



## Translation as a Fifth language Skill in an ESP Classroom

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### Abstract:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a sub branch of English language teaching that focuses mainly on a specific subject matter in relation to the learners' needs and purposes in using the language. However, studying ESP is not only learning about the language, it is moreover, about learning how to use English and become communicatively competent in the students' target discourse communities. This present research paper is a case study to investigate the efficiency of incorporating Translation techniques in ESP classroom. Additionally, it examines the rationale for using the translation method to teach ESP to third-year Dental surgery at the faculty of medicines at the University of Tlemcen. For obtaining the reliable answers to the research questions and cross check the results; a mixed method approach is used and data collection process was carried out by means of two research tools. Therefore questionnaire was administered to forty (40) students and the interview to five (05) teachers of ESP in the faculty of medicines. The results obtained revealed that Students of third-year dental surgery face a range of difficulties while interacting with professional resources. These obstacles exist at the content level, as well as the teaching approach they were exposed to during their studies. The proposed translation method in ESP may be incorporated and adapted as an effective technique for ESP teachers and students to improve learners' language skills related to their academic field.

**Keywords:** *Translation Method, Dental Surgery Learners, ESP teachers, Students' Needs.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, English has developed from a language for general communication to a language for science and technology; it has become a global language. The growth of what is known as ESP resulted from a noticeable increase in the demand for learning English lead most countries including Algeria to implement different types of ESP courses at different levels of education especially at the higher education. In the Algerian universities and in many fields of studies, English is taught in different curricula at different departments where it

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is introduced as a compulsory module and this is the case of third year students of Dental Surgery at the Faculty of Medicines at the University of Tlemcen. Learners there are required to follow ESP courses depending on their fields of study and their needs as well.

At the Faculty of Medicines most of English language teachers are general English language teachers with no training in ESP. As results, they neglected the students' specialized target content of their professional settings which might be a failure in terms of integrating academic English into the required professional tasks. For this reason, the third-year Students in Dental Surgery have great difficulties understanding ESP courses in general and ESP medical texts and terminologies in particular. Because of their level in English, They use computer translation as a tool to translate terminologies and documents which leads to troubles in translating and getting the real sense of the terms. Therefore, the present research is doomed to be a solution to learners' problems that may fit both the teachers and learners' need. It also investigates how can translation promote and improve comprehension skills and bridge the gaps between the needs of the students and the objectives of ESP courses.

It is to be stated that our ESP Students in the Faculty of Medicines may need English for various reasons; some are related to academic purposes and others to professional one. To fit the requirement of the heterogeneous students, adopting an effective method which is based on translation as a fifth skill is believed to be beneficial. Therefore, the following research questions are put forwards to better understand the phenomenon: For what reasons do our ESP teachers and learners in department of Dental surgery at Tlemcen University use translation and how can translation strategies meet our learners' needs? For the sake of getting reliable answer to the research questions, it has been hypothesized that our ESP teachers use translation as a pedagogical tool for a humanistic reasons as well as for practical reason which is mainly related to the fact of enabling the learners to transfer their L2 linguistic knowledge into the English course. Moreover, translation techniques may be useful in a number of situations to help learners engage in specialized communication, understanding authentic materials and so on. The following section is devoted for the methodology employed for the sake to answer the above questions and hypotheses.

### 1.1. Definition of ESP

As a trend of ELT teaching, ESP has established itself since 1960's as one of the fundamental educational activities that places a central emphasis on the learners' language and content-based needs as well as their communicative abilities to function effectively in their specific discipline. ESP teaching is

generally meant to impart a specific group of students with scientific, technical, business and social jargon in accordance with their needs and expectations from learning English or what has been expressed in Mackay and Mountford's (1978) words '*a utilitarian purpose*'. A key concept in ESP teaching is to teach those students the bit of English they need related to their field of specialization such as science, engineering and medicine.

In this respect, Kennedy and Bolitho (1984,p, 02) write: Given a learner or a group of learner with the specific purpose in learning English, it would seem logical in a learner-centred approach to base a course on that purpose and on the needs of the learners in his situation. To put a step further, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) extend the definition of ESP, categorizing it as an approach to language teaching which is not different in kind from general language courses and teaching methodology. It addresses the following basic questions Basterkmen (2006) believes that ESP is a 'why does this learner need to learn a foreign language' Where is the learning to take place? And what does the learner need to learn? '*goal-directed*'; it aims at providing learners with the linguistic features of subject-specific discipline. Moreover, she adds that it strives to develop the competencies required to help them function effectively in their discourse communities. To sum up, all the above definitions share the view that ESP is language teaching which is fundamentally based on teaching of English required by the learners to be active participants in their field of study or working environment.

