

## Authenticity and Specialised Translation in Algerian EST Context: A situation to Explore and Reflections to Discuss

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### Abstract

*Today, our age is characterized by the global development of technologies and sciences; this has led English to establish itself as a source of knowledge. Nevertheless, in a typical context like the Algerian one which is extremely influenced either by the use of Arabic or French, researchers, scientists and a wide range of workers have expressed their strong needs to keep in touch with recent changes in the world as much of publications are produced in English. This latter could be achieved either by learning English to fulfil specific purposes being academic, vocational or occupational or to a lower extent translating the already available materials from English to Arabic or French. This fact has, therefore, led to a strong need to include specialised translation as a main component and a fifth skill within an ESP context, namely at the physics department of TLEMEN University. Hence, this paper attempts to shed light on the underlying significance of incorporating specialised translation into scientific milieu while using authentic materials.*

**Key-words:** *authentic materials, ESP, EST context, practitioner, learners' needs, specialized translation.*

## الملخص

يشهد العصر الحالي ثورة عالمية في مجال تطور العلوم والتكنولوجيا ، الأمر الذي نتج عنه أن أصبحت اللغة الانجليزية مصدرا هاما من مصادر المعرفة العلمية . وفي خضم التحولات الكبيرة للتكنولوجيا والمعرفة ، أبدى العلماء والباحثون فضلا عن شريحة واسعة من العمال اهتماما بمواكبة تطور العلوم والتكنولوجيا وحقول المعرفة الناجمة عن هذا التطور ، والذي تظهر في الكتابات التي صدرت باللغة الإنجليزية . ولن يتحقق لهم ذلك إلا بتعلم هذه اللغة للتحكم في مفاهيمها ومصطلحاتها بطريقة علمية تمكنهم من اتقانها و ممارستها وترجمتها ترجمة دقيقة تضمن توظيفها بشكل صحيح وفعال ، تتعكس على الأداء المهني لدى المستعملين سواء أ تعلق ذلك باللغة الإنجليزية أو الفرنسية أو العربية . ومن هنا برز الاهتمام بالترجمة المتخصصة بوصفها عنصرا رئيسا ومربط الفرس بين مختلف العلوم والحقول المعرفية ، وتبادل الخبرات والتجارب ضمن سياق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية لأهداف تخصصية ، لأجل ذلك اقتضت خطة البحث الإجرائية دراسة عينة تمثلت في قسم الفيزياء بجامعة تلمسان لتسليط الضوء على الأهمية الكامنة وراء دمج الترجمة المتخصصة في البيئة العلمية أثناء استعمال مصادر أصلية باللغة الإنجليزية .

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** مواد أصلية ، الانجليزية لغة التخصص ESP ، سياق الانجليزية لأهداف علمية ، ممارس ، احتياجات المتعلمين ، الترجمة المتخصصة.

### 1.1. Introduction

Owing to the process of globalization, English language, the lingua-franca of today world communication appears to be a central issue for a wide range of academics who deeply believe in the vital role played and held by this language. Hence, one may dare to say that within an Algerian context which is extremely influenced by the French language, learning English has become a requirement not only for scientists, researchers, teachers, but also for different workers. Due to these demands, a sub-field of English Language Teaching (ELT) was introduced under the label of 'English for Specific Purposes' or 'ESP' for short.

## 1.2. ESP Overview

ESP has been defined as the teaching of English for a "clearly utilitarian purpose" Mackay et al (1978:2). This denotes that the learners' needs which can be either of academic, occupational or scientific character determine these rationales.

Likewise, Munby (1978) sustains that learners' communication needs are of worthy value in the process of syllabus and materials' design. He, then, (1978:02) writes:

ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learners.

Harmer (1983:1) deeply believes that ESP is "...situations where the student has some specific reasons to learn a language." This may underscore the fact that a wide range of learners want to learn

the target language, i.e., English to execute explicit motives which can be scholastic or professional.

