

The Implementation of ESP in the Algerian Hydrocarbon Sector

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Abstract: *this paper aims to consider the role of the English language in globalization processes and in the Algerian hydrocarbon sector. Given the English language occupies a very important place in the hydrocarbon industry and represents a desirable asset and even a must for job market conditions and in company international communication. Given the fact that the oil and gas industry constitutes a key market sector in today's globalized economy and an important job provider. Hence, the present communication entitled **the Implementation of ESP in the Algerian Hydrocarbon Sector** deals with the issue of the English language learners' proficiency in the field. In fact, it focuses on the professional profile and what communication skills in relevant situations and contexts need to be developed to conduct such activities in the processes of exploration, extraction, refining, transportation, marketing products, and management roles.*

Key words: *globalization, English, the hydrocarbon sector*

Résumé: *La langue anglaise occupe une place très importante non seulement dans l'industrie des hydrocarbures, mais aussi dans le marché du travail et la communication internationale en entreprises. En effet, l'industrie pétrolière et gazière constitue un secteur clé dans l'économie mondialisée d'aujourd'hui. C'est ainsi que la présente communication intitulée **the Implementation of ESP in the Algerian Hydrocarbon Sector** soulève le problème de la maîtrise de la langue anglaise chez les apprenants de cette langue dans ce secteur par rapport à leur profil professionnel et des compétences de communication nécessaires à développer dans des situations et contextes pertinents pour mener les différentes activités dans les multiple processus, d'extraction, de raffinage, de transport, de commercialisation des produits et même de gestion.*

Mots clés: *globalisation, anglais, hydrocarbures.*

I. Introduction

The phenomenon of globalization has affected Man's life and his environment in different ways and domains. As regards language, it has liberated negative and positive effects contributing either to the empowerment and development of some languages and

their cultures to the extent of global domination or leading to the displacement and even extinction of other languages and cultures. Languages that accompanied industrial and technological development have developed specific linguistic registers that linguists term language for specific purposes i.e. (LSP), but nowadays this term is mostly linked to the English language. As Gnutzmann (2009:517) notes,

When discussing Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) it is worth bearing in mind that in the vast majority of cases one is, in fact, talking about English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and, also, to a considerable extent, about the use of English in scientific, academic and business communication. This is not surprising in view of the dynamic development of English as a medium of world-wide communication affecting more or less all domains of people's lives and activities.

Language is the fundamental source of communication. According to Gnutzmann, in a globalized and interconnected world, the importance of English cannot be denied or neglected. It is contemplated as the means of ascending knowledge because English has been widely used and spread as the globalization of science, technology, business, etc., and lead to the emergence of languages for specific purposes (LSP) or more precisely to English for specific purposes (ESP). It is quite important to highlight that ESP is designed and developed based on an assessment of purposes, needs and the activities for which English is needed to be acquired.

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2. English and Globalization

Globalization rhymes with English as the global language and its use for specific purposes and business. Several factors can be considered to a position behind English as a global language and that of business success. Actuality has emerged as a global language as an upshot of conquest and colonization to be then twined later with modernism, development, and success in business. Business English is presently one branch of ESP, Dudley-Evans & St John (1996) cite, “Business English as an umbrella term used similarly to the term English for specific Purposes to embrace both general courses in the appropriate lexis and grammar for business communication.”

Furthermore, technological development, economic globalization, improved communication, and its straightforward involvement in knowledge dissemination mainly the scientific and technological outcomes as well as commercial, economic, and industrial transactions as regards corporations, all, have contributed to its global promotion. In terms of use, English occupies different statuses according to whether used as a native language, second, official, or foreign one. As Christina and Gergana (2003:3) note, this classification is visualized by the so-called three-circle-model (reported in Crystal 2003). Within this line of thought, Fennel (2001:243) distinguishes four factors that accordingly led to the status of English as a global language.

