

Journal of legal and social studies

Issn: 2507-7333

Eissn: 2676-1742

Bridging the Gap: The Interplay between Specialized and General Language

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Date of send: 02/06/2025	date of acceptance: 01/07/2025	Date of Publication: 01/09/2025
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Abstract :

The use of specialized languages is currently widespread across various domains—professional, medical, scientific, and advertising. Their importance thus transcends being a mere tool for carrying out specialized tasks in different fields. They extend to scientific expression in both fundamental and applied disciplines, to articulating modern technologies, and to fulfilling the communicative requirements of the respective professions. Specialized languages represent a limited and context-bound linguistic reality adhered to by their users, who already share a common general language. Moreover, these languages possess distinctive linguistic features in terms of morphological structures, vocabulary, syntax, symbolic systems, and levels of usage.

Keywords: specialized language; general language; languages for specific purposes; scientific language; functionality.

First: The Concept of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP): Specialized Language

Languages for Specific Purposes—also known as “Language for Special Purposes” or “Scientific and Technical Language”—represent a structured and precise form of language, as defined by Herbert Bicht and Jennifer Draskaw. This type of language is used in specific contexts to achieve particular goals, providing learners with specialized information at varying levels of complexity, from highly technical content aimed at experts to more accessible material intended to facilitate knowledge transfer in a given scientific field. Its function is to present this information clearly, concisely, and accurately.

These languages serve as tools for expressing scientific content and are commonly referred to as *langues spéciales*, *langues spécialisées*, *langues des spécialités*, or *languages for specific purposes*. These terms are generally synonymous in meaning: they all denote the use of language in specific academic or professional domains. Consequently, linguists have offered several definitions of LSP, including that it comprises the set of linguistic means used within a communicative context related to a particular field of specialization, thereby ensuring effective communication among its users.

Researchers J. Humbley and D. Condel define specialized language as any linguistic output produced by a specialist within a professional domain tied to their expertise. The unity of LSP is linked to any linguistic production generated by an expert in their field. Pierre Lerat describes LSP as a means of expressing specialized scientific domains; in his view, it involves using everyday language in a technical manner to address specialized topics.

Picht, H., & Draskau, J. (2000). *Introduction to terminology* (M. M. H. Khalil, Trans.). Kuwait: Scientific Publishing Council.

Hoffmann. (1992). *Kommunikationsmittel Fachsprache: Eine Einführung* (B. Spillner, Trans.). In *Textes médicaux français et allemands: Langage* (p. 65). Berlin.

From the above, we can conclude that LSP represents a highly accurate linguistic system characterized by its capacity to express clear and specific concepts closely tied to a particular domain. It fundamentally differs from general language in terms of function and purpose; LSP is not meant for everyday communication but rather serves as an effective tool for conveying specialized knowledge in a structured and direct manner. It supports scientific, technical, or professional objectives and serves as the optimal medium for delivering concepts and ideas within a specialized framework—leaving no room for ambiguity or misunderstanding.

Researcher F. Lazar points out that LSP systematically aims to refine and purify its vocabulary by eliminating ambiguous elements and by organizing its structures and meanings to achieve clear, precise content. These qualities make LSP a vital instrument for promoting effective communication in scientific, technical, and professional domains.

For instance, in the medical field, LSP utilizes precise terminology such as “chemotherapy” or “clinical diagnosis,” which convey universally agreed-upon meanings that enable shared understanding among medical professionals. In engineering, terms like “material stress” describe specific technical concepts that cannot be interpreted using general language.

Thus, we can assert that LSP is not merely a communicative tool but a comprehensive system designed to ensure clarity, precision, and efficiency in knowledge transmission. It is indispensable across all branches of science and specialized knowledge.

Candel, H. J. (n.d.). Oralisation of acronyms in aeronautics. *Linx*, 30, 141.

Didaoui, M. (n.d.). *Translation and communication* (p. 45). Casablanca: Al-Markaz Al-Thaqafi Al-Arabi.

