2.1 PRELIMINARIES

The main aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical background to the teaching and learning of English vocabulary. A cluster of meaningful morphemes make a word. Words present the structure of the mode and process of communication. A word communicates meaning through the object, action, state, qualification and modification. An attempt is made in the beginning of the chapter to discuss what is meant by a word. Then it explains the significance of word power. Later it presents importance of enriching vocabulary, growth and structure of vocabulary, the factors that impact vocabulary change and how words change meaning. The present chapter highlights types of vocabulary, selection, gradation and principal practical methods of teaching vocabulary effectively. Further it deals with the processes of word formation, ways of knowing the vocabulary items and problems faced by Engineering students with respect to the domain of vocabulary.

2.2 WHAT IS A WORD?

One of the most important components of any language is a Word. A word is unique and specific to an individual language and therefore, a word is definable only in terms of specific structural characteristics of that particular individual language. The word “cow” is specific only to the English language and “Gay”(cow) is specific to Marathi. “Crow”(crow) is characteristically an English word while “Kauwa”(crow) is specific to the Hindi language and “Kak”(crow) is specific to the Sanskrit language.

Each language has its own unique structural arrangement of its units. It is not exactly similar to the structural patterns of any other language as noticed in “’c-a-l-m”, “p-a-l-m”, “b-a-l-m” in English where ‘l’ is silent and therefore not uttered but in Marathi sh+a+n+t+a+t+a (shantata) which means ‘calmness’ has its unique structural pattern of Marathi. Every word is a complex organization of different aspects like phonology
and semantics. Naturally it becomes difficult to capture all the complexity of language organization. It is therefore quite arduous to arrive at a universal definition of a word. The difficulty and complexity is noticed in the illustrations of “hat” as in bat, cat, “hit” as in bit, kit, “hut” as in cut, but, “hot” as in “cot”, “rot” in English. The word like “Matru” (mother), “Pitru” (father), “Bhatru” (brother) in Sanskrit present the examples of the complex organization of phonology and semantics.

1) Palmer (1971) mentions three main approaches to overcome the difficulty in defining a word. The first approach considers the word as a semantic unit i.e. unit of meaning. In this regard Palmer (1971) defines a word as

'a linguistic unit that has a single meaning'. (p. 44)

According to linguists the difficulty with this definition is in deciding what is meant by a single meaning. For instance, if the words 'buy', 'sell', 'purchase', 'tell', 'speak' have each single meaning then the words 'buyer', 'seller' 'purchaser', 'teller', 'speaker' have more than one meaning since it means 'one who buys, sells, purchases, tells and speaks'. Still ‘buyer’, ‘seller’, ‘purchaser’, ‘teller’, ‘speaker’ are just single words. Conversely, it is not always possible to assign a meaning to a single word. The verb phrase 'to make ones mind' means 'to determine' or 'to tide over a situation' means ‘to come out successfully through a crisis’ but it cannot be stated in terms of individual meanings of words. Meaning has to be stated for the whole combination. Thus a word cannot be defined simply as a unit of meaning only.

The second approach considers the phonological aspect of a word. Some languages have vowel harmony as in the case of most of the Indian languages. The sequences of vowels are alike in terms of some phonetic features. There is letter and sound correspondence in Hindi, Marathi and other Indian languages but not so in the case of the English language. This feature may not always be a characteristic of the word in other languages. Some languages have fixed stress patterns i.e. the stress always falls on a particular syllable of a word in these languages. The stress can be on the first or the last or any other syllable. It is comparatively easy to identify words in such cases. Some phoneticians believe that because each word carries a stress, it is possible to identify words from the number of stresses. But in English, some words with an essential grammatical function are usually unstressed for example to, of, an, can, shall, has. The shift of stress indicates the change in the grammatical word –class.
Mary is dancing in the hall.

In this sentence all the words are not stressed. Words like 'dancing' and 'hall' are more prominently stressed, whereas words like 'they', 'is', 'in' and 'the' are not stressed. Thus the phonetic definition of a word is as unsatisfactory as a semantic definition.

The third approach defines words in terms of potential pause between two words. In the sentence, 'Maya greeted William' there are three words and we can pause after each word. However, we can also pause deliberately between the single word and that makes the definition inappropriate.

2) Bloomfield (1935) defines word as follows,

‘A word is a 'minimum freeform', but this definition too suffers from the same defect.

3) The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2000) defines ‘word’ as follows,

“the smallest unit of language that people can understand if it is said or written on its ownlip” (1648) but this too has some limitation.

4) Fries and Traver (1950) states,

“A word is a combination of sounds acting as, a stimulus to bring into attention the experience to which it has become attached by use. Whatever experience is thus brought into attention by such a stimulus is its meaning. We must, therefore, recognize the highly individual character of the experience and bring the same to the attention of any particular user of a word, both in respect of what is usually called the denotation and connotation of that words”. (p.87)

This definition by Fries and Traver tries to capture the complexities of words to some extent. Thus we can say that the word is not a clearly definable linguistic unit. However, many attempts have been made both to define a word in the context of a particular language and also to define it universally.

