Overview of Teaching English for Medical Purposes via Computer-A Case-Study: "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad, Romania

Narcisa Tirban[1+], Laura Rebeca Precup Stiegelbauer[2] and Rodica Teodora Biris[3]

[1, 2, 3] "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad, Romania

Abstract. Computers are essential in the modern world as a dominant means for education and communication. Concentration on learning English has increased due to the fact that today's global workplace has the need of career particular language teaching that consist of the capability to bring together research and treatment across borders for doctors. The capability of internationally acclaimed modern approaches of instruction most commonly used today for health professionals focus primarily on English language while secondarily embedding health care terminology in the lessons, even there is no doubt that English for Medical Purposes (EMP) falls within the category of discipline-specific language learning or English for Specific Purposes. This paper will offer a brief overview of the international EMP literature, but also will show that computers provide easy access to every possible kind of information and place. The purpose of this article is to reaffirm the importance of English as an international language in an international degree of higher institutions, such as General Medicine. The primary evaluation of the questionnaire which was undertaken by the authors and will show how much the students depend on Information Computer Technologies in their studies of English.

Keywords: English for medical purposes, International students, English as a second language, Computer, Romania, ICT.

1. Introduction

English was and is accepted globally as a global language of communication in medicine. For that reason, English is crucial for medical professionals and also medical students the world moves closer together. English is the most vital tool for medical students. The case-study is based on an observation of some of the students in general medicine from "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad. They need to use English in reading books and journals when they prepare for their exams.

In certain specializations the medical subjects are taught in English. The expert level of English requirements is higher than in other specializations, particularly related to clinical medicine. From this point of view English for Medical Purposes (EMP) is very important for these students. The English vocabulary that medical professionals need in their medical career is not only English for General Purposes (EGP), but also EMP, a in a way English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hull & Katz [2] previously described EMP as a form of English as a Second Language education that clearly emphasises on teaching aspects of medical English agreeing to the requirements of the job as a doctor: for writing progress notes and charting, interviewing and assessing patients, and providing oral and written reports.

2. Materials and Methods

A questionnaire was given to 150 students in General Medicine at the "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad that passed the exams of EMP, with a high level of proficiency in English. The students were requested to fill in a questionnaire on their information and communication technology (ICT) habits. The findings showed that students attitudes towards internet and learning English for medical purposes where not different considering their age, gender or nationality. There were 20 multiple choice questions. Some of the relevant statistics are presented in the following tables.

[+] Corresponding author. Tel.: + 004-0745-324-524.
E-mail address: narcisa_tirban@yahoo.com.

3. Results

The answers to the first question show where the learners access the internet.

Table 1
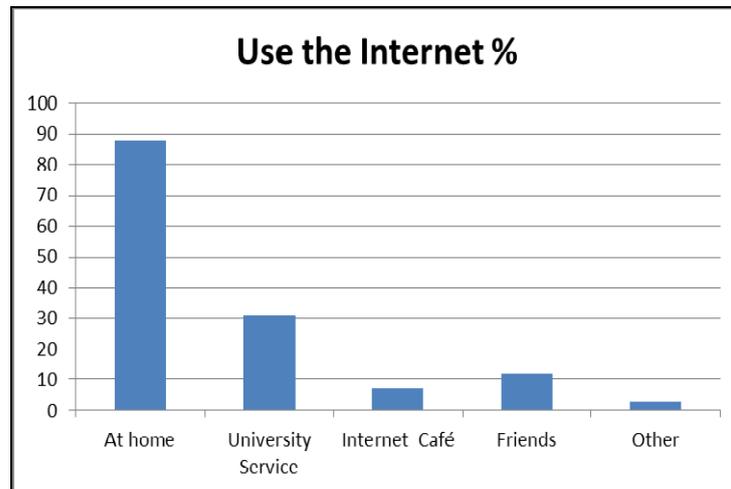
It can be understood that the majority of students get online at home, but only 31% through the University Computer Systems. Almost all of the students have access to the Internet at home. 7% of respondents use an Internet cafe, and 12% have Internet access at a friend's house. It is obvious from the data that many students use a variety of ways to access the Internet, which accounts for the total percentage exceeding 100%.