### **1.2. Translation in ESP Context**

Translation and the use of the mother tongue (L1) were relegated to the periphery of language teaching until the Grammar Translation system was widely recognized as outdated and ineffective. However, in recent years, an increasing number of theorists and professionals in the field of language learning have argued for the use of L1 and translation, citing a variety of compelling reasons. Though much of the critique of the Grammar Translation system was warranted in terms of how it was applied a century ago, all of the philosophies and methodologies established since then have inevitably made their imprint on English teaching today. Depending on their experience in the classroom and the type of learners, many teachers assume that the use of translation in class today may result in a completely different experience than what the Grammar Translation method used to be. Since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of researchers have pointed out the advantages of using translation in foreign language teaching. Leonardi (2009), for instance, draws on Malmkjaer (1998 cited in Leonardi 2009: 143) and maintains that "Translation is more and more

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frequently evaluated as a positive form of interference aimed at enriching rather than harming learners' competence and performance skills. The use of translation in language classes might, of course, have some limitations but also benefits should be explored and taken into consideration." Marinov (2016: 229) points to the development of the post-communicative cognitive paradigm and promising prospects for translation in the ESP context. As regards ESP teaching and learning, any course has to be based on specific learner needs (Dudley-Evans and St. John 2012: 4). These specific needs define selection of materials and teaching / learning methods. Marinov (2016: 227) maintains that "Translation is an activity or a strategy naturally employed by both language teachers and learners. Accordingly, despite some possible limitations, its potential should be studied and exploited since it could help language learners gain deeper understanding of what they do when they move between the two languages and thus indicate the areas that might need improvement." Importantly, teaching ESP and employing translation as a method of teaching and learning does not require from ESP learners in-depth knowledge of translation theory as it is required of translation students. As noted by Witte (2009 cited in Kic-Drgas 2014: 258) "It is not essential to be an expert in translation and translation theory to use translation in class". But translation activities used for learning ESP and the use of L1 can contribute to facilitate comprehension of specialised materials in the ESP classroom and improve learners' skills (Avand 2009: 45). Therefore, this research is a plea for the use of translation as a teaching method in an ESP class in by highlighting its advantages, as revealed by recent research in the field. Translation as a teaching method was associated for a long time with the Grammar Translation method, and fell from grace sometime in the mid-20th century, where it remained until recently. Despite this marginalization, in EFL, many teachers have been quietly using both L1 (mother tongue) for explanations and translation as a supplemental teaching method. Its value has been reasserted by numerous recent theorists and their research. They have demonstrated repeatedly, as this paper will attest, that translation exercises have undisputed value if used pertinently and efficiently, and if prepared with specific goals in mind. Thus, for several years now, translation has regained its legitimate place in the teaching of English and has re-emerged as a useful tool in this endeavour. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), its usefulness is even more appreciated, as this paper will propose. The purpose of this article is twofold. The first part is a presentation of the latest research regarding the use of L1 in the classroom and the issue of translation employed as a learning technique, with a review of the relevant literature. The second part refers to ESP and to the particularities of this branch of EFL offering a few suggestions

for types of translation activities and ways in which they can be useful in such classes. The aim is to bring evidence that translation is neither old nor obsolete, but a valid teaching method that helps learners by consolidating difficult grammar issues, clarifying confusing aspects, enriching vocabulary and generally improving their knowledge of English.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

Generally speaking, a case study research is supported by scholars for its high level of reliability. It allows for a detailed analysis of a specific event that the researcher demonstrates as the application of some recognized general hypothetical principles. The present research work is mainly conducted within the descriptive case study research design which enables a researcher to explore in depth data within a specific context. Yin (1984:23) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Moreover, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used in this work. The qualitative technique attempted to investigate the difficulties of a specific population, whereas, the quantitative method examined the relationship between variables. The aim of using a case study in this research is to explain how translation can serve the ESP course objectives and the learners’ needs.

### **2.2 Data Collection Phase and Context**

Any research project needs a strategy for gathering data, the questionnaire was chosen for this investigation as research instrument. According to William (2001) the questionnaire is a useful research tool since it allows the researcher to ask questions and obtain responses without having to speak with individuals from the selected sample. Furthermore, it is a very versatile instrument for meeting the requirements of any investigation. Despite the fact that it has a number of drawbacks, its main purpose is to collect relevant data, then to make data comparable and manageable for analysis, third to reduce bias in asking and developing questions, and finally to make questions suitable and diverse.

