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METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL STUDENTS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations and practical challenges of implementing English for Medical Purposes (EMP) programs in the context of the internationalization of higher medical education in Uzbekistan. Particular attention is paid to analyzing international students' motivation to study professional English based on the classical model developed by Hutchinson and Waters. Based on empirical data, the article identifies a mismatch between traditional general English (EGP) instruction and the actual clinical and communicative requirements of the students' future medical careers. It proposes ways to modernize curricula by integrating modules on intercultural and communicative competencies.

Keywords: Medical English (EMP), internationalization, interest analysis, communicative competence, international students, higher medical education, intercultural interaction

O'ZBEKISTONDA XALQARO TIBBIYOT TALABALARI UCHUN CHET TILINI O'QITISHNING METODOLOGIK JIHATLARI VA MUAMMOLARI

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola O'zbekistonda oliy tibbiy ta'limni xalqaro qilish kontekstida Tibbiy maqsadlarda ingliz tili (English for Medical Purposes, EMP) dasturlarini joriy etishning nazariy va metodologik asoslari hamda amaliy muammolarini tahlil qiladi. Xususan, Xutchinson va Uoters taklif qilgan klassik modelga asoslanib, xalqaro talabalarning professional ingliz tilini o'rganish motivatsiyasini tahlil qilishga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Empirik ma'lumotlarga asoslanib, an'anaviy umumiy ingliz tili (EGP) o'qitish bilan talabalarning kelajakdagi tibbiy faoliyatidagi klinik va kommunikativ talablar o'rtasida nomuvofiqlik aniqlandi. Madaniyatlararo va kommunikativ kompetentsiyalar bo'yicha modullarni integratsiya qilish orqali o'quv dasturlarini modernizatsiya qilish usullari taklif etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Tibbiy ingliz tili (EMP), xalqaro hamkorlik, qiziqishlar tahlili, kommunikativ kompetentsiya, chet eldagi talabalar, oliy tibbiy ta'lim, madaniyatlararo muloqot

МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОЙ ПОДГОТОВКИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ-МЕДИКОВ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются теоретико-методологические основы и практические проблемы внедрения программ английского языка для медицинских целей (EMP) в контексте интернационализации высшего медицинского образования в Узбекистане. Особое внимание уделяется анализу интересов к изучению профессионального английского языка студентов-иностранцев на основе классической модели Хатчинсона и Уотерса. На основе эмпирических данных выявляется несоответствие между традиционным обучением общему английскому языку (EGP) и реальными клинично-коммуникативными требованиями будущей медицинской карьеры студентов. Предложены пути модернизации учебных планов через интеграцию модулей межкультурной и коммуникативной компетенций.

Ключевые слова: медицинский английский (EMP), интернационализация, анализ интересов, коммуникативная компетенция, студенты-иностранцы, высшее медицинское образование, межкультурное взаимодействие

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the internationalization of higher education, the English language has firmly established itself as the global lingua franca (ELF). In medical education, this process is reflected in a sharp increase in the number of English-language study programs and a rise in academic mobility [3]. According to official statistics, Uzbekistan has seen a steady influx of international students into medical universities (an increase of approximately 250,000 students during the 2023–2024 period) [2,6]. The transition from teaching general English (EFL/EGP) to teaching English for medical purposes (EMP) has been recognized as a key strategic priority. However, despite its declared importance, the actual state of EMP implementation in Uzbekistan remains insufficiently formalized and standardized. Most courses continue to focus on formal

lexical and grammatical aspects, overlooking a crucial component—the clinical-communicative and intercultural competence of future physicians.

Main Section

Conceptual Features of EMP Medical English (EMP) has distinct characteristics that set it apart from other areas of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). It integrates three key components: academic, which involves writing articles, abstracts, and navigating the academic writing process for medical researchers [5]; professional-communicative (taking medical histories, conducting consultations) and clinical (working with medical records). Proponents of EMP emphasize that proficiency in this discipline provides access to 90% of the world's scientific publications and databases (Scopus, PubMed). At the same time, opponents point to the risks of cognitive overload for students with a low level of basic language proficiency and a shortage of qualified “dually competent” instructors (who are proficient in both medicine and language teaching methodology) [1,3].