Hoffmann. (1992). *Kommunikationsmittel Fachsprache: Eine Einführung* (B. Spillner, Trans.). In *Textes médicaux français et allemands: Langage* (p. 65). Berlin.

Lerat, P. (1995). *Les langues spécialisées* (p. 21). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Picht, H., & Draskau, J. (2000). *Introduction to terminology* (M. M. H. Khalil, Trans.) (p. 15). Kuwait: Scientific Publishing Council.

LSP is used both in professional and academic settings. Its importance lies in its ability not only to fulfill administrative or operational functions but also to express scientific ideas in theoretical, applied, and constructive contexts, including the articulation of modern technical and technological terminology.

Though LSP may be used in spoken form, its written form is considered more prominent and distinguishable. Specialized language primarily relies on a set of core terms, often derived from the natural language. However, despite their familiar roots, these words acquire precise and specific meanings when used in scientific or professional contexts. Among the key features that distinguish LSP, we can highlight the following:

1. Tendency Toward Precision

Precision is a foundational feature of LSP content, playing a central role in its structure. This quality is reflected in its capacity to express concepts and ideas with absolute clarity, free from ambiguity or misinterpretation. LSP strictly avoids polysemy and synonymy, relying on fixed, unambiguous meanings to guarantee objective and precise information transfer. A core principle in LSP is assigning one term to each concept, ensuring precise expression and eliminating vagueness or figurative language. These characteristics are essential to scientific and technical terminology, which strives for directness and clarity.

2. Use of Abbreviation

This feature refers to the effective and accurate communication of knowledge using the fewest words possible. One of the most common techniques is compounding or acronym formation, where parts of words are merged or shortened to produce concise, precise expressions. Generally, LSP excels in generating highly specific terms and straightforward linguistic structures, promoting rapid comprehension and eliminating complexity or confusion—making it a powerful tool for knowledge dissemination.

Boualmerka, M. (2008). *Translation of terminology and concepts derived from Islamic law into French* (Master's thesis, Mentouri University, Constantine), 12.

Al-Misawi, K. (2013). *Linguistic terminology and the formation of concept* (1st ed., pp. 54, 65). Algiers: Al-Ikhtilaf Publishing.

3. Clarity That Reveals Truths and Facilitates Understanding

LSP is marked by its linguistic clarity, employing simple and precise syntactic structures to serve specific communicative purposes. It avoids vague or obscure expressions, steering clear of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, similes, and euphemisms, which might introduce multiple interpretations. Through this practice, LSP achieves a more effective means of transmitting knowledge, benefiting both specialists and non-specialists by reducing the cognitive load required for comprehension and enhancing scientific and technical communication.

Boualmerka, M. (2008). *Translation of terms and concepts derived from Islamic law into French* (Master's thesis, Mentouri University, Constantine), 12.

Hijazi, M. F. (n.d.). *Linguistic foundations of terminology science* (p. 15). Cairo: Gharib Library.

Messaoui, K. (2013). *Linguistic terminology and the establishment of the concept* (1st ed., pp. 54, 65). Algiers: Al-Ikhtilaf Publications.

4. Objectivity

Objectivity is fundamental to ensuring the accuracy and reliability of scientific information in LSP. This means that phrases and concepts must adhere to the cognitive standards and values specific to each scientific field. Objectivity is manifested through the presentation of phenomena and scientific facts in a balanced and realistic manner, free from distortion or bias. The separation between scientific knowledge and personal opinion or emotional expression is critical, requiring scientific texts to reflect reality as it is—free from subjective interpretation. Consequently, objectivity strengthens the scientific credibility and

integrity of the language used, ensuring accurate and trustworthy knowledge dissemination.

Hegazi, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (p. 15). Cairo: Gharib Library.