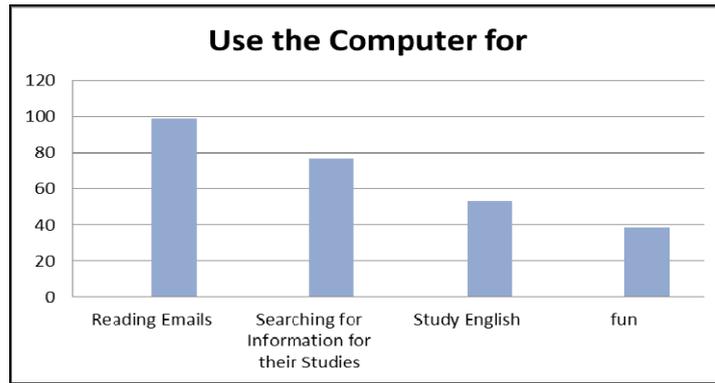The statistics on how many hours learners spend online is shown below:

Table 2
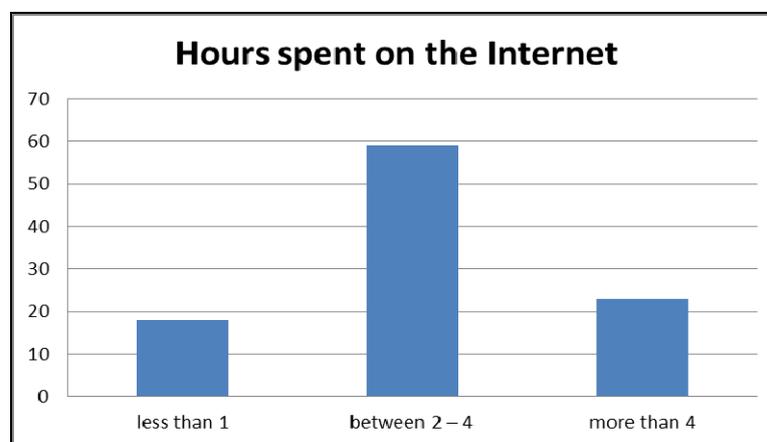
As table 2 illustrates, there is a significant difference between students' choice spending time on the internet: 18% of the students spend one hour a day online, 59% spend between two to four hours, and 18% even more than four hours per day online. As a general trend is nowadays to be more online as offline, one can see that even in the student population, more than 50% spent every day on average 2 - 4 hours online.

As it can be seen in Table 3, all students use the Internet to send and receive email, as well as searching for information, and also for general English language learning – 99%, 77%, and 53% respectively. Some respondents just surf for fun 39%. Apart from reading their emails, the students' interest lies in studying English and searching for information for their studies.
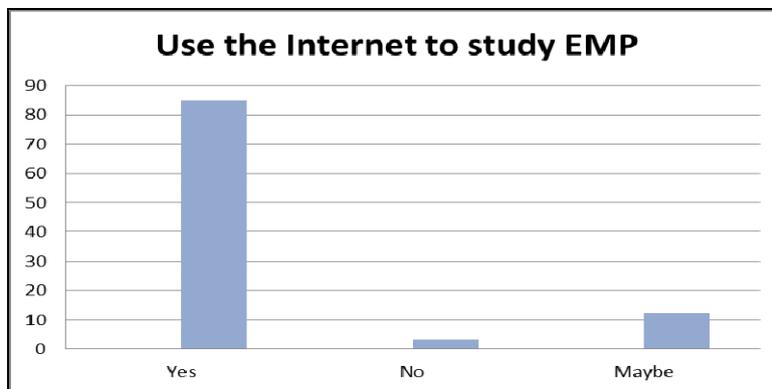
The findings on the third question are as follows:

Table 3

Use the Computer for

A bar chart titled "Use the Computer for" with the vertical axis ranging from 0 to 120. Bars: Reading Emails ≈ 99, Searching for Information for their Studies ≈ 77, Study English ≈ 53, fun ≈ 39.

As Table 4 illustrates, approximately three quarters of the students use the Internet to learn EMP.

