

The Importance of Teaching English for Medical Purposes to Medical Doctors at Batna Hospital University Centre

أهمية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية للأطباء بالمركز الاستشفائي الجامعي

باتنة

Romane Karima^{*1}, University Batna-2, k.romane@univ-batna2.dz

Bahloul Amel², University Batna-2, a.bahloul@univ-batna2.dz

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Abstract

The contribution of researchers in national and international scientific developments requires the acquisition of academic and scientific language; in order to be able to exchange information through conferences, and research articles. So, learning the learning of English is not only important for graduate students, but also for postgraduate students who want to update the scientific and technological development. In Algeria, the increasing demand from the part of medical students and doctors to take private courses in English, due to lack of an English module at the department of Medicine in all the Algerian universities, leads us to think about the necessity of introducing English for Medical Purposes (EMP) to the Algerian students and doctors. In this paper, the intention is to be able to create a course that meets medical students and doctors' needs, objectives, and to attract the attention of decision makers and programme designers to the importance of teaching English language to medical students. Based on a needs analysis' approach, a questionnaire is addressed to medical doctors at Batna Hospital University Centre. It helped to identify the needs of medical doctors to learn the English language. The tool of research used here corroborate the hypotheses and answer the research questions; it indicates that the introduction of an EMP course would certainly result in beneficial results for medical doctors.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; English for Medical Purposes; Needs Analysis; students' needs.

ملخص

للمساهمة في التطور العلمي الوطني والدولي، يحتاج الباحثون إلى الحصول على عضوية مجتمع الخطاب الأكاديمي لأغراض تبادل المعلومات من خلال المؤتمرات والمقالات البحثية المنشورة وما شابه ذلك. لذلك، يبدو أن تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ضروري للدراسات الأكاديمية لطلاب الدراسات العليا وكذلك طلاب الدراسات العليا الذين يحتاجون إلى متابعة التطور العلمي والتكنولوجي في العالم. في الجزائر يؤدي الطلب المتزايد لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من طرف طلبة الطب والأطباء عن طريق دورات خاصة باللغة الإنجليزية، وذلك بسبب نقص وحدة اللغة الإنجليزية في قسم الطب في جميع الجامعات الجزائرية، إلى التفكير في أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية للطب لأغراض طلاب الطب والأطباء. فالهدف من هذا البحث هو تصميم برنامج للغة الإنجليزية قادر على تلبية احتياجات واهتمامات طلبة الطب واهتمامات الأطباء، بالإضافة الى جذب انتباه صانعي القرار ومصممي البرامج ل أهمية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية. بناءً على منهج تحليل الاحتياجات، تم توجيه استبيان للأطباء في مركز مستشفى جامعة باتنة. وقد ساعد هذا الاستبيان على تحديد احتياجات الأطباء لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. أداة البحث المستخدمة هنا تؤكد فرضيتنا الرئيسية والإجابة على أسئلة البحث؛ تشير إلى أن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية سيؤدي بالتأكيد إلى نتائج مفيدة للأطباء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض محددة (ESP); اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض الطبية (EMP); تحليل الاحتياجات; احتياجات الطلاب.

* Auteur correspondant

Background of the Study

Based on the idea that English is the language of science and technology; an important number of researchers and scientists are interested to learn it, in order to be able to access to the different scientific sources that are written in the English language.

Since the late 1980s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) established itself as a branch of ELT. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) ESP has developed its own activity, and it rests on second language teaching. For this reason, it is considered as a separate activity with ELT.

Statement of the Problem

This study deals with the needs of medical doctors to have an English course during their academic studies, and with strategies to be developed in an attempt to satisfy learners' real requirements for the language. Therefore, we choose ESP, or more specifically EMP; because in our opinion it will satisfy a need sorely felt by all parties concerned in Algerian universities.

The context out of which this study arises is a dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs; i.e. the total absence of an English module from the program of medical students and doctors. Since students' needs and interests should be taken into consideration. So an English module for medical students and doctors is required in order to facilitate the touch for medical students and future doctors to attend international conferences, to read medical articles and journals, and why not to publish scientific articles.