Though 'words' and 'vocabulary' are two different terms, both the words are often used synonymously. Broadly speaking, one may not make any distinction between 'words' and 'vocabulary', but when it comes to the precise and technical way of handling these terms the difference is evident. The term 'word' refers to an individual entity, whereas
the term 'vocabulary' refers to a collective concept. It is a group, a cluster, a collection of words. The vocabulary refers to a collection of many entities that are called words. It refers to a total or a partial stock of words that a person or language has. The term 'word' is widely used in the field of linguistics in particular in arts and sciences pedagogy. The term 'vocabulary' is more widely used in the field of education. Word is at the theoretical level of understanding and vocabulary is at the practical level of application. Each individual unit is a lexical unit.

Words represent concepts such as truth, beauty, equations. Therefore, learning or teaching a word is learning or teaching a concept. Most of the Engineering teachers are not aware of this principle. It is felt that the right time has come when the approach to the teaching of vocabulary needs a radical revolution. Vocabulary development is like the concept development and the greater the number of concepts we acquire, the greater the variety of ideas we can understand and express.

A learner needs adequate language in order to describe and internalise his environment. The words he knows influence his perception and his attitude to the conception of his surroundings. Inadequate vocabulary results in inadequate conceptualization and inability to connect with the concrete concepts. This shows that vocabulary teaching and learning play a crucial role in the learners' conceptual development.

2.3 WORD POWER

The word power has not been used in a political sense. It is used as an adjective, for example in powerful communication, powerful is synonymous with the word ‘effective’. An expanding store of knowledge requires a store of words, expanded vocabulary is an expanded power. Enhanced word power means more effective conversation, more efficiency in the use of soft skills and more real power in the domain of communication skills.

If we turn to history to realize the significance of the word: words have been used to cause wars: as well as they have been used to bring peace. Words have the power to persuade the most unconvincing believer. Those who learn to respect their power and nurture and enjoy learning new words yield dividends beyond one’s imagination.
Present and future of the English language is desirable. English is continuing to throb in the social life of India as the most important foreign language. Word power of any language leads towards great success and achievements. Nathaniel Hawthorne quoted in Pikulski and Templeton(2004):

“Words- so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil, in the hands of one who knows how to combine them. (p.1)

2.4 IMPORTANCE OF ENRICHING VOCABULARY

“Vocabulary” is defined by various experts in various ways as illustrated below:

1) The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2000) defines vocabulary as, 'All the words that someone knows, learns or uses'. (p.1599)

2) The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary( 5th Edition) contains the following definitions of the Vocabulary,

   a) The total number of words in a language.

   b) All the words known to a person or used in a particular book, subject.

   c) A list of words with their meaning, especially one that accompanies a textbook in a foreign language.

2) Morris points out the significance of vocabulary by stating that(1969), ‘Viewed in the right perspective as a concomitant feature of the language abilities, vocabulary is unquestionably a major consideration’ (p. 29).

   It would be impossible to learn a language without learning the vocabulary of that language.

3) Thorat et al. (2000) believe that 'Words are the building blocks of language, whereas grammar functions as the cement that holds the blocks together' (p. 1). Vocabulary is considered important because even if one wants to frame a few sentences one needs an adequate stock of vocabulary. Our efficiency in using any language depends on the number of words we know in that language. The more words
we know, the more competent we are in a particular language, but if we know only few words, we are likely to manage with the words we know and that may lead to using inappropriate words or using more words to convey the same meaning.

4) Tickoo (2003) remarks, ‘True mastery of a language lies as much in knowing and appropriately using its vocabulary as in being able to use its system of sounds and its grammatical and discoursal patterns’ (p. 189).

Words are tools to communicate with others as well as explore and analyse the world around us.

5) Spender (1980) believes, ‘In order to live in this world, we must name it as globe, earth, planet. Names are essential for the construction of reality. Without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling. Naming is the means whereby we attempt to order and structure the chaos and the flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass. By assigning names we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world’ (p. 163).

Learning new words expands our understanding and improves our intellect. Every new word that is learnt entices our mind to stretch itself into new areas. We can improve our ability to think and express ourselves if we have a larger vocabulary. Our thinking becomes more fluid and supple and we understand the world better with a larger vocabulary. In the modern world the ability to use words effectively is often highly rewarded. A person with adequate knowledge of vocabulary can understand the exact meaning of what he hears and reads and so there is no misunderstanding on his part. Adequate knowledge of vocabulary allows him to speak and write easily and fluently. Bromley (2007) reported:

‘‘Vocabulary is a principal contributor to comprehension, fluency, and achievement’’ (p.299)

Vocabulary makes speech and writing more interesting, powerful, exact and effective. It enables a person to adopt the correct tone to suit appropriately his audience and purpose. It gives immense pleasure to the audience. It gives him a range of precise words to use in formal writing such as letters, reports, summaries and essays. It
enables him to impart shades of meaning and colour, which are particularly useful in the creative or narrative writings.