Overall, LSP is characterized by its use of precise terminology and simple, unambiguous syntax. The theoretical development of these languages has played a crucial role in identifying their key features, particularly their ability to convey scientific concepts with high clarity. These characteristics eliminate vagueness and allusions, promoting unambiguous understanding.

While LSP shares basic grammatical and morphological structures with general language, it reconfigures them to produce specialized meanings distinct from their everyday use. Thus, every word or term in LSP carries a precise, context-specific meaning that enhances the language's effectiveness in conveying specialized knowledge.

Moreover, LSP syntax is marked by clarity and simplicity. Its primary goal is the direct and accurate transmission of knowledge and information, focusing on accessibility and intelligibility. This scientific approach facilitates effective communication between specialists and the wider public, allowing factual information to be expressed objectively without stylistic embellishment. Scientific texts use refined language and straightforward structures, with each linguistic unit positioned appropriately, avoiding ornamental flourishes or excessive verbosity that may hinder comprehension. By prioritizing clarity and precision, LSP becomes a highly efficient tool for knowledge transfer, helping ensure that scientific concepts are easily understood—free from ambiguity or unnecessary complexity.

Ibid., pp. 14–15.

Hegazi, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (pp. 14–15). Cairo: Gharib Library.

Mohamed, A. (1990). *Arabization in the past and present* (p. 286). Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi.

Avoiding emotional and imaginative expression is a core principle of LSP discourse. Scientific texts exclude emotional influence and refrain from artistic or rhetorical ornamentation, relying instead on accurate vocabulary and clear terminology to communicate meaning effectively. The goal is to present information directly and truthfully, with an emphasis on precision and honesty. These traits are intrinsic to the nature of scientific language, whose aim is to maintain the credibility and transparency of knowledge by avoiding any non-scientific influence that could affect the reader's understanding.

Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) are also characterized by their “coloration,” which is used only by individuals or specific groups operating within a particular thematic framework. In this context, the Prague School focuses on defining LSPs as part of the general linguistic system, considering them as a subordinate style thereof. These languages are marked by general features such as precise terminology and clear, straightforward syntactic structures, which make them more capable of effectively and accurately expressing specialized concepts.

From the Prague School's perspective, LSPs are regarded as a special form of linguistic style and are categorized within what is known as the functional style. This style is used to fulfill specific and concrete objectives within specialized contexts. These features render LSPs powerful and effective tools for transmitting scientific and technical knowledge in alignment with the communicative functions they serve among specialists.

Al-Khoury, C. (2001). Arabic as the language of science. *Journal of the Arabic Language Academy*, 76(2), 370.

Garmadi, J. (1990). *Sociolinguistics* (H. K. Ahmed, Trans.; 1st ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Taliaa.

Hegazi, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (p. 15). Cairo: Gharib Library.

Languages for Specific Purposes—or special languages—are a general expression referring to the forms of language used in specific communicative situations, whether written or spoken. The defining elements of LSPs lie beyond the boundaries of language itself, despite their linguistic nature, granting them purely communicative dimensions. From this standpoint, a special language is a blend of terminology and other linguistic devices designed to eliminate ambiguity and enhance clarity in communication within particular fields. It is not limited to terminology alone but includes specialized denominations that contribute to achieving precision and clarity in scientific or professional communication—including non-linguistic symbols embedded in utterances governed by the natural resources of a particular language. Thus, LSPs can be defined as technically conveying specialized knowledge.

According to **Pierre Lerat**, specialized language has the following noteworthy characteristics:

1. “A specialized language is, first and foremost, a language of use in a specific context.” The “language of specialization,” as referred to by the Prague School, is the same natural language (as an autonomous system) placed at the service of a principal function: the transmission of knowledge.
2. The degree of technicality employed in formulations varies according to the needs and requirements of communication across different fields. These needs may lead to the use of languages not officially recognized as “working languages” by major institutions. For example, in the civil aviation sector, a single language is imposed among pilots to reduce the risk of errors or hazards, underscoring the importance of adopting a unified language to ensure safe communication and reduce the likelihood of accidents. This demonstrates how changes in communication requirements can place constraints on certain languages or even mandate the use of one language in specific situations to minimize risks and enhance specialist interaction. Additionally, this often involves the use of non-linguistic encoding alongside scientific proper nouns (e.g., those referencing cities or villages), all in pursuit of optimal correspondence.

