

Problems of Teaching and Translation of Medical English to Students of Tertiary Level

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to investigate the problems that face teachers and translators of medical English. A sample has been chosen randomly from the population of the study. The researcher used an interview to collect data about the problems of the study. She adopted the descriptive and the analytical methodology to analyze and discuss the results of the interview. The researcher reached some findings and causes of the problems. Also, the researcher recommended some points for recovery.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is no longer considered as the practice of literary transfer between two or more languages. The studies about the theory of translation have considerably evolved specifically during the nineteenth century and then occupied a large section of the scientific studies creating of translation a prominent discipline not only in the domain of the linguistics and literary studies but also in other domains such as the religious, political, social and applied sciences who have all benefitted of what has come to be known as Translation Studies.

The translation theories view the act of translating from two complementary concepts. The first one considers translation as an “art” that depends on the talent if the translator and his/her creativity and potential abilities. On the other hand, the second concept takes translation for a “craft” which depends on the practice, the training and the acquired skills of the translator along with his/her cognitive acquisitions which are all to be utilized in the practice of translation.

Both concepts have got their supports from among the scholars of the translation theories either considered an art or craft remains to form a conception of the procedure undertaken in the process of translation, rather than obtaining a group of regulations and criteria whose applications would lead to a “perfect translation”.

Those theories continue to search in the procedure of translation practice in an attempt to solve the problem of attaining the equality between the two texts in addition to searching about the techniques of the building of meaning during the process of translation.

It might be beneficial to trace the meaning of translation starting simply from what meaning is given by the dictionary and ending with what suggest the scholars and theorists of translation.

For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary explains the verb “to translate” as follows:

- To transfer from one language to another.
- To change a word from one language to another while conserving its meaning, or to transform.

- To explain in other words or reformulate.

As for the word “translate”, the same dictionary defines it as follows:

- Changing, transferring from a person, a place or a state to another.
- Making or doing changes from one language to another and the product of this act.

In fact, almost all meanings shown in most of English Language dictionaries will be turning around the same point producing general and descriptive meanings.

The practical definition of translation

From the first look, everyone would think that they are able to give a comprehensive definition for the term, translation. Many definitions have been and are still being formulated for the term translation. Moreover, all of them share in general, two meanings or ideas.

- The first meaning of translation is the replacement or “reproduction” of the same meaning from one language into another.
- The second meaning refers to the idea of “interpretation” which means explaining or interpreting the same meaning from one language to another.

The first definition of translation (replacement and reproduction)

A: Translation is the replacement of textual material in one source language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language, Target language (TL) (Catford, 1967)

B: Translation is a craft consisting of the attempt to replace a written message or a statement by the same message or statement in another language. (Newmark, 1981)

C: According to Brislin [1976:1], translation is the general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another language (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form, whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf.

D: Newmark [1981:7] defines translation as a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in another language.

E: Wilss [1982:3] defines translation as a transfer process which aims at transformation of a written SL text into an optimally TL text, and which requires the syntactic, the semantic and pragmatic understanding and analytical processing of the SL.

F: Richards [1991:389] defines translation as the process of changing speech or writing from one language (the source language) (SL) into another language (the target language) (TL), or the TL version that results from this process.

A translation which produces the general meaning and intention of the original but which does not closely follow the grammar, style or organization is known as “free translation”. A translation that approximates to a word-for-word representation of the original is known as “literal” translation.

The second definition of translation (interpretation):

In this space, the concept of interpretation is understood from two angles. The first one refers to the idea of defining interpretation with its common and ordinary conception that is: Interpreting, just like translation is fundamentally, the art of paraphrasing the interpreter-listener to a speaker in one language, grasps the constant of what is being said, and then paraphrases his/her understanding of the meaning using the tools of target language. However, just as you cannot explain a thought to someone if you did not fully understand that thought, neither can you translate or interpret something without mastery of the subject matter being relayed. [www.languagescientific.com]

But what is actually meant here is that when the interpretation is considered as a meaning for translation. So,

- a) Translation is the interpretation of the communication in a second thought having the same meaning as the written communication in a first language.
- b) Translation is the interpretation of a text and subsequent production of an equivalent text, also called “translation” that communicates the same meaning in another language. The text to be translated is called the “source text” and the language that is to be translated into is called the “target language”. The final production is sometimes called “target text”.