In the initial stages more attention is needed to the grammatical and phonological accuracy so vocabulary may be restricted to a few words. But in the higher classes it is important to expand the students' vocabulary. The students at Engineering colleges are in a better position to enrich their vocabulary because at this level the students know the sound system, the sentence patterns adequately and common words reasonably well. It is also the right time to create word-consciousness among the students. Engineering students feel a strong need to expand their vocabulary, need repetition as they are expected to express their ideas more effectively and accurately. Nation (2001) expresses:

“Repetition is essential for vocabulary learning because there is so much to know about each word that one meeting with it is not significant to gain this information, and because vocabulary items must not only be known, they must be known well so they can be fluently accessed” (p.74)

Limited knowledge of vocabulary can prove to be a major handicap in the progress of education. Learning vocabulary is largely a self learning task. It depends on the type of exposure one gets and the opportunities one finds to use the acquired vocabulary. Engineering students cannot afford to ignore the words, their different shades of meanings, their relations with each other and the way they act in different context. It is more challenging in case of English as it has become a global language and almost every day new words come into being while old words gather new or additional meanings. Hence, understanding the dynamic nature of vocabulary is indispensable. Gokhale (2013) rightly says,

“Let us be friends with words and enjoy their company. This will enrich vocabulary and lives as well”.(p.1)

2.5 GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY

In 597 A.D. the Romans Christianized Britain. This brought England into contact with Latin civilization and language. This has made significant additions to the
English vocabulary. Similarly, the Scandinavian invasion resulted in a considerable influence on the English language. English greatly changed in both form and vocabulary due to the Norman Conquest of 1066 by France. The French words made their way into English from the days of the Norman Conquest. French words were originally part of the class dialect of the new rulers. These vocabulary items lost their connotation of prestige, social superiority and courtliness and have become part of the central core of the English lexis. Words derived from French are used in the fields of art and architecture, fashion, hunting, religion, politics and war, but they are especially prominent in the area of food and cooking.

The English language often makes use of Anglo-Saxon words. For finished products and more complicated processes words are used from the French language. There is a similar division between the names for the raw materials and tradesmen in Anglo-Saxon and French. ‘Man’, ‘woman’, ‘husband’, ‘life’, ‘wife’, ‘knife’, ‘beard’, ‘hair’, ‘cloth’, ‘meat’, ‘stone’ and ‘wood’ are Anglo-Saxon words but barber, tailor, butcher, mason and carpenter are French loan words. While French contributed many terms from the fields of politics and arts, the classical loans from Greek and Latin languages have provided English with many technical terms in all the branches of knowledge. Some of the English words that are borrowed from Latin are 'abbot', 'altar', 'bishop' and 'church'. The Greek influence on English language is seen in words like 'acrobat', 'catastrophe', 'magic' and 'chronology'. Shakespeare, too, introduced many words. Shakespeare had the largest vocabulary among the English writers of his time. This is due not only to his daring and resourceful use of words but also in part to his ready acceptance of new words of every kind. Shakespeare was quite liberal in his attitude towards foreign borrowings.

English vocabulary contains borrowing from many other languages besides Latin, Greek and French. The words 'chipmunk', 'moose' and 'skunk' are borrowed from Native American. The words 'brandy', 'landscape' and 'wagon' are borrowed from the Dutch. The words ‘balcony’, ‘mozzarella’, ‘venation’, ‘balcony’, ‘canto’ and ‘opera’ are borrowed from Italian. The words 'alligator', matador, 'cargo' and 'mosquito' are borrowed from Spanish. The words 'caravan', ‘Saki’, 'shawl' and 'sherbet' are borrowed from the Persian language. English has borrowed many words from Hebrew, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Chinese and many other languages. Thus the English vocabulary is a good example of a lexically mixed language.
2.6 THE FACTORS THAT IMPACT VOCABULARY CHANGES

Vocabulary is an aspect of language which is different from phonology and syntax. It is more open-ended compared to phonology and syntax because other changes to this aspect like additions, deletions, subtraction are easily possible. In the process of language learning, phonological and syntactic aspects of language almost cease after a certain period but the process of vocabulary acquisition continues. Learning vocabulary is a lifelong process. That is why Kamil and Hiebert (2005) rightly assert:

“Vocabulary is not a developmental skill nor one that can ever be seen as fully mastered. The expansion and elaboration of vocabularies is something that extends across a lifetime”. (p.2)

Therefore, it is inevitable to deal with factors that influx vocabulary growth of an individual. Some of the factors that influence the vocabulary growth are listed and explained in brief.

1) Age

Age is the basic factor that influences vocabulary growth. The vocabulary of a child grows up with his age. The increase in the speed of acquisition is not the same throughout our life. At some point of time, the rate of acquisition of vocabulary reduces and settles for a steady speed. First Year Diploma Engineering is the most suitable period of growth and expansion of vocabulary because at this age students come in contact with Arts, music, literature, films, TV Programmes, Radio programmes, Internet and Mobile phones.