3. Specialized knowledge is designated by terminology, which consists, first and foremost, of words and word groups (including nominal, adjectival, and verbal phrases) subject to conventional definitions. These terms exist in competitive contexts with other terms within the same language and often coexist with vocabulary borrowed from other languages. Such terms can even transcend linguistic boundaries to be usable across multiple semiotic systems, as seen with the terms “water” and “dihydrogen monoxide (H_2O).” While both refer to the same substance, “water” is commonly used in everyday contexts, whereas “ H_2O ” is primarily used in scientific discourse. This illustrates how terms produce different linguistic effects based on context: the former is used in ordinary language, the latter in specialized settings. Therefore, caution is needed when distinguishing between how natural languages function and how semiotic systems (such as chemical symbols or technical terms) operate and are interpreted under entirely different rules and standards.

Al-Mayssawi, K. (2013). *The linguistic term and the formation of the concept* (pp. 54, 56). Algiers: Al-Ikhtilaf Publications.

Maria Teresa Cabré classified the features of LSPs into three main categories:

1. **Pragmatic Features:**

These features pertain to usage. LSPs are part of general language but are used in specific communicative contexts. As such, they are restricted to a subset of speakers of the general language, which is used by a larger population. LSP users are fewer in number because specialized languages serve as a means of communication among experts. Moreover, LSPs act as bridges connecting specialists around the world. Cabré argues that a specialist can understand a text in their field even if it is written in a different language, thereby facilitating communication among experts from different linguistic backgrounds.

2. **Functional Features**

These refer to the instrumental role of LSPs. According to De Beaugrande, the primary function of LSPs is the transmission and communication of information, with domain-specific terms serving to name domain-specific concepts. Regardless of the user's level, effective transmission of information remains the primary goal of LSPs. Furthermore, they serve an educational function: the aim of teaching LSPs to students is to train them in spoken and written expression and help them comprehend academic texts related to their field. Thus, LSPs play an essential role in students' comprehensive understanding of their field of study, which would otherwise be incomplete without command of its specialized language.

3. **Linguistic Features:**

Lerat, P. (n.d.). *Discourse of specialized languages* (Y. Meqran, Trans., pp. 373–374).

Hegazy, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (p. 16). Cairo: Gharib Library.

Taher, M. (n.d.). *The quality of terminology used in secondary education* (Master's thesis, University of Algiers, p. 27).

Ibid., p. 27.

These involve the specific linguistic elements that appear in specialized texts and distinguish them from other types of discourse. LSPs have a unique style—namely, technical and scientific. They are marked by conciseness and the avoidance of redundancy. Every linguistic unit—whether a word or sentence—is used solely for the purpose of accurately describing and representing reality. This purpose does not require figurative language or imagination.

Linguists have disagreed on the nature of specialized language. Some consider it a **natural language**, while others see it as a **sub-language**:

A. Specialized Language as a Natural Language:

Proponents of this approach argue that specialized language is a natural language used to convey specific information. The core system remains the same, while the labels and designations change, indicating that LSP is merely an extension or continuation of the natural language—though differing at the lexical level and in some structural expressions. In this sense, LSPs are the same as natural language, only adapted to a professional usage for transmitting specialized knowledge. They consist of words or word groups, and therefore belong to the realm of natural language.