A sample population consists of more than just the people that are involved in the research. However, as William (2007) notes that it has a larger perspective according to him; it is used to define the total number of examples of the sort that are the topic of your investigation. As a result, a population might be made up of items, people, or even events. The possible participants are chosen on the basis of using purposive sampling since it allowed me to actively pick individuals while

also developing an understanding of the main phenomena. However, a number of variables may make it difficult for the researcher to collect data from the entire population. Time constraints, accessibility, and even their inability to cooperate with the researcher are among these issues.

The choice of participants in this investigation is based on some standards which make the selection ideal; they are, first and foremost, typical ESP Algerian learners; second, they are students and most of them living in Tlemcen and studying in the same town as well, and their location is the most convenient for the researcher in terms of survey access and delivery, since the chosen group of students still encounter numerous challenges that affect how they use their education, English language in this case is needed as a practical tool rather than academic comprehension, especially because they are exposed to a variety of practical settings in which they must use their English knowledge practically. Forty (40) third-year Dental Surgery learners are considered as the most suitable target because they are at a tertiary level of education and they more aware of their needs. Five (05) teachers are also considered as part of this investigation who are currently ESP practitioners and were invited to participate in this research work.

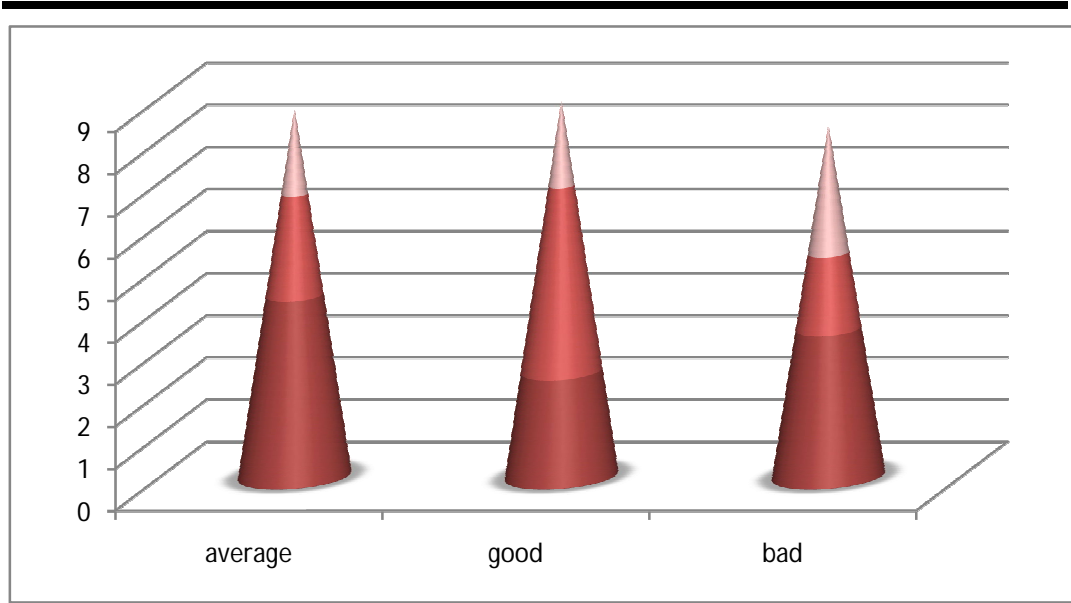
### 3. Data Analysis

#### 3.1 Students' Questionnaire Analysis

This section is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the Student questionnaire; the findings allow the researcher to gain an overview of the learners' English language academic experience as well as their opinion about the use of translation method in the ESP classroom and its efficiency in their learning process

##### *Q1. How do you evaluate your English language proficiency?*

This question is used to determine to which English language proficiency level the students belong to as it investigates students' opinion about their level in English language knowing that they have been studying English as an additional module.