2) Education

The total vocabulary of an educated speaker of a language is generally more than that of an uneducated person. The significance and the type of education that one receives is reflected in personal communication. Education opens new drive for the learners to seek more information and thus causes an increase in a person's vocabulary. Education variables have an enormous effect on the English language vocabulary for example Legal English, Technical English, Science, Medical, Home Science, Fashion Designing and others.
3) Experience and Exposure

The speaker's experience and exposure figure out the quality and quantity of his vocabulary. If a person has a wide experience and is exposed to many situations or circumstances he has a wider and deeper knowledge of vocabulary than the other person who has only a limited experience and limited exposure. For example, the colonization in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, America, and some sections of Caribbean population have made these regions L1 region of the English language. This has resulted into growth of vocabulary of the English language.

4) Socio-economic Grouping

There are vocabulary differences among the speakers of a language depending upon their socio-economic backgrounds. Speakers belonging to different socio-economic classes get different linguistic and conceptual situations. A speaker belonging to a socially higher and economically more wealthy section may have a wide variety of words that go beyond the immediate necessity, as there is a greater variety of notions used by these people. But a culturally deprived speaker may not have adequate vocabulary for effective communication however such a person too through the use of Creole and slang contributes to the growth and expansion of the English language.

5) Dialect

The dialect (especially the non-standard dialect) of a speaker is an important factor. A non-standard dialect contains features and vocabulary different from the standard dialect. The non-standard dialect speakers differ from each other in the quantum of vocabulary. For example, if we observe that after every 20 km Marathi language changes in Maharashtra, we find that the vocabulary differs from each other in quantity as well as quality. The speaker of a standard dialect has a richer vocabulary because it is used in wider contexts than a non-standard dialect. It is experienced in case of the standard dialect of Puneri Marathi. Ahirani, Konkani, Koli, Aagri, Vidharbhi, Kollhapuri and a Nagri. All these are non-standard dialects of Marathi.

6) I.Q.

Generally vocabulary is one of the components of I.Q. tests. It is assumed that a person having more extent and depth of vocabulary has a wider competence to
communicate and comprehend. Therefore, he is considered more thoughtful and intelligent. The correspondence between IQ and enriched vocabulary is positive and so, higher the IQ, richer the vocabulary.

2.7 HOW WORDS CHANGE MEANING

Influence of the meaning of neighboring words or new associations changes the meaning of words. The change in meaning is caused due to the following five factors (a) Generalisation (b) Specialization (c) Radiation (d) Elevation (e) Degeneration

a) Generalisation

Many times the meaning of a word is extended in order to cover more ideas than it originally expressed. For example, the word ‘board’ was originally applied to an object that was meant for writing and was made from a wooden black plank but when other kinds of objects were invented for the purpose of writing, the word board was applied to them also. For example white board, wooden board, glass board and cement board. Thus the meaning of the word was generalised or extended and it becomes all-inclusive.

b) Specialisation

It is completely opposite of generalisation. By this process, a word is narrowed in its application. It covers fewer ideas than it originally expressed. For example, the word ‘cat’ originally meant any kind of cat but today the word 'cat' means one of various species of cats such as jungle cats, tigers, leopards, cats, Pameriyan cats, Pekinese cats, horse cats, Cheshire cats and others.

c) Radiation

Sometimes different meanings of a word radiate from the original meaning of the word. For example, the word ‘heart’ or 'head' has different meanings. Most of them are derived directly from one or the other aspect of the original meaning. The word heart means a muscular organ that pumps blood through the body and the word head means the upper part of the body. From this meaning the following meanings of the word ‘heart’ and 'head' are derived.
a) The feelings, emotional part /the mind or understanding/the heart of the poet/ the head of the mathematician

b) Centre of the location/the upper end of a bed, hill etc./the heart of the town/ the head of the bed /the headstock of a guitar.

c) The central position/ the chief position/ the heart of the matter/ the head of the family, person, state, kingdom

d) The centre/the 'chief or 'leader'/the heart is the centre/the head of a group

e) The heart core/title or heading of a page, chapter etc/the heart of the story, novel/ the head of a page.

Thus the single words 'heart' and 'head’ have various meanings.

d) Elevation

Elevation is the change in meaning of the word by which the word is raised in rank or dignity. Originally, the words 'Quaker and Methodist' were nicknames of 'contempt and abuse' but today these words are used respectfully with no trace of the tone of scorn. Such words are sometimes called 'up-hill words'.

e) Degeneration

Degeneration is the opposite of elevation. It is the change by which a word is lowered in rank or dignity. For example, the word “scotus” originally meant “scholarly person”, then it came to mean 'scholar', 'intelligent', and now it means ‘stupid’. And the word “don” originally meant scholar then it came to mean dynce (idiot) now it is means boss of the criminals. Such words are sometimes called 'down hill words'.

