the change statistically significant? ($p < 0.05$)
Levels B2, C1 and C2	11.61	11.56	0.05	No
Level B2	7.83	9.50	-1.67	No
Level C1	2.28	1.33	0.95	No
Level C2	1.50	0.72	0.78	Yes
Levels C1 and C2	3.78	2.06	1.72	Yes

Table 1: Comparisons of less common lexis found in students' written tasks 1 and 2

The result of this breakdown is illustrated in Table 1 above. It shows that no significant difference could be found either regarding the number of B2 words or C1 words when analysed separately (changes = -1.67 words and 0.95 words, respectively).

However, it is interesting to note that the increase of sophisticated words, although not dramatic, could be observed at the C2 level (change = 0.78). This is also the case when C1 and C2 words were put together in the same group (change = 1.72).

The findings suggest that the students were already able to use B2 words at will, although it should be noted that the number of words on the EVP that fit the content of students' writing texts might have been limited. Therefore, the EVP does not help students of this present study to increase the use of words at B2 level.

5.2. The ways students used the EVP

Ten students were selected as the focus group in order to examine how they made use of the EVP and the rationales behind their actions. A content analysis of their journals and the stimulated recall interviews provided qualitative findings, which I grouped into five main categories.

5.2.1 Targeting sophisticated words from the EVP

Most students asserted that they purposively selected sophisticated words from the EVP to use in their writing.

"I aimed for the C1 and C2 levels because I thought it was more professional to write the text with words at these levels."

This, however, varied from student to student. Whilst some students intentionally searched for words at the highest level possible, some had a different target level in mind:

"B2 is my target level. I'm not at B2 yet. I hope I can go to C1 later."

Choosing certain word levels from the EVP also depended on how students perceived the characteristics of the task. When their first attempt to use higher-level words appeared to be fruitless, they would then shift to the lower levels:

"I tried to use difficult words that you wouldn't use in conversations but in formal writing. I tried to find the most difficult words C1 and C2. If I couldn't find words in C1 and C2, I would then look for B2 words."

The unanimity of these responses demonstrated that the EVP challenged students to attempt more words with sophisticated appearance. Moreover, students reported that they substituted basic words, which they originally intended to use, with advanced words found on the EVP. For example, "thread" (C2), as reported by a student, was chosen from the EVP because it was a more difficult word for "an internet article". Another example is when the word "accomplish" (C2) was used to replace the word "finish".

"If I found the words were too simple, I would look for another word with a similar meaning. I changed my original adjectives with the adjectives I found on the EVP."

The EVP also helped the students to get their point across and to be more expressive. One student explained that she described music with the word "dated" (C2) because she believed that this word added a sarcastic tone to the description of her chosen gadget.

5.2.2 Using the EVP as a reference tool

It was also revealed that the EVP played a role as a source of language reference. First of all, students used the EVP to check how words were spelt:

"Sometimes I looked up how to write certain words. I wanted to know how to write the word 'countries'."

The EVP was used to check meanings of certain words as well. A student pointed out during the interview why he chose to use the word "albeit" (C2):

"I came across the word for the first time on the EVP. Actually, I think I had heard of this word before, maybe in German, so I looked up its meaning. I can use this word instead of 'although'."

Unarguably, the EVP was consulted when students had not yet mastered particular words and wanted to know how they were used in sentences:

"Sometimes looked at examples of sentences to learn how the words were used."

5.2.3 Filtering words in the Advanced Search

The writing topics of task 1 and task 2 being about gadgets and games, most students reported that their initial reaction was to navigate to the most relevant topics in the Advanced Search, which were "Technology" and "Describing things". To narrow down the search results, some students focused on a specific type of word, in most cases the "Adjectives":

"I just searched for adjectives at all levels, I searched and I got a whole list of words. I find Advanced Search handy because you can look up words specifically and precisely."

Another student, however, commented:

"With this topic, unfortunately, there were not a lot of words I could find at the C2 level."

Whereas some students informed that filtering words in the Advanced Search made it easier for them to choose the right words, one student, oppositely, wrote in her journal:

"I did not put in a topic because I thought if I did, I would only have a limited number of words. I preferred to get a clear overview of all the words. I found around 2000 words."

5.2.4 Generating ideas for the task

Interestingly, one student stated that the EVP inspired her to start thinking about the content of her writing texts when she did not have any ideas what to write about. By browsing through words in specific categories, she came up with ideas for the given task. This, although not the main reason why the EVP had been introduced in this study, is worth looking into.

“At first I started by typing phrases and technology on the EVP. The EVP then provided a list of search results, which gave me the inspiration to start writing. I got some ideas from the words in the search results.”

The way this student handled the task differed from the others. While planning the content and organising ideas are the primary stages of writing, she - on the other hand - started browsing through the list of words on the EVP.

Due to a different strategy being employed in her case, one would expect that her work would, to some extent, distinguish itself from the others and more focus would be put on the use of words, rather than on the organisation of ideas. However, on the contrary, her work was a prime example of a well-organised review.

On the surface, using the EVP to generate ideas for writing seemed to be rather beneficial. However, I believe that formulating ideas for writing should definitely come from the writers themselves, especially in normal situations where the EVP is not available.

5.2.5 Experimenting with words found on the EVP

In their journals students were asked to identify which words they had selected from the EVP. Most students indicated that the words they chose were words they already knew or had heard of before. However, they would not have used these words in their writing texts, if they hadn't spotted them on the EVP. While perusing the search results on the EVP, there were moments when the students thought - *“I know this word, it fits in my work, why not use it?”*.