In addition to this, we noticed that medical doctors take the initiative to learn English for medical purposes by gathering into special groups or in private schools like "Hopeland Institute" in Cheraga, and of small groups of medical doctors who want to improve their level in English by selecting an English teacher to teach them EMP; the case of such special groups is in Annaba, Batna and Constantine. Such identification is likely to increase the teachers' awareness of the students' needs and help decision makers and program designers to design efficient English courses for medical students.

Research Questions

The following are the main questions of our study:

1. Do medical students and doctors need English for medical purposes (EMP) course in their curriculum?
2. What are the needs and aims of medical students and doctors who intend to have an English module during their academic studies?
3. Are teachers and program designers aware of the necessity of designing an English course for medical doctors?

Hypotheses

1. We hypothesize that medical students and doctors need to take medical English courses that will enable them not only to communicate in English, but also to publish articles in English, and to be able to participate in international conferences.
2. Medical students and doctors, who intend to have an English module during their academic career, have specific medical needs and aims that are directly linked to their field of study.
3. Teachers and program designers should be aware of the necessity to design a specific English course for medical students and doctors.

Reasons for the Study

In the 20th century, an unprecedent demand to learn and to teach English to medical students emerged. This leads to the necessity of developing courses and materials that are related to the medical field.

However, In the 21st century, there is a big need to develop more the teaching of EMP all over the world, in order to follow the scientific and technological development.

Since the medical doctors form a big part in today's world, and since they will meet different people from different communities; so they need to know the English language to be able to communicate and hail these people.

In Algeria, however, the learning and teaching of EMP is not the concern of decision makers or program designers. It is mainly the concern of private schools like "Hopeland Institute" in Cheraga, and of small groups of medical doctors who want to improve their level in English by selecting an English teacher to teach them EMP; the case of such special groups is in Annaba, Batna and Constantine.

In an attempt to remedy such deficiencies, it is the purpose of this paper to present as comprehensive as possible an investigation about the basic needs of the medical doctors.

Objectives of the Study

The teaching of the English language to medical students and doctors is based on the fact that the English language is a scientific language. In addition to that, all the new discovers concerning the medical field are more available in the English language.

For all these reasons we have conducted the present investigation that aims to:

1. Identify medical students and doctors' needs for the English language.
2. Attract the attention of decision makers and program designers to the importance of EMP.
3. Design a medical syllabus following the needs of a selected group of students and doctors doing medical studies in French.

Research Methodology and Design

The primary task, in this paper, is an attempt to identify medical students and doctors' needs to learn the English language, and to try to design a medical syllabus

following needs analysis of a group of students doing medical studies in French. This is why the researcher employed a descriptive methodology, and prepared a questionnaire administered to the participants.

Review of Literature

All over the world ESP was, and still is, very fashionable because English is “par excellence” the language of science and technology. Since the 1960s, ESP was seen as part of applied linguistics, theoretically and practically speaking. This contribution helps us to understand more the different ways of language use in the contexts.

Definition of ESP

A lot of scholars tried to identify what ESP is and to define it. Mackay and Mountford (1978, p.2) defined ESP as: “*the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose*”. Robinson (1980) defined ESP courses as: “*ones in which the participants have specific goals and purposes*” (again, academic, occupational, and scientific). Hutchinson & Waters (1987, p. 19) state: “*ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning*”.

In a more recent definition of ESP Tony Dudley-Evans defined ESP according to its ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics. Based on Strevens’ definition of ESP, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) offered their own definition based on ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics

1. Absolute Characteristics:

- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
- ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

2. Variable Characteristics:

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used by beginners (1998, p.4-5).

We can conclude that ESP definitions cover three important points: the specific language, the learners, and the place of learning. These points of ESP are closely related to each other, and can be combined to establish that ESP is: the teaching of special English, to adults, who will use it in special places (the

administration, the university, the hospital...); in order to fulfill a specific aim (communicate linguistically correct).

