

## Translation and ESP Textbooks Evaluation: The Case of Extra-Linguistic Sub-Competence Needs in Legal and Journalistic Sources<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The present study attempted to evaluate legal and journalistic translation course books, as well as ESP textbooks for students of law and students of journalism to investigate whether they meet students' needs. In so doing, it made attempts to compare extra-linguistic knowledge of three groups of undergraduate students of English translation, law, and journalism. To address the issues, data were collected from eight most popular legal and journalism translation books as well as eight legal and journalism ESP books. Besides, a researcher-made extra-linguistic questionnaire inspected the participants' beliefs about specialized translation. The evaluation of different specialized sources in ESP program, despite the program objectives, showed that it cannot train legal and journalistic translators. The questionnaire analysis indicated that translation students were more powerful in search sub-competence domain but in background knowledge domain law students did not do differently from translation students. The findings emphasized the role of extra-linguistic sub-competence in the promotion of total translation competence.

**Keywords:** Background Knowledge, Extra-linguistic Knowledge, Journalistic Translation, Legal Translation

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## Introduction

PACTE (2009) defines extra-linguistic sub-competence as “predominantly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit. It comprises “general world knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, bicultural and encyclopaedic knowledge” (p. 3). Valgina (2003) also refers to the concept of background knowledge as “presupposition” what Gile (2009, p.110) indicates as “knowledge base”. What Valgina estimates as background knowledge can be found in the text itself or out of it. As Farahzad (2017, p.5) states, “the aim of new English translation training program is efficiency, localization, self-learning, and considering market demands with regard to new approaches to translation training”. Besides, the overall objectives of every course, its lesson plan, and the most effective resources have been included under the title of the course. Improving specialized translation competence and employability will be the result of an appropriate performing of the program.

The aim of the specialized English learning program, as Saffarzadeh (1987) states, is to make students capable of studying different English references, journals, and papers and to train them as specialized translators. Saffarzadeh (1992) believes that students of other fields, besides learning knowledge of their scientific field, practice translation and terminologies in their ESP books. In her idea, these books are enough for translator training in specialized fields and there is no need for translator training field. The previous program does not pay attention to the importance of knowledge in specialized fields.

The students cannot use the knowledge and skill in their field efficiently, to participate in international conferences, and write English articles (Rajabi, etal, 2012). ESP program has not achieved to its purposes and the students cannot use the knowledge in real world after graduation (Tayebipour 2005, Hayati, 2008, fathi, 2008). Translation practices are not suitable for students to challenge high

level of learning and performing in real world (Soodmand Afshar & Hafez, 2017). In his evaluation of ESP textbooks, Tajeddin (2005) finds that SAMT books do not follow an integrated approach or lesson plan and thereby they cannot improve students' skills of translation and reading comprehension. Esfandiari (2015) also states that BA law students need knowledge of general and technical vocabularies, the use of dictionaries, and the Internet to do research.

Based on this, the present study aims at addressing the following questions:

1. Do legal and journalistic sources in translation training program meet the needs of students in terms of extra-linguistic sub-competence?
2. Is the past claim of ESP program on training translators valid?
3. Are there any preferences in the books which might be helpful in promotion of the translation sub-competence?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

Three different groups of students who participated in the study were: undergraduate translation students and undergraduate students of law and journalism disciplines.

### ***Instruments, Materials, and Framework***

In order to analyze extra-linguistic translation competence of the participants, the following instrument was utilized in the research:

### ***Structured Questionnaire***

An extra-linguistic sub-competence questionnaire was arranged logically based on four domains on the 5-point Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and numerical rating scales. It included 37 items that reflected the indicators of extra-linguistic sub-competence in PACTE studies. The internal consistency reliability was measured by

the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and it was high enough (0.82) for the questionnaire to be reliable.

### *Textbooks Data Collection*

The evaluated materials in the current study included published Law and Journalism ESP textbooks as well as legal and journalistic translation books which are mostly taught at BA academic settings. The evaluation of the materials included: the cover page, information in the table of contents, introduction, and appropriateness of the materials and practices in terms of extra-linguistic knowledge.