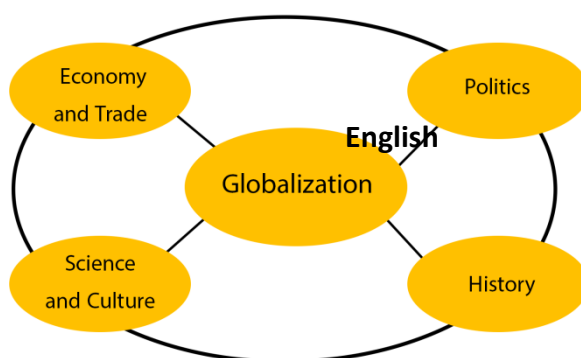


Figure (1): Main Factors of English Globalization

2.1 Historical and political factors

The ancient empires are an early example of globalization namely the “British colonialism from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, the British leadership in the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the American economic superiority and political leadership, and the American technological domination.”(qt in Romanowski 2017:42). Therefore, globalization is a process completed in the 20th century through which new policies and systems have spread in the world.

2.2 Science and culture factor

Globalization of English language and its effects on cultural identity needs to be understood in English as an instrument for economic success and also English as a tool for cross-cultural communication.

Another very important factor contributing to the status the English language acquired and known nowadays as English for Specific Purposes i.e. ESP is the necessity people in different work spheres felt to conduct some professional activities or knowledge updating ones. A whole revolution to adapt teaching methods and material to learners’ needs is launched for that purpose. As Block and Cameron (2002:5) argue “... globalization changes the conditions under which language learning takes place. In this sphere as in others, some of the most significant changes are economic.

2.3 Economic factor

Many thinkers and ideologists determine that the major factor of globalization is economy and business. ” Cameron (2000) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000) believe economic reasons to be most important for what language to learn and what linguistic skills to develop. For Block and Cameron (op cit) ‘Communication skills’ and the new literacies demanded by new technologies, as well as competence in one or more second/foreign languages, all represent valuable ‘linguistic capital’, to use Bourdieu’s (1991) term. Heller (1999) among others argues that “languages are coming to be treated more and more like commodities and that this view is displacing traditional ideologies in which languages were primarily symbols of ethnic or national identity.” (qt in Block and Cameron: op cit). This

view has even disturbed if not diverted national language policies. As Bowles and Cogo (2016:4) notes “In international business contexts, especially multinational corporations the use of English as a ‘corporate language’ has become a common practice, if not an official recognition of the company’s language policy.”

3. The Status of the English Language in Algeria

The case of Algeria in terms of language use and policy is no exception. The need for foreign languages has even slowed down the Arabization policy in scientific and high technology demanding sectors among which the hydrocarbon sector which manifests the need for foreign languages. In addition to the use of French for historical reasons, a need for English was felt as a *sine qua non* condition in some economic sectors.

Phillipson (1992:6), in his turn argues,

English has a dominant position in science, technology, medicine, and computers; in research, books, periodicals, and software; in transitional business, trade, shipping, and aviation; in diplomacy, and international organizations; in mass media entertainment, news agencies and journalism; in youth culture and sport, in education systems, as the most widely learned foreign language.

This is because, in many international companies, employees come from different countries with different language backgrounds requiring thus a common language of a *lingua franca* status. For the modern world of business, international communication is inseparably linked to English as a *lingua franca*. According to Sternkopf (2004:46), “A Study conducted by Zeh-Glocker (1999) demonstrates that 81% of the companies needed English “very frequently” or “frequently” for business communication, this idea is quietly supported by Nadezda Stojkovic (2015:37) who observes

We are all aware that English has become the international language of business. This has been facilitated by the changes and advancements in technology ... so that English has gained a role it has never had before. We are facing an incredible challenge when it comes to teaching Business English, the globalised world, endless possibilities and new markets worldwide, demand that business people seek professional language training to prepare themselves for the real business situations they encounter ... business people have specific expectations and needs that require developing generalized business skills such as giving presentations, taking notes, participating in meetings, making phone calls, negotiating and socializing.

It is pivotal to highlight that the hydrocarbon sector in Algeria is by far the largest industrial business in exporting oil, gas, and the main source of investment. SONATRACH¹ a French word which stands for: the national company for the research, production, shipping, transformation and trade of the hydrocarbons. It is one of the key market job providers and a key economic sector, business people at high professional hierarchies are not the only working fraction feeling the need for business English.