Characteristics of ESP

- It is based on the needs of the learners.
- It includes a specific methodology and activities destined to special fields of study.
- It has its own grammar, vocabulary, and language skills.
- It is often addressed to adult and motivated learners.

Branches of ESP

What we notice about ESP is that it emerged from the English language Teaching (ELT), as it is a branch of ELT (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

According to Celce-Murcia (2001), it is not difficult to speak about the division of ESP. She divided ESP into two big branches that are EAP and EOP.

EAP includes English for Science and Technology (EST), English for business and Economics (EBE), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), and English for Law (ELP). The second big branch is EOP that includes EPP and VESL.

English for Medical Purposes

Existing as a sub-branch of ESP, EMP is characterized by implementing its unique language and terminology. Gyls and Wedding (1983) explained that the medical field has its own terminology that is addressed to the health care places.

Yang (2005) believed that EMP courses are based on the use of specific medical affixes and prefixes.

The growth of EMP all over the world led program designers and educators to think carefully about the content of an EMP course addressed to medical doctors (Master, 2005). Regarding the role of an ESP teacher, Swales (1985) states that ESP teachers must be immensely involved in the content language of the discipline. NA for an EMP course should be conducted with extreme care.

Bosher and Smalkowskis (2002) emphasize the crucial role need analysis plays in selecting the content of an EMP course. They argued that needs analysis should be based on interviews with teachers and students, students' questionnaires about the complexities of the health-care language and observations of different EMP classes.

Needs Analysis

When designing an ESP course, the most important thing that we take into consideration is the learners' needs and wishes. In order to know who the learners are and what they need from the course, we must follow a needs analysis approach to identify the required needs and aims from the learning of English.

Definition of Needs

The concept of 'Needs' covers both the learners' needs and the teaching situation. Richterich (1972) states: "...a need does not exist independent of a person.

It is people who build their images on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment". Brindley (1984) says: "the term needs refer to wants, desires, demands, expectations, lacks, constraints and requirements." Berwick (1989, p. 52) suggests a basic definition of a need: "a need is a "gap or a measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state."

So from these definitions we conclude that a need represents the wants, desires and demands of the person in his specific environment.

Types of Needs

- The Learners' Needs

The learners' needs represent an important type of NA process. Richards (2001) states that: "different types of students have different language needs and what they are taught should be restricted to what they need". He suggests that learners' needs are special; we should know them, and they form the course content.

On the other hand, Bloor (ELT documents,117) defines the learners' needs as learner-centered; Bloor clarifies this concept as: what the learners are able to do at the beginning of the course, what are his/ her, or what skills he may possess. (Bloor ELT documents117, p.17). So the analysis of this type of needs will help the teachers in designing an EMP course.

-The Target Needs

In ESP, the learners' needs are determined by the target needs. Bloor (ELT documents,117) defines the target needs as *target-centered*, which she views as the learners' future roles in their work places, and the skills, or knowledge the learners need in order to perform their jobs sufficiently.

According to Hutchinson& Waters (1987, p. 53), needs analysis has direct relation with ESP. They also said that there is no difference between ESP and General English:

It is often argued that the needs of the general English learner; for example, the schoolchild, are not specifiable...In fact, this is the weakest of all arguments, because it is always possible to specify needs, even if it is only the need to pass the exam at the end of the school year. There is always an identifiable need of some sort. What distinguishes ES from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need.

Similarly, Richards (1990, cited in West, 1994, p.13) believes that: "most of the literature on needs analysis originally came from the realm of TESP, but needs analysis procedure have increasingly come to be seen as fundamental to the planning of general language courses".

Richards, also, clarifies the concept of needs analysis, as: "procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as need analysis."

In a more interesting definition of needs analysis, Richards and Platt (1992, p. 242) explain this concept as: “the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities.”

Implementing NA in language teaching

According to recent research, there is a difference between the learners’ needs and the teachers’ needs. Robinson (1991) thinks that needs analysts should be aware about the content of an ESP course by taking into consideration the different views of both; the learners and teachers.

