

# RELEVANCE OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE OF MEDICINE

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**Abstract:** *this article describes the issue of importance and relevance of English as an international language of medicine. The global spread of science and technology has made the English language lingua franca of international communication. Due to huge development of medical science and practice, the English language of medicine has become the leading language.*

**Keywords:** *language of medicine, international, lingua franca.*

There is no recognized discipline called medical linguistics, but perhaps there ought to be one. The language of medicine offers intriguing challenges both to medical historians and to linguists. Classical scholars have analysed the contents and language of the most ancient medical records in great detail, but the later development of medical terminology has received much less attention.

Then followed the era of the national medical languages, such as medical English (i.e. ordinary English with the admixture of medical terms), medical French, medical German, medical Italian and many others. A few of these, especially French, German and English, replaced Latin as vehicles for international communication, but most of the others were only used nationally. The national medical languages had much in common since most of the medical terms were derived from medical Latin, but there were systematic differences that still persist. Today, all the most influential medical journals are written in English, and English has become the language of choice at international conferences. We have entered the era of medical English, which resembles the era of medical Latin in that, once again, medical doctors have chosen a single language for international communication. Whereas in former times new medical terms were derived from classical Greek or Latin roots, now they are often, partly or wholly, composed of words borrowed from ordinary English—e.g. bypass operation, clearance, base excess, screening, scanning—and doctors from non-English-speaking countries now have the choice between importing these English terms directly and translating them into their own language [1, p. 40]. The relevance of English in academic and professional settings began some decades ago, in the 1960s, and it has not decreased. Orr (2002, 1) said that ESP "is an exciting movement in English language education that is opening up rich opportunities for English teachers and researchers in new professional domains". Following Ypsilandis and Kantaridou (2007, 69), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) "refers mainly to the academic needs of students and of future professionals who would seek a career in the academic environment" and English for Professional Purposes (EPP) refers to "the actual needs of (future) professionals at work". These two broad fields or categories also involve many different areas and fields of interest and research. Medical language is the occupational register of physicians and it is largely opaque outside the medical community. Several authors have commented on one particular feature of medical language. The English language, with scientific and professional development, is no longer a foreign language for other nations, but it has become a mother tongue, it is lingua franca, which used to be Latin once upon a time. English has become the lingua franca of medicine and most scientific fields since 95% of medical papers come from English speaking countries [2, p. 470]. Such huge development of medical science and practice requires further improvement of the language of medicine. It has become necessary to create new terms not only for new illnesses and disorders but a totally new terminology for fundamental medical branches, particularly terms for state-of-the-art technology. It has been shown that the language of medicine finds it hard to keep pace with medical science and practice. It frequently describes rather than defines incompletely understood natural phenomena. Modern medicine has transgressed the boundaries of the Greco-Latin terms and must create a new terminology. For linguists the language of medicine is fascinating for the flow of concepts and words from one tongue to another. For medical doctors, an appreciation of the history and original meaning of words offers a new dimension to their professional language.

Huge scientific and technological development has made languages for specific purposes a necessity today. English for Specific Purposes has been well developed and standardized. It has become lingua franca and, due to its importance, is no longer considered a foreign, but an additional, language [3, p. 37].

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