2.8 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MEANING OF AN UTTERANCE

Different factors contribute to the meaning of an utterance. They are as follows.

a) Word meaning

b) Grammatical meaning

c) Intonational meaning
d) Pragmatic implication

a) Word Meaning

Every utterance consists of one or more words. Each word has one or more meanings. The meaning of an utterance can be understood only if one knows or guesses correctly from the context the meaning of each word. For example,

The old man took or carried young tiny chick in his big shopping bag.

In order to understand the meaning of the above utterance, it is important to know the entities to which the words 'man', 'chick' and 'bag' refer. Similarly, one should know the action for which the word 'took', or ‘carried’ is used. One should also be familiar with the qualities for which the symbols 'old, ‘young’, ‘tiny’' and 'big' stand. If one does not know the meaning of these words one can use a dictionary to find them out.

b) Grammatical Meaning

Sub-systems of syntax like number, tense and word order convey this kind of meaning. In the sentence given above, firstly, from the pronunciation or spelling of words like 'man', 'chick' and 'bag' we know that only one of each was concerned, otherwise the words 'men', 'chicks' and 'baskets' would have been used. Secondly, the suffix 'ing' tells us that the action is taking place in the present continuous slot on the timescale running, playing, batting, hitting, fielding, bowling as in-

The fielder is running after the ball.

The Indian team is playing.

The captain cool is batting.

He is hitting sixes and fours.

He is bowling fast.

He is fielding excellently and chasing balls to prevent runs.

Thirdly, the word order too, conveys some meaning. If the word order is changed there is a change in meaning. For example,

(i) The cow kicked the dog.
(ii) The dog kicked the cow.

In both the sentences the same words are used but they convey different meanings because they are arranged differently. Similarly, a statement can be converted into a question through the change of word order inversion and vice versa. For example, 'She is beautiful’ or ‘He is smart’ is a statement but if the word order is changed it becomes a question, ‘Is she beautiful ?or Is he smart?

c) **Intonational Meaning**

Change of intonation is responsible for change in meaning. If the falling tone is used, it is a normal statement, but if we use the rising tone, it changes into a question. For example,

(i) The cat killed the rat.

(Normal statement above has indicated the falling intonation.)

(ii) The cat killed the rat ?

(Rising intonation above has indicated an interrogative utterance to depict whether it is a fact that the cat has killed the rat).

In sentence (i) the falling tone is used and it is a normal statement but in sentence (ii) when the rising tone is used the same statement changes into a question.

d) **Pragmatic Implication**

One must consider the utterance and the situational context in which it is used in order to understand the pragmatic implication. For example,

The old man carried or took young tiny chick in his big shopping bag.

If the above utterance is used in the context of the old man’s being hungry, it means that the old man carried the chick probably because he wanted to cook and eat it. But if the utterance is produced in the context that the small chick is injured, it means that the old man intended to look after it and provide medical aid to the young tiny chick from veterinary surgery.
2.9 TYPES OF VOCABULARY

Vocabulary can be classified in diverse ways. One way of classifying vocabulary is as follows.

a) **Active and Passive Vocabulary:**

Active vocabulary means all the words used in speech or writing by a person. The active vocabulary is learned intensively with respect to form, meaning and usage in such a way that the learner is able to use it in listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is also called as 'production' vocabulary.

Active vocabulary of one person may differ from that of another. A person's active vocabulary for example, the active vocabulary of an engineer is different from the active vocabulary of a doctor. Similarly, the active vocabulary of one person may be the passive vocabulary of another person. Vocabulary may also pass from a person's passive vocabulary into his active vocabulary if proper exposure is provided.

Passive vocabulary means all the words recognized and understood but not necessarily used by a person. This is also called recognition vocabulary. We seldom use these words in our own speech or writing, but in a passive sense we are able to recognize them when we hear or see them. The amount of passive vocabulary of a person is very high, as compared to the active vocabulary. This is because passive vocabulary also includes the active vocabulary and it exists in the unconscious mind of the speaker.

b) **Denotations and Connotations**

If word has reference to an object, action, or event in the physical world this can be described as referential or denotative meaning. It also refers to the ‘dictionary definition’. It is an important factor in linguistic communication. It is essential for functioning of language. For example, a part of the conceptual meaning of “needle” may be “thin”, “sharp”, “instrument”. The organization of conceptual meaning is based on two structural principles of contractiveness and the principle of structure. For example the word “woman” can be shown as “+Adult, -Male, +Adult”. On the contrary the word “boy” can be realized as +Human, -Male, -Adult.
Connotative meaning relates to the attitudes and emotions of a language user on choosing a word and the influence of these on the listener or reader’s interpretation of the word. For example, the description “+Human, -male, +Adult” of the word ‘woman’ represents the conceptual meaning of the word, but the word “woman” has additional features too. It has physical and social properties like “having womb” and “being generous”. It is also associated with the qualities like “frail”, “emotional”, “cowardly”. Connotations differ from age to age, society to society and from individual to individual.

