

DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING ENGLISH AT MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING THEM

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Abstract: English language proficiency has become an essential requirement for future healthcare professionals due to the increasing globalization of medical education and practice. However, many medical university students experience difficulties in learning English because of low motivation, inadequate language backgrounds, and limited opportunities for practical language use. This article examines the major challenges faced by medical students in English language learning and discusses effective pedagogical strategies that can help overcome these obstacles. Special attention is given to active teaching methods, including role-playing, discussions, project-based learning, and collaborative activities. The findings suggest that learner-centered approaches significantly enhance students' motivation, communicative competence, and professional language skills.

Keywords: medical students, English language learning, motivation, communicative competence, active learning, role-play, project-based learning, foreign language teaching.

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, knowledge of foreign languages, particularly English, plays a crucial role in academic, professional, and personal development. For medical students, English is not merely an academic subject but an important tool for accessing international medical literature, participating in professional communication, and pursuing career opportunities in global healthcare environments.

Despite its importance, English is often regarded by medical students as a secondary subject compared to specialized medical disciplines. As a result, many learners demonstrate low motivation and encounter significant difficulties during the language learning process. These challenges may negatively affect both academic achievement and future professional development.

The purpose of this study is to identify the primary obstacles encountered by medical university students while learning English and to explore effective teaching strategies that can increase motivation and improve learning outcomes.

Challenges in Learning English at Medical Universities

Teaching English in medical universities differs considerably from teaching general English. Students are expected to acquire not only general communicative competence but also professional vocabulary and language skills related to healthcare settings. This creates additional demands on both learners and instructors.

Analysis of students' performance and classroom observations reveals that many medical students face considerable difficulties in acquiring English language skills. Several factors contribute to this situation.

One of the most common problems is the insufficient language background acquired during secondary education. Many students enter university with limited knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. In some cases, the lack of qualified English teachers in schools results in significant gaps in learners' preparation.

Another important factor is low motivation. Although students generally recognize the importance of English for their future careers, many focus primarily on passing examinations rather than developing practical language competence. This attitude reduces engagement and limits opportunities for meaningful language acquisition.

Psychological barriers also influence language learning. Fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, language anxiety, and communication apprehension often prevent students from participating actively in classroom activities. Consequently, learners become passive recipients of information rather than active participants in the educational process.

Additional challenges include difficulties in memorizing large amounts of vocabulary, limited exposure to authentic language materials, monotonous teaching methods, and inadequate understanding of the practical value of English in professional contexts.

Effective Strategies for Increasing Motivation and Learning Outcomes

To address these challenges, English language instruction should focus on creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. The teacher's role extends beyond transmitting knowledge; it involves inspiring learners, developing curiosity, and demonstrating the practical relevance of language learning.

Modern educational approaches emphasize competence-based learning, which aims to equip students with skills that can be applied in real-life situations. Within this framework, active teaching methods play a particularly important role.

Role-Playing Activities

Role-playing is one of the most effective instructional techniques for medical English courses. These activities simulate professional situations that students may encounter in their future careers, allowing them to practice language in realistic contexts.

Scenarios such as doctor-patient consultations, pharmacy interactions, medical examinations, and case-history discussions encourage students to apply professional vocabulary while developing communicative competence. Role-playing activities also reduce language anxiety and increase learners' confidence in using English.

Discussion-Based Learning

Classroom discussions provide valuable opportunities for students to express opinions, exchange ideas, and develop critical thinking skills. Topics related to healthcare, modern medicine, healthy lifestyles, and global issues can stimulate meaningful communication and encourage active participation.

Through discussions, students learn to defend their viewpoints, respect differing opinions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. These skills contribute not only to language development but also to professional competence and interpersonal communication.

Project-Based Learning

Project work represents another effective strategy for motivating learners. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, project-based learning encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Students collect information, conduct research, analyze findings, and present results using various formats such as presentations, reports, and multimedia projects. This process develops independent learning skills, creativity, and language proficiency while increasing learner engagement.

Project activities also help students connect English language learning with their professional interests, making the educational experience more meaningful and relevant.

Collaborative and Interactive Learning

Group activities, competitions, presentations, and interdisciplinary projects can significantly enhance classroom dynamics. These methods create opportunities for communication, cooperation, and peer learning.

Participation in academic contests, conferences, and online learning activities further increases students' motivation by providing authentic contexts for language use and professional development.

Discussion

The findings indicate that difficulties in learning English among medical students are largely associated with motivational, psychological, and educational factors. Traditional teaching approaches often fail to address these issues because they focus primarily on grammar and memorization rather than meaningful communication.

In contrast, active learning methods encourage student engagement and transform learners into active participants in the educational process. Role-playing, discussions, and project-based learning create opportunities for authentic language use and help students understand the practical value of English for their future careers.

Furthermore, these approaches contribute to the development of transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, and independent learning, all of which are essential for healthcare professionals.

Conclusion

English language learning remains a significant challenge for many medical university students. Factors such as inadequate prior knowledge, low motivation, language anxiety, and traditional teaching methods can hinder the development of communicative competence.

However, the implementation of active and learner-centered teaching strategies can effectively address these difficulties. Role-playing, discussions, project-based learning, and collaborative activities not only improve language proficiency but also increase motivation and professional readiness.

Therefore, English language instructors should adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that emphasize communication, interaction, and practical application. Such methods enable students to overcome learning barriers and develop the linguistic and professional competencies required for success in modern healthcare environments.

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