

Mastering Terminology through Translation in English for Specific Purposes Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore the efficiency of using corpora in translation activities in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. It is focused on the ways for enhancing the students' foreign language competence by teaching terminology through translation of specialized texts. Terminological work constitutes central part of any translation project and may be a time-consuming process. Therefore, efficient terminology management may considerably facilitate students' work and significantly contribute to the delivery of high quality translation.

Keywords: terminology, ESP, corpus-based translation.

INTRODUCTION

In the teaching and learning of a second language, vocabulary is an essential component of all comprehension. Therefore, facilitating students' vocabulary acquisition is a major focus in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and research.

The process of translation that implies interpreting a source text and generating a target text in another language requires certain strategic competences that will help to find the right match. One particular useful tool to compare languages and explore their similarities and differences is by compiling a corpus of texts written for a specific

context, especially texts which occurred naturally.

Defining terminological competence

Along with linguistic and translation skills, terminological competence is considered to be a requisite for students which can show the degree of mastery of the foreign language and may be quite beneficial for their future professional career. One such framework which gives an insight about the requirements of successful completion of a translation project is the competence framework for professional translators developed by the EU [1].

Under EMT project (Fig. 1) the overall translation „supercompetence“ is divided into several sub-competences among which thematic competence

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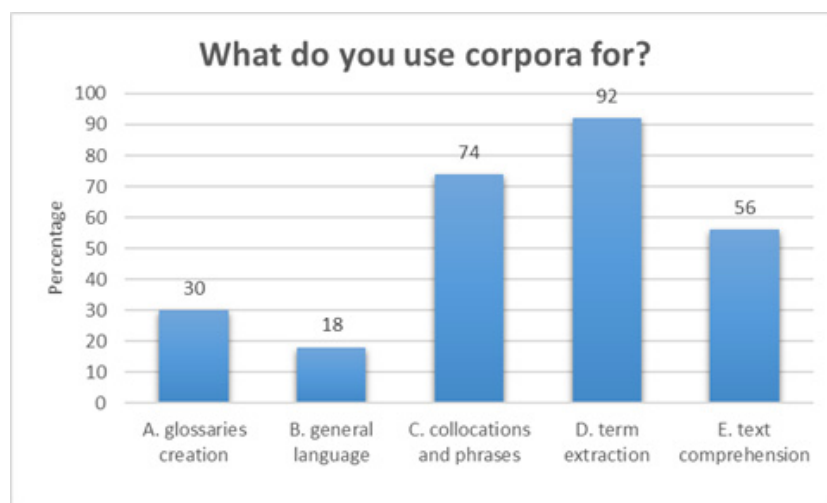


Fig. 1. Usage of corpora in translation.

(knowledge in specialist fields), technological competence (the ability to use a range of computer tools for various purposes), and information mining competence (the ability to search for information, by looking critically at various information sources). Hence, apart from language and intercultural competences, i.e. proficiency in the source and target languages, the thematic competence is very important, which is also referred to as domain/subject/or subject-specific competence and means specialized knowledge in a particular domain.

Here we will be most interested in the information mining competence which is related to [2]:

- Knowing how to identify information including several subskills;
- Developing strategies for documentary and terminological research (including approaching experts);
- Knowing how to extract and process relevant information for a given task (documentary, terminological, phraseological information);
- Developing criteria for evaluation vis-a-vis documents accessible on the internet or any other medium, i.e. knowing how to evaluate the reliability of documentary sources (critical mind);

- Knowing how to use tools and search engines effectively (e.g. terminology software, electronic corpora, electronic dictionaries);
- Mastering the archiving of one's own documents.

As can be seen, research and information mining competence as well as technical skills are considered to be indispensable for translation process. Also, for translators to obtain terminological information and manage it for translation purposes they have to be able to use a variety of technical tools which enable efficient storage and management of terminology.

Moreover, these two competences should be backed up with thematic competence in its traditional meaning - knowledge in a particular field. Thus, terminological competence is understood as a mixture of technical and research skills supported with subject specific knowledge and the ability to develop the thematic competence.