Denotative vocabulary is fixed and closed. However, connotative vocabulary is determinate and open ended.

c) Function Words and Content words

The word-forms of English are like word-forms of any other language. They can be put into two classes. This division of words is based on the ‘Structural words’ and ‘Form words’.

Functional words mean words which are used to express a real relationship of grammatical structures. They are also called ‘structural words’. These words have no meaning in isolation but these words play a very important role in sentence construction. These words contain articles (a, an, the), prepositions (to, on, at), conjunctions (but, and, because), pronouns (I, you, him) and demonstratives (this, these, those). They are also known as ‘empty words’.

Content words mean words that stand for things, action and qualities. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are content words. They are infinite in number, have stable and practical meaning. For example, green, white, handsome, friend, pen, notebook and so on.

d) Receptive and Productive vocabulary

Receptive vocabulary means ability to understand a word when it is heard or read however productive vocabulary means the knowledge to produce a word when one
writes or speaks. If we observe children we notice that they understand words and phrases way before they can utter them. For example, fifteen months old child may respond to language like “Let’s put on a new dress to go to the garden” well before the child is able to say things like this to himself. So child’s or any adult’s receptive vocabulary remains considerably larger than his productive vocabulary.

Acquiring productive control over vocabulary is normally a gradual process. When the learner is exposed to variety of context and situations he automatically adds bits and pieces to his stock of knowledge about a new word.

e) Technical Vocabulary and its Technicalities

Course option at the higher levels insist upon some higher order skills like understanding some specialized text that differs in terms of their register, discourse, genre etc, responding critically to the arguments, analyzing data etc, hence the students opt for specific programmes such as medicine, engineering. Understanding for instance, a subject specific text-anatomy, electrical, mechanical, civil, computer engineering, applied linguistics - involves apart from other discourse features and grammatical system that are apparent, the understanding of its technical and non-technical vocabulary since any text is made out of a set of words that are common across different fields of specialization-'common core’ and words that tend to be specific or technical to a particular topic or discipline. According to Nation (1990), these technical words cover 5% of text.

Until recently, all those claims made in favour of teaching high frequency and academic vocabulary dominated the field of vocabulary teaching; and technical vocabulary was assumed to be words that are exclusive to the field and occupy a little space in texts. However, of late, this assumption was questioned for its scope being narrow, and the boundaries were redrawn.

Nation in his Learning Vocabulary In Another Language (2001) and two more recent papers (Chung and Nation, 2003, 2004) broadened the scope of technicalities and classified technical vocabulary into four categories.

Category 1. The word forms appear rarely if at all outside this particular field.
Law: per curiam, corum, jurisdiction

Applied Linguistics: morphemes, lexis, syntagmata

Electronics: anode, impedance, galvanometer, dielectric

Category 2. The word form is used both inside and outside this particular field but not with the same meaning

Law: cite (to appear), caution (vb)

Applied Linguistics: sense, reference, type, token

Electronics: induced, flux, terminal, earth

Computing: execute, scroll, paste

Category 3. The word form is used both inside and outside this particular field, but the majority of its uses with a particular meaning not at all, are in this field. The specialized meaning it has in this field is readily accessible through its meaning outside the field.

Law: accused (n), offer, reconstruction(of a crime)

Category 4. The word form is more common in this field then elsewhere. There is little or no specialization of meaning, someone knowledgeable in the field would have a more precise idea of its meaning.

Law: judge, mortgage, trespass

Applied Linguistics: word, meaning

Electronics: drain, filament, load, plate

Computing: print, program, icon

2.10 SELECTION OF VOCABULARY

English language has a vast vocabulary. However, while speaking and writing we make use of about 2880 words and for reading, a vocabulary of about 10,000 words is
needed. It is difficult to learn more than million words and their meanings in the English language. Therefore it is inevitable to select the most essential words from the deep ocean of words. Following criteria is suggested to select workable vocabulary:

**a) Word Frequency**

The frequency of occurrence of the words must be taken into consideration before selecting a word that would be included in one’s vocabulary. Words that occur in greater frequency get qualified for selection. Word frequency is derived by counting systematically the number of times the word comes in a representative body of literature that includes novels, plays, poems, essays, editorial, articles etc.

Certain word frequency lists have been prepared on the basis of word counts- certain words most often used and certain words rarely used. Faucett and Makki (1932) have classified words as follows:

(a) Indispensable Words  
(b) Essential Words  
(c) Useful Words  
(d) Special Words

**b) Structural Value**

The words we speak with are generally with very high validity, as they help to build up sentences irrespective of the subject, for example was, shall, with, be, and, are, which, any, all, half, together, etc. There are certain semi-structural words also, for example, break, part, fill, sleep.

