

Medical Terminology Acquisition Through Communicative Activities In ESP Classrooms

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Abstract: This study explores medical terminology acquisition through communicative activities in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms. A questionnaire-based pre-test was conducted with first-year medical students at Tashkent Medical Academy to examine learners' interests, challenges, and initial knowledge of medical terminology. The findings reveal that communicative approaches support contextualized terminology learning, increase learner engagement, and contribute to the development of professional communication skills in medical English.

Keywords: Medical terminology; communicative approach; English for Specific Purposes; medical English; communicative language teaching; ESP classrooms; medical students; professional communication; vocabulary acquisition; higher medical education.

Introduction: The increasing internationalization of medical science and healthcare has significantly enhanced the role of English as the primary language of professional medical communication. Medical students are required to access international academic literature, participate in professional exchanges, and communicate effectively in multilingual clinical environments. Consequently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly Medical English, has become an essential component of medical education in non-English-speaking countries. One of the most challenging aspects of Medical English instruction is medical terminology acquisition. Medical terminology is characterized by morphological complexity, abstract meanings, and frequent use of Latin and Greek roots. First-year medical students often experience difficulties in memorizing and actively using medical terms, especially when traditional teaching methods such as translation and rote learning dominate classroom practice. These approaches frequently result in passive recognition of terms rather than the ability to apply them in real communicative situations. Recent pedagogical research highlights the need for learner-centered and communicative approaches that

integrate language learning with professional practice. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) offers a methodological framework that prioritizes interaction, meaningful language use, and contextualized learning. This study investigates medical terminology acquisition through communicative activities in ESP classrooms, based on empirical data collected from first-year students of Tashkent Medical Academy.

Theoretical Background

English for Specific Purposes in Medical Education

English for Specific Purposes is an approach to language teaching that focuses on learners' specific academic and professional needs. In medical education, ESP aims to develop students' ability to use English effectively in professional contexts such as clinical communication, academic reading, and medical documentation. Needs analysis plays a central role in ESP course design, ensuring that content, terminology, and teaching methods correspond to learners' future professional requirements (Nabieva, 2023).

In contrast to general English, Medical ESP emphasizes specialized vocabulary, professional discourse, and communicative functions relevant to healthcare.

Therefore, instructional approaches must prioritize practical language use and professional relevance.

Medical Terminology and Learning Challenges

Medical terminology forms the foundation of professional medical discourse. Fayzullayev (2023) notes that medical terms represent scientific concepts rather than everyday lexical units, which requires systematic and contextualized instruction. Teaching terminology in isolation often leads to superficial knowledge and limited communicative application. Additionally, first-year medical students face cognitive overload due to the simultaneous acquisition of subject knowledge and foreign language skills. Gavranović (2018) emphasizes that without appropriate methodology, ESP learners struggle to transform terminological knowledge into active professional communication.

Communicative Language Teaching as a Framework

Communicative Language Teaching emerged as a response to form-focused teaching methods that failed to develop communicative competence. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT prioritizes meaningful communication, interaction, and functional language use, balancing fluency and accuracy. Richards (2006) further argues that language acquisition occurs through meaningful interaction and negotiation of meaning. Suemith (2011) highlights that CLT shifts the teacher's role from authority to facilitator, encouraging learner autonomy and collaboration. These principles make CLT particularly suitable for ESP contexts, including medical terminology instruction.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive empirical research design based on a questionnaire administered as a pre-test. The objective was to identify students' interest in learning Medical English, challenges in language learning, and their initial level of medical terminology acquisition. The research was conducted at Tashkent Medical Academy, Faculty of General Medicine. The participants included 60 first-year students aged 18–20 with mixed English proficiency levels (A2–B1). All participants were enrolled in an ESP course focusing on Medical English.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

1. Self-assessment of general English proficiency

2. Interest in learning English and Medical English
3. Challenges in learning English and medical terminology

4. Recognition and basic understanding of common medical terms

The instrument provided both quantitative and qualitative insights into learners' needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results revealed that most students demonstrated a high level of interest in learning Medical English, recognizing its importance for their future professional careers. However, significant challenges were reported in learning medical terminology. The most frequently identified difficulties included limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty remembering complex terms.

The terminology section of the questionnaire indicated that while students were familiar with basic medical terms, their ability to use terminology actively in communicative contexts was limited. This finding confirms that traditional teaching approaches may not adequately support active terminology acquisition.

Discussion and Implementation of the Communicative Approach

The findings support the theoretical assumptions of Communicative Language Teaching. Students' challenges highlight the need for instructional approaches that promote active language use rather than passive memorization. Communicative activities provide meaningful contexts in which medical terminology is acquired as part of professional discourse.

Examples of implementing the communicative approach in Medical ESP classrooms include:

- **Role-plays:** Simulating doctor–patient interactions to practice terminology related to symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.
- **Case-based discussions:** Analyzing simplified clinical cases using target medical vocabulary.
- **Group problem-solving tasks:** Collaboratively discussing medical scenarios to encourage interaction and peer learning.
- **Simulated clinical presentations:** Presenting short case reports using newly acquired terminology.

These activities correspond with findings by Cazac et al. (2020), who demonstrate that communicative tasks enhance terminological competence and professional confidence. The empirical data of the present study confirm that students express a strong need for interactive and communicative learning environments.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that medical terminology acquisition in ESP classrooms can be significantly enhanced through the implementation of communicative activities. Empirical data collected from first-year students at Tashkent Medical Academy indicate high motivation to learn Medical English alongside considerable challenges in terminology learning. Communicative Language Teaching provides an effective framework for addressing these challenges by integrating terminology acquisition with meaningful professional communication. Role-plays, case discussions, and simulations enable students to develop terminological competence and communicative skills essential for future medical practice.

Therefore, ESP instructors are strongly encouraged to incorporate communicative activities into Medical English courses to improve terminology acquisition, increase learner engagement, and foster professional communicative competence.

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