Furthermore, the research drew on the results of longitudinal studies of the PACTE group on the acquisition of translation competence.

## **Results**

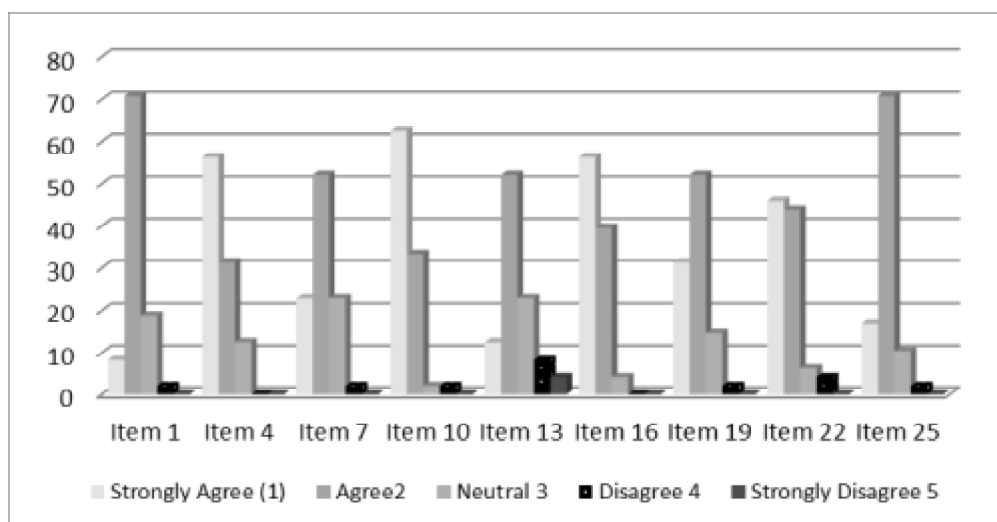
### *Findings of Search Sub-Competence Domain*

The first domain of the questionnaire consisted of 10 items. It can be seen from Table 1 and Figure 1 that translation students showed their strong beliefs in the items of search sub-competence domain.

**Table 1.** *Participants' (Translation Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain*

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
Item 1	8.3	70.8	18.8	2.1	0	2.15
Item 4	56.3	31.3	12.5	0	0	1.56
Item 7	22.9	52.1	22.9	2.1	0	2.04
Item 10	62.5	33.3	2.1	2.1	0	1.44
Item 13	12.5	52.1	22.9	8.3	4.2	2.40
Item 16	56.3	39.6	4.2	0	0	1.48
Item 19	31.3	52.1	14.6	2.1	0	1.88
Item 22	45.8	43.8	6.3	4.2	0	1.69

Item 25	16.7	70.8	10.4	2.1	0	1.98
Statements	Yes			No		
	Percentage			Percentage		
1.a number of searches	33.3			47.9		
1.b variety of searches	70.8			10.4		
1.c time of searches	16.3			69.8		
1.d when to stop	11.6			74.4		
1.e (Neutral)	14.0					



**Figure 1.** Participants' (Translation Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, most of law students marked the left side of the Likert-scale for the items of search sub-competence domain but it should be noted that the percentages of neutral participants were high.

**Table 2.** Participants' (Law Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
Item 1	18.6	46.5	27.9	7.0	0	2.23

Item 4	27.9	51.2	11.6	9.3	0	2.02
Item 7	18.6	44.2	32.6	4.7	0	2.23
Item 10	34.9	46.5	14.0	4.7	0	1.88
Item 13	11.6	46.5	23.3	16.3	2.3	2.51
Item 16	34.9	51.2	14.0	0	0	1.79
Item 19	25.6	48.8	18.6	7.0	0	2.07
Item 22	25.6	44.2	16.3	14.0	0	2.19
Item 25	16.3	65.1	9.3	4.7	4.7	2.16

