

The value of the English language in the current context of medical sciences

Valor del idioma inglés en el contexto actual de las ciencias médicas

Yusnier Lázaro Díaz-Rodríguez^{1*} <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7730-0525>

Luis Amado Quintana-López¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0321-2175>

Irmino Francisco de León-Riera¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2878-0451>

¹Universidad de Ciencias Médicas, Facultad de Ciencias Médicas “General Calixto García”. La Habana, Cuba.

*Corresponding author: yusnierdiaz98@gmail.com

Recibido: 06/07/2020

Aceptado: 24/01/2022

Mr. Editor:

Knowledge has acquired a power that bursts into all spheres of life and has demanded the development of capacities for the processing, restructuring and critical recreation of the accelerated dissemination of information. In this context, the English language appears as the most widely used for the dissemination of scientific and technical information.

The English language is one of the most important languages when it comes to communication. International relations are more frequent every day and the use of this language is of more preponderance especially in the non-Anglo-Saxon countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and in all the Spanish-speaking nations from Spain, Central America and South America.⁽¹⁾

The primacy currently held by the English language, in the world of international relations, is a reality that few questions. English has become the vehicle of communication par excellence at all levels: politics, economy, commerce, tourism, science and technology. In other words, it has become what we could call a lingua franca, a role that, not many centuries ago, Latin –and to a lesser extent Greek– played in the western world.⁽¹⁾

The English language has undergone a huge expansion if we compare its position, for example, in the time of Shakespeare when it was the native language of only a few million inhabitants, with its position today, when it is estimated that approximately 300 million people have it as their mother language and a similar number of inhabitants use it as a second language. It has become a vital medium for the transmission of information and traditional or digital communication, as its use spreads rapidly in the computer network system.⁽¹⁾

Over the years, it has been seen that medical science students and specialists themselves have needed the English language during their academic studies, as well as in the professional contexts in which they are developed. Today, the most influential medical journals publish in English, which has also become the language of international conferences. His domain for medical purposes must be a compulsory subject.⁽²⁾

The terms associated with English learned for specific purposes have been analyzed and categorized, in order to differentiate it from English learned for general purposes. While the development of specific-purpose courses has given rise to a large number of acronyms, the general term is: English for Specific Purposes, which is then further subdivided into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). In relation to the field of Medicine, the predominant term used is English for medical purposes (IFM).⁽³⁾

In higher medical education centers in Cuba, great importance is given to teaching the English language, which is why it represents an essential element in terms of comprehensive preparation for the future performance of health professionals.

The study of the English language is included as a discipline, in all medical science careers, from its early years with a gradual derivation of its contents and objectives, starting from the mastery of communicative aspects of language to those related to their profession, from This language preparation allows them to provide medical assistance in countries where English is used as their mother tongue, official language, or lingua franca, and to stay up-to-date on advances in science and technology, through reading, translation, and interpretation of scientific articles in the various existing sources. Furthermore, mastery of this

language is an essential requirement for obtaining teaching and research categories, academic and scientific degrees.⁽¹⁾

In the field of medicine, it is evident how necessary the English language is for students to achieve their academic purposes and can develop in the research field. The teaching of medical English must be adapted to meet these needs, since the knowledge and command of English is useful for each and every one of the health professionals.

There are several articles that reinforce the value of English in the context of medical sciences,^(3,4,5) such is the case of *Gutiérrez-Rodillas*,⁽⁴⁾ where reference was made to the marked disuse of Spanish in its future as a language of medicine; Furthermore, *Roca-Morales*,⁽⁵⁾ refers to English as a means to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship through cordial and authentic communication.

It can be concluded that the English language has stood out in the development of the field of medical sciences, where it has been widely used since the second half of the 20th century. An example of undoubted recognition is the increase in the number of publications in English on a daily basis, as well as the fact that most of the journals indexed in prestigious databases publish their results in this language.

This letter is intended to promote the knowledge and development of English by medical science students, in order to guarantee adequate training for health professionals in Cuba.

Bibliographic references

1. Ángel-Rodríguez N, Alpizar-León YP, García-Hernández G. Importancia del idioma inglés en el campo de la Medicina. *Medicent Electrón*. 2020 [access 07/03/2020];24(2):413-21. Available from: <http://medicentro.sld.cu/index.php/medicentro/article/view/3045>
2. Arfan Lodhi M, Shamim M, Robab M, Shahzad S, Ashraf A. English for doctors: An ESP approach to needs analysis and course design for medical students. *Int J English Linguist*. 2018 [access 07/03/2020];8(5). Available from: <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/75192>
3. Davies W, Fraser S, Lauer J, Howell P. English for medical purposes: teaching an intensive English course to third-year medical students. Hiroshima University: Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education. 2013 [access 07/03/2020]. Available from:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7960/f25d7a13611a659f8a2a60fca4c10e774425.pdf>

4. Gutiérrez-Rodilla BM. El futuro del español como lengua de la medicina. Educ Med. 2017 [access 03/07/2020];18(S2):34-7. Available from: <https://www.elsevier.es/es-revista-educacion-medica-71-articulo-el-futuro-del-espanol-como-X1575181317608325>

5. Roca-Morales J. El idioma inglés como lengua de la medicina. Educ Med. 2019 [access 07/03/2020];20(3):195-6. Available from: <https://www.elsevier.es/es-revista-educacion-medica-71-articulo-el-idioma-ingles-como-lengua-S1575181318303358>