

## English for Medical Purposes: The Need for the Application of a Hybrid-Teaching Environment in Tunisian Medical Institutions

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### Abstract

*This paper is a review article that deals with the field of English for Medical Purposes. The objective of this piece of research is to show that based on various studies on medical discourse, it can be said that there is a continuum of hybrid Medical Englishes. As a result of this plurality, teachers of English in medical schools are supposed to take this variable into consideration. The first part of the article is a theoretical part that refers to research in the domain of English for Specific purposes and the domain of English for Medical Purposes. The theoretical part also mentions the different types of medical discourse. The second part is supposed to give the rationale or the conclusion that can be drawn from the theoretical part.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of ESP is a field that captivates the attention of many researchers. Thus, researchers should pay close attention to this field to better the teaching environment. In this regard, the investigation of this field is supposed to ameliorate the educational atmosphere.

This field “refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain”. The main objective of an ESP curriculum is to meet “the specific needs of the learners” (Introduction)

It should be noted that “Globalization and international development in language education have inspired a shift from the learning of traditional College English to English for Specific Purposes (ESP)” (Dou et. al, 2023, p. 1).

As it has been argued,

English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular social groups. Emerging out of Halliday, Macintosh, and Strevens’ (1964) groundbreaking work

nearly 40 years ago, ESP started life as a branch of English language teaching, promising a stronger descriptive foundation for pedagogic materials (Hyland, 2006, p.380)

English is considered the language of science and technology. In this regard, scientific researchers use English to talk about scientific innovations. As it has been argued, *“In many countries, English has become the lingua franca for science and technology; almost all important discoveries and most research results are now published exclusively in English”* (Sinadinović, Mičić, 2013, p.115)

## **2. DIFFERENT TYPES**

The field of English for Specific Purposes involves different varieties of this domain. In this respect, it is possible to mention the following subfields like Aviation English, Business English, legal English and English for Medical Purposes. (Paltridge and Starfield 2013: Introduction)

### **2.1.English for Medical Purposes**

This section is divided into two parts. The first part introduces this field and the second part mentions some studies that have been conducted in relation to this field.

### **2.2.Definition**

English for Medical Purposes is put under the rubric of English for Specific Purposes. This subfield is interested in the world of medicine.

This field has received huge success. To put it differently, those who belong to the domain of linguistics and medicine are interested in this domain. As it has been suggested, *“EMAP has developed considerably over the last decade and is attracting increasing attention from the linguistic and medical fields”*. The researchers also mention the importance of EMP in English communities. As it has been stated, *“EMAP is well developed in English-speaking countries, especially Great Britain, where there are many workshops and campaigns on the importance of English for Academic and Professional Purposes”*. The importance of this area comes from the belief that *“EMAP is thought to help physicians make more precise diagnoses, establish better physician–patient communication, and reduce the number of clinical errors”*. In other words, the efficacy of EMP is due to its capacity to assist doctors in their medical profession. EMP is not only important in English communities. This field is also significant *“in non-English-speaking”* communities (Sinadinovic and Micic, 2013, p.115)

It is important to note that this field entails the presence of specific linguistic features that characterize the realm of EMP. As it has been argued,

English for medical science is distinguished by extensive use of specialised lexicon that has several layers, including technical vocabulary, which refers to Latin and English medical terms used in anatomical descriptions and scientific papers (such as tetanus, opisthotonos, acne vulgaris, and diarrhoea); semi-technical vocabulary, which refers to language used in doctor-to-doctor communication (such as acne, eruption, and trismus); and non-technical (col (pimples); rash; red spots ; the runs; lockjaw). (Ji Dubey, 2022, p. 1473)

### **2.3.Studies Related to this Field**

Different studies have been conducted in relation to the field of English for Medical Purposes. One of these studies is a study done in Serbia. Sinadinovic and Micic(2013: 115) point to the old usage of EMAP at the faculty of medicine in Belgrade, Serbia. The logic behind this usage is that *“Belgrade university focuses on helping its students to successfully manage the many academic and professional tasks they will face during their studies and professional life”*. An important feature that characterizes the teaching environment at this faculty is the focus on the combination of the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Another study that can be mentioned is this study done in Romania. The research that has been conducted in Romania seeks to investigate the peculiarities of teaching in this specific country. Because many Romanians who are specialized in medicine *“intend to emigrate to English - speaking countries”*, *“teaching medical English should be adapted in order to meet the specific academic professional needs of the Romanian students”* (Pavel, 2014, p.39)