As previously pointed to, the term “interpretation” is also used with oral or sign language. It is the intellectual activity that consists of facilitating oral or sign language communication, either simultaneously or consecutively, between two or among three or more speakers who are not “interpreting” rather than “interpretation” is preferentially used for this activity by Anglophone translators, to avoid confusion with other meaning of the word “interpretation”. Unlike English, many languages do not employ two separate words to denote the activities written and live-communication translators. Even English does not always make the distinction frequently using “translation” as a synonym of “interpreting”.

Finally, if the meaning is replacement or interpretation, in written or in oral languages all of them convey or carry across one meaning from languages or SL into TL, and this is the etymological meaning of the word translation which means “carrying across”, or “bringing across”.

The Latin “translation” derives from the perfect passive “translation” of “transfer”, “across” + “ferre”, “to carry” or “to bring”. [Kasperek, 1983]

But why is the first meaning of translation, “replacement”, is more commonly used and that many references evoke and tackle this definition? That is due first to the fact that translation into TL must be reliable.

Historical Background of translation

When we talk about the history of translation, we should think of the theories and figures that have emerged in its different periods. In fact, each era is characterized by specific changes in translation theory. These changes differ from one place to another. For example, the development of translation in the Western world is not the same as in the Arab world, for each nation knew particular incidents that led to the birth of new theories. In the next part, the main changes that marked translation history in both the West and the Arab world will be examined.

Translation in the western world

For centuries, people believed in the relation between translation and the story of the tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis. According to the Bible, the descendants of Noah decided, after the great flood, to settle down in a plain in the land of Shinar. There, they committed a great sin. Instead of setting up a society that fits God’s will, they decided to challenge Him and build a tower that could reach Heaven. However, this plan was not completed, as God, recognizing their wish, regained control over them through a linguistic stratagem. He caused them to speak different languages so as not to understand each other. Then, he scattered them in the earth. After that incident, the number of languages increased through diversion, and people started to look for ways to communicate, hence the birth of translation (Benabdelali, 2006).

With the birth of translation studies and the increase of research in the domain, people started to get away from this story of Babel and look for specific dates and figures that mark the periods of translation history. Researchers mention that writings on translation go back to the Romans. Eric Jacobson states that translation is a Roman invention (McGuire: 1980). He points out that Cicero and Horace (first century BC) were the first theorists who distinguished between word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation.

Another period which marked a turning point in translation development was related to St Jerome (fourth century CE). *"His approach to translating the Greek Septuagint Bible into Latin would affect later translations of the scriptures."* (Munday, 2001). Later on, the translation of the Bible remained subject to much debate among Western theorists of translation for more than a thousand years.

Conflicts on Bible translation were intensified with the coming of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when

"translation came to be used as a weapon in both dogmatic and political conflicts as nation states began to emerge and the centralization of the Church started to weaken evidence in linguistic terms by the decline of Latin as a universal language." (McGuire, 1980)

The invention of the printing machine in the fifteenth century played an important role in the development of the field of tranents which in turn provide us with many models such as those of Riess, Wilss, Koller, House, North and Hulst.

The period is also characterized by pragmatic and systematic approach to the study of translation. The most famous figures that marked the twenties are Jean-Paul Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Alfred Malblanc (1963), George Mounin (1963), John C. Catford. (1965) and Eugene Nida (1964).

Nowadays, translation research started to take another path, which is more automatic. The invention of the Internet, together with the new technological development in communication and digital materials, has increased cultural exchanges between nations. This led translators to look for ways to cope with these changes and to utilize practical techniques that enable them to translate more and waste less. They also felt the need to enter the world of cinematographic translation, hence the birth of audiovisual translation. The latter technique, also called screen translation, is concerned with the translation of all kinds of TV programs, including films, series, and documentaries. This field is based on computers and translation software programs, and it is composed of two methods: dubbing and subtitling. In fact, audiovisual translation marks a turning point in the field of translation.