**c) Universality of the Word**

Some words are commonly shared in different dialects in different regions. These words should be given priority while selecting vocabulary as they denote concepts of universal significance. For example, the word ‘peace’ has a universal significance, as it is understood all over the world, whereas the word ‘aarti’, ‘akshata’, ‘roti’, are familiar only to Indians and the people from middle East. They are culture-specific items. Therefore, they do not have universal significance.
d) Range of Applicability

The word which can occur in a number of situations should be selected first for teaching purposes. For example the word ‘teacher’ has a wider range of applicability than a word like tutor, lecturer, professor, dean etc. So the word ‘teacher’ should be taught before hand to the pupil.

e) Material Association:

Words always become concrete by their associations. Sometimes association leads to the grasp of a number of other words which enter the teaching process unknowingly. So those words should be taught first which can easily be associated with things the students see around them.

2.11 GRADATION OF VOCABULARY

Grading of language items is an important general principle of language teaching and learning. The proper way of gradation of vocabulary is to move from simple to complex words and from known to unknown words. The process of vocabulary learning is smooth if is taught through on the basis of (a) its usefulness, (b) its structural value (c) its teachability and (d) its simplicity.

a) Structural value

Gradation is essential even in case of structural words. For example, the pronouns should be taught earlier than prepositions: and among the pronouns, I, my, me should come earlier than he, his, and her and among the prepositions in, on, at etc. are easier to teach than 'over', 'under', 'above'.

b) Teachability

Words that are easier to teach must be taught first. Concrete words are easier to teach than abstract words. For example, words like 'black-board, 'note-book and 'chalk-stick' are easier to teach as they represent actual objects in the classroom that can be shown easily in the classroom but, it is difficult to show god, or give surprise.
c) Usefulness

Not all words carry equal utility. The teacher should first teach the words that are more useful for the learners. For example, the verb 'move' should be taught before the words 'transport', 'travel', 'transfer', 'journey' etc. In the same way, the verb 'talk' should be taught before the words 'communicate', 'lecture', 'address', 'relate' and others.

Words like 'honesty', 'beauty' and 'surprise' are difficult to teach and can be taught later.

e) Simplicity

The simpler words with simple spelling and simple pronunciation should be taught first. For example, the word 'big' should be taught before the words 'huge', 'vast' 'gigantic'. Similarly, the word 'small' should be taught before the word 'trivial'.

2.12 PRINCIPAL METHODS OF TEACHING VOCABULARY

English plays a very important role for the Engineering students and the teachers make use of various methods while teaching vocabulary. The various methods which have been used for the teaching of English vocabulary for many years are mentioned below.

2.12.1 Past Trends

Of the many individual methods of teaching vocabulary in India advocated in the past following two types receive special consideration.

a) The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

The roots of Grammar Translation method are found in teaching of Greek and Latin in ancient times in Europe. This method adopts the teaching of grammar of L2 using LI. The teaching materials used in GTM consist of chapters depicting various grammatical topics and translation texts. The vocabulary of LI is used in grammar lessons to explain a particular grammar rule. At the same time, vocabulary items listed in the teaching materials are presented to the learners in the class as exception
to the rules described. The learners are provided with the list of irregular verbs, nouns etc. In GTM, vocabulary gradation and presentation for teaching materials and the practical teaching and learning in the classroom context are mainly based on the affiliation of the vocabulary item to the particular grammatical category. Vocabulary is taught out of context and in isolation. A list of vocabulary items is given which is to be memorized in the context of the lesson.

Limitations of the grammar-translation method:

(a) This method ignores the natural way of learning a language that is listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

(b) Vocabulary is learnt through the medium of mother-tongue. The children lose free expression in English.

(c) The switch from one language to another may result in mental stress, so mixing of the two languages in this way is most unfavorable.

(d) It encourages word-for-word translation. The students learn translation and this seriously hinders the inculcation of correct speech and reading habits in the target language.

(e) It makes the whole of teaching work dull and dry. It gives no place to any activity on the part of the teacher or the pupils. The Pupils develop a distance for the language.

b) The Direct Method

The direct method came to be used as a reaction against the grammar-translation method. It was popularly used by language teachers in the 19 century. It is based on the principle that L2 can be learned easily if it is learned like LI or mother tongue i.e. through constant repetition and by linking words directly with objects or actions without translation. Nagraj (1996) comments,

‘A teacher described each event in the foreign language and as reading and writing tasks on these lessons. The teachers used full sentences in the foreign language as input rather than words and phrases; no translation was used. The aim of the direct method was to get the learner to think in the target language’ (pp. 71-72)
The Direct method tries to establish an association between expression and experience. In this method, mother tongue is not used to stem ‘inter-lingual interference’. The main characteristics of this method are: it uses everyday vocabulary and structure. This method encourages normal conversation by using many new items. Oral teaching of vocabulary is carried out. Teaching of pronunciation is also focused upon. Most of the work is done in the class, which requires more class hours.

Limitations of the Direct Method:

(a) Every teacher cannot be expected to teach using the Direct Method. Some teachers always commit the mistake of using more difficult, less frequent words for explaining the meaning of simpler words.