One student whose work showed a significant change with the presence of the EVP indicated that he used the found words simply because they were related to his writing text, which was a computer review, such as: *“compatible”* (C2), *“technologically”* (C1), *“scroll down”* (C2), *“break down”* (C1) and *“programmer”* (C2). During the interview he pointed out:

“I couldn't have come up with these words myself, except maybe for the word ‘programmer’. I knew this word before and I saw it on the EVP so I tried to add it in.”

Although the EVP did not prove to be significantly effective in lifting the levels of vocabulary at the target levels (B2 to C2), it had increased students' awareness in vocabulary learning and encouraged experimentation of new words.

“After having seen the words on the EVP, they will still be in your head. In that way you learn new words.”

The ten students in the focus group claimed to have selected on average 4.1 words from the EVP. This number was less than what I had anticipated, given that the majority of the students spent, according to the interviews, approximately 20% of their time on task browsing through words on the EVP. A student insightfully noted a factor that limited possibilities to use more words from the EVP:

“I tried to change some words, but I couldn't find the synonyms.” He also added: *“Well.. I think the EVP could be more useful if it would give you suggestions about certain words which you could change or add to your writing.”*

The number of strategies which students deployed while using the EVP was an indication that they were in charge of their own learning. In addition, their eagerness to express themselves with sophisticated vocabulary was a demonstration of a desirable characteristic of word learning. As said by one of the students - *"It's good for you to learn and use new words."*

5.3. Students' opinions towards the EVP

All eighteen students of this study were asked to complete a questionnaire. The findings obtained from this yielded a lot more data than I had anticipated, some of which coincided with the findings mentioned previously. Therefore, in this part of the report, I will only present my reader some parts of the findings which are relevant to the research questions. It is my opinion that these findings will provide the reader with a broader and deeper view of how the eighteen students experienced the EVP.

5.3.1 How students perceived the usefulness of the EVP for enriching their lexis

Parallel with the interview results, the majority of the students indicated that the information on the EVP helped them to select sophisticated words (strongly agree = 22.2%, agree = 44.4%).

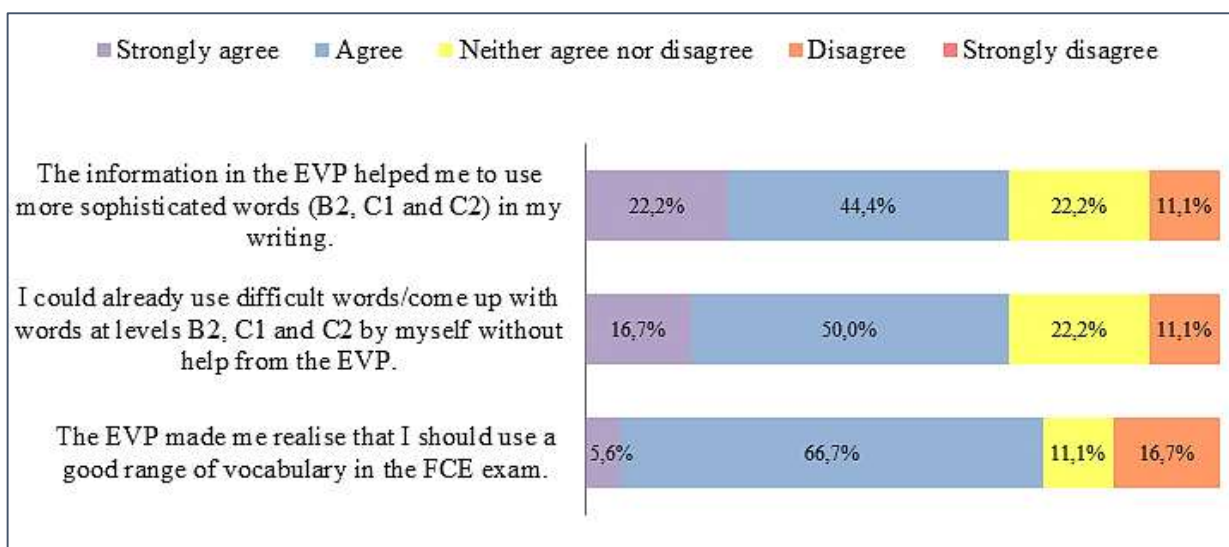


Figure 2: Usefulness of the EVP for enriching students' lexis (N = 18)

However, surprisingly, also a large proportion of students believed that they were already able to use words which they considered difficult without assistance from the EVP (strongly agree = 16.7%, agree = 50%). Nevertheless, the findings suggested that the EVP had raised their awareness of sophisticated vocabulary use, which should be attempted in FCE written tasks (agree = 66.7%).

5.3.2 Students' interaction with the EVP

A few questions in the questionnaire also addressed the ways students used the EVP and the amount of task time they spent on browsing words on the EVP. As shown in Figure 3, most students devoted around 0-20% of the task time on the EVP. This finding was not unexpected as students were confronted with a large quantity of data. However, one could say that – given the large amount of time that had been put into it – they should have been able to select more words from the EVP.

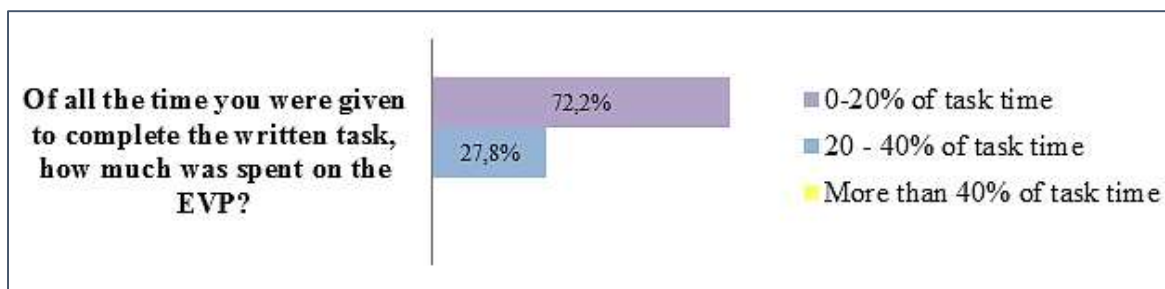


Figure 3: Students' indication of time they spent on the EVP

Figure 4 provides an overview of their responses regarding how the EVP was used during writing. This question allowed the students to choose more than one strategy which applied to them. Out of the total number of responses (N = 43), the most chosen answer was that the EVP encouraged them to use new words (32.6%). This finding was in line with the interview results.