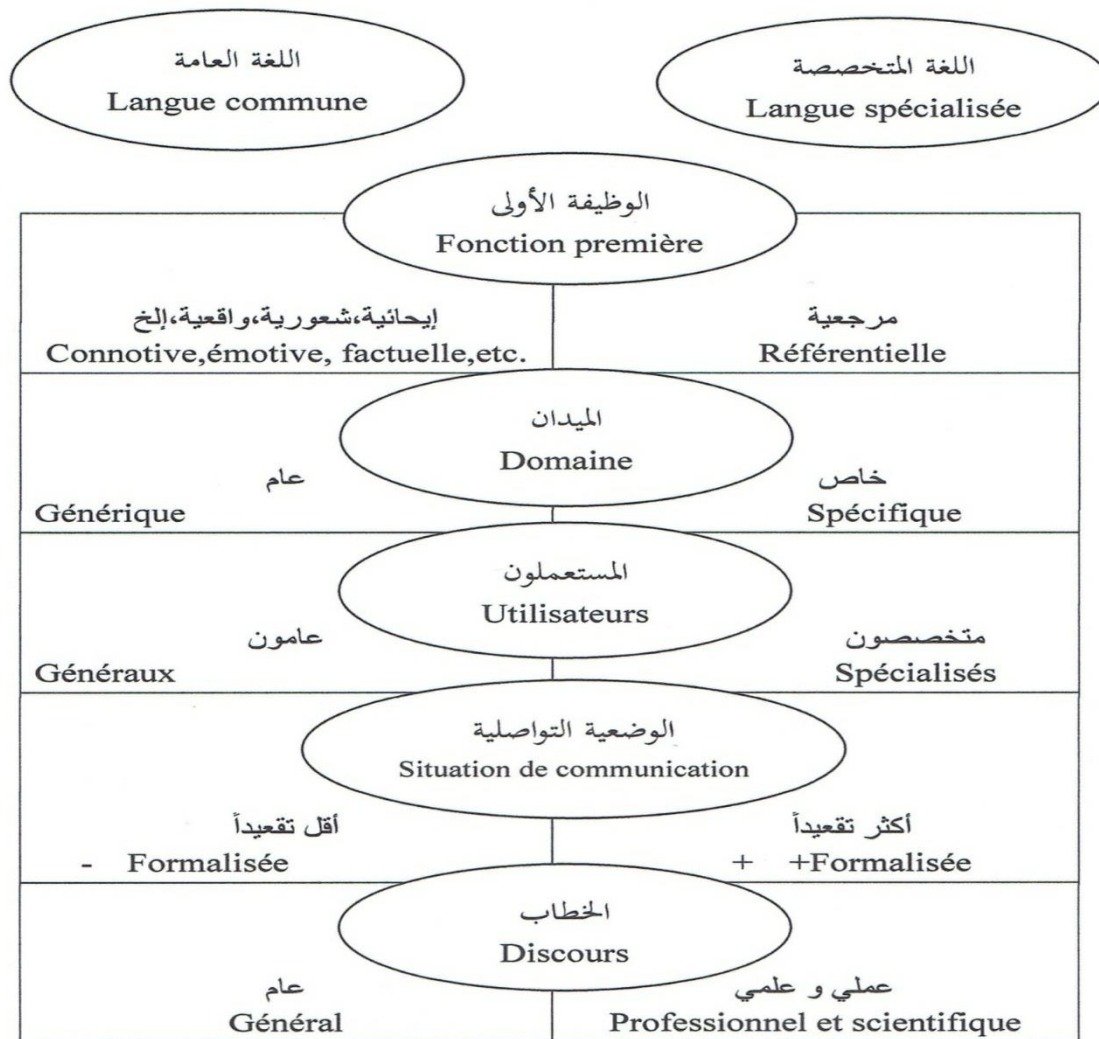
B. Specialized Language as a Sub-Language:

This approach draws a distinction between the general and specialized languages, treating the latter as separate from the former. However, the linguist **Kocourek** believes that LSPs are part of the general or natural language, pointing out that knowledge is not confined to a single subject but varies across domains—leading to diverse specialized languages. Some of these closely resemble natural language systems, while others diverge significantly.

