



COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES IN TEACHING MEDICAL ENGLISH: PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES AND CHALLENGES

Butunbayeva Aziza Sayfullo qizi

PhD researcher

The Uzbek State World Language University

E-mail: abutunbaeva92@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17450719>

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to explore the pedagogical feature and challenges of teaching Medical English by communicative approach. English has become an integral part of a successful professional career in medicine. English is a bridge to international collaboration, participation in conferences, access to scientific literature. However, medical students often face serious challenges: complex medical terminology, limited classroom hours, various level of English in groups. Traditional methods cannot meet the demand of medical students. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) focuses mainly to communicative skill with professional orientation. This article aims to investigate the pedagogical features and challenges of teaching Medical English highlighting the importance of authentic materials, digital tools ,and motivational strategies in developing students professional competence.*

Keywords: *Medical English, ESP, medical terminology, communicative approach, authentic materials, digital tools, motivation.*

Introduction

The rapid development of medical science and the globalization of healthcare have made English an indispensable tool for medical professionals. Today, medical students around the world are expected to study and communicate in English, which is the dominant language of medicine, research, and international collaboration. However, most medical students , especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds struggle to understand medical texts, use terminology accurately, and communicate effectively in professional contexts. Especially, in Uzbekistan in medical university English is highly demanded language that open many opportunities for professional growth.

Nowadays, many medical universities still struggle to provide effective English classes with limited classroom hours. Despite this issue, the complexity of medical terminology and psychological factors such as lack of confidence and fear of speaking in English become another challenge. If we ask 'What is the difference between the ESP and General English approach? Hutchinson, T. & Waters answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal"[1:5]. Bojovic adds the fact that ESP develops its own methods since it deals with various disciplines in addition to applied linguistics, and that ESP always is focused on learners' needs and its general purpose is to communicate effectively and fluently in the learners' field of study or work [2:2] . According to Zukhra Khazratova (2024), English for General



Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) differ mainly in their aims, learners, and content. While EGP is designed for general communication and linguistic development, ESP focuses on professional needs within a particular field. ESP learners are usually adults with specific career goals and higher language proficiency, whereas EGP learners are often beginners of different ages. In ESP, teaching is short-term, goal-oriented, and based on learners' professional requirements, involving specialized vocabulary, grammar, and topics relevant to a specific discipline. Moreover, ESP emphasizes practical communication skills for professional and socio-cultural contexts, supported by strong learner motivation.[3:7] "It is not the usage of technical term per se that distinguishes language for special purposes from general language, but the factual knowledge necessary to understand these words." [4:4] In the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly within medical education, considerable emphasis is placed on meeting learners' specific professional and communicative needs to enhance the overall efficiency of the teaching and learning process. The design of an English for Medical Purposes (EMP) course represents a dynamic and ongoing process that requires continuous revision and improvement. Therefore, in selecting course materials or lesson content, instructors should incorporate purpose-oriented ideas and employ contemporary methods and techniques that align with the specialized nature of medical language instruction.

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially for medical professionals, presents unique challenges that go beyond general English instruction. Although most learners already have a basic knowledge of English, medical English requires mastering specialized terminology, professional communication, and contextual accuracy. ESP teachers must consider the highly specific nature of medical vocabulary, such as anatomical terms, medical tools, and healthcare procedures, while also fostering communication skills through activities like role plays, discussions, and case studies.

The continuous advancement of healthcare demands constant adaptation and improvement of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) courses. These courses should include authentic materials such as medical journals, patient forms, clinical reports, and instructional texts. Since many ESP instructors are not healthcare experts, they must be able to manage both linguistic and professional aspects, often through collaboration or self-study. Medical English differs from general English in its vocabulary, scope, and teaching methodology. It requires a more technical, context-based approach aimed at adult, self-directed learners. Teachers serve as facilitators who design purposeful lessons focused on real-life professional communication.



Effective instruction should progress from familiar social situations (e.g., visiting a doctor) to complex professional contexts (e.g., medical conferences or diagnosis presentations).

Communicative approaches are essential for developing learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in medical contexts. These methods include listening to authentic audio-visual materials, reading and summarizing research articles, conducting patient interviews, and writing case reports. The ultimate goal of teaching medical English is to enable learners to communicate professionally, use medical terminology accurately, and function independently in specialized healthcare environments. The communicative approach or CLT have now become generalized terms to describe learning sequences which aim to improve the student's ability to communicate, in stark contrast to teaching which is aimed more at learning bits of language just because they exist and without focusing on their use in communication . [5:3] The statement suggests that CLT primarily aims to strengthen students' communicative fluency and efficiency. According to Diane Larsen Freeman, "The sole aim of all the methods of English Language Teaching is to make students talk in English, to communicate in English, and to communicate in English means mastering not only linguistic structures but certain functions of the language also like promising, inviting, declining invitations within a social context." [6:6] Abidova and Guzacheva (2020) emphasize that medical terminology is central to the development of professional competence among medical students. Unlike general English, medical English is characterized by complex terminological systems, often rooted in Greek and Latin. This creates unique difficulties for learners, such as low-frequency vocabulary, large numbers of abbreviations, and the challenge of memorization. To overcome these barriers, the authors suggest task-based approaches, semanticization techniques, and the use of authentic materials such as patient brochures, medical websites, and video content. Their findings show that a **terminology-centered, communicative approach** helps students develop not only linguistic but also professional competence. [7:1] Sharipova (2019) examines ESP teaching practices at the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute. The study highlights the role of ESP courses in introducing international medical terminology and enabling students to participate in global academic exchanges. According to Sharipova, ESP should be designed according to learners' needs, with a strong focus on motivation and individual learning approaches. Modern methodologies such as Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are seen as more effective compared to traditional grammar-translation methods. Sharipova also underlines the value of interactive techniques (games, role



plays, simulations) and authentic resources for bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world professional communication.[8:9]