Moving further, Hutchinson et al (1987:19) consider ESP as “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and methods are based on the learner’s reason for learning.” In this case, the researcher may dare to say that the language teacher is invited to provide and reflect on the following question: “Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?” to settle on the type of language to be taught.

In her turn, Basturkmen (2006:18) proclaims that:

ESP is understood to be about preparing learners to use English within academic, professional, or workplace environments and a key feature of ESP course design is that the syllabus is based on an analysis of the needs of the students.

In this regard, it is widely held among researchers that ESP is, basically, perceived as an urgent response to the necessity of learning the target language which has been spread among learners who hold specific needs which are, commonly, related to particular contexts; being academic, professional or vocational.

Moving a step further in developing such a theoretical framework, one may feel the need to shed light on the main sub-sections of ESP. In this vein, the most prominent two branches of ESP are ‘EAP’ English for Academic Purposes and ‘EOP’ English for Occupational purposes. A third branch which has

been a matter of debate few years ago is 'EST' English for Science and Technology.

'English for Academic Purposes' or for short 'EAP' can be referred to studying or teaching English in Academic contexts, such as universities in order to fulfil Academic Purposes. In this respect, Kennedy et al (1984:4) point out that: "EAP is taught generally within educational institutions to students reading English in their studies." EAP may constitute of teaching specific skills such as: reading texts, writing reports, taking notes and so forth for students at the tertiary-level institution.

On the other hand, 'EOP' has been used for the kind of English which is either used or learned to fulfil occupational purposes which may include: medicine, law, banking, administration and so forth. Kennedy et al (1984:04) write: "EOP is taught in a situation in which learners need to use English as part of their work profession."

The diagram below adapted from Johns (1991) shows that ESP has been divided into two main areas: EOP and EAP. This latter has two subdivisions: EST and EAP. Apart from EAP which has been divided into two main branches where EST appears as the oldest branch of ESP and EAP which includes all other labels regardless EST. EOP has its own two majoring fields, too: EPP 'English for Professional Purposes' and EVP 'English for Vocational Purposes.'

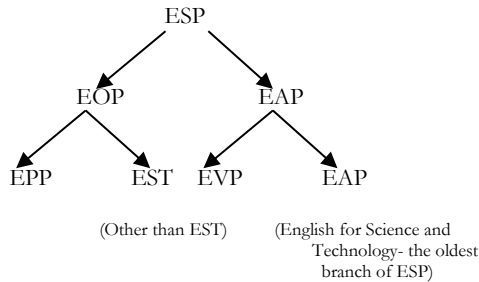


Diagram 1.1: Subdivisions of ESP

(Johns 1991 quoted in Jordan 1997: 3)

In sum, it can be said that EOP which is either for professional or vocational purposes, is about preparing learners to better cope with the requirements of everyday working needs.

The third branch of ESP is ‘EST’ which has been a matter of debate among researchers such as: McDonough (1984), and Dudley-Evans et al (1998); whether it is a branch of its own or a sub-branch shared by both ‘EAP’ and ‘EOP’. The following diagram illustrates this idea:

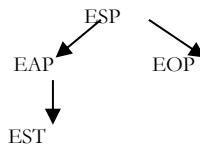


Diagram 1.2:

Subdivisions of ESP (Adapted from McDonough 1984:6)

In this diagram, McDonough (1984) has put EST as a subdivision of EAP in which he emphasized the view that it has an academic orientation. ‘EST’ refers to

teaching English for Scientific and Technological purposes. In this trend, Kennedy et al (1984:6) argue that:

The term 'EST' presupposes a stock of vocabulary items, grammatical forms, and functions which are common to the study of science and technology.

They elaborate further for more precision and clarification to this notion by stating that "EST is simply an important branch of ESP dealing with scientific content."

Bearing in mind the fact that, ESP is about catering for our learners' target aims. Those learners are supposed to be often adults and already have a background in English where in most cases; those apprentices are supposed to have an intermediate or advanced level. Yet, in this case, the use of authentic materials as a component of the ESP course adopted or adapted is inevitable. Therefore, it can be noticed that the use of authentic materials is one of the features of the ESP courses.