Translation-oriented terminology courses are courses which should introduce students to the realm of terminology management tools and their functionalities and which would develop practical terminology management skills (e.g. terminology mining, terminology search techniques, term extraction, retrieval, storage, creating a termbase,

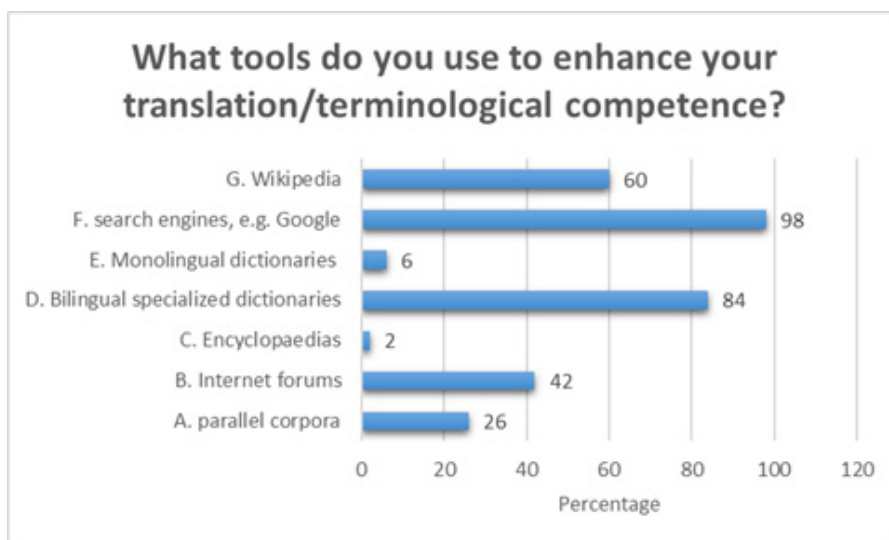


Fig. 2. Internet tools to enhance translation competence.

information on available terminological resources, etc.). The learning outcomes of these courses specify that students should possess the knowledge of available terminology sources, should have well-developed research skills, and should be able to use specialized knowledge and resources critically as well as constantly develop their own lexical resources. The aims of such courses should be:

- developing lexical resources in a specific field by means of practical vocabulary exercises;
- developing information and terminology research skills;
- providing information on available terminological resources;
- showing students how to use these tools in practice.

Hence, teachers should focus on teaching the specialized vocabulary and expressions that students will use or will be expected to use in their subject areas. This can be done by helping learners gain the more general skills of recognizing specialized words, interpreting definitions, relating senses to a core meaning, and learning word parts (Fig. 2). Teachers can provide learners with the tools for dealing with specialized vocabulary and help them increase their aware-

ness of how language features are used in the specific subject areas. In order to achieve this aim authentic materials should be used as tools to understand and explore certain discourse community. The role of the teacher is to teach students to recognize and solve terminological problems; to provide information on available Internet and electronic terminology and information resources; to develop good research skills and strategies for effective searching of information and terminology resources; to teach students how to extract, retrieve, evaluate, manage information and terminology and store it for future use; and to teach students general terminology management and termbases creation principles (Fig. 3).

Using own compiled corpora

A well-compiled and representative corpus ensures fast processing of large amounts of language material provided with translations and other linguistic information to be used for lexical and grammatical studies as well as for tracking language changes or extracting translation equivalents during the translation process. The concordance lines give researchers an opportunity to infer and deduce the meanings of words from the grammatical patterns as well as the collocations in different contexts.

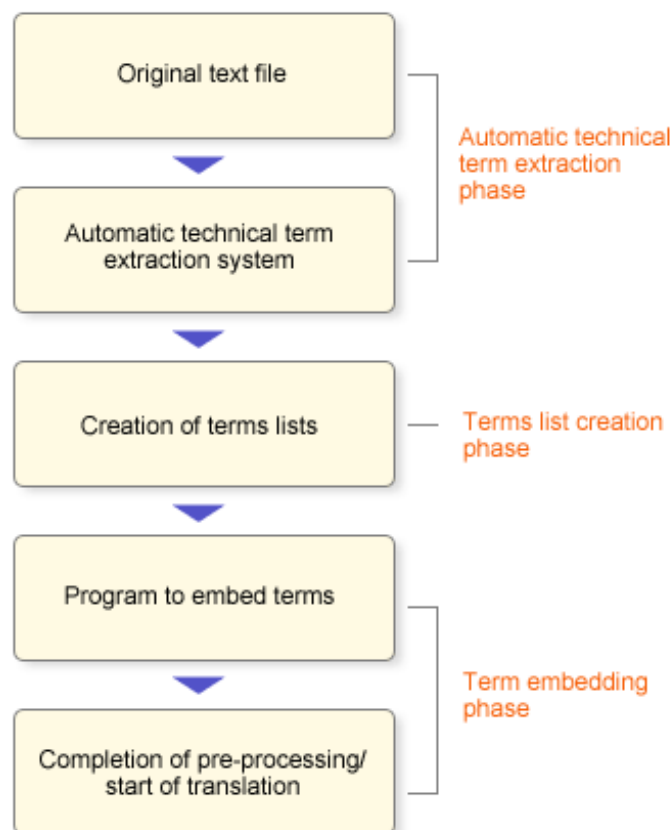


Fig. 3. Termbase creation.