Another study done in Iran. It is meant to ameliorate the teaching of EMP in Iran. It seeks to investigate *“the issue of learners and expectations of the main problems of ESP classes in the school of medicine”* (Boniadi et al, 2013, p. 49)

Another study done by a Tunisian researcher can be mentioned. In this regard, Harrabi (2013) seeks to provide a descriptive account of the *“educational situation of English for specific purposes within the faculty of medicine of Sousse, Tunisia”*. This piece of research investigates *“the attitudes of both teachers and learners in this institution”*(p. 57)

Harrabi (2013) states that *“In Tunisia we don’t have enough information concerning the English for specific purposes teaching/learning situation”* (p. 57)

Harrabi (2013) states that this investigation is very important because of the lack of studies related to this domain. An additional reason for this importance is that *“the number of students and the non literary institutions has been in increase for a number of years and this increase requires an exploration of the situation of teaching/learning of this specialty”* (p.60)

Harrabi (2013) states that it is important that those who belong to the field of ESP *“think of improving the situation in this field in Tunisia”* (p.62). He suggests two main techniques to reach this objective. The first one is the introduction of audiovisuals *“and multimedia means”* and the second one is to the implementation of trainings for the teachers of ESP.

Imen (2022) conducted a study to scrutinize the teaching of English for Medical purposes in Tunisia. This thesis project has analyzed the textbooks addressed to Tunisian learners in the faculty of Medicine of Tunis. The textbooks have been analyzed using the model of McDonough and Shaw (2003). This study has focused on the investigation of the nature of the medical genres targeted in the textbook. Thus, Imen (2022) states that this doctoral dissertation *“sees medical discourse as a discourse that is characterized by its generic variety. This generic variety entails the inclusion of a spectrum of medical genres that takes this hybridity into consideration”* (p.208). She also argues that

Imen’s study (2022) tries to open the gates for a new understanding of medical discourse that is meant to put an end to the traditional teaching method of Medical English that sees it as a one unique unit ignoring the fact that Tunisian learners should encounter Medical “Englishes” used in research and workplace settings (p.208)

## 2.4. Medical discourse

This section is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with Academic medical genres and the second part deals with popularized medical genres.

### 2.4.1. Academic medical genres

Academic discourse “refers to the way of using language that exists in the world of academia, enabling universities to go about teaching students and doing research” (Tiainen, 2012, p.12)

Different medical genres are put under the rubric of academia. As it has been suggested, “regarding the communication in the field of medical science it can be noticed that it is conducted according to well established communication patterns called academic genres” (Milosavljević and Antić, 2015, p.78)

Two types of genres are put under the rubric of medical discourse: written and spoken genres

Under the rubric of written genres, it is possible to talk about research articles. In this respect,

Research articles in medicine are written according to the so called IMRaD form (introduction, material and methods, results, discussion). Adoption of IMRaD form is an attempt to improve the structure of the article and expose the content in a systematic and accurate manner in order to improve communication (Milosavljević and Antić, 2015, p.78)

It is important to say that the genres that belong to the academic realm are meant to shape the future of researchers. As it has been mentioned, “To meet the requirements of the academic discourse communities, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners need to gain a good command of the English language for completing various academic tasks” ( Saidi and Talebi, 2021, p.1)

Under the rubric of spoken genres, it is possible to mention oral presentations and conferences. As it has been argued, oral presentation and conference language belong to spoken genres. In this respect, “conferences play an important role within the specialized discourse communities, and represent important events for both students and experienced

*professionals. This is an opportunity to exchange ideas and hear about the latest findings in research”* (Milosavljević and Antić, 2015, p.79)

Medical discourse can be described as a dynamic discourse. It is characterized by its dynamic nature. As it has been suggested,

International use of English in the field of medical science encompasses not only sheer transfer of new information and ideas but adoption of the well established features of written and oral genres. However, it should be emphasized that these genres are at the

same time dynamic and subject to changes in wider contexts surrounding this discipline (Milosavljević and Antić 2015, p. 77)

It can be argued that Hyland (2009) talks about the presence of four types of discourses. The first category corresponds to research discourses. This type of discourse is meant “*to convey information and knowledge in research settings between researchers*”. The second type of discourse is instructional discourse. This type of discourse is a “*discourse used in the universities to teach students*”. The third type of discourse that Hyland refers to is the discourse produced by students. Student discourses “*refer to the discourse that university students themselves use*”. The final category corresponds to popular discourses. Scientific journalism is part of popular discourse. This type of discourse is used “*to convey academic knowledge and information to the wider audience*” (Hyland, 2009, as cited in Tiainen, 2012, p12)