2. Needs Analysis Based on the Hutchinson and Waters Model To develop an effective “English in Medicine” course, a thorough assessment of the target audience's requirements is necessary. According to the concept developed by T. Hutchinson and A. Waters, an analysis of the target situation includes a triad of parameters: needs, lacks, and wants: Needs (Situational Context): These are determined by the demands of real-world clinical practice—reading specialized literature, maintaining medical records, and communicating directly with English-speaking patients [4]. Gaps (Learning Objectives): These identify the gap between the student's current language skills and the demands of the target situation. In Uzbekistan, this gap is significant due to the predominance of grammar-translation methods at the expense of conversational practice. Student Interests: students' personal motivation, their cultural background, and their individual learning styles.

3. Specifics of teaching communication skills in Uzbekistan. While in international practice (for example, at universities in the United Kingdom) the assessment of international students' communication skills is strictly regulated, in the

context of domestic medical education this process has not yet become a mandatory standard. International students (for example, from India or South Korea) undergoing clinical rotations in Uzbekistan's hospitals use English as the only available means of communication with faculty and colleagues. Universal principles of communication (empathy, active listening) should be supplemented with specialized modules on intercultural adaptation to prevent professional and ethical errors.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The purpose of this study is to examine the process of teaching Medical English to international students at Tashkent State Medical University, as well as to develop and modernize a professionally oriented language training program. The Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 is implementing an updated curriculum for the course "Medical English" for international students. This program is primarily aimed at students from India and is designed to integrate professional English with basic theoretical medical disciplines, such as human anatomy, pathological anatomy, and biochemistry. Interactive technologies, including role-playing games (e.g., "At the Doctor's Office," "Dialogue Between Doctor and Patient"), have been actively incorporated into the educational process.

The program is currently undergoing continuous optimization to accommodate the varying levels of prior language proficiency among international students. To maintain high-quality instruction, the department's faculty members undergo international certification every two years to confirm their proficiency in English at the C1 level.

The department's primary objective is to make effective use of human resources and educational and methodological potential. This is achieved through the exchange of experience, the development of teaching and learning materials, the compilation of specialized dictionaries, the conduct of joint practical classes, and the development of international students' ability to understand various regional dialects and accents. An

important step in this direction was the organization of research and practical seminars with the participation of international colleagues, in particular the Director of the Regional English Language Office for Central Asia (RELO), Giuseppe Carlo Chiaramonte. To identify needs, gaps, and challenges in teaching the “Medical English” course, a quick survey consisting of five open-ended and closed-ended questions was conducted among the 1st year foreign students of the Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2. Data collection and processing were carried out using descriptive statistical methods, followed by a qualitative analysis of the results.

Picture 1. English lesson for foreign medical students (Tashkent State Medical University)



Following the survey, general discussions were held with each group of the 1st year foreign students to review the results. Based on the data collected, a plan was developed for ongoing scientific and methodological inclusions in the educative process

of teaching Medical English for the department's students. The inclusions focus on boosting future doctors' professional confidence, developing practical recommendations, and integrating digital and interactive educational technologies into the learning of medical English [8]. As part of international academic mobility programs, master classes featuring leading foreign experts are planned. In addition, the department's long-term plan includes initiatives to provide methodological support to instructors of related disciplines (the interdisciplinary module "Uzbek," "Latin," and "Russian") who teach international students in English as a medium of instruction.