The main advantage of corpora lies in shifting the role of the teacher from being the principal information provider to becoming an information facilitator to support self-investigation and learning in an autonomous way. The new approach to autonomous learning with the use of corpora develops new ways for increasing language competence. Applying a constructivist approach, where context and cognitive processes are seen as most important, students are given an active role in adapting their mental models and building up their own knowledge and experiences by using corpora as a tool.

The corpus typology basically comprises three main types of corpora:

1. Monolingual corpora, which is a large collection of texts which may be analyzed for naturalness.
2. Comparable bilingual corpora, which are normally specialized collections of similar texts

in the two languages and which can be ‘mined’ for terminology and other equivalences. Students could use a comparable corpus of original target-language texts to study the idiomatic usage of terms and their collocations or the natural target-language style of specific text types or genres.

3. Parallel corpora, which, when aligned, can allow for the strategies employed by the translator to be examined. Such bilingual translation corpora, containing source texts and their translations, offer insights into the strategies employed by professional translators when dealing with specific translation problems on various levels. For example, students could search a bilingual translation corpus for terminological equivalents and perform a contrastive analysis of the underlying source and target-language terms.

When corpora are compiled „for the sole purpose of providing information - either factual, linguistic or field-specific - for the purposes

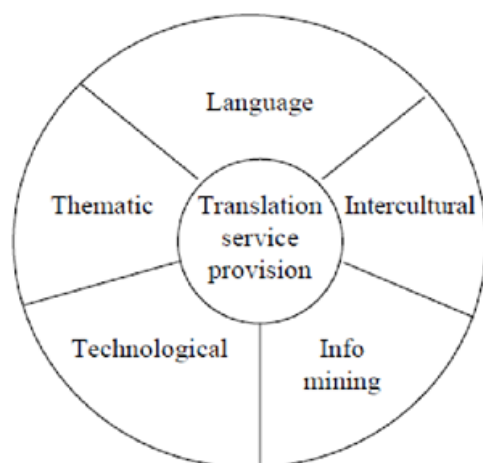


Fig. 4. The EMT conception of translation competence (2009).

of completing a translation task“ [3], these are known as do-it-yourself (DIY) corpora (Fig. 4). One of the main advantages of DIY corpora is that they are created in response to specific translation problems or information needs. Therefore, these corpora tend to be very precise and can be expanded anytime as required. The design criteria of these corpora are primarily determined by the source text, which basically guides the material to be included in the DIY corpus [4].

Internet as a source of corpora - methodology of the research

Internet can be used as a source for autonomous corpus compilation by students, since it is highly accessible and it provides a vast body of information. The Internet therefore seems to be the most viable source for compiling DIY corpora (Fig. 5). Before students start compiling a DIY Web corpus [5], they should be made aware of the characteristics and functioning principles of the search engines in order to make more informed searches.

A group of 28 fourth-year engineering students who were taught ESP through translation activities were asked to complete a short questionnaire with regard to their experience with using DIY corpora, as well as the reasons why and when they use the corpora. Their answers are presented in the following three figures – Fig. 5, Fig. 6 and Fig. 7.

Corpus-based language learning can meet the needs of learners by stimulating their motivation to learn with authentic examples through inductive thinking strategies, developing ESL learners' comprehension and transforming learned linguistic knowledge into reading and writing skills. Students also specified the kind of translation assignments for which they usually build DIY corpora [6]. Most of them stated that they normally compile corpora for highly specialized texts or when translating texts related to unfamiliar fields (with a high number of terms). They also specified at which stage of the translation assignment process they compile their corpora. Most of them (62 %) build corpora during the translation assignment, but a fairly large number of them also do so before (11%) and after (6%) the assignment (maybe for editing/revision/checking/proofreading purposes or because they have recognized the need to compile a corpus for future assignments), as shown in Fig. 7.

Teachers and material writers have more knowledge of which common words or technical words, and specifically which meanings of those words, are more likely to appear in students' academic or occupational settings, then they will be better positioned to help students acquire the vocabulary needed for successful comprehension of the target language, (Fig. 2).

Some researchers point out that more attention should be given to teaching specialized vocabulary. They emphasize the value of ESP classes, in which students concentrate on the vocabulary that they need for their disciplines. Academic vocabulary should be viewed as discipline-specific words ranging from those that are particular to one discipline to those that share some meaning and use with words in other fields, and these should be the words that teachers introduce and spend time practicing in the ESP classroom. These researchers also suggest that corpus-informed lists should be established from the texts that students will need to read and the genres that they will need to write in for their various disciplines.