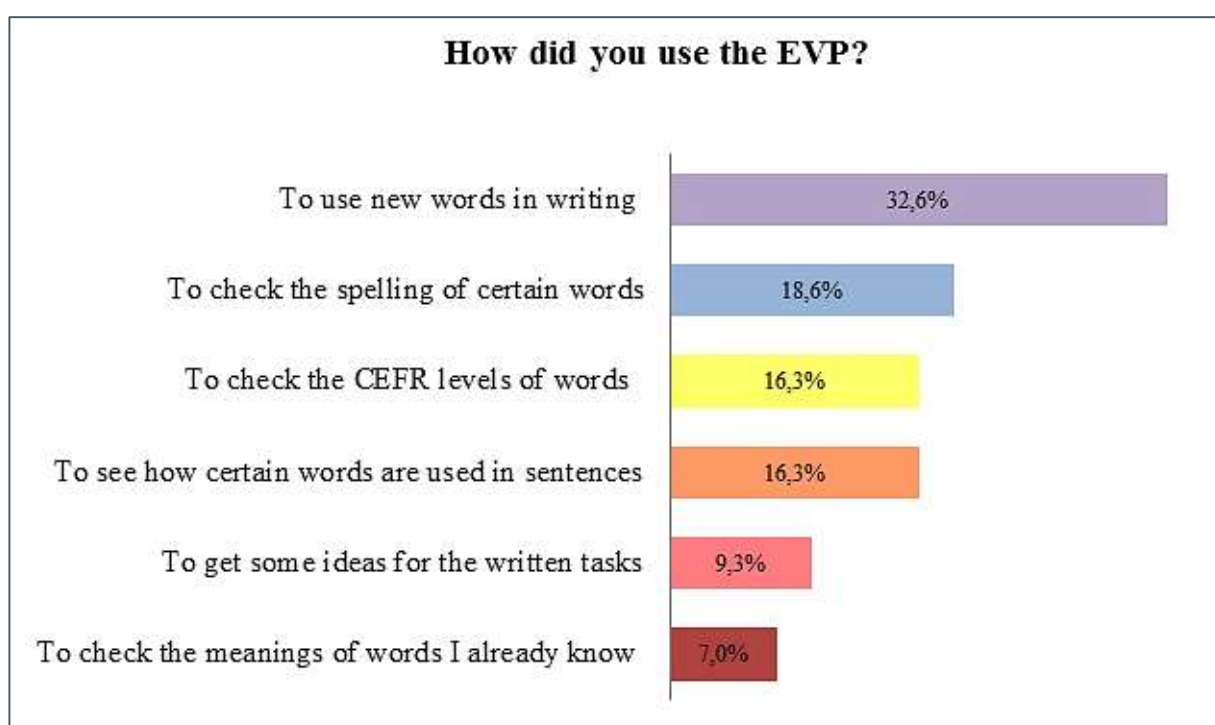


Figure 4: How students used the EVP

When asked whether the EVP was easy to use, most students gave a positive answer (yes = 77.8%, no = 11.1%, not sure = 11.1%). This finding was not surprising as students of this age, who are considered to be “digital native”, are very familiar with handling such software.

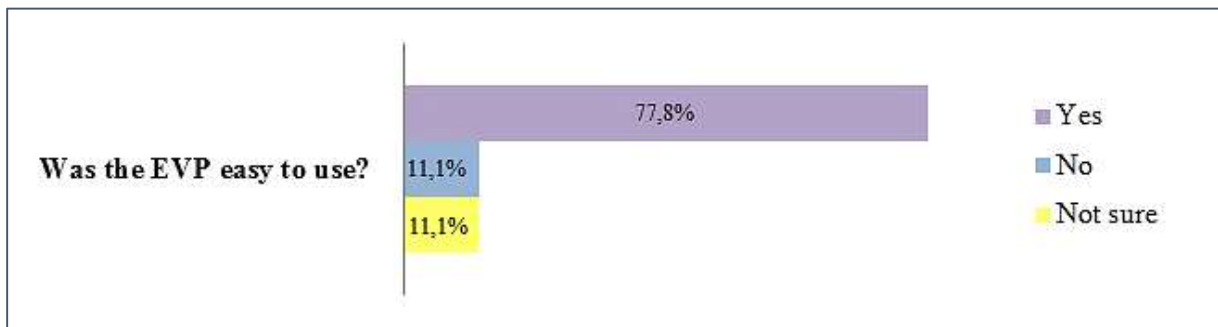


Figure 5: Did students find the EVP interface simple?

5.3.3 Negative aspects of the EVP

The students were required to specify the difficulties they came across while utilising the EVP. The responses (12 in total) are illustrated in Figure 6.

