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PAPER

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN ACQUIRING MEDICAL INFORMATION

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, the ability to understand and use foreign languages—particularly English—has become a crucial competence in the medical field. As most contemporary scientific discoveries, clinical guidelines, and academic publications are produced in English, foreign language proficiency significantly influences the effectiveness of medical education and professional development. This article examines the role of foreign language competence in accessing, interpreting, and applying medical information. It explores the importance of medical terminology acquisition, the role of digital information systems, and the impact of foreign language proficiency on international collaboration, evidence-based practice, and clinical decision-making. The findings indicate that foreign language competence is an essential component of modern medical literacy and a prerequisite for integrating national healthcare into the global medical community.

Key words:
foreign language, medical information, English for medical purposes, terminology, scientific research, digital literacy, communication, medical education, competence.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of medical science and the increasing integration of global healthcare practices have significantly expanded the need for foreign language proficiency among medical professionals. Today, more than 70 % of international scientific publications in medicine appear in English, making it the primary language of science, research, and technological innovation (Johnson, 2022). In such a context, the ability to navigate foreign-language medical resources has become not only a desirable

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skill but a professional necessity.

Foreign language proficiency allows medical students and practitioners to access up-to-date clinical recommendations, understand diagnostic protocols, and follow international standards such as ICD, DSM, and FDA guidelines. It also facilitates participation in international conferences, academic mobility programs, and joint research initiatives. Therefore, English is increasingly considered a core component of medical competence and clinical literacy. This research aims to analyze the role of foreign language proficiency in acquiring medical information, focusing on access to scientific literature, terminology acquisition, digital medical platforms, and communication within the professional community.

Methodological Notes

This article is based on a qualitative analysis of contemporary scientific literature, medical databases, and educational policies related to English language instruction in medical universities. The study synthesizes findings from Uzbek and international researchers to determine the practical effects of English proficiency on medical education and professional practice. Additionally, comparative analysis was conducted between English-based and translated medical information sources to understand the challenges of terminology interpretation.

1. Foreign Language as a Gateway to Medical Knowledge

The majority of breakthrough discoveries—including innovations in genetics, pharmacology, oncology, and infectious diseases—are published in top-tier journals such as The Lancet, NEJM, BMJ, and JAMA, all of which are primarily English-based. Without adequate English proficiency, medical professionals face significant barriers in accessing recent scientific data, which may lead to outdated clinical knowledge and limited diagnostic accuracy.

Moreover, evidence-based medicine (EBM) depends heavily on the ability to read and evaluate international research articles. This requires not only general English proficiency but also specific skills in academic reading, critical analysis, and familiarity with medical terminology.

2. Importance of Medical Terminology Acquisition

Medical terminology, largely rooted in Latin and Greek, appears almost universally across foreign-language sources. However, many terms undergo semantic shifts, abbreviation, or contextual modification in English. Common examples include:

- CBC (Complete Blood Count)
- ECG/EKG
- LDL/HDL
- CT/MRI scans
- SARS-CoV-2, COPD, and HIV/AIDS descriptors

Medical students who lack English proficiency often face difficulties interpreting these abbreviations, leading to errors in understanding clinical guidelines or scientific texts.

Furthermore, drug monographs, international disease classifications (ICD-11), and WHO recommendations are primarily published in English, making terminology comprehension essential for accurate diagnosis and treatment.

3. Digital Information Systems and English Proficiency

Modern medical practice relies heavily on digital platforms for clinical decision-making. The most widely used systems—PubMed, UpToDate, ClinicalKey, Cochrane Library—operate in English. To effectively utilize these resources, medical professionals must understand:

– abstracts and summaries,
– key clinical indicators,
–statistical methods,
– research methodologies,
– tables and scientific charts.

Digital medical literacy, therefore, becomes inseparable from English language literacy. As telemedicine expands globally, English also becomes the operational language of virtual consultations, international case discussions, and online simulations.

4. Foreign Language Competence and International Collaboration

English proficiency significantly enhances the mobility and professional integration of medical specialists. Those who possess strong foreign language skills can:

– participate in international residency programs,

– engage in exchange projects and conferences,

– collaborate in multinational research teams,

– publish in high-impact journals.

For developing healthcare systems, such as Uzbekistan's, foreign language proficiency plays a critical role in adopting international best practices and integrating global protocols into national medical education standards.

5. Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Medical English

Despite the recognized importance of English, many medical students face challenges such as:

– limited vocabulary,

– insufficient exposure to authentic texts,

– lack of systematic terminology training,

– difficulty analyzing complex scientific articles.

However, modern pedagogical approaches—task-based learning, corpus-assisted studies, blended learning, mobile applications, and medical simulations—provide effective solutions. Incorporating authentic materials and digital platforms into medical English courses enhances students' motivation and improves their ability to comprehend medical information.

CONCLUSION

Foreign language proficiency, especially English, is a fundamental component of modern medical education and professional practice. It enables medical students and specialists to access cutting-edge research, adopt evidence-based approaches, and communicate effectively in international medical environments. The digitalization of healthcare further strengthens the link between English proficiency and medical literacy, making it a prerequisite for professional growth, international collaboration, and clinical competence.

Therefore, continuous development of foreign language skills should be prioritized within medical universities and lifelong learning programs. Strengthening English for medical purposes ensures that future specialists can fully integrate into the global healthcare community and contribute to the advancement of national medicine.

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