The research to date emphasizes the significance of needs analysis for devising a course, writing textbooks or course books, and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place (Robinson, 1991; Jordan, 1997).

Yet it is recommended that needs analysis should be carried out continuously because “as students become more involved with the course, their attitudes and approach may change” (Robinson, 1991, p. 15).

Needs analysis answers the questions who? (who needs to be taught), What? (the content of the course), When? (the appropriate timing), and where? (the setting or place of teaching). (Clark, 1998).

According to Long (2005) there are four reasons to perform needs analysis: First, to determine the relation between the material and the learners’. Second, to explain the necessity of the material for all parties included in the teaching process (teacher, learner, administration, parents). Third, to pay attention to the differences in learner needs and styles. Fourth, to create a syllabus which will meet the needs of the learners.

Research methodology and Design

Starting from the basic assumption that ‘needs’ are not tangible, ‘ready-made’ or fully-developed’ facts, but, multiform and difficult to grasp; Richterich and Chancerel (1980) put forward the view that, in order to identify them, one must gather a certain amount of information concerning the learner and his needs in relation to his resources, his objectives, methods of assessment and curriculum. The focus is therefore on “the learners, with their varying experience, age, intelligence, learning styles and expectations as well as needs and motivation” (1980).

With this concern in mind, it has been our objective in the present investigation to identify the medical doctors’ needs for English, to include the above parameters of inquiry and gain as much relevant information as necessary for our purpose.

The sample meant for this study comprised ten medical students and doctors working at Batna Hospital University Centre. A purposeful sampling technique is used to select the sample. According to Lodico et al. (p.2): “the goal of purposeful sampling is not to obtain a large and representative sample; the goal is to select persons, places, or things that can provide the richest and most detailed information to help us answer our research questions”

Analysis of the Medical Doctors' questionnaire

1- The existence of English books in doctors' reading lists

The majority of the respondents answered positively to the question concerning the existence of English books in the doctors' library.

Table 01: English books in doctors' reading lists

	YES	NO
Number of Doctors	7	3

2- Do you read Articles on the internet written in English?

It is the same case for the next question concerning the reading of English articles.

Table 02: Number of doctors reading internet articles

	YES	NO
Number of doctors	6	4

3- In which language do you find the most important articles?

For this question, 6 out of 10 doctors believed that the majority of the important articles are written in the English language.

Table 03: The type of language that provides the most important articles

Language	Number of doctors
English	6
French	4

The information gained in questions 1, 2 and 3 confirms the fact that English has an important role in the doctors' academic career; English is the language being needed to gain access to specialized literature in their subject discipline (books, journals, articles...). In addition, such information is relevant to the specific language skills to be focused on and developed within the English program.

4- To be a qualified doctor, how do you consider the English language?

The last question is about the relationship between the English language and being a qualified doctor in the work, and here 7 out 10 of the doctors said that it is necessary, and only three said that it is useful. This information is relevant in order to anticipate the eventual use to which they will put their knowledge of the language.

Table04: The need of the English language for a qualified doctor

	Number of the doctors
Necessary	7
useful	3

Such is the background information gathered from the doctor body. The remainder of the questionnaire is divided into three sections, which we shall examine in turn.

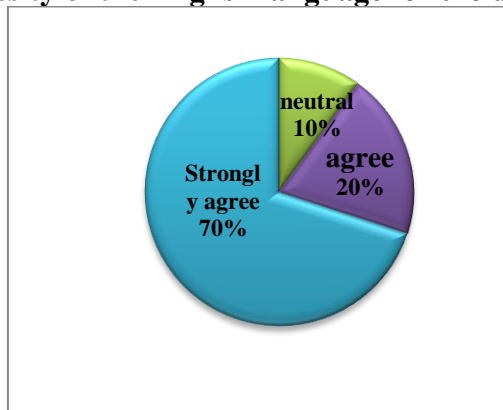
Section1: The Doctors' Motivation

In this section, the doctors are asked about what motivate them to learn English.