Statements	Yes	No
	Percentage	Percentage
1.a	14.0	72.1
1.b	60.5	25.6
1.c	16.3	69.8
1.d	11.6	74.4
1.e (Neutral)	14.0	

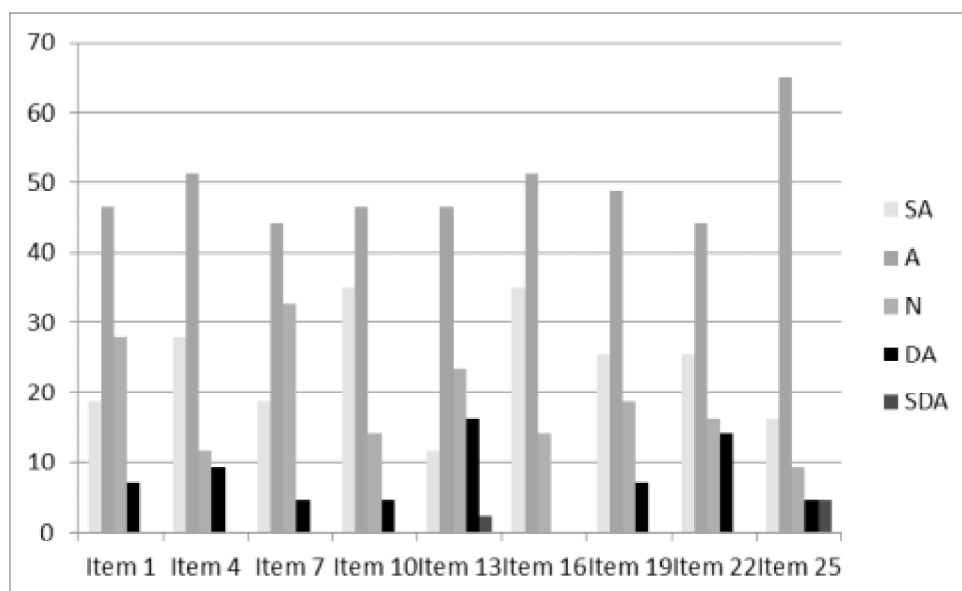
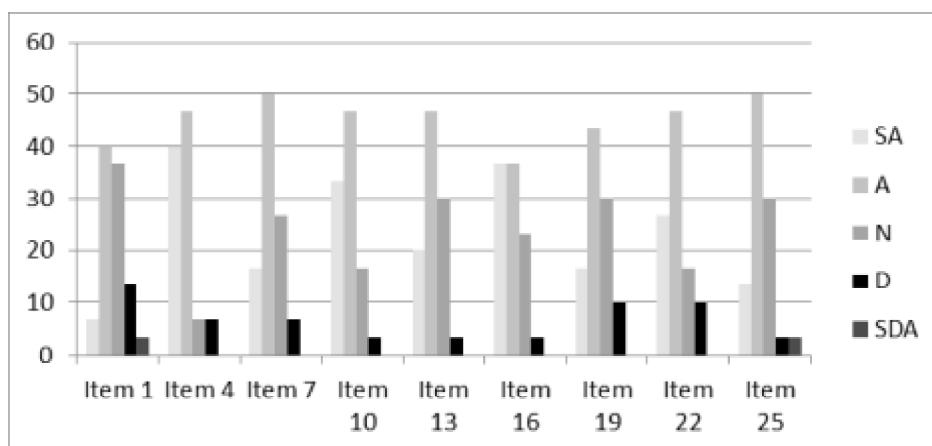


Figure 2. Participants' (Law Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain

As shown in Table 3, Most of journalism students marked the left side of the Likert-scale for the items. However, the percentages of neutral participants in the items were high.