QUESTION 4

Match each term with its definition or description

☐ Chemical modification of transcript that is added to the 3' end	A. Prokaryotic cell
☐ A residue 18-40 bp upstream of the 3' splice site that plays a role in lariat formation	B. EF-Tu
☐ Term used to refer to a protein coding stretch that begins with a start codon and ends with a stop codon	C. Poly-A tail
☐ Adapter molecules that are responsible for delivering amino acids to the site of polypeptide synthesis	D. Branch point
☐ Portion of the ribosome that is part of the translation initiation complex	E. Small subunit
☐ Portion of a prokaryotic mRNA that the initiator complex initially binds to	F. 7-methylguanosine cap
☐ Prokaryotic translation factor that restores the ribosome to its original conformation by hydrolyzing GTP	G. Open reading frame
☐ Class of protein responsible for bringing translation to a halt	H. Shine-Dalgarno sequence
☐ Type of cell that produces polycistronic mRNA	I. Wobble
☐ Term used to describe the mechanism by which anticodons pair with codons that they are not perfectly complementary to	J. Eukaryotic cell
	K. Aminoacyl tRNA synthetase
	L. EF-G
	M. Release factor
	N. Large subunit
	O. tRNA

Fig. 5. Matching terms with their definitions.

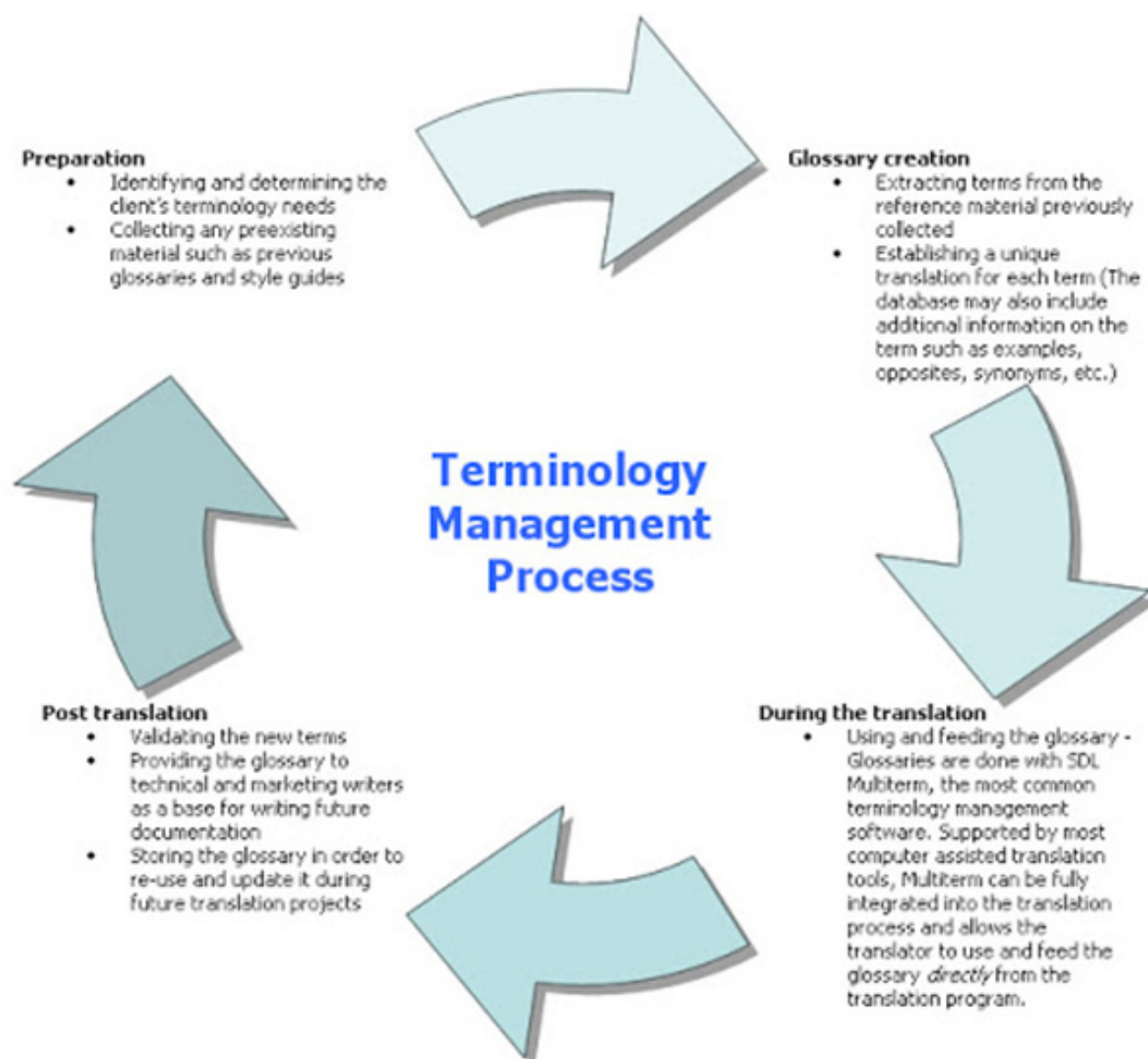


Fig. 6. Example of terminology management process.

Using corpora tools in translation work not only raises the learner's autonomy in using translation strategies, but also enhances the translator's competence. With regards to what tools students use to enhance their translation/terminological competence (Fig. 6), the results show that search engines and multilingual specialized dictionaries are used by almost all of the students. This proves the fact that the students tend to look for instant decisions by using the most conventional forms of search, such as Google and on-line translators, which are seen as user-friendly and providing

quick responses. Sometimes, though, these can produce confusing results because content may be unreliable or context insufficient.

Translation may usefully help students improve their reading and writing skills in a specialized subject in a foreign language. More specifically, corpus-based translation activities can increase the learning autonomy of the students and the use of corpus resources affects the role of the teacher in such a context. From a terminology learning perspective, students become language researchers and take on an active role discovering