Challenges in Teaching Medical English

Rodin and Travnikova (2017), analyzing the Russian context, argue that English proficiency among medical students remains insufficient for international professional engagement. They identify both linguistic and psychological barriers—students often experience anxiety and lack of confidence when speaking English. Furthermore, institutional constraints, such as limited curriculum hours and outdated teaching methods, exacerbate the problem. The authors recommend integrating online resources (e.g., PubMed, Ovid, MedicalEnglish.com) into the learning process and creating elective courses to provide more exposure to English. They stress the need for medical students to view English not merely as a subject, but as a **functional tool for professional communication**. [9:8]

Grammar-translation Method (GTM) was used to taught medical terminology. Students translated medical texts from English into their native language, focusing on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary recall. While this method allowed learners to understand written medical literature, it did little to enhance their communicative competence. In addition, it failed to prepare students for real-life professional situations such as doctor-patient communication, conference presentations, or collaborative research discussions. Another traditional method that used by most teachers called **vocabulary lists and drilling**, where students memorized medical terms without sufficient context or practice. Although effective for short-term recall, this approach often led to passive knowledge, with students unable to use the terms actively in professional communication.

Main Categories of Medical Terminology in English

Medical terminology encompasses several key categories that reflect various aspects of healthcare communication:

❖ **Medical Personnel:** includes different medical specialties, nurses, and administrative staff in healthcare institutions.

❖ **Diseases and Conditions:** covers the names of acute and chronic illnesses, pathological states, and symptoms.

❖ **Medical Procedures:** involves surgical operations, examinations, analyses, and diagnostic tests.

❖ **Treatment Methods:** refers to pharmacotherapy, surgery, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, and other therapeutic interventions.

❖ **Medical Equipment:** includes diagnostic and treatment tools and devices such as stethoscopes, syringes, and X-ray machines.



❖ **Anatomical Terms:** represent organs, systems, and tissues of the human body and their functions.

The teaching medical terminology is essential and requires specific methods, as medical vocabulary originates from Greek and Latin languages. Moreover, many expressions used in medical communication cannot be translated directly into English. For instance, “umumiy qon tahlili”- it is not translated as *General Blood Test*, but **Complete Blood Count (CBC)**, the phrase “ambulatoriya sharoitida davolandi” is not translated as *ambulatory*, but rather as **on an outpatient basis**.

The success of Medical English instruction depends not only on teaching methods and materials but also on the **psychological state and motivation of learners**. Medical students are under heavy academic pressure, and the additional challenge of mastering complex terminology in a foreign language often leads to stress, low confidence, and reluctance to participate actively in class. Addressing these factors is essential for effective learning.

Technology has become essential in teaching Medical English, offering access to authentic materials, interactive learning, and AI-based personalized practice. Online platforms, virtual simulations, and mobile apps enhance communication skills and learner motivation. Psychological factors such as anxiety and low confidence affect performance, so teachers should create supportive environments and apply motivating strategies. Effective Medical English courses focus on medical terminology, real-life communication, and integration of digital tools. Teacher training and collaboration with medical professionals are also crucial for improving course quality.

Conclusion

English has become an essential component of professional development in medicine, enabling doctors and medical students to access international literature, participate in global research, and communicate effectively with colleagues and patients worldwide. However, teaching Medical English presents unique challenges due to the complexity of medical terminology, limited classroom time, and psychological barriers such as anxiety and low confidence. Teaching Medical English through a communicative approach requires integrating professional content, authentic materials, and modern technology to develop learners’ fluency and confidence. Since medical terminology is rooted in Greek and Latin, its mastery demands special methods and contextual practice. Psychological and motivational factors also play a vital role, emphasizing the need for supportive and interactive learning environments. Combining digital tools, communicative strategies, and



collaboration between language teachers and medical professionals ensures effective instruction and prepares students for real-world medical communication.

References:

1. Abidova, M., & Guzacheva, N. (2020). *Features of medical terminology teaching in English lessons. Bulletin of Science and Practice*, 6(4), 434–437.
2. Bojovic, M. (2006). *Teaching foreign languages for specific purposes: Teacher development. In The Proceedings of the 31st Annual Association of Teacher Education in Europe* (pp. 487–493).
3. Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching* (3rd ed.). Essex: Pearson Education.
4. Hüllen, W. (2003). *Global English – desired and dreaded. In R. Ahrens (Ed.), Europäische Sprachenpolitik / European language policy* (pp. 113–122). Heidelberg: Winter.
5. Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learner-centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Jain, J. (2012). *Communicative English language teaching: Its concurrent relevance – An overview. ELTWeekly*, 4(28). Retrieved from <http://eltweekly.com/2012/07/vol-4-issue-28-research-paper-communicative-english-language-teaching-its-concurrent-relevance-an-overview-by-jinendra-jain>
7. Khazratova, Z. M. (2024). *Formation of lexical competence of future journalists based on mass media terms (example of the English language)* [Doctoral dissertation abstract, Uzbekistan State World Languages University].
8. Rodin, E. V., & Travnikova, N. G. (2017). *Teaching English for medical students. Bulletin of the International Scientific Surgical Association*, 6(2), 22–24.
9. Sharipova, F. I. (2019). *The specificities of teaching English for specific purposes (in medical institutes). Vestnik Nauki i Obrazovaniya*, 10(64), 116–119.