In 1983, Carver states that there are three features common to ESP courses. He summarises them in what follows:

- Authentic materials;
- Purpose-related orientation;
- Self direction.

Based on the idea that, the central issue of the current work is to explore possible ways to include both specialised translation and authenticity as an essential ingredient in the EST teaching/learning process for the sake of helping our learners upgrade

their achievements, the use of authentic materials, in this case, is seen a shared characteristic of the ESP course mainly in self-directed study and research tasks.

While discussing the use of authentic materials, one may find that many authors (Kennedy et al, 1984; Robinson, 1991; Dudley-Evans et al, 1998; Basturkmen, 2006) who share the view that "Authenticity is a key concept in ESP courses." Dudley-Evans et al (1998:28) define authenticity as follow:

Authenticity lies in the nature of the interaction between the reader (or hearer) and the text. Part of the process of needs analysis is finding out exactly how learners use different sources so that activities in the ESP class can reflect what happens in real life.

The second feature of the ESP course as expressed and discussed by Carver (1983) is: "purpose related orientation", i.e., the situation of communicative tasks required by the target situation. According to Carver (1983), the main aim of the ESP course is to enable learners to become communicatively competent in the target field through note-taking, conducting researches and presenting oral tasks. The last feature as viewed by Carver (1983) is self-direction or what he defines as: "...turning learners into users". Therefore, it is crucial for the ESP practitioner to base his course on a needs analysis procedure at the first step, while in the second step he is invited to encourage his



students to decide what, when and how to study, i.e., displaying a certain level of autonomy or freedom.

In this respect, Kennedy et al (1984: 141) write: "A prime concern for the teacher is to enable a student to become more and more autonomous in his learning as the course goes on."

It is also widely agreed among researchers (Robinson, 1991; West, 1994; Dudley-Evans et al, 1998; Basturkmen, 2006) that ESP courses are strongly subject to time. In other words, those learners, who seek to learn English for a specific purpose, have a limited period of time in which they are supposed to learn English. Therefore, they need to be taught only a limited range of the language rules which they will need for the field of specialty they are involved in.

To sum up, ESP courses hold specific characteristics which may differ from other courses. Learners' needs, wants, and lacks constitute the primary step in the process to needs analysis upon which it could be possible for the teacher to design an adequate course.

### 1.3. Statement of the Problem

In EST context, our learners often lack a good command of English while facing updated materials. A strong need has emerged, then, not only to learn English to fulfil a set of definite purposes but also, to adopt a positive attitude towards translation as a tool which is believed to facilitate their learning task. This paper is in fact a moderate attempt towards providing a clear picture of the particular situation, i.e., EST at

the physics department where both key-parameters namely; teachers and learners share a set of responsibilities, provide their particular standpoints and are called to afford their valuable reflections. These could be mainly done for the sake of defining the underlying significance of the adoption or adaptation of specialised translation within the scientific context while using authentic materials.

In Algeria, a heavy influence of Arabic and French is still predominating our classes. In this line of considerations, in ESP context, the teacher is no more the dominant actor as his/her students may have a full command of the field knowledge and they only lack the ability to transfer this knowledge from their L1 or L2 to the English language, including therefore, specialised translation alongside, authenticity is believed to be an accurate remedy. In this vein, the main problematic would be seen as follows how an ESP practitioner may succeed in managing authenticity alongside, specialised translation in EST context to cater for his/her learners' academic needs.

#### 1.4. Limitations and Delimitations

This study is mainly conducted to promote, hopefully our learners' achievements and to attain a better professionalization of the teaching/learning process. To meet this end, adopting a positive attitude towards our learners' field of specialization besides their main expectations, is regarded as the

first essential element. In addition to this, including specialised translation as a fifth skill along with authenticity of aims, materials and tasks are among those needed parameters. Other variables such as: learners' age, motivation, styles and strategies are of equal importance in EST context. Yet, due to time and words limit, it has not been possible for the researcher to deal with all these parameters. Hence, they are considered to be out of the scope of this present work.

