# Teaching Technical Writing to Non-Native Speakers of English at Higher Education

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**Abstract**: In this paper, the author explores different types of teaching technical words to students who learn English as a second language. ESL learners may face many difficulties in acquiring a foreign language, these difficulties range from understanding a single word to being able to use technical words in NECESSARY contexts. This article mainly focuses on this particular aspect of the whole language learning process.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, learning methods, linguistics, ESL learners.

## Introduction

In the contemporary world, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential factor for achieving success at universities and institutions (higher education). Therefore, many ESL learners are seeking to increase their technical writing skills to better communicate their thoughts or any information to a broader audience. Nonetheless, teaching technical words and phrases to non-native English speakers has big challenges. This process necessitates specialized approaches and methods.

Technical words are specialized terms used within **a specific field** or **industry**, while common (or ordinary) words tend to be much more general and more commonly used in everyday discussion. Technical words often have a precise meaning that is understood by people who are familiar with the field or industry in which they are used, but may be unfamiliar or unclear to those who are not. Each field has its own words. For example, the word "algorithm" is a technical term used in **computer science** to refer to a set of instructions for solving a specific problem, while the word "plan" is a more general term used in everyday speeches to refer to a course of action. Similarly, the word "nephrology" is a technical term used in medicine to refer to the study and treatment of kidney disorders, while the word "health" is a more general term used to refer to overall well-being.

In general, technical words are more precise and specific, while ordinary words are more general and accessible to a wider audience. Effective communication often requires striking a balance between the use of technical and ordinary words, depending on the intended audience and purpose of the communication.

A technical writing is can be called as a special course of the language course itself.[1] This "course" teaches students how to write effectively for a technical audience. Technical writing may include articles, manuals, software documentation, or other materials such as books, novels that are used to help people use or understand technology. As mentioned above, the advantages of sufficient explanation of technical words is of crucial importance.

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[1] Connors, R.J., 1982. The rise of technical writing instruction in America. Journal of technical writing and communication, 12(4), pp.329-352.

Firstly, it is essential to recognize the cultural and linguistic differences that non-native speakers of English bring to the classroom. Many non-native speakers may have different expectations about writing conventions and styles than native speakers, and it is essential to address these differences and provide clear guidance on expectations[2].

Secondly, non-native speakers may struggle with technical vocabulary and complex sentence structures, which can make their writing difficult to understand. To address this issue, instructors should provide clear explanations of technical terms and encourage students to use simple, concise language to convey their ideas.

Thirdly, non-native speakers may need additional support with grammar and syntax. It is essential to provide feedback and correction in a constructive and supportive manner to encourage improvement and ensure that students are not discouraged or demotivated.

To address these challenges, instructors can adopt various strategies, including:

1. Teachers should start with the basics: Technical words often have a specific meaning in a particular field of study. Teachers should be advised to start by introducing the basic concepts that these technical words are related to. This will help students understand the context in which the words are used. This method is very easy to apply, even the least experienced teachers can benefit a lot from bearing in mind this method.[3]

2. Teachers should use visual aids: visual aids such as diagrams, flowcharts, and graphs can be helpful in explaining technical words. Also, using certain videos can be a great tool in communicating deep meaning of those words. This visual information can aid students in visualizing the concepts and understanding how they relate to each other. Also, students do not need to struggle much since the "only job" they do would be looking at screens and trying to understand the concept.

3. Teachers should encourage active learning: active learning is a teaching method that involves engaging students in the learning process. They should also encourage students to participate in discussions, ask questions, and collaborate on assignments to help them understand technical words. This way of teaching technical words is also easy. However, in order to encourage students to acquire such difficult words, a teacher is required to possess certain skills.

4. Using real-life examples: Using real-life examples can help students relate technical words to their everyday lives. For example, when teaching technical words related to computer programming, teachers can use examples of popular software programs or mobile apps.[4]

5. Providing hands-on activities: Hands-on activities such as experiments, simulations, and case studies can help students apply their knowledge of technical words in real-world scenarios. This can help them understand the practical applications of technical words. This method may require a bit more time, but the "fruit" that brought by using this method of teaching is one of the most effective ones.[5]

6. Teachers ought to reinforce learning: regularly reinforce learning by reviewing concepts, asking questions, and giving students opportunities to practice using technical words. This

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[2] Horwitz, E.K., 1999. Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: A review of BALLI studies. System, 27(4), pp.557-576.

[3] Alqahtani, M., 2015. The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. International journal of teaching and education, 3(3), pp.21-34.

[4] Sari, A. and Sugandi, B., 2015. Teaching English through English movie: Advantages and disadvantages. The Journal of English Literacy Education: The Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language, 2(2), pp.10-15.

[5] Goldenberg, C., 2008. Teaching English language learners: What the research does-and does not-say.

will help students retain the knowledge they have learned. This method is simple and effective in many ways since reviewing is often seen as "the mother of knowledge".

Also, according to the well-known scholar KT Rainey puts forward four techniques that can be beneficial in teaching technical words to non-native English speakes:

(1) one-on-one conferences directed at making language apprehension easier;

(2) carefully clear and detailed instructions;

(3) teacher leadership through successive drafts of students' technical reports;

(4) peer evaluation.[6]

These methods can also work, especially in a higher education. For example, at schools, many learners may not have the same level of English, thus struggle to give a proper evaluation to each other.[7]

Overall, teaching technical words requires a combination of theoretical and practical approaches. By using a variety of teaching methods, you can help students understand technical words more effectively. As discussed above, this process is not an easy task and possesses certain obstacles like any stage of language acquisition. However, applying the above-mentioned ways of teaching technical words can be a very beneficial approach for students in a higher education.

## REFERENCES

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[6] Rainey, K.T., 1990. Teaching Technical Writing to Non-Native Speakers (Approaches to Teaching). Technical Writing Teacher, 17(2), pp.131-35.
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