

Construct Your Skills

Context:

Many students and apprentices enter FE with significant vocabulary gaps that affect their ability to access learning and succeed academically. The project highlights that developing a strong subject-specific vocabulary is *essential* for students' academic success and ability to engage with the curriculum.

The Education Endowment Foundation also notes that helping students secure knowledge of technical vocabulary is a major challenge for educators. This is especially relevant in construction, where understanding terminology directly affects:

- Safe working practices
- Ability to follow technical instructions
- Accuracy in practical tasks
- Interpretation of drawings, measurements, and regulations
- Success in written and verbal assessments

The Technique/Method:

The Construction Vocabulary Routine

READ IT, SAY IT, SPELL IT

<p>1 SELECT THE KEY TERMS</p> <p>Choose 5-7 essential construction terms for the lesson (e.g., damp proof course; spirit level, shear force, first fix, thread seal tape).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · damp proof course · spirit level · shear force · first fix · thread seal tape <p>SOFFIT The underside of a structure</p>	<p>2 SAY THE WORD</p> <p>Soffit</p>	<p>4 EXPLAIN THE CONTEXT</p> <p>Describe how the term appears on site. Example: "A soffit is the underside of a structure such as an arch, stair, overhang"</p>
<p>3 SHOW THE WORD</p> <p>SOFFIT - The underside of a structure</p>	<p>5 LEARNER APPLICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Write the term in a sentence · Label it on a diagram · Use it during a tool demonstration · Teach the definition to a partner 	<p>6 REVISIT AND REINFORCE</p> <p>The project showed that repeating interventions strengthens effectiveness.</p> <p>Revisit the terms during the practical and again at the end.</p>

See the Technique/Method in Action:



[CTEC Read It Say It Spell It](#)

Top Tips:

When This Is Particularly Useful	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When teaching unfamiliar tools or machinery • Prior to assessments requiring technical language • When introducing safety-critical vocabulary • At the start of a new module or unit • During on-site simulation tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved confidence and engagement — learners want to improve vocabulary. • Fewer mistakes in practical tasks due to clearer understanding • Higher-quality portfolio writing • Stronger oracy (verbal communication), which your project identifies as a key area to support • Better retention through repeated exposure
Intended Outcomes	Things to Watch Out For
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure understanding of trade-specific language • Improved ability to read drawings, follow instructions, and meet industry standards • Better performance in theory tests, observation assessments, and EPA interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't overwhelm students with too many new words • Avoid overcomplicated definitions — keep them "industry simple" • Some students may be reluctant to speak aloud; use paired practice first • Ensure the examples given match real site use
Resources Needed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whiteboard/mini whiteboards • Photos or physical tools/materials • Vocabulary cards or wall displays • Slide deck with the day's key terms 	

Dig Deeper:

- 1. Challenges & Strategies in Teaching Vocational English Vocabulary (2022) Link: <http://www.ijosser.org/download/IJOSSE-6-10-22-27.pdf>
- 2. The Importance of Vocabulary in Teaching & Learning (Applied Linguistics Review, 2022) Link: <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/509865-the-importance-of-vocabulary-in-teaching-b6dcc856.pdf>
- 3. Systematic Review on Vocabulary Instruction for English Learners (2025, Education Sciences) Link: <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/15/3/262>

Monitoring Progress and Impact:

1. Peer Observations	2. Student Feedback	3. Learner Confidence Checks	4. Evidence from Practical Work	5. Portfolio and Written Work	6. Assessment Data	7. Teacher Reflective Logs
Ask a colleague to observe how vocabulary is introduced and reinforced.	Quick surveys or informal conversations about which words they understand or still find difficult.	Use "thumbs up/side/down" or confidence scales before and after vocabulary tasks.	Notice whether students use terminology accurately while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving peer instructions - Identifying tools - Completing Workshop tasks 	Monitor for correct use of terminology in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Method statements - Risk assessments - Reflective logs - Annotated photographs 	Track improvements in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theory test scores - EPA readiness - Observation grades 	Record what worked well, which terms were challenging, and next steps — useful for planning and standardisation.