As it is shown in figure01, practical instrumental motivation is behind the medical doctors' need to learn the English language. In fact, the instrumental reason expressed in question1, namely:

I am studying English because knowledge of the language may help me in my future job.

Figure 01: The necessity of the English language for the doctors' future job



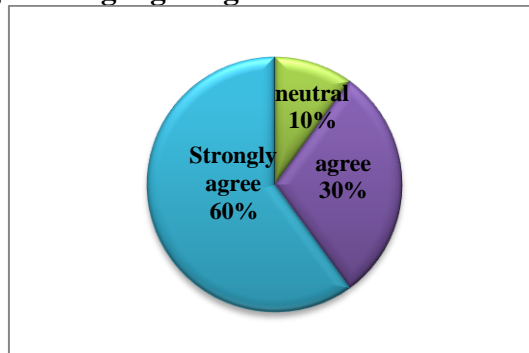
The majority of the doctors (70%) agree about the necessity of the English language for the medical doctors' future job.

The percentage of the doctors choosing this reason is approximately the same to the percentage of the doctors choosing the next popular reason, also classified as being of the instrumental type.

This is expressed in question 2:

The more I learn English the more I realize how useful it can be for scientific knowledge.

Figure02: The usefulness of the English language to gain scientific knowledge

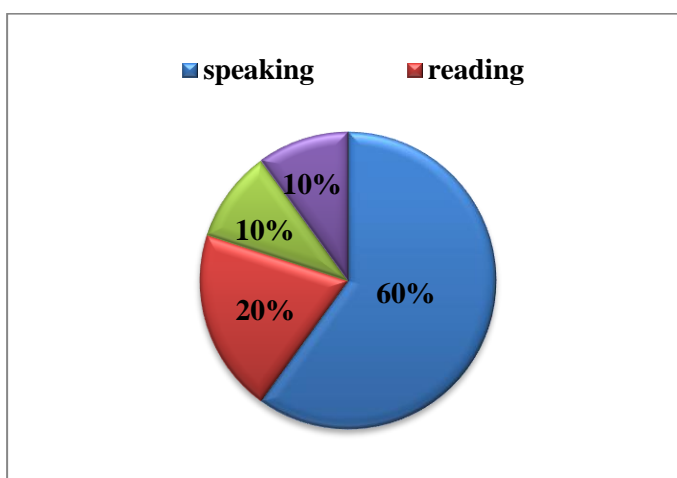


We can say here that the medical doctors are more interested with the ‘instrumental’ motivation because they see the English language as a tool to improve their academic and occupational level.

Section2: Needs Analysis

In this section, we are dealing with the doctors’ needs for the English language. The doctors are asked to arrange the different skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing in order of importance. As it is obvious in figure03, the most important skill according to the doctors’ opinion is to be the ability to speak the language Then, in the second position, we have reading skill, and finally listening and writing.

Figure03: The Classification of Skills



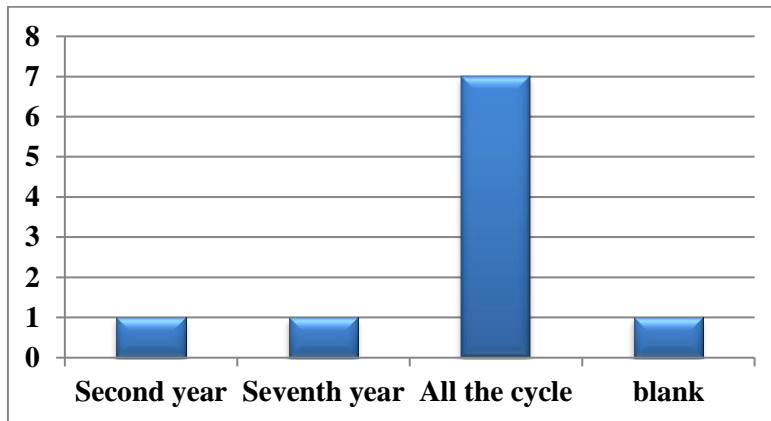
we notice that the doctors are more interested to develop their ability to speak in English than the other skills. This is probably due to the fact that the medical doctors are in a stage of the academic learning in which they are asked to participate in conferences, and even to go abroad..