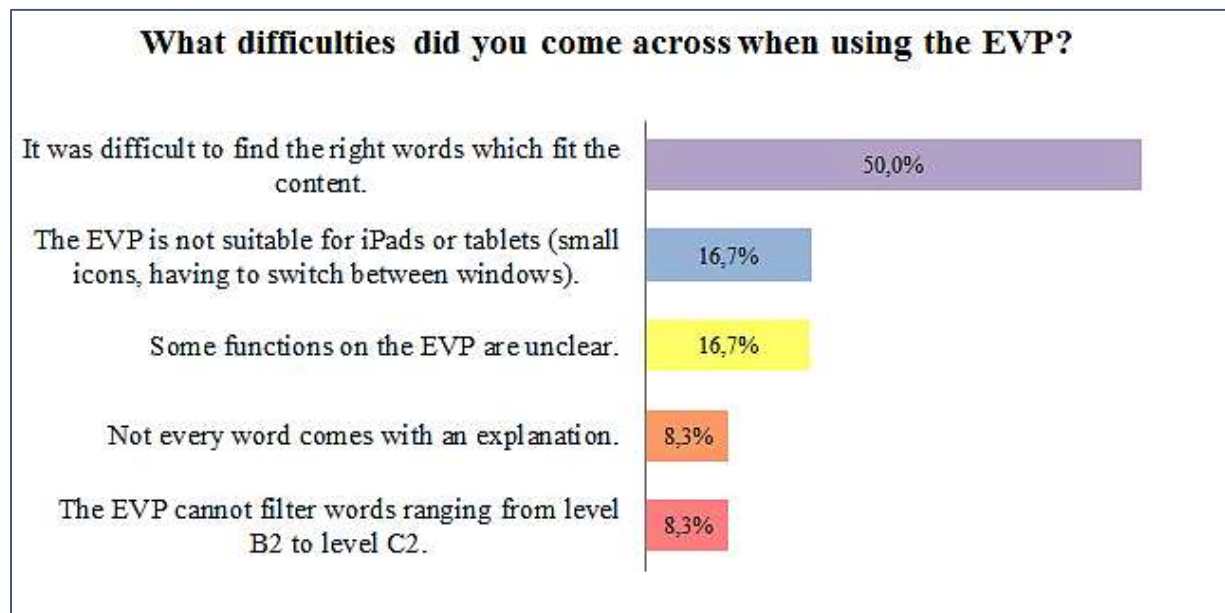


Figure 6: What students found difficult when using the EVP

Despite the extensive word lists on the EVP which students were confronted with and the writing topics which coincided with the topics in the Advanced Search, most responses had to do with the difficulty in finding the exact words which could be used to get their point across (50%).

Asking for the disadvantages of the EVP led to 10 responses. The answers to this open question are shown in Figure 7 below. The most common answer was that the EVP was time-consuming (80%).

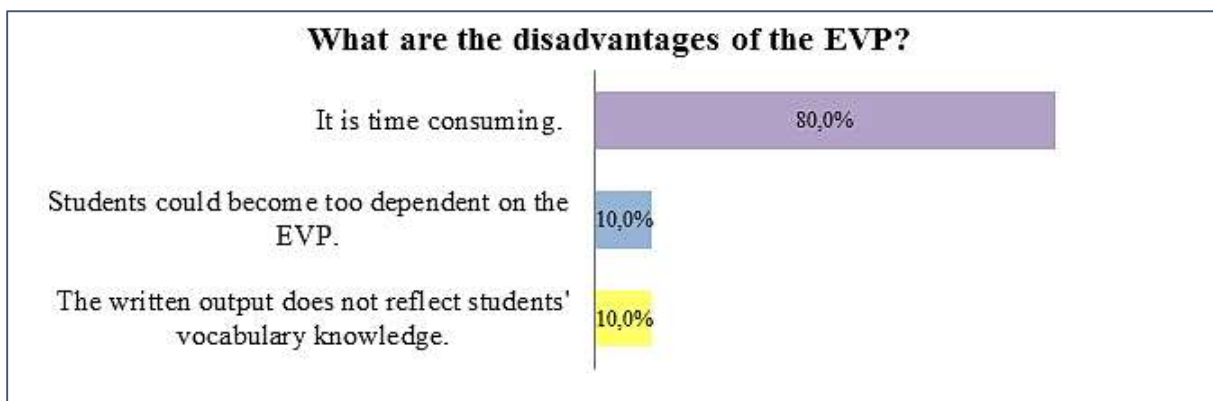


Figure 7: Disadvantages of the EVP

There are two other illuminating points which emerged from this feedback scan. The first point had to do with possible “growing dependence” on the EVP. One student wrote: *“The work becomes less good, if you don’t use the EVP”*. One could say that the fear of producing lower quality written output might arise when students have become attached to the EVP, but are not allowed to use it, for example, in examination settings.

The other issue concerns the “inauthenticity” of the work produced with help from the EVP. According to one student, *“You received help (from the EVP). Therefore, you couldn’t check your own vocabulary”*. What this student suggested was that the advanced words that he had selected from the EVP did not reflect his real ability. As a result, writing output might say little about vocabulary skills of the students.

I must concede that the issue raised by this student contained a great element of truth, as knowing a word is not only limited to knowing its meaning and the context in which it is used, but it is also about being able to recall it at will. *“Can we claim that students could genuinely use these sophisticated words?”* is, therefore, a crucial point to ponder.

Nevertheless, a constructive argument could be made. Rather than solely focusing on the product, one could claim that the EVP facilitates the process of word learning, “Not knowing a word is likely to result in learner not using the word at all” - (Flinspach et al., 2010). The EVP provided the incentive for students to attempt words they perceived as “new”, which could lead to incremental word learning.

5.3.4 To what degree was the EVP voluntarily used by students?

In task 3 to task 7, students could choose whether or not to use the EVP during their writing process. After submitting task 7, students were asked to indicate in the questionnaire whether they used the EVP less now than before. Although there were students who persistently used the EVP in task 3 to task 7 (no = 44.4%), it was noticeable that the use of it fell away over time for some students (yes = 38.9%).