**Table 3.** *Participants' (Journalism Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain*

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
Item 1	6.7	40.0	36.7	13.3	3.3	2.67
Item 4	40.0	46.7	6.7	6.7	0	1.80
Item 7	16.7	50.0	26.7	6.7	0	2.23
Item 10	33.3	46.7	16.7	3.3	0	1.90
Item 13	20.0	46.7	30.0	3.3	0	2.17
Item 16	36.7	36.7	23.3	3.3	0	1.93
Item 19	16.7	43.3	30.0	10.0	0	2.33
Item 22	26.7	46.7	16.7	10.0	0	2.10
Item 25	13.3	50.0	30.0	3.3	3.3	2.33
Statements	Yes		No			
	Percentage		Percentage			
1.a	30.0		46.7			
1.b	40.0		36.7			
1.c	13.3		63.3			
1.d	13.3		63.3			
1.e (Neutral)	23.3					



**Figure 3.** Participants' (Journalism Students) Answers to Search Sub-Competence Domain

A multiple choice question asked about the most important factor in searching specialized information for translation. As shown in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3, variety of searches in Item 1, was the most important factor for all participants, translation students ( $X=1.128$ ), law students ( $X=1.297$ ), and Journalism students ( $X=1.478$ ).

**Findings of Background Knowledge Domain**

Another domain of the questionnaire dealt with background knowledge or specific knowledge of the field. Table 4 reports the results of Likert-scale and multiple choice items for translation students. The highest mean scores belonged to Items 8, 11, 28, 26, 14, and 20. Background knowledge gained more support from the participants in Item 3; how to search information and world knowledge have taken second and third place respectively.

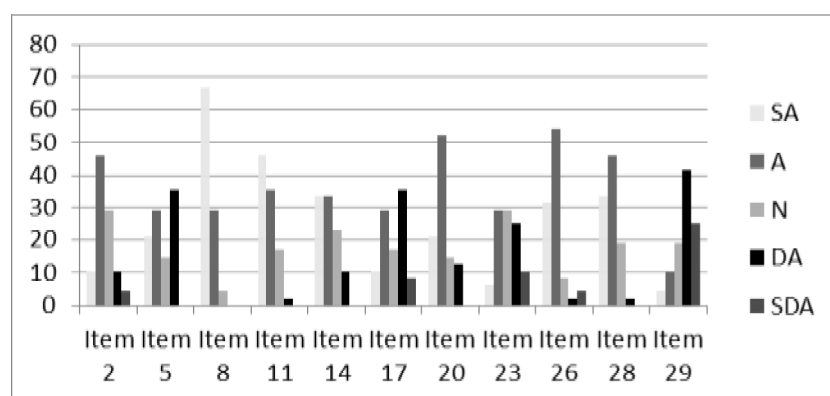
**Table 4.** Participants' (Translation Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Domain

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
Item 2	10.4	45.8	29.2	10.4	4.2	2.52
Item 5	20.8	29.2	14.6	35.4	0	2.65
Item 8	66.7	29.2	4.2	0	0	1.38
Item 11	45.8	35.4	16.7	2.1	0	1.75



Item 14	33.3	33.3	22.9	10.4	0	2.10
Item 17	10.4	29.2	16.7	35.4	8.3	3.02
Item 20	20.8	52.1	14.6	12.5	0	2.19
Item 23	6.3	29.2	29.2	25.0	10.4	3.04
Item 26	31.3	54.2	8.3	2.1	4.2	1.94
Item 28	33.3	45.8	18.8	2.1	0	1.90
Item 29	4.2	10.4	18.8	41.7	25.0	3.73

Statement	Percentage
3.a world knowledge	14.6
3.b background knowledge	39.6
3.c cultural knowledge	2.1
3.d encyclopedic knowledge	8.3
3.e how to search information	35.4



**Figure 4.** *Participants' (Translation Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Sub-Competence Domain*

Table 5 reports how law students showed their ideas about items. The Mean scores in Items 11, 8, 26, 28, 14, and 2 showed the order from highest to lowest. Background knowledge, field knowledge, gained more than 60% support from the participants in Item 3; how to search information took the second place.