In short, translation has a very rich history in the West. Since its birth, translation was the subject of much controversy among theorists. Each theorist approaches it from his own ideology and field of study, the fact which gives its history a changing quality.

Types of translation

Literary Translation

Literary translation is the translation of varying genres. Serious imaginative literature has four principal types, namely poetry, drama, short story and novel. There is no doubt that the translation of literary works is considered by many to be one of the highest forms of translation as it involves so much more than simply translating a text. A literary translator must be capable of also translating feelings, cultural nuances, humor and other suitable

elements of a piece of work. Some go as far as to say that literary translations are not really possible. Jacobson went as far as to declare that (poetry by definition is untranslatable).

The traditional translation considers finding equivalents not just for lexis, syntax or concepts, but also for features like style, genre, figurative language, connotations as well as denotations, culture-specific concepts and values in such cases, the translator has to make a decision whether to keep the stylistic dimension and features of the original. In the case of translating poetry, for example, it is vital for a translator to decide whether the verse should be translated into verse, or into free verse or into prose. A rather interesting approach to literary translation comes from Riffaterre. He separates literary and non-literary use of language by saying that literature is different because a literary text would implicate not only other verbal texts but also other modes of significations like food, fashion, metaphysics, systems, traditional and conventional narratives like myths, legend, genres and other symbolic structures. Hence the literary translation should reflect or imitate these differences. He considers a literary text as an artifact and contains the signals which mark it as an artifact. It has been remarked that the study of literary translation should begin with a study of the translated text rather than with the process of translation, its role and function in the culture in which is translated (e.g. Toury). Lefevere mentions some impressive analytical tools and perspectives for studying literary translation:

(The ideological and poet logical constraints under which translations are produced should be explicated, and the strategy devised by the translator to deal with those constraints should be described: does he or she make a translation in a more descriptive or in a more refractive way? What are the intentions with which he or she produces foreign elements into the native system? Equivalence fidelity, freedom and the like will then be seen more as functions of a strategy adopted under certain constraints, rather than absolute requirements, or norms that should or should not be imposed or respected. It will seem that (great ages) of translation occur whenever a given – literature recognizes other as more prestigious and tries to emulate it.

Another area of sensitivity in the translation of literary texts is semantic or discourse prosody. This is an aspect of meaning acquired by a lexical item (through its repeated association with other items in the language or (a feature which extends over more than one unit in a linear string).

Technical and scientific Translation:

As science and technology develop, new English words are used to express new concepts, techniques and inventions come to existence. This development has brought to Arabic serious linguistic problems of expressing this ever-expanding wave of newly founded concepts and techniques, for which no equivalents in Arabic exist. Although coinage, borrowing, translation and other means of transfer made for a huge bulk of English Scientific terminology, translating of full technical texts from English into Arabic still poses a major challenge. It is understandable to note that Nida in his Discourse and Scientific Translation pointed out this challenge. He said: (If however, the translation of scientific texts from one language into another participating in modern cultural development is not too difficult, it is not surprising that the converse is true- that translating scientific material from a modern Indo-European language into a language largely outside the reach of Western science is extremely difficult. This is one of the really pressing problems confronting linguists in Asia today).

According to a number of recognized translation scholars such as Nida (1964), Newmark (1981), Cook (2003) and others, another classification of types of translation has engendered the following list.

There are eight types of translation:

1] Literal Translation:

A translation strategy in which a text (or part of a text) is subjected to translation at a low level of linguistic organization (e.g. the level of the word).

2] Word-for-word Translation:

In this kind of translation, aspect of the source text such as wording, word order, cultural references and local color are bound to be primary focus. To quote Cook (2003:56): word-for-word translation is impossible if the aim is to make sense.

3] Free translation:

A type of translation in which more attention is paid to producing a Target Text (TT) which reads more naturally than one which adheres closely to Source Text (ST) wording.

4] Semantic Translation:

Semantic Translation is a mode of text transfer which involve using ' the bare syntactic and semantic constrains of the TL (Target Language) to reproduce to practice contextual meaning of the author. Newmark (1981:22)

5] Communicative Translation:

Communicative is a mode which seeks (to produce the same effect on the TL readers as was product by the original on the SL reader (Ibid: 22)

6] Adaptive Translation:

This kind of translation whereby the SL text is freely translated into the TL. It is mainly a procedure appropriate to particular circumstances such as translating plays for the stage.

