



AENSI Journals

**Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences**

ISSN:1991-8178

Journal home page: www.ajbasweb.com



## Generating the Specialized Engineering Word List for Students at Tertiary Level Education

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 30 September 2014

Received in revised form 17

November 2014

Accepted 25 November 2014

Available online 13 December 2014

#### Keywords:

Word list, specialised engineering words, dictionary, corpus

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Research findings provide evidence that the use of word list may assist students in learning selected words which they may need to know for the purpose of reading and understanding a technical text. **Objective:** The objectives of the paper are to determine the specialised engineering word contained in the engineering textbooks as well as to identify the percentage of words contain in Specialised Engineering Word List (SEWL) as it is compared to AWL. **Results:** This study has found that there are 66 words in SEWL and less than 20% of the words listed in SEWL are available in AWL. **Conclusion:** The findings enhance our understanding that developing a specialised word list requires a systematic process. And the use of corpora instead of dictionary is more appropriate for researchers attempting to generate a word list.

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**To Cite This Article:** Zuraina Ali, Hafizoah Kassim, Nurul Nadia Mohammad, Rosnani Ismail, Siti Norzaimalina Abd Majid, Mohd Amir Izuddin Mohamad Ghazali., Generating the Specialized Engineering Word List for Students at Tertiary Level Education. *Aust. J. Basic & Appl. Sci.*, 8(24): 353-358, 2014

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant current discussions in learning vocabulary concerns with the use of the word list for specialised fields in assisting students' curriculum development (Jin, Ling, Tong, Sahiddan, Philip, Azmi and Tarmizi, 2012). The specialised vocabulary is recognisably specific to a particular topic, field, or discipline (Nation, 2001). Looking back at the history of its compilation, its process of compilation has been made as early as the first half of the 20th century. Nation and Waring (1997) argues that mainly the word list compiled basic and high-frequency vocabulary for learners of English. Several word lists that have been made earlier are The Teachers Word Book of 3,000 Words (Thorndike and Lorge, 1944), The American Heritage Word Frequency Book (Carroll, Davies and Richman, 1971) and The General Service List (West, 1953). In spite of the criticisms the latter received on its size (Engels, 1968) and age (Richards, 1974), General Service List (GSL) has been reviewed and referred to by many researchers (e.g. Coxhead, 2000; Li and Qian, 2010; Wand *et al.*, 2008). Also, the evidence for this came from the very high coverage that the GSL provides a wide range of texts (Hwang and Nation, 1989; Hirsh and Nation, 1992).

In a further research, Nation and Waring (1997) claimed that vocabulary frequency lists had an important role to play in curriculum design and in setting learning goals. In terms of conducting instructional activity in the classroom, teachers needed to have a reference list to judge whether a particular word deserved attention or not. Not just that, word list also provided a platform for teachers to determine whether or not certain text is suitable to be used for a lesson.