Section 3: The English Program

In this section we are dealing with the content of a future English program. So, the doctors are asked to give their opinion about the different components that can be included in the program.

Question one is about the need of an English module in their studies. All the doctors who constitute the sample of our study (10 doctors) answered “yes” for the question.

The second question is about the year in which we can include an English module. As it is shown in figure04:

Figure04: The appropriate academic year for an English module

The majority of the doctors are for the introduction of an English module during all the cycle(7 years).They justified such choice by saying that if they will have the module from the first to the senventh year, they will be able to progress step by step; i.e.they will first acquire the basics of the language,then they will develop different skills like: writing scientific article, speaking in English.

The third and fourth questions are about the appropriate timing and attendance to the English course.Here ,the majority of the doctors said that they must have more than three hours per week for an English module.And attendance to the course must be obligatory.

The last question of the third section is about the type of the teacher that should be in charge of the English module .Here, the medical doctors want to have an ESP teacher because he/she will have a knowledge of the English language and the medical domain.

At last and not least, the doctors are asked if they have any suggestions/remarks that they think would be useful to this study.The following comments are the most recurrent:

- The necessity of having an English module for the medical students at an advanced level i.e.the graduate and post graduate level. They see it as a necessity not a choice. More specifically,English for Medical Purposes.

- They suggest that the medical library should contain Medical English books.The reason for such suggestion is that the translated books from English to French are more expensive than the books in the original version.

- According to the medical doctors, the Ministry of Health must enter into collaboration with Anglophone countries in order to facilitate the touch for the medical students.

- Since the internet plays a significant role nowadays, the doctors suggest that there must be a forum for the medical students and doctors in the English language; in this case it will be more easy for them to learn the language .

Conclusion

The background against which this study has developed is a dissatisfaction from the part of the medical doctors concerning the lack of an English module in the medical syllabus. The prime objective is to investigate the needs of medical doctors for ESP, and precisely for EMP in their academic career and future job.

With this concern in mind, what we have attempted to do in the present paper is to identify the urgent need of medical doctors, who are doing their medical studies in the French language, for the English language in their academic career and future job.

A review of literature has shown that ESP is an approach to language learning based on learners' needs. Its foundation lies in the question: why does this learner need to learn a foreign language? In addition to that, the teacher and planner must investigate the uses to which the language will be put, to determine accurately what these specific purposes are.

Furthermore, the lingua franca of medicine, and most scientific fields, is English. The world most widely cited medical journals are published in English. As such, doctors and researchers whose first language is not English must learn to rely on the mass of medical knowledge published in English.

Implementing an academic needs analysis has a significant role in the identification and examination of needs for any educational institution. An ongoing needs analysis should be a prerequisite for any program/course design in order to achieve effective instructional outcomes.

A curriculum, as a pedagogic tool, should take into account both modern trends in language learning and teaching and the findings of this study. It should thus be based on the following principles:

- It should be a document with an international ambition. It will provide students with a solid foundation of learning and open up international professional opportunities to them.

- It should be relevant to the needs of the learners and societal expectations, and relevant to the target situations in which ESP students will function as specialists. Its content should:

- Be based on international levels of proficiency.

- Have a clearly and flexibly formulated objectives and outcomes.

- Take into account the students' needs, backgrounds, level and motivation to the language.

This investigation has shown that medical students and doctors at Batna Hospital University Centre need the English language not only in their academic career, but also in the professional one. Medical students and doctors are highly

motivated to have an ESP module in their field of study. This motivation is not only an integrative one, but also instrumental motivation.

In this investigation, the results show that medical students and doctors do need an English module in their studies. Therefore, the introduction of ESP course for medical students and doctors is a vital need. An English module, according to the doctors' view, should be introduced from the first year of their medical studies; the attendance of course must be obligatory; the timing of the course should be for three hours; and the course must focus on the teaching of the medical terminology, in addition to the concentration on speaking and reading skills.

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