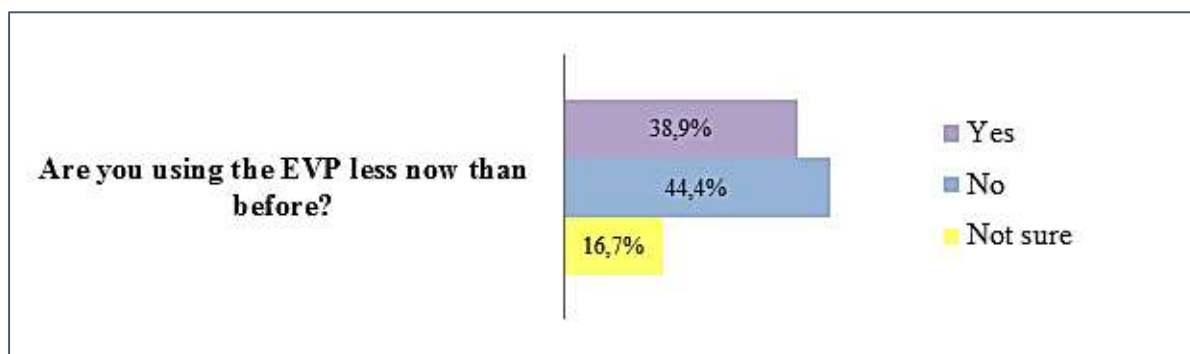


Figure 8: Students’ indication of the changes in the use of the EVP.

The most common reaction from students was that they could not find the right words to convey their message. As it also required a great deal of time to browse through words and it often appeared to be fruitless, they would have preferred not to use it so they would have had more time to concentrate on the content and the organisation of the tasks. Those who still logged into the EVP, despite the fact that they were not specifically told to use it, did that because of their determination to use as many high level words as possible – *“For this assignment I made a long list of words I found on the EVP. I used them all in my essay! You will see them when you read my work.”*

5.3.5 Will students use the EVP for future written tasks?

A disappointing but yet insightful finding was students’ prediction about whether they would use the EVP in the future if they were not explicitly instructed to do so. Regardless of its benefits students had reported, only four out of eighteen students claimed that they would consult the EVP for future written tasks (22.2%), whereas half of them reported to be unsure about it (50%). Five students indicated that they would not use the EVP without a command from the teacher – *“The idea of the EVP is too broad. I can’t see the purpose of it yet”*.

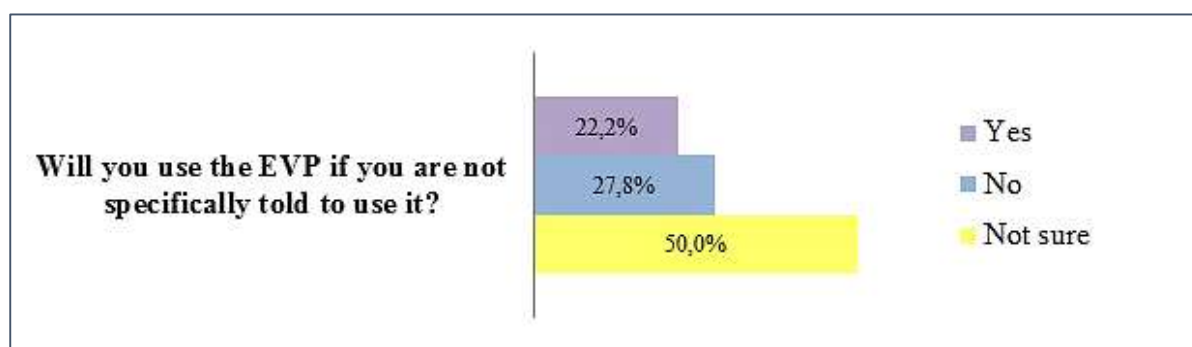


Figure 9: Students’ responses to the future use of the EVP

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This classroom research was carried out with the intention to enrich my students’ use of lexis in their written tasks by providing them with a word pool of a manageable size. Through the integration of the EVP in the writing process, an increase in C2 words was found in their work. Although the EVP had very little bearing on the actual gain of sophisticated words in their written output for the other target levels (B2 and C1), it clearly fostered students’ word consciousness. The EVP drove students to actively take charge of their own writing process, as seen from the number of strategies they had deployed. Although most students reported that the EVP was easy and had facilitated their writing, a large proportion of the class was unsure whether they would use the EVP for future tasks without

being told to do it. In fact, one could see from the students' responses that when use of the EVP was not required, it was applied less.

Due to its investigative nature, the small sample size and the limited period of the experimental phase, I concede that the findings of my study cannot be extrapolated to other settings. However, should teachers and other practitioners be interested in its underlying principle and its pedagogical implications, the design of this study can be replicated in different contexts.

Considering the time-consuming nature of the EVP, teachers might want to preselect particular words, which are relevant for the tasks and correspond with students' target levels. These target words should be integrated in lessons and explicitly taught (English Profile, 2011; Ur, 2012). This is to avoid students being bombarded with the extensive entries of vocabulary that the EVP has to offer, which is often the usual pitfall of data driven learning (Boulton, 2009). Therefore, further studies might want to address both direct and indirect use of the EVP – not only can teachers consult the EVP before designing their lessons, students should also be allowed to interact with the software themselves. However, just like any other type of software which offers a large quantity of data, it is highly recommended that students are properly trained before the EVP is put into use.

A crucial issue which is worth investigating further is how appropriately students use the chosen words in their sentences, instead of which words are chosen and why. This calls for greater attention on word-strings. However, teachers should take into account that a deeper analysis will be necessary as single word counts might be valid but insufficient (Vidakovic & Barker, 2010). To promote the correct use of these lexical chunks, students must be presented with authentic language and encouraged to practice them in several contexts as well as in different kinds of assignments (European Platform, 2010).