7] Idiomatic Translation:

Idiomatic translation reproduced original content. The translator prefers generalization and idiomatic expressions which different from the literal meaning of the word that make up those expressions, often peculiar to a particular language culture.

8] Faithful Translation:

Faithful translation is an attempt to make the target function in particular ways, and translations can be said faithful when they deliver what a particular reading thinks find more acceptable.

No one can deny the contribution of translation in the field of technology and science. The need for translation has grown rapidly as a result of the increasing demand for dissemination of information in the techno-scientific field.

As part of a wide variety of English for specific Purposes courses and syllabuses, Medical English is usually designed for academically oriented methods to develop different language skills necessary for effective participation of students in any basic health science courses. It facilitates the leap from basic English to academic English and prepares students to handle health science material with confidence. Those methods are destined to focus on various strategies required for medically oriented students and translators with the available dictionaries that make part of some of the mentioned methods, to help the students enlarge their vocabulary and get initiated for translation practices.

Medical terminology is a special language used by healthcare practitioners. That terminology is one of the difficulties faced in medical translation and in teaching medical English to the students of the medical field. Steps need to be taken to familiarize students and translators with Greek and Latin terms, as those terminologies will help them to translate better. From my experience as a teacher of translation to medical students I encountered many problems. So, the researcher aims to investigate these problems in order to find appropriate solutions.

The teaching of English for specific purposes (**ESP**) courses is not an easy task for the teachers of English either as a second or foreign language. Further, the teaching / learning of medical terminology is an acute problem for both teachers and learners of medical discipline.

The teachers cannot convey easily the ideas hidden in ambiguous lexemes which are derived from foreign languages other than English (i.e. Greek and Latin). In turn, the learners are frightened of long and complicated terms and they find it very difficult to pronounce, spell and understand unfamiliar forms. The present research paper investigates the difficulties encounter the learners of medicine in understanding medical terminology. It provides some strategies for the learners such as breaking down strategy, identifying the word – parts , removing affixation (pre-and post) and memorisation of eponyms (terms named after persons).

English is accepted as the language instruction of different sciences and technologies. It is distinguished uniquely from the other global languages, because it borrows freely and constantly from other languages (i.e. loan words), for instance, there are a lot of Arabic words introduce(d) from time to time not only in general English domain, but also in specialised areas such as medicine, pharmacology, etc. Obviously, we can witness Arabic terms as alcohol , alkali, alembic , naphtha , tartar , al-chemy , el-exir and so on . Many other languages enrich the English globe by a huge number of loans in different fields, exemplification, a lot of medical terminology or lexemes are originated from Latin and Greek because they were very popular as English widely used nowadays. Also, French, German and many other languages played and still play a very important role in supporting and promoting the phenomenon of English .Hence, English can be defined as not a language in its own right, but it is a collection of overlapping languages .Interestingly, many words transmitted to English by indirect way, that means passed from one language to another language then to English.

Serjeantson (1935:15-6) points out "some words have entered English, not by direct contact with the language which is its source, but indirectly through an intervening language. In this way many of the earlier Italian Loans come through French, the earlier loan words from the east come through Latin, many of them having already passed through Greek before reaching Latin Words travelled thousands of miles, westward from Asia to Europe, across Europe from east to west and from south to north, all round the Mediterranean from nation to nation and from generation to generation." There is no doubt then, English like any other languages serves the native speakers with a wide range of implementations in different disciplines, but it is striking to note that it serves the non-natives of English with an equally wide range of use as it is international and can be used in various fields of sciences, commerce, trade and communication between the different states of the world (Talgeri , 2004: 17) . English is used in three varieties .First language (L1), second language (SL) and foreign language (FL), for the learners of English as an SL and FL, English is implemented in two ways : English for general purposes (EGP) and English for specific purposes (ESP). EGP provides an unlimited range of language which can be applied for various purposes without identification of particular needs or specific people (Abdullah , 2005: 68) Whereas, ESP concentrates on a restricted use of language which is designed for specific needs of a particular group of learners for example English for medical studies, English for technicians, English for airlines employees, English for agricultural learners, etc. (ibid : 47).