#### 1.5. Significance of the Study

The current paper is a modest endeavour to provide hopefully valuable data, useful insights and worthy reflections about the EST teaching situation at the Physics department, within faculty of Exact Sciences of Tlemcen while trying to include translation as a main component within the EST curriculum, tasks and strategies to enhance our learners level of English language proficiency and their achievements, too. Other ESP practitioners who opt to teach EST groups can benefit from this study, as well.

#### 1.6. Learners Needs Analysis

In EST situation, our learners are regarded as the foundation stone. Our fundamental concern as language teachers is to conduct a careful needs analysis to outline, later on, their target aims, current circumstances and their future prospects. In the same line of thought and believing in the worthy insights which one may gather from conducting such needs analysis, the researcher has recourse the use of two

research tools notably, classroom observation and questionnaire.

The informants of this study are those apprentices (80 participants) enrolled in the physics department in the faculty of Exact Sciences of Tlemcen University. The process of collecting data started during the academic year 2013-2014 where teachers alongside their learners were invited to take part in this project. The research instruments mentioned above were piloted and a number of questions were adjusted depending on the learners' level of language proficiency and the teachers' willingness to take part in this research work.

After analysing data, the investigator has obtained the following results: as the central focus of the current work revolves around outlining those possible ways to include authenticity and specialized translation in physics context and while examining and reflecting upon the language used within the EST classroom, the researcher has noticed that teachers were obliged to deal with three languages in their classrooms for different reasons. The use of the three languages, i.e., English, French and Arabic can be explained by the fact that students who lack a sufficient command of the target language, and who have a low level of language proficiency, obliged in most cases, the teachers to switch either to Arabic or French. This is, of course, to highlight various ideas they judge to be important such as explaining some key-terms: motions, power, and engine, giving definitions: laws,

and equations and dealing with sentence structures: passive and active forms.

To move a step further and depending on both parameters, the learners' answers provided in the questionnaire besides, the teacher's observation process the following difficulties have been outlined on the part of the learners: learners encounter a set of problems at different levels: Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure and so forth. This could be mainly related to the fact that they have a low level of language proficiency. At this level, it can be stated that having a low ability to use the language properly and lacking at the same time the appropriate terminology for their field of study have created a real obstacle for them. The results are shown in their attitudes towards the language and the course in general, i.e., the language is not important for them as they lack motivation, and the course is mainly boring, hence, the rate of their attendance is very low.

Based on the outlined difficulties, the learners have suggested translation as a main remedy for those issues. To include translation may help them express better their ideas, transfer the amount of information they have from their L1 to L2. They have, in fact, mentioned translation from Arabic, or French to English and vice versa to learn more specialized terms.

### 1.7. Translation as a Fifth Skill

As a matter of evidence, translation was considered as the core stone of EFL teaching for many centuries

under the Grammar Translation Methods. This latter has started losing its significance with the coming of the new approaches to language teaching namely, the communicative one. It has been criticized mainly for the following reasons:

- No enough practice of the target language from the part of our learners as all the instructions are provided in their mother tongue;
- To memorise a very long lists of words with their equivalents in the target language is not believed to be a welcome experience neither for the teachers nor for their learners, too;
- Providing word by word translation is considered as a hard and boring task for apprentices;
- Another forgotten element which could be seen as, more or less, an accurate mirror which may reflect the learners' fluency is their way of pronunciation. This latter has been given little or no attention.

From the above mentioned reasons another call has been mainly emerged aiming at excluding the use of the mother tongue in target learning contexts as learners are supposed to be exposed and hence, fully involved in tasks using only their L2 which may, almost, promote their level of English language proficiency under the Communicative Teaching Methods.

Despite the existence of the already mentioned criticism on both the use and usefulness of

translation in those foreign learning settings, it is, still, seen as a way to promote our learners' competence. In this sense, and in EST context, it is no more perceived as a harming tool which may reduce our learners' competence, besides, their performance but rather as a vital tool and an essential component which should be included, chiefly, in all our curricula that we are as ESP practitioners supposed to develop based only on our learners' current needs and their future prospects.

