

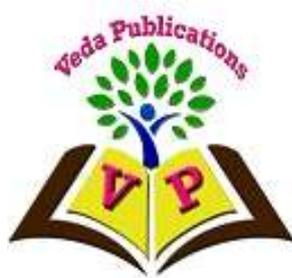


## ELICITING RICH VOCABULARY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR EMPLOYABILITY

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### ABSTRACT



India has one of the largest and diverse education systems in the world. The spiraling developments at the global level invoke the quality of learning of a professional student. Every professional student should compete with the fast changing world to meet the demands of corporate competition. One should groom one's personality in core skills, life skills and communication skills to face the challenges of industry. While at the college, it is both very important to become academically competent and effective communicator to aspire for MNCs. English language has become an important tool of communication for engineers in the industry. Language competency promotes engineering student for employment opportunities. Words are tools with which people communicate. The more words they know the better they can think and exchange their ideas with their peers.

The present study discusses how we can enhance the vocabulary proficiency of an engineering student to aspire for higher goals. It also focuses to improve their communicative ability. The study is intended to present different kinds of vocabulary as well as several aspects of vocabulary knowledge that are essential for professional students in learning language fluency. Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides the basis for understanding. The engineering students are expected to possess extensive vocabulary for both academic and professional purposes. It is very difficult to survive in global-economic society with limited word power. The chances for success for engineering aspirants increase with the range and application of their acquired vocabulary. It is vivid that a limited vocabulary hinders the prospects of the engineering students. A strong vocabulary meets the needs and requirements of an aspiring executive in the corporate sector.

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings expressed via oral and written format both in productive and receptive forms. Learning words in any language other than one's mother tongue is not a day's task. Researchers opine that words are gradually learned over a period of time from numerous sources of exposure. Hence, there are different aspects of learning a word and students need to know how to use it in the classroom and in everyday situations. A word's meaning must be learnt before that word is used. The potential knowledge that can be known about a word is rich and complex. Different perspectives of teaching vocabulary shed light on the complexity of helping learners achieve success in learning vocabulary appropriately.

**Keywords:** *English, Vocabulary, Language, Fluency.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with the significance of strategies to elicit vocabulary among the students of engineering and technology. In the present century, linguistics and psycholinguistics observed vocabulary measures in many experiments: studies of human learning, reading and writing ability, attention, memory and emotions. There has been a revival of interest in word power since there is a need for graduate students for appearing for competitive exams GRE, TOEFL, IELTS and Bank Pos and written tests for MNCs in recent years. Learning vocabulary is perhaps the most challenging aspect of becoming proficient in a second or foreign language because of the sheer enormity of the task (Meara, 1995; Nation, 2001 Schmitt, 2010).

It also aims to define the term vocabulary in general. It presents different kinds of vocabulary as well as the several aspects of vocabulary knowledge that are essential in learning English language. The academic status of engineering students in the present scenario is highlighted basing on the present research. The role of vocabulary in acquiring language skills and their reciprocal relationship is highlighted.

## VOCABULARY

The word vocabulary is derived from the Medieval Latin *Vocabularium*. According to Compact Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus it means,

- A listing, either selective or comprehensive, containing the words and phrases of a language, with meanings or conversions into a different language; glossary.
- The cumulative of words to make use of or understanding of a specified person, class, profession, etc.
- All the words enclosed in a language.
- A range or system of signs, characters, or skills constituting a means of communication or term, as any of the arts or crafts a wide vocabulary of textures and colours (1024).

According to the Oxford English Mini Dictionary, vocabulary means,

- The words used in a particular language or activity or known to a person.

- A list of words and their meanings (622).

According to Dr. Ernest Klein (1996), 'What the elements are to chemistry, what the sounds are to music, are words to language. However, words are not only the elements of a language but also of the history of the people speaking it. They are important milestones along the way leading to the majestic Palace of Human Knowledge.'

Vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. Generally, words are formed in two modes— oral and written. Oral vocabulary comprises the words that are recognized and used in listening and speaking. Written vocabulary includes the words acknowledged in reading and writing. Words are the tools by which people think, communicate and learn. The more words they know, the better they can think, communicate and absorb knowledge. It is very hard to survive in the present corporate competition with limited vocabulary. Their chances for success increase with the range and applications of their acquired vocabulary.

English in contrast with other languages has a rich and extensive vocabulary. The main rationale for this is the multifaceted combination of Germanic and Romance words. It is anticipated that roughly 300 million people are the native speakers while 300 million use English as a second language besides 100 million who use it as a foreign language. English is the language of science, aviation, computing, diplomacy and tourism. Around 45 nations use English as the official or co-official language. English plays a key role in the political, cultural and economical life of several countries.

It is the core vocabulary in every language that includes function words or set of terms that carry grammatical information. In English, both general words and specific words relevant to the field are available. Learners acquire vocabulary knowledge by listening first and then producing them in limited contexts. They acquire complete knowledge of words only through productive process. The degree of L2 learners' vocabulary knowledge depends on their ability to pick up this information from contexts (oral and written) in which the words are used as well as from explicit instruction. According to Nagy, the following types of knowledge contribute to effective use of context for vocabulary learning (Nagy: 1997).



- Linguistic information: Syntactic information, word meanings, word structures.
- World Knowledge: Perception of the notions which the words represent, familiarity with related conceptual frameworks and awareness of social associations.
- Strategic Knowledge: control over cognitive resources.

The L2 learners besides knowledge of words require fluent use of language. This is an incremental achievement upon which effective engagement in L2 language activities ultimately depends.

### **USAGE OF ENGLISH AMONG ENGINEERING GRADUATES**

English is the significant medium of instruction in the engineering colleges. It is both an academic language and a library language. It plays a dominant role in deciding one's career in the corporate sector. Students need English proficiency in academic context in listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also need it in the job situation for extracting information, exchanging their views in many activities conducted at the time of interviews and communicating with their superiors and peers at virtual office.

### **THE OBJECTIVE OF VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR A PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE**

- To articulate subject material and thoughts with more clarity and accuracy
- To extend the vocabulary size of the students to get confidence to participate in Group discussions, Debate, JAM, Extempore and Presentations etc...
- To guess the meaning of new words by analyzing their structures
- To spell the difficult words correctly
- To write reports, e-mails vividly for their professional communication
- To practice spoken communication suited to the professional situations such as board meetings, conferences and seminars

However, Vocabulary learning is considerably complex due to the size of the potential lexicon and the multifaceted nature of vocabulary knowledge.

Around five aspects of vocabulary complexity are identified:

- Augmentation: Knowing a word is not a matter of all-or-nothing, but an incremental procedure based on small steps.
- Multidimensionality: Word knowledge consists of multiple aspects of word knowledge such as grammar, morphology, theoretical meaning, and frequency
- Interrelated: Words often have multiple meanings.
- Interrelatedness: Words are not isolated but interrelated with one another, for example, how fine a person comprehends the word bread depends on part of the understanding of other words such as powder and wheat.
- Heterogeneity: Word knowledge depends on words' function, for instance, perceiving the word whether is moderately different from understanding the word apple.

Thus, from the above mentioned aspects it is obvious that words are unique and interesting. Further, a limited vocabulary hinders the process of communication. Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings expressed via oral and written format both in productive and receptive forms. Generally, vocabulary knowledge is divided into two categories- receptive vocabulary knowledge and productive vocabulary knowledge. Receptive vocabulary indicates learning the meaning of a new word, while, productive vocabulary specifies learning to express a concept by means of a new word.

Therefore, Receptive vocabulary includes words that are recognized by means of listening or reading. Productive vocabulary comprises words by means of speaking and writing. Receptive vocabulary is typically larger than productive vocabulary.

### **RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY**

The aim of learning English in Indian Technical colleges is to help the students to acquire both receptive and productive usage of it. The students are expected to acquire theoretical and practical command over English. They should be able to first understand spoken English (Listening), Speak



English (Speaking), read English (Reading) and write English (Writing). These are the four basic aims of learning English. Listening and Reading skills are termed as receptive process, while speaking and writing are termed as productive process.