English for specific purposes is one of the principal offshoots that has emerged in the last few decades and has been internationally accepted as the language of instruction of science and technology. In the last few years, the phenomenon of learning English for specific purposes has

begun to appear more and more frequently throughout the process of English language teaching.

Unquestionably this has become a major activity in today's highly automated world (Abdullah, 2009: 1 and Abdullah and Othman, 2010:4).

Medical English is a branch of ESP in which it is designed to meet the entire prerequisites of medical studies and profession. Medical lexicon which is the accepted international terminology of the discipline and the profession, is the prime need of the ESP learner of medicine irrespective of whether his own language is Arabic or Swahili or Hindi (Khan,1986: 146).

Medical Terminology

Every profession or field has its own jargon, i.e. a registered or a specialised language that allows for quick and efficient communication smoothly between members of the same discipline .Practitioners of medicine and health sciences have their own jargon or particular language for medicine . Medical terminology is a specialised language used by learners, specialists and experts of medicine and health sciences. It is regarded as one of the most difficult language among all the other specialised languages in different fields. Medical language includes complicated long terms which seem difficult to sound, spell, remember and even understand e.g. **amonasehydrocharideoymphaeoid, encephalomyeoneuropathy , dermatomucosomyositis** ,etc. Kenneth and Chuntana Methold (1975:6) argue "medical writing relies very heavily on a specialised vocabulary . most of these words cannot be usefully translated or even defined .Medical writing is often so difficult to understand , it is necessary to approach it from a variety of angles if one is to understand the ideas hidden in long words and even longer and complex terms ."

Further, medical language provides unfamiliar and strange words, for example some words contain triple (o) together as in **hysterosaplingoophorectomy** and others start in double (o) as in **oophorectomy** . Furthermore , the grammatical patterns in medical context are different , for instance the plural is formed by another way different from that one in an ordinary English , many nouns do not add "-s" or "-es" in the plural , but change in vowels or the last part of the words e.g. **amoeba / amoebae , bacterium / bacteria , phenomenon / phenomena , protozoon / protozoa, fungus / fungi, curriculum / curricula** , etc.

It is important to explain what is meant by medical terminology .The word "medical" is an adjective which means areas / contexts / settings of medicine. Terminology is divided into three parts: term- = word, -in- = inside (-o-, linker) and -logy = a branch of study. Therefore, it can be deduced that the two terms mean a branch of science which is concerned with the study or understanding what is hidden inside the medical words. There are different techniques or strategies and methods or approaches which can be used to understand the meanings of the medical terms and comprehending the ideas beyond such complicated lexemes .In the next discussion, the focus will be on the most important strategies and approaches which may help in learning and teaching medical terms.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted the descriptive and analytical method to analyze the results of the study. The researcher used an interview with teachers of medical English and with some professional translators in the medical field. The researcher prepared well an appropriate setting for interviewing the sample of the study. The sample was chosen randomly from the population of the study