Finally, what this study appeared to be lacking is its transition to further usage of the chosen vocabulary. As far as my study is concerned, words from the EVP might have been attempted once, but there is no evidence whether students will also be able to use these chosen words, without consulting the EVP, in other productive tasks. The prospect of further investigation of how and whether or not the EVP can enrich students' long-term usage of vocabulary is, undeniably, exciting.

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Appendix 1

Lesson plans for EVP training sessions

The 1st EVP training session

Introducing the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP)

Objective:

Students explore the EVP website to see what it entails and what they can do with it.

Note:

Students use their prior knowledge about the CEFR system and the requirements in the FCE exam in order to gain understanding of the EVP website.

Teaching steps:

1. Teacher shows a figure of the CEFR system to class. Examples of can-do statements for different CEFR levels are presented. The whole class establishes the target CEFR level which they are expected to reach at the end of their third year (May-June 2016).
2. The whole class discusses how a wide range of vocabulary can enhance their writing.
3. Teacher introduces the EVP website to class. The username and password are given to the students.
4. While/after exploring the website, students write down answers to the questions posed by the teacher:
 - How did you explore the EVP website?
 - What have you discovered about the EVP?
 - How can you make use of the EVP?
 - What is your first impression of the EVP?
5. Students share their answers with their classmates.
6. Teacher rounds off this mini lesson by summarising main points that students should know about the EVP.
 - The EVP allows you to check the level of each meaning of a word / a phrase.
 - It helps you to see which words are known by learners at each level.
 - You can see real examples of how words/phrases are used.
 - You can narrow down your search to grammar, parts of speech, usage, etc.
 - It allows you to view words based on topics/themes.

The 2nd EVP training session

Polysemus: Looking into the word “Fly”

This mini lesson plan is adapted from Tilbury, A. (2014, July 1). Using the English Vocabulary Profile: doing a basic search. Retrieved from <http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/resource-details/1615/using-english-vocabulary-profile-doing-basic-search>

Objectives:

1. Students gain awareness that a single word can carry several meanings. These meanings can appear across different CEFR levels.
2. Students learn how to use EVP to find information about a particular word. In this case the word “fly” is used.

Teaching steps:

1. Teacher asks students what the word “fly” means. Students guess possible meanings of this word as well as give example sentences.
2. Teacher asks students to fill out the table below. Students write down their ideas in the first two columns.

“Fly”	Your guess		EVP	
	Meaning	Level	Meaning	Level
1. He passed the final exam with flying colours .				
2. There were a lot of flies around.				
3. There was plenty to do, and the time flew .				
4. I am flying to Thailand tomorrow.				
5. The poor bird couldn't fly because it had a broken wing.				
6. She learned to fly at the age of 18.				

3. Teacher asks students to share their answers of the first two columns with their classmates.
4. Students log into the EVP with the given username and password.
5. Teacher demonstrates how students can do a basic search for the word “fly”.
 - First select the levels “A1-C2”.
 - Then type the word “fly” in the box and click then click the red “Search” button.
 - A list of results will appear. For each result, you will see the level, a definition as well as example sentences.
6. Students complete the last two columns in the table.
7. Students record what they have learned from this activity.

The 3rd EVP training session

Advanced Search

This mini lesson plan is adapted from Tilbury, A. (2014, July 1). Using the English Vocabulary Profile: doing an advanced search Retrieved from <http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/resource-details/1617/using-english-vocabulary-profile-doing-advanced-search>

Objectives:

1. Students learn how to use the Advanced Search function on the EVP.
2. Students can identify the situations in which the words obtained from the Advanced Search can be used.

Teaching steps:

1. Teacher explains to the students what the Advanced Search terms (e.g. categories, parts of speech, grammar, etc.) on the left side of the EVP website mean and what they consist of.
2. Teacher gives examples of simple Advanced Search tasks such as:
 - Find phrasal verbs with the word “make” at B2 level.
 - Find a C1-level personality adjective that ends in “ful”.
 - Find a verb that is often used in the passive form at B2 level.

Students should be able to identify what filters they have to select in the Advanced Search. After a few practice tasks, students are provided with the table below, which they have to complete.

Note: Teacher can use this table as a scavenger hunt game.

Input	Words	When can you use these words?
Informal adjectives at <u>all levels</u>	1. (A1 level) 2. (A2 level) 3. (B1 level) 4. (B2 level) 5. (C1 level) 6. (C2 level)	
Three adjectives on the topic “Work” at B2 level	1. 2. 3.	
Three formal prepositions at B2 level	1. 2. 3.	

<p>Three conjunctions at B2 level</p>	<p>1. 2. 3.</p>	
<p>Three nouns on the topic "Crime" at C1 level</p>	<p>1. 2. 3.</p>	
<p>Four adjectives used to describe food or drink at B1 – C2 levels</p>	<p>1. (B1 level) 2. (B2 level) 3. (C1 level) 4. (C2 level)</p>	

The 4th EVP training session

Sample sentences on the EVP: Verbs followed by an –ing form or infinitive

Objectives:

1. From example sentences provided on the EVP, students inductively learn how to use verbs which are followed by an –ing form or infinitive.
2. Students are aware of the fact that new words should not be learned in isolation.

Note:

This mini lesson focuses on the grammar topic “Verbs followed by an –ing form or infinitive” based on the students’ book “New Opportunities: Intermediate”, Pearson Longman, page 90. The EVP provides the students with an opportunity to see how words are used in actual sentences.