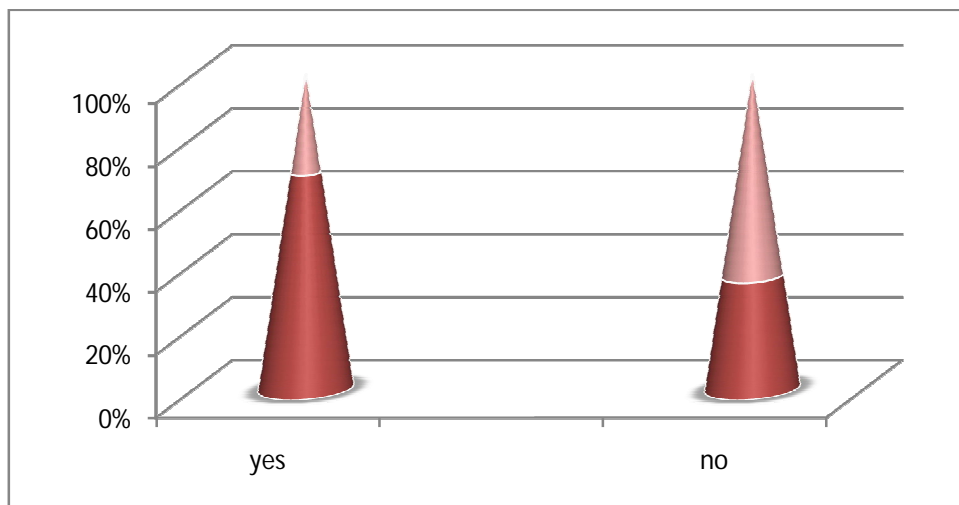


**Figure 1:** Students opinion of their language proficiency

The results shown that the majority of students (60%) think having an average level in English while few of them (20%) claim to have good English whereas (20%) of the students have a bad English level.

***Q2. Do English language courses meet your needs in your field of study?***

The second question attempts to determine if students recognize the value of the English language in their studies. Students responded with their opinions, which are depicted in the figure below.



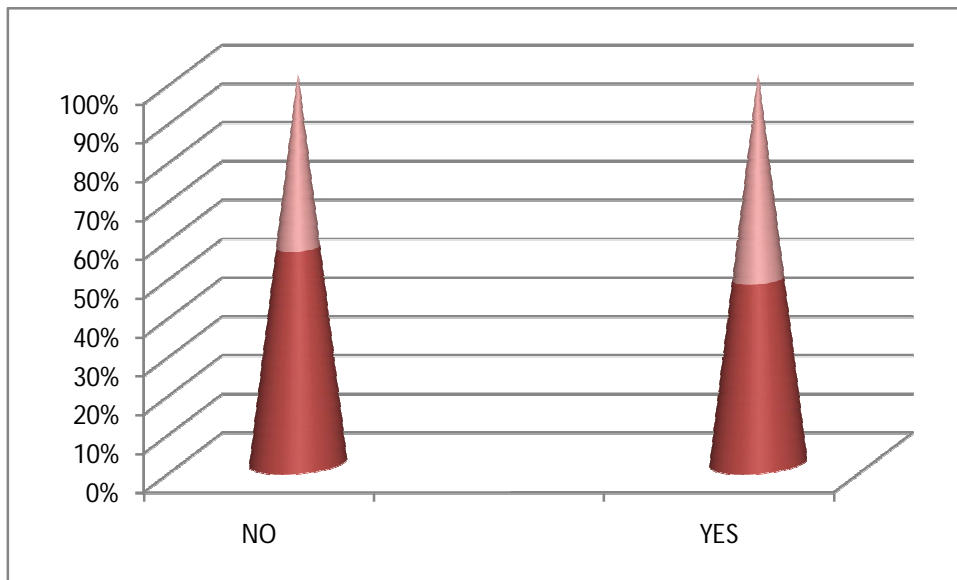
**Figure 2:** Students needs according to their specialty

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The figure below shows that the majority of the students (60 %) were aware of the importance of the English courses to fulfill their educational needs in their field of study, while (40%) of the sample, think that ESP lessons do not meet their academic needs.

### *Q3. Do you think the time allotted to ESP course is sufficient for you to learn the language?*

This question relates to the amount of time devoted for studying English. The figure below illustrates the outcomes of the students' replies to the English module time table.



**Figure 3:** Students' opinion about English module schedule.

The results shown that (85%) of the students the amount of time set aside for studying English is not enough to study the language while (15 %) of the participants are satisfied with the English module time table.

### **3.2 Teachers' Interview Analysis**

This section is about the ESP course, where different questions were asked to describe teachers' points of view about using translation in their ESP classroom aiming to assess instructors' knowledge of teaching methodologies through the use of a diverse language teaching methods in general and the use of the translation method in particular.



***Q1. Do you think that using translation in your ESP class can meet your course objectives?***

The responses of the teachers to this question vary from one to the other; two of them agree on the fact that translation may be a facilitating tool to convey their lecture objective, whereas, one teacher thinks that it is not an important factor of the success of the teaching learning process. Another teacher has a different point of view; she thinks that the translation method can be useful at the beginning level, however, it can block the students' process at intermediate and advanced level of language proficiency.