**Table 5.** *Participants' (Law Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Domain*

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
Item 2	16.3	41.9	23.3	16.3	2.3	2.47
Item 5	30.2	23.3	2.3	34.9	9.3	2.70
Item 8	51.2	25.6	14.0	9.3	0	1.81
Item 11	48.8	32.6	11.6	4.7	2.3	1.79
Item 14	20.9	44.2	18.6	16.3	0	2.30
Item 17	20.9	30.2	9.3	32.6	7.0	2.74
Item 20	16.3	30.2	16.3	25.6	11.6	2.86
Item 23	20.9	27.9	14.0	34.9	2.3	2.70
Item 26	23.3	55.8	14.0	7.0	0	2.05
Item 28	27.9	39.5	16.3	16.3	0	2.21
Item 29	16.3	30.2	23.3	25.6	4.7	2.72

Statement	Percentage
3.a	7.0
3.b	60.5
3.c	2.3
3.d	7.0
3.e	23.3

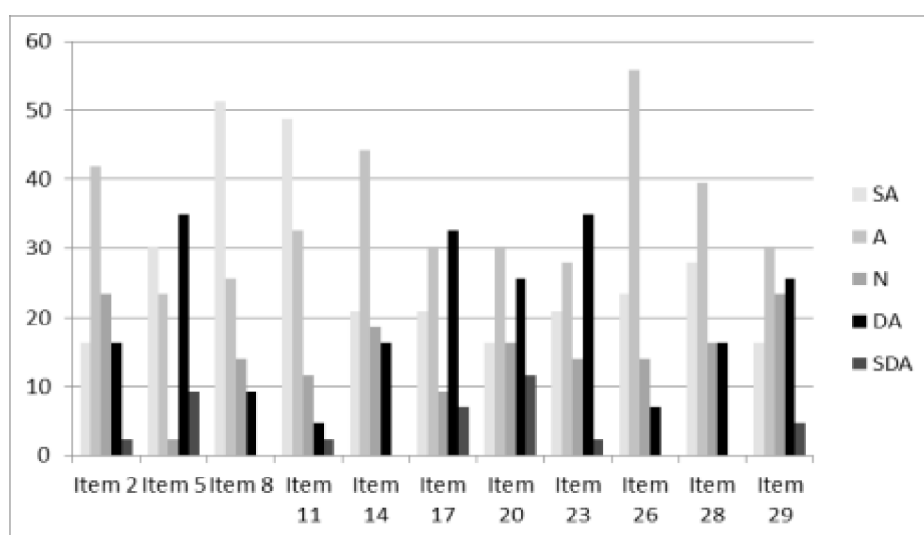


Figure 5. Participants' (Law Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Sub-Competence Domain

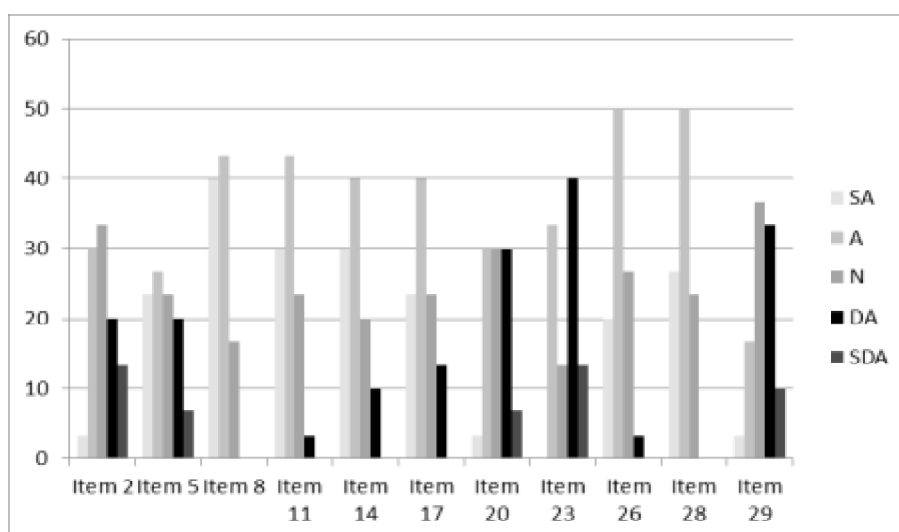
Table 6 reports the Mean scores. Items 8, 28, 11, 14, 26 showed the order from highest to lowest. Background knowledge gained more support from the

journalism students (40%) in Item 3; how to search information and encyclopedic knowledge took second and third place respectively.