While reviewing once again the literature of ESP, one may find that teachers who tend to teach ESP courses need to play different roles and acquire a specialized knowledge depending on the learners' specific scientific field or profession they are concerned with. According to Robinson (1991: 79), "the role of the ESP teacher is a controversial issue" since "there is no single ideal role description."

Hence, playing a different role in each stage of the ESP program starting from data collection and needs analysis, moving to the design of materials, to structuring the classroom and preparing the learning environments, ending with evaluating the learners' achievements, the teaching materials, as well; one may say that ESP practitioners have to play various roles. In this regard, Dudley-Evans et al (1998:13) state that: "The ESP practitioner has five key roles: Teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator".

It can be stated that the ESP practitioner needs to perform different tasks while involved in ESP teaching situation. Therefore, to include specialised translation as a main component in the EST curricula is an important decision any ESP teacher should take it into serious consideration which could be better practised and achieved via the use of authentic materials. This latter can be adopted under the two main dominant approaches to language teaching namely; 'Contextualization Teaching' and 'Content and Language Integrated Learning', or 'CLIL' for short.

#### 1.8. Specialised Translation in EST Context: Tips and Challenges

In an attempt to achieve the objective which is to include specialised translation within scientific context while using authentic materials, the following tips drawn upon an eclectic overview starting from the well known researchers' investigations, in addition to the researcher's own experience can be seen as a rich source which may facilitate the task of other practitioners while adopting such ideas:

❖ To go from a general perspective to a more specialised one may help our learners function adequately in their target situations. This could be done in the following way: first, starting with setting up small activities about introducing themselves in their mother tongue then translating this latter to their target language; Second, providing them with documents focusing on general themes where almost all students are familiar with, to discuss and, later on,



translate them, these may help them in enhancing their motivation which can have a positive impacts on their performance.

❖ Group-works could be seen as an important method which may help learners share their knowledge, discuss their main standpoints, and offer their possible solutions; specially when they are supposed to transform their knowledge from L1 to L2, or vice versa;

❖ In those group-works students are required to provide their materials including texts, select suitable ones and then, decide upon the better way to analyse those materials taking into consideration their field of specialism and their interests, too;

❖ Learners are, also, called to present short summaries, abstracts and presentations which they have already submitted using the French language as it is considered the mostly used language in their field of specialism, utilizing the English one;

❖ Translation is considered as a hard task for those who lack expertise in this field of specialism. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the teacher should be a translator to adopt this latter in his/ her classrooms. In this vein, Gaspar (2009) quoted in Witte et al (2009: 176) argues that

It is not necessary to be an expert in translation and translation theory to use translation in class. However, some translation experience and training can help a lot.

❖ Including translation as a main component ‘to improve learning’ (Gaspar, 2009) is believed to be of worthy significance in EST context;

❖ As ESP practitioners, we need to plan a careful needs analysis based on its results we may decide about the kinds of facilitating tools which should be included in our curricula;

❖ To go a step further, an ESP practitioner is required to select materials, i.e., authentic one based on the level of his/ her learners as the sharing points with almost all ESP classes is the mixed-abilities groups. In this respect, we may find apprentices with an intermediate or advanced level and we may also find others with a beginning one. This may create another challenge for the teacher to decide on the type of authentic materials to reduce our learners’ difficulties, they may face to.

As ultimate annotations, one may say that including specialised translation in our scientific context aiming at improving our learners’ level of English language proficiency is considered to be of creditable importance. In EST milieu, translation is no more seen as a separate trend but as an integrated activity, and skill aiming at facilitating the way for our learners to better grasp the content of their courses and, later on, function adequately in their target situations. Specialised translation, in this case, is, therefore, seen as a vocabulary builder tool, a way to mediate culture and an instrument which may help our learners to expand their knowledge and to evaluate and assess their performance, too.

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