Table (1) Shows size of population and sample for teachers

Gender	Population	Sample	Percentage
Male	20	10	50%
Female	2	2	100%

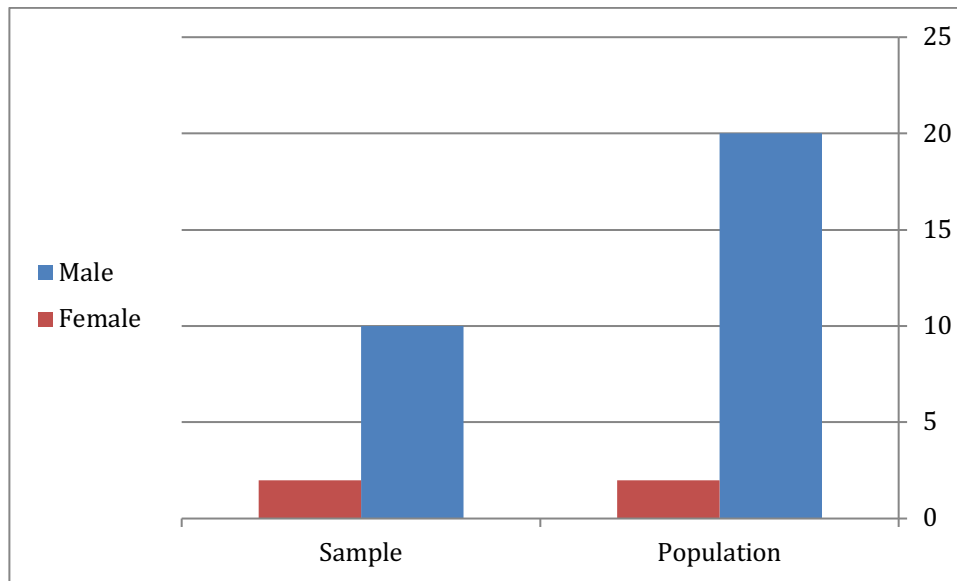


Table (2) Shows size of population and sample for translators

Gender	Population	Sample	Percentage
Male	20	10	50%
Female	10	5	50%

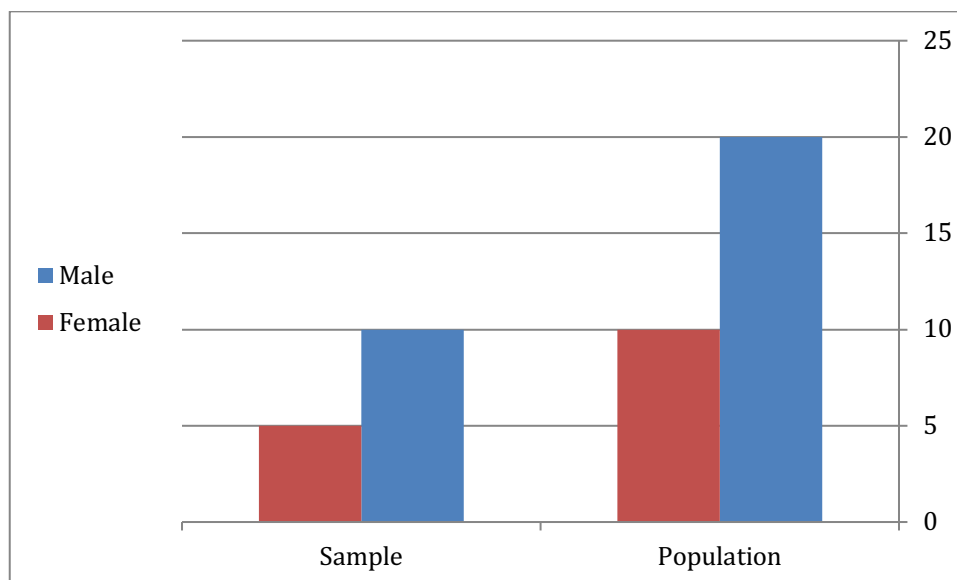


Table (3) Shows qualifications of teachers (Males)