**Table 6.** *Participants' (Journalism Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Domain*

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean
Item 2	3.3	30.0	33.3	20.0	13.3	3.10
Item 5	23.3	26.7	23.3	20.0	6.7	2.60
Item 8	40.0	43.3	16.7	0	0	1.77
Item 11	30.0	43.3	23.3	3.3	0	2.00
Item 14	30.0	40.0	20.0	10.0	0	2.10
Item 17	23.3	40.0	23.3	13.3	0	2.27
Item 20	3.3	30.0	30.0	30.0	6.7	3.07
Item 23	0	33.3	13.3	40.0	13.3	3.33
Item 26	20.0	50.0	26.7	3.3	0	2.13
Item 28	26.7	50.0	23.3	0	0	1.97
Item 29	3.3	16.7	36.7	33.3	10.0	3.30

Statement	Percentage
3.a	13.3
3.b	40.0
3.c	3.3
3.d	16.7
3.e	26.7



**Figure 6.** *Participants' (Journalism Students) Answers to Background Knowledge Sub-Competence Domain*

### ***The Content of the Specialized Courses in English Translation Training Program***

#### ***The Content of Legal Translation Sources***

The evaluated textbooks in legal translation domain were as follows:

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (1)" (Aslanzadeh, 2016).

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (2)" (Aslanzadeh, 2016).

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (1)" (Rae Sharif, 2009).

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (2)" (Rae Sharif, 2008).

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (1)" (Tavangar, 2019).

"Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (2)" (Tavangar, 2019).

According to Aslanzadeh (2016), the course allows students to be ready for the translation market and translation profession in international business. It will make the students ready for learning and searching more details of legal subjects. Translation of Legal Correspondence and Deeds (1) includes four chapters of general documents translation, educational certificates, registration documents and court judgments, and official deeds translation. Most of the activities practice direct translation; in each lesson, there are some definitions for terminologies as well as

practical strategies in legal translation. The students compare the source text with the target text and discuss the strong as well as weak points. Extra activities in translation suggest more practices. Despite all practices, one weak point can be the author's high expectations of translation students' legal background knowledge.

The second volume of the book provides political documents translation, legal documents translation, and deeds translation. Furthermore, two English-to-English appendices describe some terminologies on UN treaties as well as buy and sell. The students translate in two directions or compare the source and target text. A lot of nominal contracts in two books practice translation.

Raee Sharif (2008) indicates that the students face problems in translating deeds into English; they even have problems understanding the legal language in Persian. The first volume of the book includes personal and social documents. It provides Persian into English activities accompanied with formal instructions. Moreover, Appendix A deals with converting the dates from one calendar to another and Appendix B includes the names and titles of the fields as well as courses at Iranian universities.

The second volume of the book continues the discussion of social (banking documents, contracts, deeds, articles, and charters) documents. Translation of these documents is more challenging; the documents are very diverse and dependent on parties, context, and objects. Raee Sharif (2008) attempts to deal with contracts in detail. Captions and phonetic symbols as well as their translation are the elements explained in the preface of the book. The Checkpoints section also asks about the difference between some terms which some of them are not legal. The list of acronyms has been provided at the beginning of the book.

Tavangar (2019) believes that legal translators should be familiar with legal issues and all subcategories of the law field. Furthermore, acquaint with official documents and legal terminologies will help students to acquire a higher level of translation competence. Six lessons are covered in volume (1) of the book. It

includes notarial documents as well as private documents. Power of attorney, certificates, and business letters are the subjects of other lessons.