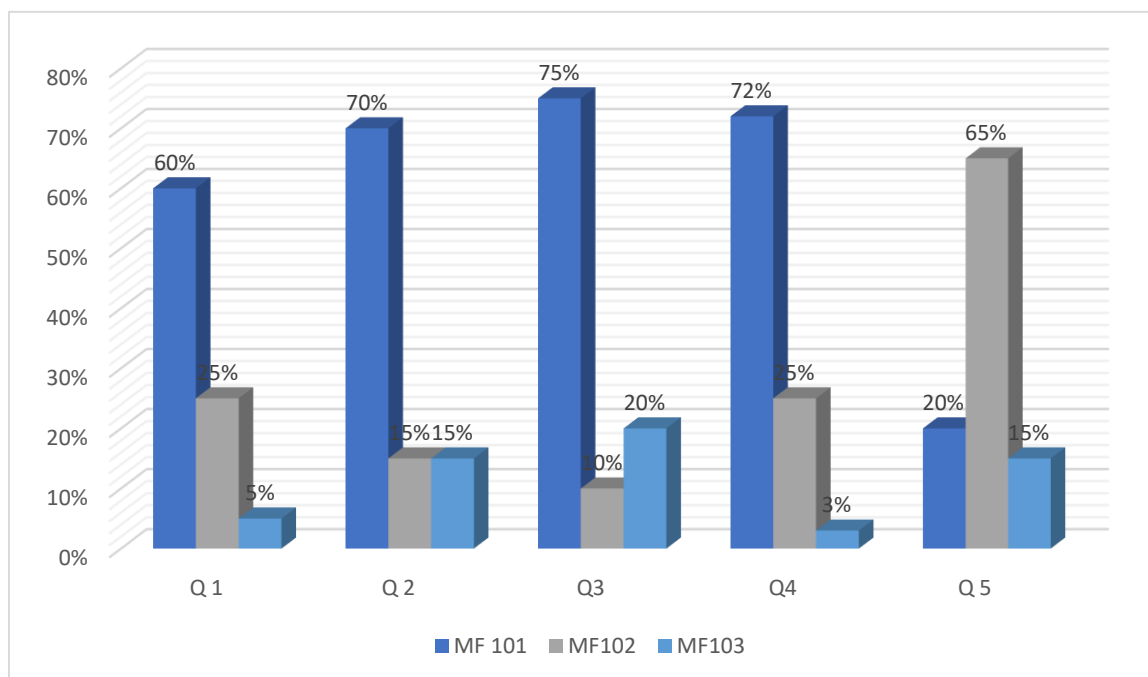
Below are five questions for a survey of first-year international students in the Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 at TSMU, developed using the Hutchinson and Waters methodology (Needs, Lacks, Wants).

1. What are the main difficulties you face when studying "Medical English" and integrating it with clinical subjects (anatomy, biochemistry, etc.)? Objective: to identify "deficits" – Lacks).
2. How comfortable do you feel when listening to instructors speak and during oral communication in class? Does the difference in accents affect your understanding of the material? (Objective: to identify "communication barriers" – Communicative Analysis).
3. Which interactive teaching methods (doctor-patient role-plays, clinical case simulations, small-group work) do you consider most useful for your future career? (Goal: identifying professional "wants" – Wants).
4. Are you satisfied with the current quality and structure of the instructional materials and medical dictionaries provided by the department? What materials do you feel are missing? (Objective: to assess "instrumental needs").
5. Do you think it is necessary to increase the number of academic hours allocated to the "Medical English" course, or is the current amount of time sufficient for mastering the terminology? (Objective: to assess "time budget" and program intensity).

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

A survey of international students from India studying “Medical English” revealed that 75% of respondents consider the gap between their general language proficiency and the requirements of medical terminology to be the main problem, while 100% cited communication barriers. To improve the curriculum, 90% of students cited the need for teacher certification and also suggested increasing the number of class hours, introducing state exams (75%), and strengthening the practical clinical focus. Based on the student survey, recommendations were developed to modernize the professional English program.

The results of the Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 at TSMU' survey are summarized in diagram 1.



Note: MF 101, MF 102, MF 103 are numbers of 1st year foreign medical students at the Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 TSMU

Diagram 1. Survey results of the Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 department's foreign students

An analysis of the results of a survey conducted among international students from India enrolled in the “Medical English” program at the Department of Uzbek and

Foreign Languages No. 2 at the Tashkent State Medical University revealed the students' key academic needs, gaps, and subjective difficulties. Responses to the first set of questions revealed significant heterogeneity within the sample. The majority of the foreign students surveyed (75%) identified as the main barrier the sharp gap between their basic level of general English proficiency (EGP) and the high demands for mastering highly specialized medical terminology at the intersection with fundamental disciplines (anatomy, pathological anatomy, and biochemistry). The remaining 25% of respondents indicated that their greatest difficulty stemmed from adapting to the academic discourse of their instructors. At the same time, 100% of international students confirmed the presence of mutual communication difficulties during the initial stage of their studies. This factor stems from the fact that neither the students nor the instructors are native speakers, and English functions exclusively as a lingua franca. As a result, students sometimes find it difficult to accurately express their thoughts when analyzing complex clinical cases, while instructors struggle to quickly identify and distinguish phonetic and lexical errors specific to Indian regional dialects.