Teaching steps:

1. Teacher gives students a list of words which can be followed by an –ing form or infinitive.

admit	afford	agree	arrange	ask
avoid	can't stand	choose	consider	decide
deny	expect	fail	give up	hope
learn	let	love	manage	offer
plan	practise	promise	suggest	tend

2. Teacher presents students some examples in order to explain how students can spot these verb patterns on the EVP.

The screenshot shows a dictionary entry for the verb 'expect'. It includes the word family (Nouns: expectation, Verbs: expect, Adjectives: expected, unexpected, Adverbs: unexpectedly) and a section for the verb 'expect' with the sub-header 'THINK'. The definition is '[T] to think or believe that something will happen'. Dictionary examples include 'We are expecting a lot of applicants for the job.' and 'I expect (that) she'll be very angry.'. A red box highlights the sentence 'He didn't expect to see me.' with an arrow pointing to a red box containing the text 'verb + to + infinitive'.

choose ⁴/tʃuːz/ (chose, chosen)

Word family:
Nouns: choice
Verbs: choose

► **VERB** [I or T]

1 to decide what you want from two or more things or possibilities.
Dictionary examples:
Danny, come here and choose your ice cream.
I had to choose **between** fish or lamb.
There were so many colours to choose **from**.
It's difficult choosing **where** to live.
I've chosen Luis a present./I've chosen a present **for** Luis.
He's been chosen **as** the team's new captain.
The firm's directors chose Emma **to** be the new production manager.
Katie chose **to** stay away from work that day.

verb + object + to + infinitive

choose ⁴/tʃuːz/ (chose, chosen)

Word family:
Nouns: choice
Verbs: choose

► **VERB** [I or T]

1 to decide what you want from two or more things or possibilities.
Dictionary examples:
Danny, come here and choose your ice cream.
I had to choose **between** fish or lamb.
There were so many colours to choose **from**.
It's difficult choosing **where** to live.
I've chosen Luis a present./I've chosen a present **for** Luis.
He's been chosen **as** the team's new captain.
The firm's directors chose Emma **to** be the new production manager.
Katie chose **to** stay away from work that day.

verb + to + infinitive

3. Students categorise the given verbs based on the forms they precede. Students consult the EVP to check all the possible verb patterns.

Patterns	Words / examples
verb + to + infinitive	
verb + object + to + infinitive	
verb + object + infinitive	
verb + -ing form	

4. After having done gap filling exercises in the students' book, teacher asks the students to create their own sentences using the verbs they have just learned with the correct patterns.

The 5th EVP training session

Doing a topic-search

Objectives:

1. Students are provided with further practice in doing Advanced Search by topics.
2. Students become familiar with the Word Family presented with each word.
3. Students are trained how to write their responses to guiding journal questions.

Note:

This mini lesson is carried out in the form of writing and speaking activities under the theme “colours”.

Teaching steps:

1. Students discuss in pairs the importance and influence of colours.
2. Students look at examples of company logos provided by the teacher. The students make a connection between the products these companies sell and the colours which are used in their logos.



3. In groups, students try to make sense of what these colours mean, why they are used in these logos and what the colours imply about the products.
4. Instead of using simple adjectives/nouns which they already know, students are encouraged to select less common words (B2 – C2 levels) from the topic “Describing things” on the EVP.
5. With their classmates students discuss a few logos, take notes, then give a presentation about the logos they have chosen.
6. For an individual writing task, each student describes colours used in a piece of art, which could be a painting, a poster, a book/album cover, a logo, etc. Students are allowed to use the EVP in their writing.
7. Students are asked to complete their journal.

The 6th EVP training session

Using EVP during writing

Objectives:

1. Students are provided with further practice in doing an Advanced Search.
2. Students become more familiar with how EVP can be used as an assisting tool during the writing process.
3. Students are trained how to write their responses to the guiding journal questions.

Note:

The task in this mini lesson is similar to the writing tasks which are given to the students in the experimental phrase. The students are required to write an application letter, in which formal phrases are used.

Teaching steps:

1. Students are presented with a letter which contains informal phrases. Students are supposed to replace these phrases with more formal ones.

Hello Mrs Sykes,

I'm writing this letter because I saw your advertisement that was put up in the local youth centre and I want to apply for this job as Activities coordinator.

I'm 18 years old and I like to work with kids. I have to babysit my sister's daughter, who is only 7 years old. Sometimes her friends come over to do fun stuff together like playing games or cooking. I know how to deal with kids because I spend a lot of time with them. I also like to do all sorts of things to stay active. I am a very strong swimmer too! I even have a lifesaving certificate.

I guess I'm the person you're looking for. I want to use my cool ideas, plus my experience in this job. I think this job is something for me.

It'll be great if you ask me to come for an interview, whenever you have time. I am waiting for your reply.

Bye for now,

J. Simone

2. Students use the Advanced Search in order to find suitable formal phrases. (Click on "Category" and select "Phrases. Then click on "Usage" and choose "Formal".)
3. Students are provided with a selection of job advertisements. Each student writes a letter to apply for the position they are interested in. Their letter should contain at least 200 words.
4. Students are asked to complete their journal.

Appendix 2

Writing tasks 1 and 2

Writing Task 1

Write your answer in **200 words** in an appropriate style on the separate answer sheet.

Digital game

Reviews wanted!

Do you have a favourite digital game? It could be a game that you play on your PC, iPad or mobile phone. Send us a review of this game, telling us what the game is about, why you like this game, anything that isn't good about it, and whether you'd recommend it to other people of your age.

Writing Task 2

Write your answer in **200 words** in an appropriate style on the separate answer sheet.

Gadget

Reviews wanted!

Do you have a favourite gadget? It could be something that you or your family use in daily life. Send us a review of this gadget, telling us about its function, what you use it for, anything that is good or not so good about it and whether you'd recommend it to other people of your age.

Appendix 3

Guiding journal questions

1. How did you create this work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How did you use the EVP while creating this work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Which word(s) did you take from the EVP?

Word	Why did you decide to use this word in your work?