University students who are preparing themselves for professional careers, senior technicians, and engineers in different domains are all concerned with the need to further their knowledge of English tailored to their corresponding area of practice to be ready for real-life situations in the workplace.

3. English in the Hydrocarbon Sector

English occupies a very important place in the hydrocarbon industry and represents an advantageous skill and even a necessity for job market recruiting conditions and in-company international communication. As the oil and gas industry constitutes a key market sector in today's globalized economy and an important job provider, it is evident that the issue of English language proficiency in this very field becomes an individual and a shared worry among large fractions of workers, all hierarchies and job profiles included.

This has recently developed into "communities of practice" interest as regards language learning focusing on the professional profile and what communication skills in relevant situations and contexts need to be developed to conduct such activities in the processes of exploration, extraction, refining, transportation, marketing products, and even management roles

The hydrocarbons sector that is, the oil and gas industry, which is one of the most important industries in Algeria and a promising job market, is a working place in which the use of English is of great necessity. In fact, English language proficiency is not a condition for recruitment because they rather require

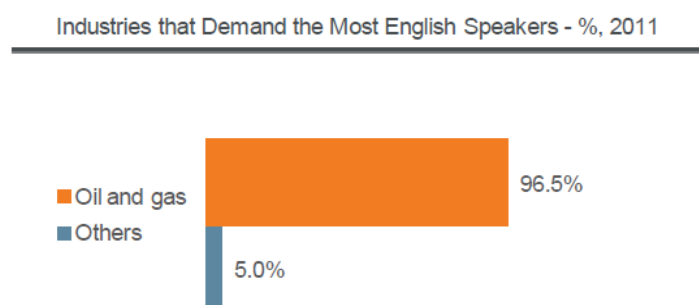
¹ Société Nationale pour la Recherche, la Production, le Transport, la Transformation, et la Commercialisation des Hydrocarbures .

hydrocarbon profile senior technicians and engineers from different petroleum specialties such as petroleum geologists, production engineers, and drilling engineers among others.

However, necessity also arose to give interest to the English language which is perceived as a key step in the development of foreign direct investment growth. In fact, it is the foreign direct investment which is behind the need to giving importance to English in helping retain existing foreign companies as well as attracting new ones.

Furthermore, oil and gas multinational companies are also facing challenges in developing a workforce with sufficiently strong English skills. As this industry contributes greatly to economic development, there is a strong imperative for improved English-speaking skills in the workforce. This increasing demand for English education motivates many young Algerians to take up English education to improve their chances of employment with national and multinationals that offer a very attractive salary grid corresponding to the different professional positions.

Figure (1) shows that the oil and gas companies are key drivers of the English language. The Euromonitor International (2011:67), the UK-based English course provider, Language Solutions International, reveals “The demand for English speakers from oil and gas companies is increasingly high. The institute provides services to Baker Hughes, Anadarko, BP, Burlington Resources, Halliburton, Schlumberger, and Sonahess as well as government monopoly Sonatrach.” See Figure :1



Source: Euromonitor International from trade interviews, 2011
Note: "Others" include sectors excluding oil and gas

Figure (2): Industries that Demand the English Language**4. SONATRACH Pedagogic centers and institutions**

The English language then is becoming a sought-after additional skill that plays an important role in job securing. In the job market, it is becoming a scarce asset that multinational companies, and in particular oil and gas companies are in search of as they struggle to find employees with the required language skills. Many are actively seeking a solution to this by providing general business English training to their employees through Centers of Intensive Training for Language (CIEL) and other external language providers. SONATRACH's human resource services as well show interest to provide the workforce directly engaged in the up, mid and downstream activities with the necessary English skills.

Created on December 31, 1963, SONATRACH must respond to this concern to mobilize the resources of the oil revenue perceived very early as a driving force in the development of Algeria.