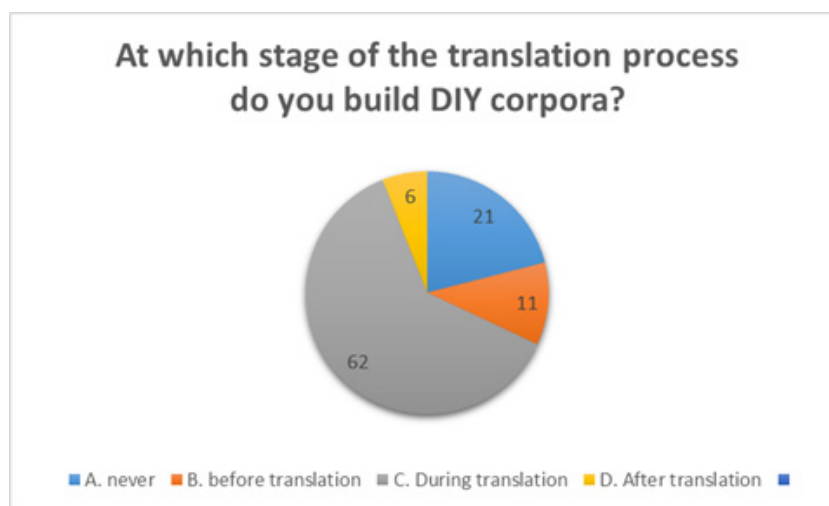


Fig. 7. At which stage of the translation process students build DIY corpora.

language by themselves from authentic examples. Corpora in a language learning context are particularly suitable to build learning activities where the corpus constantly presents new challenges and stimulates new questions. Unlike in traditional translation activities, which are usually teacher-centered and where students are supposed to learn by being exposed to the expert knowledge of the teacher, in this learning context the teacher acts more as a guide and a facilitator.

Considering the fact that a set of concordance variants gives an instant picture of genre conventions, register, textual micro- and macro-structure, lexical and syntactic analysis and other details sufficient to analyze any given translation unit, it can as well help the translator to come up with a possible translation. Although there are no ready-made solutions, there are instant clues to the choice of the right collocation and examples of how it works in a natural context.

Students use parallel corpora for various reasons (Fig. 5). Term extraction stands out as the main purpose for which students make use of corpora (92 %), followed by collocations and phraseology (74 %). Text comprehension is the third most frequent form of use (reported by 56 % of the students), and glossary creation - the fourth (30 % of respondents). Finally, just 18 % of the

students stated that they use corpora to look for information about general language.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, language learners may benefit from using corpus tools and resources for translation activities in the ESP classroom. Students learn by reading and translating materials related to their respective areas of professional knowledge. Using parallel corpora can raise their awareness of the contrastive aspects of the two languages and of the varieties of possible translations, since students are given the opportunity to discover the language rules and conventions by themselves. The use of parallel texts in a translation task also fosters reading and writing skills and encourages self-confidence and autonomy, and hence, teachers should act as experts in guiding students how to use resources and evaluate their findings.

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