***Q2. Do you think that the use of translation meet your students' needs?***

The findings summarized below show that from the point of view of two of 50% of the teachers, translation may stand as a successful method for ESP students whereas the two others (50%) have a total disagreement.

***Q3. Do you see that translating the technical terms may be more beneficial***

There has been a consensus on this subject, with all ESP practitioners (98 %) agree that translating terminology and technical terms pertinent to the students' field of study is more beneficial than translating the entire lecture.

***Q4. is the use of translation method in ESP classes beneficial for both ESP learner and teachers?***

The majority of teachers (70%) confirmed that the use of translation in ESP classes is advantageous for both the teacher and the learner, while (30%) of them have a different opinion a; she believes that translating saves time, but when learning is difficult, you are more likely to achieve your goal. What ESP students require is the ability to reach that goal regardless of the coast. Simply expressed, they are motivated enough to attempt; thus, let them do it the right way.

***Q 5. According to your experience, what kind of advice would you provide to students ?***

Teachers were highly collaborative when it came to the last question, providing practical solutions and ideas for students to overcome the obstacles they encounter. Among these are: reading about their technical field in English, to provide more importance to ESP courses, avoiding thinking in their native tongue, developing the habit of autonomy and conducting research, group work, precisely asking for what they want to make their teachers better understand what their students need and adapt the courses accordingly.

### 4. Result

On the basis of the discussion of the two instruments mainly from both the students' questionnaire and teachers' interview provided us with a thorough understanding of the issue of integrating different approaches, such as the translation approach, in special settings, mainly ESP classrooms. One may say that the vast majority of third year Dental surgery students have a variety of issues that hinder them from participating in the ESP course. The results of both surveys are reviewed in connection to the hypotheses that have previously been raised.

The students are more likely to comprehend the lecture content when the translation method is implemented in the teaching learning process. For them, the language is a means of getting access to a rich professional material in their specialty. It also highlights that the majority of students are aware of their individual demands. They also place a premium on translation as an effective tool that helps understanding documents provided to them. However, some teachers agree with the use of translation in the class as a teaching method although they are actually using it especially with ESP classes, but they frequently fail to assess students' requirements, resulting in ambiguous course content that prevents the majority of students from being engaged and motivated.

Concerning the translation as strategy that may meet our learners' needs 'Translation method' as a teaching approach can provide students with graspable learning activities resulting in greater achievement in linguistic and subject domains, as well as increased language learning competency. Therefore, teachers should place a greater focus on the ESP course material in order to improve language instruction and students' language development. It should be mentioned at this level of discussion that having successful learners in terms of learning the foreign language the ESP teachers can reach an effective teaching and their performance in particular contexts is highly joint with more practical ESP courses applied within the students' areas of interest.

### 5. Some Recommendations to ESP Teachers

Some pedagogical recommendations are suggested for ESP teachers to help the learners develop their language level to meet their academic and professional needs:

- ESP teachers should be aware of their responsibility towards their students. They should remember that they are there to help and provide them with the important components to build up their insight. A section from their duty is to motivate those ESP students despite all the difficulties encountered. In other words, motivation is very important in ESP situations as it represents a fundamental factor in either pushing learners to

an ongoing learning process or slowing them down and even stopping the whole process.

- Make use of technology as it might facilitate their job because, using technology in a scientific field, will help in illustrating ideas by using images, graphs, figures...etc. However, it noticeable that teachers play an important role in using ICT for teaching and as guides and facilitators when providing background material and guiding principles for research. They need to monitor the process, particularly for adult students, who tend to browse the web, rather than follow the search plans. They are also needed in helping students to differentiate the reliable sources from unreliable ones; and make sense of the huge number of information that may overwhelm them.
- Try to understand the learners' needs and thus develop courses accordingly. However, they should have a deep perception of the available methodologies which set the guidelines for the process of course design; otherwise, courses may take other directions. The present work highlights some aspects of the designing course process and syllabus.
- Teachers should update their approaches, methods, and techniques of teaching, making the difference between the three concepts, and then applying them in real-life situations.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the present research paper aims to expose the results of each part the questionnaire and Interview analysis. By the end, a detailed account of data interpretation is provided to reflect on the research questions, and test the hypotheses. From all the above instruments analysis, One may say that third-year Dental Surgery Students in Tlemcen University found great difficulties while dealing with specific professional resources; those difficulties lie at the level of content due to the nature of ESP courses design provided by teacher. Consequently, the results from different research tools reveal that the use of translation method may serve as an effective teaching method to make students understand the different authentic texts. Teaching methods should be used for their importance to students' demands rather than linguistic requirements, thus, the use of certain translation strategies could be appropriate.

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