The primary distinguishing factor of LSPs is vocabulary and terminology. The existence of a specialized term implies, by contrast, the existence of a general language without such specialization. However, both types of language share syntactic and discursive structures. What differentiates them is their lexical units, which in specialized languages are usually terms from fields such as medicine or economics.

Sassi, A. (2005). The principle of linguistic economy as the basis of economic language. *Al-Mutargim Journal*, (11), 118–125.

Maria Teresa Cabré proposed a model illustrating the differences between general and specialized language.



Cabré, M. T. (1998). *Terminology: Theory, method and application* (p. 193). University of Ottawa Press.

Thus, general language is that which is used in everyday situations and is not restricted to any specific group. It is accessible to all members of the linguistic community and is used in daily communication to fulfill general life needs in various settings. General language is the common usage shared among all speakers in routine communication—for exchanging information, greetings, pleasantries, inquiries, buying and selling, etc. This widespread usage is due to the general nature of its vocabulary, which differs significantly from how language is employed by an engineer, physician, or novelist in their respective domains. In these specialized uses, vocabulary is charged with additional meaning arising from the specific context. This is the language of professional practice—a natural language used to convey knowledge and information. It thus takes on a primarily informative function, used in specialized communicative situations by specific groups.

It is difficult to draw clear boundaries between general language and LSPs, given the strong relationship between them. Moreover, due to the proliferation of sciences and technologies, LSPs themselves are diversifying. This is reflected in Cabré's observation that **terminology** is the primary factor distinguishing not only LSPs from general language, but also differentiating the various LSPs from one another.

"Terminology is the most important aspect that differentiates not only specialized languages from general language, but also the various specialized languages from one another."

The diversity of professions, the expansion of commercial activities, the technological explosion, and the division of specializations have created a vast array of terms that have enriched the general language with these specialized terms. As a result, many terms from fields like medicine, pharmacy, commerce, and others have become commonly used and widely understood by the public. This phenomenon is part of what is known as the interaction between the specialized lexicon and the general lexicon. This usage has played a significant role in the spread and acquisition of specialized knowledge, allowing it to assume the status of general knowledge.

Suleiman Al-Wasati, *Scientific Translation*, Baghdad, n.p., 1983, p. 29.

Maria Teresa Cabré, *Terminology: Theory, Method and Application*, University of Ottawa Press, 1998, p. 90.

Specialized language uses the rules of general language and shares its morphological characteristics. **Hegazi** states that grammatical research has proven that each specialized language has its own distinctive morphological and syntactic features. These features are derived from the general language; they first form within the general language and are then employed by specialized languages to meet their specific needs.

Maria Teresa Cabré believes there is a resemblance between general language and specialized language, as they share many linguistic features. For example, when comparing a scientific text and a general text, one can observe that both:

- Share the same writing system and the same alphabet.
- Use the same phonological system; when reading both texts aloud, one will notice that they share the same phonetic units.
- Have the same morphological system for the internal structure of words used in the text.
- Follow the same structure in their discourse.
- Contain the same types of sentences.

While general language refers to the language used by people for everyday communication without distinction, specialized language refers to language that can only be understood by a specific group of specialists. For example, we have the language of mathematics, medicine, physics, chemistry, etc.

Taking the language of mathematics as an example, terms like "square root," "exponent," "rational number," "irrational number," "rounding," and "factor" are not easily understood by the general public. Similarly, in other fields, terms like "potential difference," "stress," and "mechanical work" in physics, or "mole,"

"molar mass," and "density" in chemistry, may be opaque to non-specialists. Even in linguistic fields, terms such as "agent," "object," "syntax," and "morphology" are only understood by specialists. Thus, the language of scientific research is common across these fields, while each specialization has its own terminology. Therefore, non-specialists may not understand certain medical terms, which could be acquired by individuals in the street through frequent use, as is the case with concepts like "blood pressure" and "diabetes." More importantly, specialized language is not meant for the general public, as it often contains abbreviated forms that can only be decoded by someone experienced and knowledgeable in the particular field.

