

TEACHING TERMINOLOGY TO STUDENTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract: Teaching terminology in foreign languages plays a crucial role in developing students' proficiency, particularly in specialized fields like science, technology, business, and law. The process of acquiring and using correct terminology is essential for students to function effectively in academic and professional settings. However, teaching terminology in a foreign language presents various challenges. This article explores these challenges and provides practical solutions for effectively teaching terminology to foreign language learners.

Keywords: terminology, foreign languages, language acquisition, specialized vocabulary, teaching strategies, challenges

Acquiring and understanding terminology is a vital component of language learning, especially for students who need to navigate specialized fields in a foreign language. Whether the learner is studying medical terms in English, legal vocabulary in Spanish, or technical terms in French, mastery of terminology is essential for academic success and professional competence. However, teaching terminology in foreign languages is fraught with difficulties, from the complexity of terms to the differences between languages and cultures. This article outlines the key challenges faced by educators and offers practical solutions for overcoming these hurdles in foreign language instruction.

Complexity of Specialized Vocabulary; Specialized terminology often includes abstract concepts, multi-word terms, and discipline-specific jargon that can be difficult for learners to grasp. The meaning of these terms is often contextual and requires not just linguistic understanding but also subject-specific knowledge. In foreign languages, this challenge is magnified as students may struggle with both the language itself and the complex subject matter. Teachers can help learners by breaking down complex terms into smaller, more manageable components. Using visual aids such as diagrams, charts, or infographics can also help students understand the meaning of the terms in context. Additionally, teachers should introduce terminology in relation to real-life scenarios or examples, which helps learners connect the terms to practical applications.

False Cognates and Translation Issues; false cognates—words that appear similar in two languages but have different meanings—are a significant challenge when teaching terminology. Students may assume that a term in their native language is the same as a term in the foreign language, leading to confusion and misunderstandings.

Teachers should be proactive in highlighting false cognates and ensuring that students are aware of the differences. Creating lists or databases of false cognates and discussing them in class can be an effective strategy. Additionally, encouraging students to rely on context and use dictionaries or glossaries that offer precise definitions can reduce the risk of misunderstanding.

Lack of Context and Practical Usage; Terminology is often learned in isolation, making it

difficult for students to see how the words function in real-life contexts. Without proper context, students may fail to apply the terms correctly in speaking or writing, leading to a limited understanding of their practical use.

Contextualization is key. Teachers should incorporate terminology into realistic situations where students can practice using the terms in speaking, writing, and listening exercises. Role plays, debates, case studies, and project-based learning are excellent ways to provide students with the opportunity to apply the terminology they have learned in authentic contexts.

Retention and Long-Term Learning; Specialized terminology, like any new vocabulary, can be challenging to retain. Students often forget terms if they are not exposed to them regularly or if they do not see their relevance. The difficulty increases when terms are abstract or highly technical, as students may struggle to understand their importance in the long run.

Spaced repetition is a powerful technique to enhance long-term retention of terminology. By revisiting terms at regular intervals, students can solidify their understanding. Teachers should also incorporate active recall strategies—asking students to recall terms without looking at notes—through quizzes, games, or peer teaching. Another effective method is to use terminology in different contexts, ensuring that students see the terms from multiple perspectives, which aids in retention.

Cultural Differences and Variations in Terminology; Terminology is often influenced by cultural context, and certain terms may have specific connotations or uses in different cultures. This can be particularly challenging when teaching students terminology in languages with distinct cultural backgrounds. For example, legal or political terminology in one language may have no direct equivalent in another.

Teachers should introduce terminology with cultural context in mind. It is important to explain not only the meaning of the term but also how it is used in different cultural or professional settings. Comparisons between terms in the target language and the students' native language can help them understand cultural nuances. Incorporating cross-cultural discussions in class can raise awareness of how language reflects cultural differences and deepen students' understanding of terminology.

Effective Strategies for Teaching Terminology;

Use of Glossaries and Terminology Lists; A well-organized glossary or list of key terms can be a valuable resource for students. Teachers should compile terminology lists for each topic and provide clear, concise definitions, often with examples of usage. Digital tools such as online glossaries or apps can further support students' learning by allowing them to review terms at their convenience.

Incorporating Multimedia; Using multimedia resources—such as videos, podcasts, interactive diagrams, and online tools—can enhance students' understanding of complex terms. For instance, a video on the concept of "photosynthesis" could provide a visual and auditory representation of the term, making it easier for students to grasp the idea in both language and context.

Collaborative Learning and Peer Teaching; Collaborative learning techniques can be highly effective in teaching terminology. Students can work together to create flashcards, mind maps, or group projects that focus on specific sets of terms. Peer teaching, where students explain terminology to one another, reinforces learning and ensures that students understand the material well enough to teach it.

Task-Based Learning; Task-based learning focuses on using language in real-life contexts to complete specific tasks. This method is particularly effective in teaching terminology as it encourages students to apply their new vocabulary in practical situations. For example, students might be asked to work together to create a presentation using specialized terms they have learned.

Role of Technology; Technology can enhance the learning of terminology in foreign languages. Apps, websites, and learning management systems (LMS) can be used to create interactive vocabulary exercises, quizzes, and games that reinforce terminology in a fun and engaging way.

Tools like Anki or Quizlet, which allow students to create flashcards and use spaced repetition, can be especially useful for vocabulary retention.

Teaching terminology in foreign languages is a crucial but challenging aspect of language education. The complexities of specialized vocabulary, false cognates, cultural differences, and the need for context can make teaching terminology a daunting task for educators. However, through the use of strategies like contextualization, spaced repetition, multimedia, collaborative learning, and task-based teaching, these challenges can be mitigated. By using a variety of approaches, teachers can ensure that students not only understand and retain specialized terminology but also use it effectively in both academic and professional settings.

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