#### **LISTENING**

In the process of both L1 and L2 learning, listening is the basis because language is first received then expressed. Learners should be given a lot of practice in Listening. At graduate level, as of Engineering students should be enabled to understand spoken English required in ordinary tête-à-tête, substitution of compliments, receiving orders or directions and listening to lectures, talks, debates, seminars, group discussions and so on. Thus, active listening is the basis for effective language learning.

#### **SPEAKING**

The second basic skill in learning a language is to speak the language. The engineering students have to express themselves in responding to the questions posed by teachers. Further, they practice oral activities like conversations, role-plays, Group discussions, debates, speeches-extempore and prepared and mock interviews. English is required in every sphere of life. It is a language of day-to-day communication.

#### **READING**

Reading is an important skill to be acquired by L2 learners. They need to comprehend the meaning of written material. The Engineering students are required to comprehend the technical terms through intensive reading.

#### **WRITING**

Writing correct English is the most important aspect of English language learning. It is apart from speaking, only through writing a person express himself or herself. The Engineering students need to write letters, job applications, reports, paragraphs and essay topics.

Hence, it is clear that vocabulary is necessary for the engineering students. It is accepted that it is highly impossible for even the native speakers to master all the words of that particular language. The Engineering students are obliged to reach a basic threshold proficiency level in English both academically and professionally. During the early stages of acquisition, they listen to the

language, engage in interaction and as a result, they learn to identify the forms and the meanings of new words, which they remember and in due course, come to use. Here, their primary focus is not on learning new words; rather they learn them as a by-product of engaging in oral communication with others.

#### **ASPECTS OF VOCABULARY ACQUISITION**

The previous researches in vocabulary acquisition have focused on three aspects:

The strategies that learners employ in intentional vocabulary acquisition (Cohen: 1990). This research indicates that learners can enhance their retention of new words if they employ various mnemonic strategies, such as the key-word method.

- The incidental vocabulary acquisition that takes place as a result of learners' attempts to understand written texts. It shows that they can successfully learn new words incidentally as they read for comprehension, although they may need multiple exposure to words before they can begin to use them productively.
- Yoshida found out that quantitative aspect of the learners' expanding lexicon (91) and Palmberg suggests that in the early stages, learners learn nouns rather than verbs or adjectives and that, in contrast to L1 acquisition, words are acquired at a fairly steady rate (98).

#### **KINDS OF VOCABULARY**

Generally, there are three kinds of vocabulary according to their usefulness in language. The first is active or productive that occurs in one's spoken and written language. The second is passive or receptive vocabulary which occurs in listening and reading. The third sort of vocabulary is ad hoc vocabulary. Vocabulary is also classified into four categories - high occurrence words, scholastic words, technical words and low frequency words. The study discusses these four categories in detail.

#### **HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS**

The structure and content words form high frequency words in written and spoken texts. In every language there are some words by dint of their function and referential prominence spoken and



heard more often than others. For example, the word 'chair' is used more frequently than 'penguin'.

#### **LOW FREQUENCY WORDS**

These words are several in numbers.

##### **Academic words**

These words are very common in different kinds of academic texts comprising 9% of the running words in the text.

##### **Technical Words**

These words are very closely related to the topic and subject area of the texts covering 5% of the running words in a text. Learning words in any language other than one's mother tongue is not a day's task. Researchers in second language acquisition are of opinion that words are gradually learned over a period of time from numerous sources of exposure. Hence there are different aspects of learning a word. Vocabulary knowledge consists of meaning and word form. There are different aspects and degrees of knowing a word. Vocabulary knowledge could be gained in terms of the receptive and productive knowledge. It is assumed that the receptive knowledge occurs first followed by the productive.

There are various facets of knowing a word. A word's meaning must be learned before that word is used. The potential knowledge that can be known about a word is rich and complex. Nation proposes the following list of the different kinds of word knowledge that a person must master in order to know a word.