Hegazy, M. F. (1995). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (p. 14). Dar Gharib.

Cabré, M. T. (1998). *Terminology: Theory, method and application* (p. 136). University of Ottawa Press.

The term is the foundation of specialized language

The meaning of terms is defined within a comprehensive theoretical framework and can only be understood through complementary elements within that theory. Furthermore, the term evolves according to the specialization itself and is only defined within the system that constitutes the specialization.

The term drives the development of the specialized language and ensures its continuity and transmission between different peoples. Additionally, terms define the boundaries of specialized languages, protecting them from confusion and ambiguity. In this regard, **Maria Teresa Cabré** states that terminology is the most important feature distinguishing not only specialized languages from general language but also distinguishing the various specialized languages from each other. Therefore, terms are the essence of specialized languages, and attention to them is a necessity.

"Terminology is the most important aspect that differentiates not only specialized languages from general language but also different specialized languages from one another."

Specialized language tends to rely on certain terms that can only be understood by specialists, as they are not intended for the general public. These terms are highly condensed and can only be deciphered by someone who is experienced in the specific knowledge domain.

A term is just one linguistic feature of specialized language, and despite its immense importance, it should not be equated with the language itself. This is the view of **Kocourek**, who believes that specialized language is more than just a set of terms or a code specific to a particular field. Many linguists have adopted this view, rejecting the limited semantic perspective of specialized languages.

El-Tijani, H. (2016). The nature of the language of specialization and its teaching between clarity and ambiguity. *Journal of the Translator*, (32), 52. University of Algiers 2.

Hegazy, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (pp. 14–16). Dar Gharib.

Cabré, M. T. (1998). *Terminology: Theory, method and applications* (p. 28). University of Ottawa Press.

Generally, specialized language is characterized by its specific terminology and straightforward structures. From this perspective, as **Prague School linguists** suggest, it is considered a distinct linguistic style—the functional style. Here, "style" refers to the framework used to construct the text in terms of linguistic choices and their application. There is a distinction between the style characterized by everyday communication, the aesthetic style, the functional scientific style used in general communication, and the scientific style used in specialized expression.

Some scholars link specialized language and terminology, viewing the specialization as the use of specific vocabulary within a general framework. Many researchers in the field of specialized languages focus specifically on terminology. Therefore, one of the key roles that terminology plays in determining the course of specialized languages is its responsibility for defining the degree of specialization. It is well known that the closer a term is to the general language, the more it will be used by the general public, leading to a lower degree of specialization. Conversely, the more a term is restricted to a specialized community, the higher the degree of specialization.

Kocourek, R. (1991). *The French language of technology and science* (2nd ed., p. 31). Brandstetter.

Hegazy, M. F. (n.d.). *The linguistic foundations of terminology* (p. 15). Dar Gharib

Conclusion:

In this study, we aimed to clarify the relationship between specialized language and general language. The key points we have concluded can be summarized as follows:

- Specialized languages are closely tied to specialized knowledge and serve as a means of transmitting sciences and knowledge. What distinguishes them most is their precise and clear concepts, leaving no room for ambiguity or confusion. Thus, they do not differ significantly from everyday communication or what is known as general language or common language.
- Given that terminology is the key to the sciences, it can be said that terminology constitutes the tools of specialized languages and, in fact, forms their foundation.
- A specialized language is measured by the degree of specificity and accuracy of its terminology. For instance, mathematics has its own language and terminology, as does medicine, and so on. Thus, specialized language is closely reliant on terminology, which is an inseparable part of it. This is what distinguishes it from general language on one hand and differentiates between levels of specialized languages on the other hand.
- Specialized languages are not limited to terminology alone; they also draw upon the structures of general language in the formation of words. This implies that the linguistic system between the two is shared.

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