Gender	Population	M.A	Percentage
Male	20	18	90%

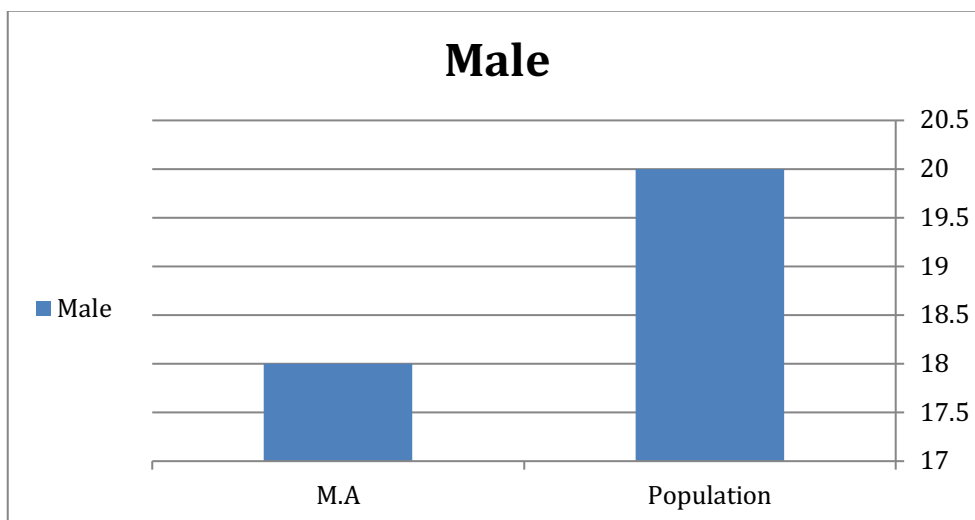


Table (4) Shows qualifications of teachers (Females)

Gender	Population	Above	Percentage
female	10	3	30%

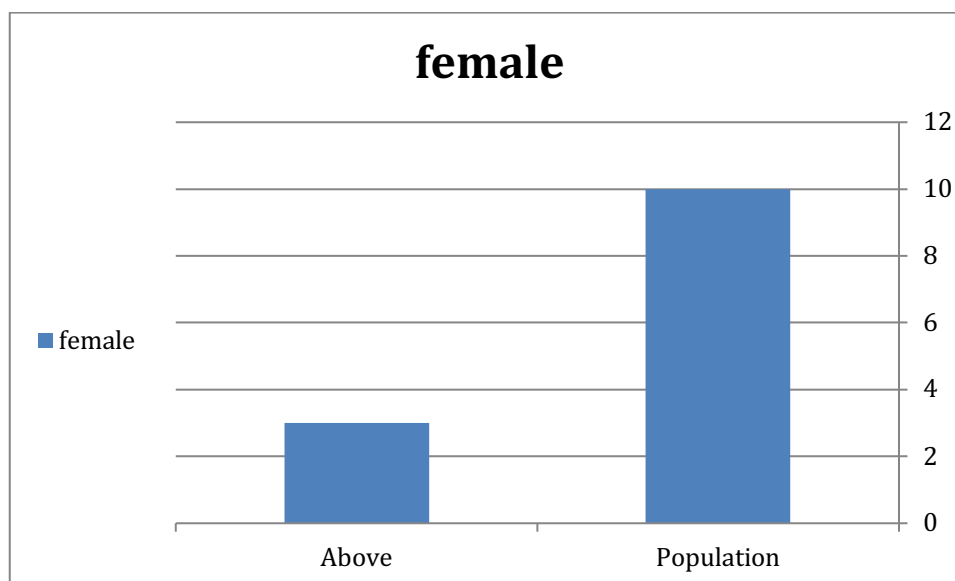


Table (5) Shows qualifications of translators (Male)