- The meanings of the word
- The written form of the word
- The spoken form of the word
- The grammatical behavior of the word
- The register of the word
- The association of the word
- The frequency of the word (31).

All the above types of word knowledge that are interrelated are necessary for the students in using a word in the wide variety of language situations they come across.

#### **ELICITING VOCABULARY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TEACHING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM**

Eliciting is a technique that ESL teachers can use to get information about what the students know

and don't know. This means that the teacher becomes more capable and doesn't waste time rehashing the students' existing knowledge. Eliciting creates a learner-centred environment and is very thought-provoking for the students. The teacher can elicit ideas, feelings, meaning, situations, associations and memories. For the teacher, eliciting is a powerful diagnostic tool, providing key information about what the learners know or don't know, and therefore a starting point for lesson planning. Eliciting also encourages teachers to be flexible and to move on rather than dwell on information which is already known.

Eliciting vocabulary is used when we want the student to come up with a word on their own. This may be because you have taught the word already and you want to review it. There are many ways this can be achieved. An easy way to elicit vocabulary is by giving definitions. Provide the students with a definition and see if the students can supply the correct word.

We can also use synonyms to elicit vocabulary. When we use this technique, we have to make a statement and ask the students to paraphrase it by using a synonym. Using opposites (antonyms) is also useful when we want to elicit a word from a student. Furthermore, we could pretend we have forgotten the word we are trying to elicit. This happens regularly in a natural conversation and is a great way to elicit vocabulary. We can ask the students questions to try to elicit the vocabulary we pretend we can't remember.

For young or visual learners, let us use flashcards or pictures to elicit vocabulary from the students. Mind maps or word clusters work better with older students and can also help to elicit vocabulary. Let us simply start by writing a general topic in the centre of the board in bubble diagram and have the students add words that relate to the topic. It excites the students to generate vocabulary apt to the given topic. It worked so nice when we design rich vocabulary in the form of **WOW** (words of wisdom) a good technique to elicit vocabulary. Students develop passion for learning new words if they are enthused to learn words giving them synonyms for the words: for example;



General Words	WOW Words
Talkative/ Chatterbox	Loquacious
Reserved	Taciturn
Homesick	Nostalgia
Nickname	Sobriquet
Cognomen	Surname

Students often pick up new words quickly. The problem comes when the students are not given the opportunity to use the words they have learned. This leads them to forgetting vocabulary, so let us try to find ways to regularly practice the words we teach in our class and use them in contexts the students will remember.

Eliciting ideas and background information also requires input. This may come from a teacher's anecdote or story, a text, pictures, or a video, and involves the sharing of knowledge between teacher and learners. Information is often elicited onto a mind-map on the board, but it is important that all the students have a record of collective knowledge, and may find one of the many kinds of graphic organizer useful. Reading lessons often begin with a photo or headline from the text which serves a dual purpose in providing a stimulus for eliciting and a prompt for predicting content. KWL charts are ideal records of what students already Know, what they Want to know, and what they have Learnt by the end of the lesson, and point to the conclusion that eliciting can take place at any stage of a lesson and often indicates what should happen next.

## CONCLUSION

The success of eliciting depends largely on the attitudes of teachers and learners to their respective roles. Ideally it promotes the notion of an exchange of information, helps to break down traditional teacher-centeredness, and begins to establish a variety of interaction patterns in the classroom. It is also fundamental to the inductive approach to teaching language and to learning through tasks and self-discovery, and a simple and effective way of getting learners to produce language. The central point is the opportunity elicitation provides to make students' knowledge, emotions and thinking a great value to share with others. Students come to discover how great a contribution they bring to the lesson as individual

learners with different learning, intellectual and emotional dimensions. Consequently, by contributing to the making of the lesson, learning happens naturally. And most important, there is the unavoidable personal growth of students as human beings since they come to see the necessity, usefulness and need for complete involvement in the class experience and thus take responsibility for their own learning.

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