The OSCAR PUBLISHING Services
American Journal of Philological Sciences

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue12 2025
PAGE NO. 247-249
DOI 10.37547/ajps/Volume05Issue12-68

Teaching Methodology of A Foreign Language For Technical Universities

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Received: 28 October 2025; **Accepted:** 19 December 2025; **Published:** 29 December 2025

Abstract: This article examines modern approaches and methodologies for teaching a foreign language in technical universities. It analyzes the linguistic and pedagogical requirements specific to engineering and technical disciplines, discusses the integration of professional vocabulary and communicative tasks, and explores the importance of project-based learning, contextualization, scaffolding, and competency-based instruction. The study also highlights the role of digital technologies, authentic materials, and motivation strategies in fostering professional linguistic competence among technical students.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching, technical university, professional communication, ESP, technical vocabulary, methodology.

Introduction: Teaching a foreign language in technical universities presents a complex and multifaceted pedagogical challenge. Unlike classical philology or general humanities education, technical students require language competency primarily for professional, scientific, and workplace-related communication rather than for literature, culture, or everyday conversation. Thus, their learning context demands a different approach: one rooted in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), task-based learning, professional discourse analysis, and integrative pedagogy.

Technical specialists — engineers, IT developers, architects, chemists, mechanics — often work in global environments where English operates as a lingua franca. Proficiency in the language affects their ability to read technical documentation, understand safety regulations, compose email communication, present research results, and collaborate across borders.

The methodology of foreign language teaching in technical universities must therefore meet the following objectives:

1. Develop functional professional language skills
2. Integrate specialized terminology into communicative practice
3. Enable reading and comprehension of authentic technical texts
4. Build students' confidence in real-world language application
5. Use technology and interactive methods to encourage participation

2. Historical Overview of ESP in Technical Education

English for Specific Purposes emerged in the mid-20th century, driven by economic globalization, technological development, and academic internationalization. Early ESP programs focused primarily on vocabulary acquisition and translation of scientific texts. Over time, teaching approaches evolved to include discourse-based learning, genre analysis, and multimodal professional communication.

In the 1980s, the communicative approach expanded the goal of language learning from knowledge of grammar to practical communicative competence. In the 2000s, digitalization made access to real-world materials — manuals, safety instructions, webinars, MOOCs — more accessible, transforming both classroom content and teaching methodology.

Today, ESP is considered an integral part of technical education globally.

3. Methodological Principles of Teaching a Foreign

Language in Technical Universities

The effective teaching of a foreign language to technical students requires an integration of linguistic and professional objectives. The main methodological pillars include:

3.1 Communicative Approach

This emphasizes language as a tool for real communication. Students engage in:

- problem-solving discussions
- role plays imitating workplace situations
- technical presentation and reporting tasks
- peer-collaboration in English

3.2 Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL merges language learning with technical subject matter. For example:

- learning English through physics labs
- discussing mechanical engineering projects in English
- studying IT documentation in English

3.3 Task-Based Learning

Students perform practical language tasks:

- composing technical emails
- explaining engineering designs
- writing user manuals or technical instructions
- using specification sheets and diagrams

3.4 Professional Vocabulary Development

Specialized terminology must be:

- intentionally introduced
- contextually embedded
- repeatedly reinforced
- activated through communicative practice

A cycle might include:

1. Introduction of terms
2. Contextual exercises
3. Practice in speaking tasks
4. Real-world application in project work

4. Role of Digital Technologies in Technical Language Education

Modern language teaching in technical universities benefits significantly from online platforms and digital media. Useful technologies include:

- Learning Management Systems (Moodle, Blackboard)
- Translator and dictionary tools (WordReference, Linguee)
- AI-based writing assistants
- Speech recognition apps for pronunciation
- Online scientific databases and journals

Digital tools provide real-time feedback, access to authentic materials, and opportunities for self-paced learning.

5. Authentic Materials in Technical Language Learning

Authentic sources — created not for teaching but for real communication — expose students to professional language in context. Examples:

- technical manuals
- research abstracts
- safety instructions
- engineering articles
- patent documents
- industrial guidelines

Working with authentic content teaches students how professionals truly communicate.

6. Motivation and Learning Strategies for Technical Students

Technical students often perceive foreign languages as secondary to engineering subjects. Therefore, motivation strategies are necessary:

- showing direct career advantages
- connecting learning to real projects
- encouraging collaborative learning in teams
- including gamification elements
- using peer-assessment
- integrating industry-relevant materials

When students see that English enables intellectual and career development, motivation increases organically.

7. Classroom Activities and Practical Techniques

Effective activities include:

- technical debates
- simulation of factory or laboratory communication
- real-time translation of diagrams
- collaborative glossary building
- student-led presentations of innovations
- technical report writing exercises

8. Assessment of Language Competence in Technical Universities

Assessment must reflect professional linguistic ability:

- domain-specific vocabulary testing

- interpretation of technical diagrams
- presentation of engineering concepts
- comprehension of written professional correspondence
- oral situational tasks for workplace communication

9. Conclusion

In summary, the methodology of foreign language teaching in technical universities must evolve in accordance with the demands of modern engineering education and the global labor market. The integration of ESP, CLIL, and communicative pedagogy ensures that students are not merely passive recipients of theoretical knowledge, but active users of language within professional and technical contexts.

The development of linguistic competence should not be separated from technical thinking — rather, these competencies must progress in parallel, reinforcing one another. By learning a foreign language through real professional tasks, authentic technical discourse, case studies, and project-based collaboration, students acquire the ability to communicate effectively in scientific and industrial environments. This includes reading and interpreting professional texts, drafting technical documentation, and participating in international teamwork.

Furthermore, the use of digital technologies, adaptive learning platforms, and AI-supported tools expands the possibilities for personalization, feedback, and self-directed learning. Motivation becomes inherent when students clearly understand the relevance of English for their future careers, research ambitions, and access to global innovation networks.

Ultimately, foreign language education in technical universities is not merely an academic requirement, but a strategic component of professional development. A technically competent specialist who also possesses advanced language skills becomes a globally competitive expert, capable of contributing to international knowledge exchange, scientific collaboration, and technological progress. Therefore, continued refinement of didactic strategies and methodological innovation in this area remains an essential priority for higher technical education.

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