4. Which “topic” did you choose in the Advanced Search?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix 4

Questionnaire

Deel 1: Achtergrond informatie

1. Geslacht: Man Vrouw

2. Gemiddelde Engels:

3. Vanaf welke klas in je basisschool kreeg je Engelse les?

4. Welke taal/talen spreek je thuis?

5. Vind je het leuk om in het Engels te schrijven? Ja Nee Weet niet

6. Hoeveel tijd per week besteed je aan het schrijven in het Engels?

0 uur 0-1 1 – 2 uur meer dan 3 uren

7. Wat voor soort schrijftaken in het Engels doe je (in je eigen tijd en ook voor school)?

.....

8. Wat vind je moeilijk in het schrijven van Engels?

.....

9. Wat wil je verbeteren in het schrijven van Engels?

.....

10. Ben je tevreden met je woordenschat? Ja Nee Weet niet

11. Wat vind je van het gebruik van je woordenschat in de schrijftaken die je tot nu toe hebt gemaakt?

Heel tevreden Tevreden Gaat wel Ontevreden zeer ontevreden

Deel 2: Het gebruik van de EVP

Lees de volgende vragen. Kies het antwoord.

Vragen	Helemaal mee eens (Strongly agree)	Mee eens (Agree)	Niet mee eens, maar ook niet mee oneens. (Neither agree or disagree)	Mee oneens (Disagree)	Helemaal mee oneens (Strongly disagree)
12. De informatie in de EVP heeft mij geholpen om beter te schrijven. ENG: The information in the EVP has helped me to write better.					
13. De informatie in de EVP heeft mij geholpen om moeilijke woorden te kiezen (bijv. woorden op B2,C1 en C2 niveau) ENG: The information in the EVP has helped me to choose more difficult words (e.g. words at B2, C1 and C2 levels).					
14. Ik kon zelf al moeilijke woorden (niveau B2,C1 en C2) gebruiken zonder hulp van de EVP. ENG: I could already use difficult words/come up with these words (level B2, C1 and C2) by myself without help from the EVP.					
15. De manier, waarop ik het schrijfwerk aanpakte m.b.v. de EVP, was anders dan toen ik dat deed zonder de EVP. ENG: The way I approached the writing task when I used the EVP was different from when I did not use the EVP.					
16. De EVP gaf me ideeën voor de inhoud van mijn schrijfwerk. ENG: The EVP gave me ideas for the content of my writing task.					

Vragen	Helemaal mee eens (Strongly agree)	Mee eens (Agree)	Niet mee eens, maar ook niet mee oneens. (Neither agree or disagree)	Mee oneens (Disagree)	Helemaal mee oneens (Strongly disagree)
17. De EVP was nuttig in het plannen van mijn schrijfwerk. ENG: The EVP was useful when planning my writing task.					
18. De EVP was nuttig om mijn werk te verbeteren (bijv. spelling check). ENG: The EVP was useful for editing my work.					
19. De EVP deed mij beseffen dat ik moeilijke woorden diende te gebruiken in FCE schrijftaken. ENG: The EVP made me aware of the fact that I was supposed to use difficult words at the FCE level.					

20. Hoe gebruikte je de EVP tijdens het schrijven? Je kan meer dan één antwoord kiezen:

ENG: How did you use the EVP during writing? You can choose more than one answer:

- Om het niveau van woorden te checken (B2,C1, C2) **ENG: To check the levels of words**
- Om ideeën te krijgen voor mijn schrijftaken **ENG: To gather some ideas for my writing tasks**
- Om de spelling te controleren **ENG: To check the spelling of certain words**
- Om de betekenissen van de woorden, die ik al kende, te controleren **ENG: To check the meanings of words I already knew**
- Om te zien hoe bepaalde woorden in zinnen worden gebruikt **ENG: To see how certain words are used in sentences**
-

21. Welk deel van de tijd, die je besteedde aan de schrijftaak over een gadget review (of) een game review, was je bezig met de EVP?

ENG: Of the time it took you to do the writing task about a gadget review (or) a game review, how much did you spend on the EVP?

0-20% van de tijd 20-40% van de tijd 40-60% van de tijd 60-80% van de tijd meer dan 80% van de tijd

22. Vind je het ok om de EVP naast je te hebben, wanneer je een schrijfpodracht maakt (Als je gezegd is om het te gebruiken)?

ENG: Do you think it is ok to use the EVP during a writing task (When you are specifically told to use it)?

Ja Nee Weet niet

23. Vind je het ok om de EVP naast je te hebben, wanneer je een schrijfpodracht maakt (Als je niet gezegd is om het te gebruiken)?

ENG: Do you think it is ok to use the EVP (When you are not specifically told to use it)?

Ja Nee Weet niet

24. Was de EVP voor jou makkelijk te gebruiken?

ENG: Was the EVP easy to use for you?

Ja Nee Weet niet

25. Welke functie in de EVP vond je het nuttigste/leukste ?

ENG: Which feature in the EVP did you find most useful / did you like the most?

.....

26. Wat waren de moeilijkheden, die je tegenkwam, toen je de EVP gebruikte?

ENG: What were the difficulties that you had when you used the EVP?

.....

27. Zal je de EVP gebruiken bij het schrijven als je niet verteld is om het te gebruiken?

ENG: Will you use the EVP if you're not specifically told to use it?

Ja Nee Weet niet

28. Gebruik je de EVP nu minder dan eerst.

ENG: Are you using the EVP less now than before?

Ja Nee Weet niet

29. Hoe zou de EVP applicatie verbeterd kunnen worden?

ENG: How could the EVP application be improved?

.....

30. Wat zijn de nadelen van het gebruik van de EVP?

ENG: What are the disadvantages of the use of the EVP?

.....