Gender	Population	M.A	Percentage
Male	20	5	25%

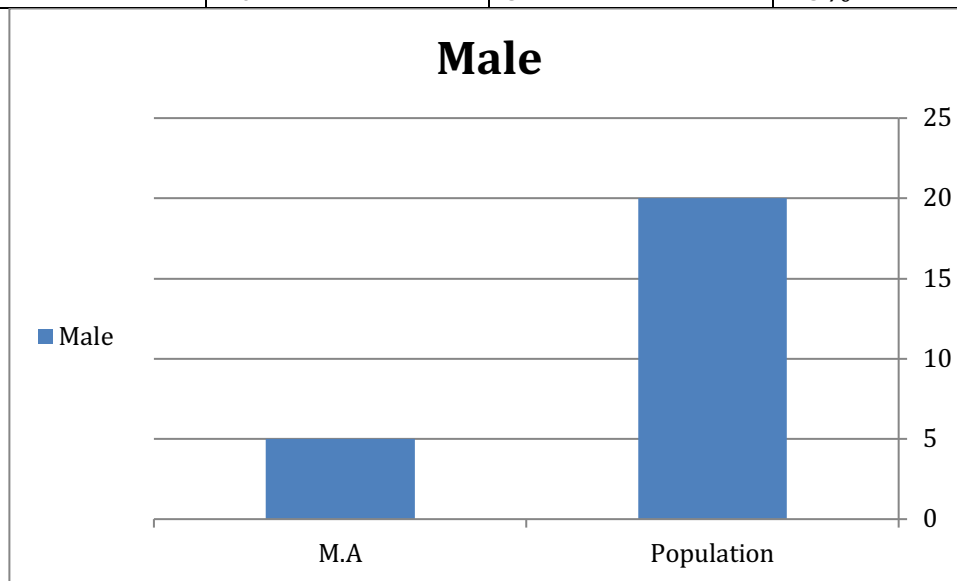
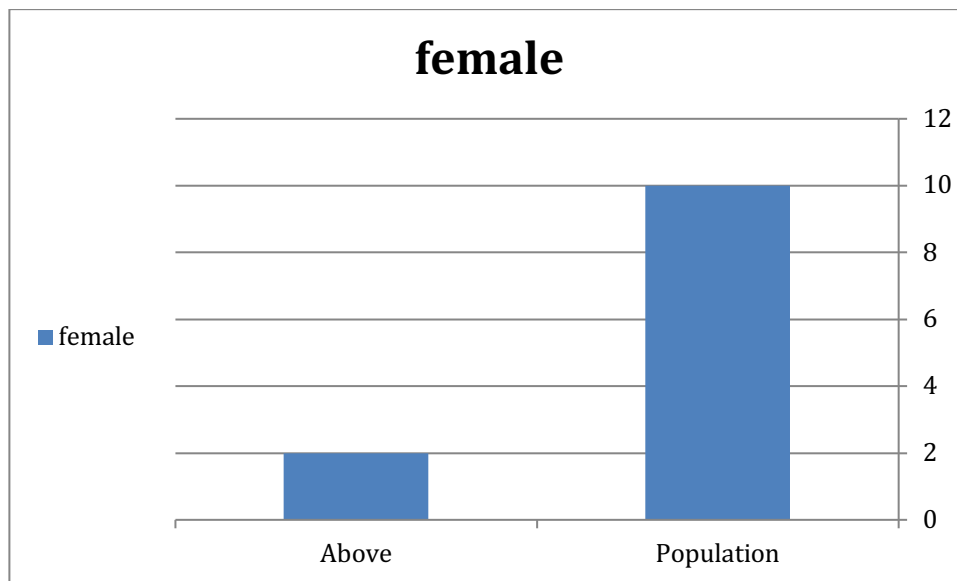


Table (6) Shows qualifications of translators (Female)

Gender	Population	Above	Percentage
female	10	2	20%



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of the interview the researcher could reach the following, medical translation requires great skills, because it needs to be precise and very accurate. Medical translation has terminologies that are unique to this field, and that appear in different spellings based on the target language. Added to this is the fact that abbreviations could mean different things. Teachers of medical English lack proficiency as well as specialized scientific knowledge that play key roles in successfully teaching and doing medical translation. It is a highly medical undertaking because of the number of specialized terms that are difficult or even not suitable to be translated into various languages. Teachers of medical English lack of in- service training. The nature of Arabic language is to some extent different from the other languages from which the medical terms are derived. Some of the respondents complain from the bad teaching-

learning environment and shortage of teaching audiovisuals. Other respondents argued about remuneration and cost of living they said that their income from teaching or translating in general and translating and teaching of medical English doesn't suffice their needs.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study is to investigate the problems of teaching and translating medical English. The researcher used interview as a tool to collect data about the problem. The sample of the study was chosen randomly from the population of the study. The researcher set and discussed the results which emerged from the interview. Findings and recommendation for solving the problems are shown below.

FINDINGS

1. Teaching and translating medical English need special qualifications.
2. Training is crucial.
3. The different cultures and origins of English, Latin and Arabic Language cause some difficulties.
4. Teachers and translators are not motivated enough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Qualification of teachers and translators of medical English is very important.
2. Decision makers and syllabus designers must consider the appropriate syllabuses for teaching medical English.
3. Medical dictionaries and other further information resources should be available to teachers and translators of medical English.
4. In-service training for teachers and translators of medical English is a must.
5. Teachers and translators of medical English should be motivated.
6. Proper assessment to the work of the teachers and translators of medical English is of vital importance.
7. An evaluation of the achievement of the required goals of teaching and translating medical English should be taken with high consideration.
8. Improvement of the working environment.

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