(b) All vocabulary cannot be taught through direct association.

(c) This method becomes more complicated than the translation method, as the students usually indulge in mental translation than putting efforts in identifying the concepts.

2.12.2 New Trends

The new trends in language teaching are based on a scientific view to the teaching and learning of a vocabulary.

a) The Cognate Method

This method is used to teach languages in cases where both the source and target languages are genetically related. This method tries to exploit the cognateness in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of both the source language and the target language. Rules are graded from the known to the unknown. So generally, the vocabulary items with the identical shape and meaning in both the source and target languages are given priority. All the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, writing are developed together.

b) The Audio-Lingual Method

This method was developed in America in 1960s and 1970s. The method deals with each language skill separately. This method assumes that in language speech has primary and writing has secondary importance. Language is a set of patterns. These
patterns can be acquired easily by constant repetition and reinforcement. Like the direct method, the criterion for vocabulary selection in this method is the frequency count. Thus the basic vocabulary and some other non-basic vocabulary items that are essential for efficient teaching and effective communication are included. The teaching is done with the help of dialogues and use of mother tongue is avoided. While teaching the language laboratory is used as an important teaching aid.

c) The Bilingual Method

The Bilingual Method was proposed by C.D. Dodson. This method is based on the similarities and differences between the students' first language and the second language he desires to learn. It aims at making the learner fluent and accurate in spoken as well as written forms of a word by making use of L1. According to Dodson (1967),

“The teaching materials need not be specially designed for this method. The materials that easily facilitate the adoption of this method can be selected from the materials that would be available for teaching a language as a second language.” (p. 76)

Few students and a few vocabulary items are taught at a time because learning a large number of words hampers the learning of the language and slows down the fluency. The words that have a one-to-one correspondence in both the languages are given preference. The new vocabulary along with the old vocabulary is presented in a wide range of contexts so as to provide exposure to usage. By presenting vocabulary in this way the teacher can prepare the learners to use the new vocabulary in innumerable sentences and in various situations.

d) The Eclectic Method

Yardi (1977) describes this method as a ‘compromise method’. It is not one homogenous method since it combines in itself all that is good in other methods. Thus it makes use of the learner’s mother tongue when necessary.

In conclusion, a language teacher needs to make an effective use of various methods and approaches in the teaching-learning process. A teacher should make use of
positive aspects of each method and approaches to make his or her teaching more interesting and innovative.

2.13 PROBLEMS OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS WITH RESPECT TO VOCABULARY

The students at Engineering college generally have a limited stock of vocabulary. They use general words, which makes their discourse sound weak. They are not able to convey different moods or connotations. They fail to communicate the intended message precisely. Limited knowledge of vocabulary is a major handicap in the process of communication. They need to expand, enrich, and enhance their vocabulary to express themselves more clearly and appropriately in different situations. They should know how to recognise the words and their meanings. The productive use of a wide range of vocabulary is normally limited but that needs to be expanded and should be positively applied.

They have a superficial knowledge of vocabulary. They need a more comprehensive deeper conceptual understanding of words. They cannot learn vocabulary just by reading or through definitions. Word knowledge is complex and consists of more than knowing definitions. Knowing a word involves knowing synonymy, antonymy, homonyms, polysemy, word boundaries, denotation and connotation, style, register, idioms, collocations, grammar and pronunciation of the word. Most of the students fail to realise that the meaning of words changes according to the context in which they are used, as they are not familiar with variety of words associated with that single word. Engineering students lack the knowledge of word formation. Due to this reason they are unable to expand their existing stock of vocabulary. A majority of the engineering students have a problem with collocations because there are no rules regarding collocations that can be learned.

Vocabulary teaching should always be in purposeful contexts and the learners should be involved in the learning process more actively. They should be involved in activities which require them to retrieve words appropriate to the situation and the words should be repeated several times so that they are permanent part of their active vocabulary.
2.14 WAYS OF KNOWING AN ITEM OF VOCABULARY

Learner should have the knowledge of -

1. Pronunciation of the word
2. Spelling of the word
3. Precise meaning of the word
4. The appropriate context
5. Collocation of the words
6. Relation between the target word and the other words within a lexical set
7. The connotation of the word
8. The synonyms of the word
9. The antonyms of the word
10. The homonyms of the word
11. The idioms and phrases associated with the meaning of the target word

The meaning of a lexical item is related to the other words. Any word is a part of a context. In order to understand the word precisely it is important to understand the complex inter-relationship that exists between the words of the same lexical set and item of vocabulary in the same context.

2.15 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter reveals that knowledge of words is crucial to language learning. It shows that teaching vocabulary structure, types, selection, gradation, methods, strategies of word formation and fostering importance of word power for effective communication plays a significant role in learning language. Vocabulary learning is an enjoyable activity, when learnt with interest, effective methods and reinforcement. The next chapter is devoted to techniques adopted for developing word power of Engineering college students.