The content aims to introduce legal language in detail. Legal terms and their equivalents let the students compare their answers through exercises. Articles, principles, and rules are presented in English and Persian; legal terminologies have been underlined for more attention. Moreover, some activities ask the students to find term definitions in specialized dictionaries and teach them how to find legal terms' equivalents (extra-linguistic practice). At the end, two types of letters, personal and business, and the writing processes have been described. A Persian-to-English glossary includes new terms.

Tavangar (2019) believes that the course enables students to progress in translating real documents in two directions and learning legal writing style. But it seems that most of the texts are complex for novice legal translators. The book provides a beneficial guide for translating legal correspondence and deeds. However, extra-linguistic exercises are neglected again. The order and design of the lessons in volume (2) resemble to volume (1) except for the content. The book has components including articles of association, contracts, bank documents, and business letters. It ends with English-to-Persian glossaries of legal and business terms.

### ***The Content of Journalistic Translation Sources***

Two journalistic translation sources were as follows:

“Translating Journalistic Texts (1)” (Tajvidi, 2005).

“Translating Journalistic Texts (2)” (Tajvidi, 2013).

The introduction of the books indicates that the aim is to exercise the writing style of journalistic texts and to be familiar with journalistic terminologies. The objectives of the lessons are explained as follows:

Finding equivalents, using dictionaries, learning the writing style of journalistic texts, considering complex grammar points, avoiding unnecessary omissions and additions in translation, writing footnotes, comparing source text and target text, correct punctuation and fluency in translation, and revision of the translation.

In addition to journalistic translation, the book teaches translation principles, translation revision, and even contrastive analysis. Therefore, the majority of the content has not been used to teach journalistic translation. The exercises focus on translation revision; learning journalistic text characteristics is not addressed. The author has tried to cover translation exercises in different subjects but extra-linguistic exercises and macro-structure contrastive analysis are neglected.

### ***The Content of ESP Textbooks for Students of Law***

The materials evaluated in Law field included:

“Legal Texts (1) “Contract Law” A Textbook for Law Students” (Shiravi, 2018).

“Legal Texts (2) “Contract Law” A Textbook for Law Students” (Shiravi, 2018).

“English for the Students of Private Law” (Moshfeghi and Sharifiyan, 2007).

“English for the Students of Criminal Law and Criminology” (Moshfeghi, 2016).

“English for the Students of International Law” (Moshfeghi, 2009).

As the table of contents of contracts (1) and (2) shows, the materials and the organization are similar to general English books. Word study, reading, comprehension exercises, and filling in the blank are the topics of the contents of each lesson. Some new vocabularies, 10-12 words, have been presented in each lesson. Evidently, every detailed concept is explained for the students to be familiar with English background knowledge in the subject.

Private Law includes three sections. Sections one and two practice language the same as general English exercises, but section three has been devoted to translation activities. In some lessons, translation is practiced from English to Persian

through short texts; equivalents of some words are also asked in Persian. The book deals with contract issues; translation activities explain basic theoretical legal issues. Moreover, some further readings expand the legal background knowledge of the main readings.

Physical organization and the order of ESP course books are similar. A section of recommended exercises has been added to lessons after translation activities. It is a short case with a more tangible story in legal issues. Translation activities in Criminal Law and Criminology include longer texts which discuss basic theoretical criminal law issues.

English for the Students of International Law is the title of another source in the law program. The structure and organization of the book are similar to Criminal Law. Translation activities discuss basic theoretical international law issues. Most of the activities follow the title of the readings. The contents of the book are also presented in Aslanzadeh's book.

### ***The Content of ESP Textbooks for Students of Journalism***

The materials evaluated in journalism field were as following:

- "English for the Students of Journalism and Mass Media" (Ziahosseini and Marefat, 2017).
- "News & Views. A course in Reading British & American News" (Vaez Dalili, 2014).
- "Listening, Vocabulary and Translation Skills through News and Media" (Bakhshandeh, Tabesh and Vaez Dalili, 2009).