Over the years, SONATRACH has become a powerful element of national development mainly economic and social development. the ministry of energy in Algeria used to provide the necessary vocational staff through its own training institutions among which the I.N.H.² (National Institute of the Hydrocarbons), and IAP³ (the Algerian Institute of Petroleum) whose mission is to provide the necessary staff with both the technical and the English language skills for a specific range of roles within the oil, gas and energy industry. In the case of IAP Arzew, the English language used to be the medium of instruction for all disciplines. IAP trainees used to be proficient both in general and technical English be they in the mechanics, instrumentation, or gas transport specialties. It should be noted that the trainees used to start their training with an intensive course in English for a whole semester before moving forward to pre-specialty and specialty levels offered by the institution as cited above.

² Institut Nationale des Hydrocarbures

³ Institut Algérien du Pétrole

However, with the opening of the university in the industrial sector, different faculties among which l'USTO⁴ (Oran Technology and Science University) started to provide technical staff to the industrial job market among which SONATRACH. Important to note also that the incoming university workforce showed some in-field practice lacks as regards the linguistic one. Thus SONATRACH took on its behalf the mission of human resource policy to offer the employees constant training along with their carrier in technical and linguistic issues, an activity ascribed to the in Company Training Centre, CPE⁵ now becoming SMA (SONATRACH MANAGEMENT ACADEMY) which provides training in technological and managerial domains as well as other domains including foreign languages (English and French), finance, law, and computing.

5. Needs Analysis of the ESP Learners

Given the different specific work spheres in the oil and gas industry, the demand for ESP is of great importance. For efficiency reasons, we believe the organization of the course to be tailored to every specific group of learners including staff from different technical domains as well as a human science background staff hired for administration and managerial purposes. To this end, specific English language needs to be tailored to every learner, a case that impacts the learner's motivation. The English course in this case is rather one which should be based on need analysis occupational purposes rather than academic ones. Palmer (1964) mentions that selective concentration on particular skills and abilities are an important characteristic of ESP.

It requires the constitution of groups of learners having similar needs, wants, and lacks to develop communication skills within appropriate situations and contexts related to their range of activities within their domain, to develop vocabulary and terminology linked to the key processes; and practice the use of the language through a range of communication activities including presentations, discussions, technical reading, and technical writing. According to Richard et al. (1992) "needs analysis is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or a group of learners requires a language."

⁴ Université des Sciences et Technologie d'Oran

⁵ Centre de perfectionnement en Entreprise

This helps the learners to build upon their previous competence in English and enables them to develop further their proficiency in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The focus should concern technical writing and oral presentations, the most important and frequent activities related to the discipline of Engineering. This is to improve the ability to convey technical content clearly and convincingly in both writing and speaking in a work environment where they are exposed to career-specific vocabulary including such topics as tools, materials, numbers, engineering concepts, career options, petroleum mapping, oil rig mechanical systems, and drilling processes to cite very few of them.

The practical language skills, the course broadly concerns pedagogical subjects allowing learners to express measurements and statistics, and to describe the way things work, parts of the whole, and relations. Among other issues is the need to communicate with confidence by solving issues of pronunciation, developing fluency using the language of presentations, meetings, and negotiations relevant to their occupations. In parallel and for cultural considerations, learners need to be introduced to social English for business and socializing purposes, for managing international teams, as well as English for marketing petroleum products and dealing with financial issues.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper convincingly advocates the need to adopt English as a global language for communication emphasizing the importance of ESP teaching. Obviously, having one common language can ease the communication barriers and because of globalization, the acquisition of English is very essential because countries are becoming globally integrated with all aspects in terms of culture, economy, science, and commerce. This integration can be achieved only when the spoken language is unified and the same. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a learner-centered approach to teaching, which focuses on developing communicative competence in a specific discipline. Moreover, ESP courses aim to equip learners with a certain English proficiency level for a situation where the language is going to be used, i.e., target needs. Therefore, to capture the learners' needs and skills in workplace communication many methods have been suggested to adapt the practical needs related to the educational materials and approaches

Because the Worldwide hydrocarbon market is full of challenges and intense competitions, SONATRACH pedagogic centers/ educational institutional, especially foreign languages departments need to be very effective in workplace learning practices that impact the profession of the learners/trainees in addition to having immediate applicability to their professional responsibilities and should be useful in a specific workplace. Consequently, Being able to communicate successfully in English, in and outside the company, makes the worker skill-set more attractive to conduct business internationally and also for career progression.

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