When analyzing responses to the question about the need for international certification of instructors, the overwhelming majority of international students (90%) expressed the view that instructors of specialized English must hold international certifications (at the C1/C2 level). Students associate this not merely with formal confirmation of language proficiency, but with the need for instructors to implement modern, interactive teaching methods from abroad that can increase student engagement. Only 10% of students noted that they considered it sufficient for instructors to have a traditional command of medical vocabulary at the academic minimum level (B2). However, it was precisely in groups using a traditional approach that students most often demonstrated a decline in intrinsic motivation and passivity during practical sessions. A significant number of problems came to light during the evaluation of the course's teaching and methodological support. Most international students reported a

severe shortage of adapted educational resources tailored to the specifics of their future integration into the international healthcare system. Students identified the difficulty of comprehending unadapted text materials as the most challenging aspect. A quarter of the respondents (25%) emphasized that the textbooks used rarely contain relevant cross-references to current international treatment protocols and databases. A survey of students' opinions regarding the allocation of class time revealed that the overwhelming majority consider the number of hours allocated to the "Medical English" course to be insufficient. To maximize the effectiveness of instruction, international students proposed a set of measures:

- 25% of respondents favored extending the course into the upper (clinical) years;
- 75% supported the initiative to introduce a mandatory final state exam in medical English;
- 25% pointed out the need to integrate language classes directly with clinical practice at hospitals and simulation centers.

The results of the student survey were summarized descriptively and used in conjunction with data from a survey of faculty members to comprehensively modernize the course curriculum. As the study showed, international students have a pressing need to transition from rote memorization of vocabulary to the development of real clinical communication competence. Students expressed a strong need for free access to foreign-language literature (25%) and the creation of specialized interactive glossaries (75%) that take into account the characteristics of their native language background. The quantitative indicators and distribution of students' responses according to key indicators of needs are clearly organized and presented in the diagram 1.

CONCLUSION

An empirical study of the foreign language training process for international medical students conducted by the Department of Uzbek and Foreign Languages No. 2 allows us to draw the following key conclusions: The need to transition from EGP to

EMP: The traditional system of teaching general English (EGP) does not fully meet the professional needs of international students. The identified gap between students' basic language skills and the requirements for mastering highly specialized medical terminology (reported by 75% of respondents) necessitates the comprehensive integration of the "Medical English" course with fundamental disciplines (anatomy, pathological anatomy, and biochemistry). Overcoming Communication Barriers (Lingua Franca): In a context where English serves exclusively as a lingua franca, 100% of participants in the educational process face interference and dialect-related barriers. To address this issue, specialized glossaries (supported by 75% of participants) and teaching materials that take into account regional phonetic and lexical characteristics as well as the linguistic background of students from India must be developed. Faculty Qualifications and Modernization of Teaching Methods: The successful internationalization of medical education directly depends on the continuous professional development of faculty members. The overwhelming majority of students (90%) want to work with instructors who hold international C1/C2-level certifications, driven by the need to incorporate cutting-edge interactive technologies (such as "doctor-patient" role-playing and clinical case simulations), which directly enhance academic motivation. Reforming the allocation of instructional time and assessment of knowledge: Students consider the current number of academic hours insufficient for developing sustainable clinical and communication competencies. The optimal solution is to extend the course into upper-level years (25%), move some practical sessions directly to clinics and hospitals (25%), and strengthen quality control of knowledge by introducing a final state exam in medical English (75%). Thus, the modernization of the professionally oriented language training program for international students should be comprehensive in nature, integrating the linguistic, methodological, clinical, and intercultural components of higher medical education. The introduction of EMP into the higher medical education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan is a crucial step toward enhancing the global competitiveness of local

universities. The theoretical and methodological analysis conducted shows that effective training of foreign specialists is impossible without moving away from traditional reproductive methods of language teaching (EGP). It is necessary to introduce flexible teaching models (for example, Content and Language Integrated Learning—CLIL) and to mandatorily include modules on clinical communication and intercultural ethics in the structure of medical English courses.

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