Ziahosseini and Marefat, (2017) involve in some journalistic subjects which do not seem to be purposeful. The book has been organized in the same style as the other SAMT ESP books. Translation activities, here, include some bolded terms but the astonishing point is that most of the terms are general vocabulary. However, considering non-verbal communication in a picture is a strong point in one translation activity of the book. Analyzing the book, a question comes to mind whether the activities and texts will prepare the students for the future professional market and their needs.



As Vaez Dalili (2014) states, the book audiences are students of EFL, media and cultural studies, and general readers. It covers the issues of what news media is and how journalistic discourse works. Moreover, it aims at dealing with the what, how, and why of the language of the news and focuses on developing the basic knowledge of the language of news media. Selecting real texts and examples, using high-frequency journalistic themes, presenting clear definitions for new words, and describing the language of news media in the form of self-study vignettes are the crucial points that the author attempts to take into consideration in his book. There are a series of exercises, each focusing on a skill in the language of the news media. The most frequently used abbreviations are also explained in the spotlight section. Finally, the last part practices vignettes for the language of news and the basic principles.

### **Discussion**

As findings of the questionnaire showed, translation students scored higher than two other groups in search sub-competence domain. They believed that a successful translator is a skillful researcher. Several findings, however, need more attention. There is a high number of neutral participants in Items 1 (specific ways of searching), 7 (assessing founded information based on specific criteria), and 13 (seeking information from experts). High numbers of neutral participants in two other groups can also be due to the factors such as unfamiliarity with search methods or its significance for specialized translation. In order to ensure greater accuracy, the multiple-choice question of the domain evaluated respondents' ideas about the importance of five factors in searching specialized information for translation. All participants selected variety of searches; translation students scored higher.

In the second domain of the questionnaire, about half of the translation students believed that world knowledge and specific field knowledge were equally important. The results were almost the same for two other groups of participants. For translation students, knowledge of the field and the way of searching for information took the same support in the multiple-choice question. But, field-specific knowledge took more support from two other groups of the participants respectively. One possible reason for the results can be the integrated competence-based approach of the translator training program.

Item 20 of the domain asked about the precedence of translation knowledge over specific field knowledge. Most translation students supported the initial but in two

other groups' ideas, they were almost equally important. The participants stated their ideas about sufficiency for their field knowledge and cultural background knowledge in Item 29. Most translation students were not satisfied with their specialized knowledge but the item almost took the same agree and disagree answers for law students. Journalism students' opinions fluctuated between dissatisfaction and neutrality. Although translation students got better scores in the domain, the results of mean scores showed that they did better in the search domain. In the background knowledge domain, the score of the law students was not much different from translation students. One interpretation is that translation students need more awareness of specific field knowledge.

In a review of the book's content, it was found that the level of complexity of the texts is not appropriate for novice legal translators, and the students almost play the role of raters rather than translators. Meanwhile, most ESP books, especially legal sources, deal with specialized subjects in a step by step manner; the strong point which can extend the background knowledge of translation students more adequately.

### **Conclusion**

As Mahmoodzadeh, Farahzad, and Esmaili (2019) believe, "the promotion of extra-linguistic sub-competence, knowledge about translation sub-competence, strategic sub-competence, and the psychophysiological components pertaining to translation could result in the promotion of the total translation competence" (p.74). Accordingly, the concentration of translator training program on promoting every sub-competence, such as extra-linguistic sub-competence investigated in the present study, results in the promotion of total translation competence. The findings of the study can have implication for textbook authors of legal and journalism translations to include extra-linguistic practices to encourage students to search specialized topics and strengthen their background knowledge.

In order to meet the aims of the ESP program, textbook contents need to be revised. This study confirms the findings of Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018) that the program needs to be updated. ESP program, however, cannot train translators as it claimed

in the past. Following the evaluation of the ESP sources, rather than presenting words equivalent activities, students should learn how to find appropriate and authentic information for understanding the specialized texts.

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