In this sense, academic discourse can be described as a multifaceted type of discourse that has hybrid, multiple facets. As it has been suggested, “*Academic discourse is increasingly multi-modal, incorporating various visual as well as verbal texts, including photographs, diagrams, outputs of imaging devices, and even cartoons*” (Myers 2003, p.3)

#### 2.4.2. Popularized medical discourse

The term popularization is defined as “*a class of communicative events or genres that involve the transformation of specialised knowledge into ‘everyday’ or ‘lay’ knowledge, as well as a recontextualisation of scientific discourse, for instance, in the realm of the public discourses of the mass media or other institutions*” (Calsamiglia & Van dijk, 2004, p.370)

It can be assumed that the objective behind the usage of a popularized discourse is “*to communicate lay versions of scientific knowledge*” (Suhardja 2008: 1). Taking this into account, it can be stated that “*In popularization discourse, insights from academic discourse are recontextualized and reformulated into newsworthy, understandable knowledge for a lay audience*” (Sterk et al, 2022, p. 35)

The media is characterized by the powerful propagation of the medical discourse. In this respect, “*Seymour-ure (1977:55) argues that although general news values affect the day-to-day appearance of science stories, the subject “fashion” is more important and medicine is “always in fashion”*” (Suhardja, 2008, p.1)

To put it differently, “*medical and health related stories are more prominent than other science stories because they are usually reported in terms of human interest or in terms of something that readers can relate to (hansen&dickinson, 1992)*” (Suhardja, 2008, p. 1)

Medical information is easily accessed via the media. This propagation of medical data is noticeable. In this regard,

hargreaves, lewis and speers’s (2003) found that health and medical related stories are more likely to be reported in the media than other types of science stories such as technology, animals, science/scientists, plants/ genetic modification, outer space, environment and foot and mouth disease” (Suhardja, 2008, p.1)

It is possible to say that there is a dialogue between the world of science and the world of news media. The increase of “*the amount of scientific news that fills the headlines*” is a clear



indication of this dialogue. The reason behind this dissemination is that science plays an increasingly visible role in society (de Semir 2000, p.125)

Popularization can take various, multiple forms and shapes. As it has been argued, “popularizations can appear on television, in the radio, or in the printed media such as textbooks, journals, magazines etc. (Varttala, 2001)” (Csongor, 2013, p.15)

### **2.4.3. Hybridity**

The term hybridity is defined by Fairclough in his article Discursive Hybridity and Social Change in Critical Discourse Analysis. In this respect, “discursive hybridity, interdiscursivity, the mixing of different discourses, genres and styles, the “disarticulation” and “rearticulation” of relationships between different discourses, genres and styles” (Fairclough, 2011, p.1)

The notion of hybridity can be understood as this amalgamation of different genres. In this regard, “Genre theorists have long noted the capacity for genres to split into new sub-genres,

*and the tendency towards genre-mixing or hybridity (Bachtin 1986, Bhatia 1993)”* (Sandra Gollin-Kies et al., 2015, New Genres/genre mixing/hybrids)

Technological progress also leads to the emergence of new genres. As it has been argued, “the convergence of computers and internet-based technology introduces new genres, such as the cybergenre” (Sandra Gollin-Kies et al., 2015: New Genres/genre mixing/hybrids).

Within this line of thought, the field of EMP is a rich field that should be investigated with cleverness. The understanding of the different facets of this discourse will have a positive impact on the teaching of EMP. The conclusion that can be drawn from the theoretical part is that medical discourse involves a variety of contexts. It is not possible to talk about a unified medical context. In this respect, medical discourse can be described as a hybrid, diversified type of discourse. Contextual parameters shape the type of discourse that should be produced.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

This article indeed has provided an overview of the field of English for Medical Purposes and the notion of hybridity and medical discourse. It is important to note that this article is not just a mere summary of the literature. To put it differently, this article is an invitation to shed light on a type of discourse that should be investigated with great attention by researchers to enable teachers of EMP to design a course that will benefit EMP learners. This review article is meant to invite researchers to pay close attention to the investigation of EMP discourse to be able to teach learners a valuable course that will help them in the future.

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**About the Author**

**Imen Chaari** is a doctor in linguistics who is teaching English at the Institute of Higher Commercial Studies of Sfax (Tunisia) as a contract teacher. My Ph.D. thesis is entitled “Teaching of English for Medical Purposes in Tunisia: The instructional discourse in the faculty of Medicine in Tunis: Textbooks as a case study”. Within the same line of thought, my Master’s dissertation is entitled “Appeal to Pathos in al-Musāmiḥ Karīm TV Program”. It should be noted that the field of ESP is my primary research interest.