Table 4

Use the Internet to study EMP

A bar chart titled "Use the Internet to study EMP" with the vertical axis ranging from 0 to 90. Bars: Yes ≈ 85, No ≈ 3, Maybe ≈ 12.
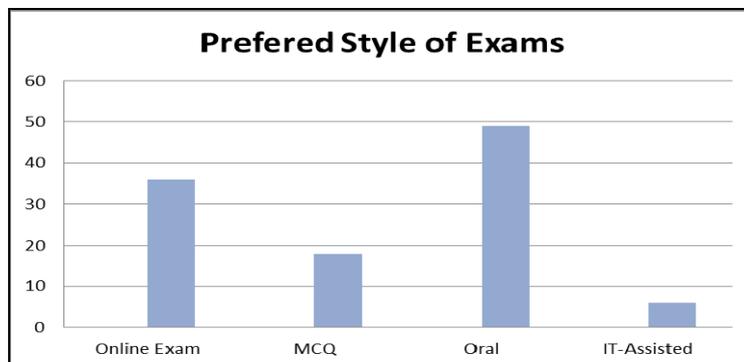
The replies in the questionnaire show the students' approaches to learn EMP online vary, but the majority of students, 85%, is open for it and makes frequent use of the Internet to aid their studies. 12% of participants did not show much attention for using the internet to study EMP; the reason can be attributed to lack of experience, familiarity or maybe antipathy.

In question number 17 the applicants were asked what would be their preferred style of examination for EMP and some of them chose more than one option therefore 100% was exceeded.

Table 5

Prefered Style of Exams

A bar chart titled "Prefered Style of Exams" with the vertical axis ranging from 0 to 60. Bars: Online Exam ≈ 36, MCQ ≈ 18, Oral ≈ 49, IT-Assisted ≈ 6.

Almost half of the participants would prefer an oral exam. The positive attitude towards this style of examination can be attributed to the role of the professor during the exam. Students had strong negative attitudes towards IT-Assisted examination as it can be seen in the table 5 above. The reason can be that the

students did not believe that computer can take the place of traditional styles of examination. MCQs were the second lowest response. A reason could be that they still have to get acquainted with this kind of examination

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the university students' attitudes towards the ICT and internet usage for learning English language. The students questioned for this questionnaire came from a common background, medical students, therefore they were homogenous. We consider the use of modern technologies very valuable. The findings showed positive attitudes towards using computers for their language learning. There is evidence in the literature that more experience with computer increases the degree of self-confidence and self-efficacy in using computers.

The main result from our findings is the questionnaire arising; how to give grounding in English to medical students, since they are indispensable points, which need to address in talking about the educational background of forthcoming medical professionals. The language of medicine is quite distinctive. It is filled with academic and technical language and acronyms and abbreviations. English for Medicine addresses these different styles in learning in different activities. The curriculum never loses sight of its obligation to the future medical professionals. On the other hand to have an enhanced understanding for the needs of medical students and medical professionals, the foundation of fruitful education was and is hereby a learners-centered attitude which addresses learners' wants and needs. International education is not a new era of international education, but "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad believes teaching students to actively explore and improve themselves; it is a very crucial and important component of constantly progress and advance the quality of training students.

EMP was defined as a form of English Second Language education that clearly focuses on teaching aspects of medical English based on the needs of the job for writing progress notes and charting, interviewing and assessing patients, and reporting. On the other hand it was identified EMP students as physicians, nurses, or pharmacists. EMP curricula at "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad actually are based on student needs and student types, but is that the same in most other institutions?

Most professors in linguistics, who are far removed from the medical field, are they aware of medical student and medical professionals needs, dictate curriculum or faculties decisions, how can they achieve a curriculum design that fits? It is, as in most hierarchical systems, a top-down model of decision-making wherein academics decide for themselves without listening to the medical students' needs or at least medical professionals.

5. Conclusion

Without doubt, the literature reviewed in this article validates a fondness for medical student focused curriculum design that takes account of a real medical world focus on content. The importance of learner-focused curriculum can be understood in the study by Rosswurm and Larrabee [4]. They conducted a needs analysis of both faculty and students, independently focusing on the perception of English language needs. They established that both parties agreed that listening skills are of most important point. In Japan, Kimball [3] discusses that the setting up of linguistic aims are what medical students on the whole require and how EMP curricula might better be developed. Kimball [3] believes that new trends in teaching ESP support the incorporation linguistic units such as grammar and vocabulary into the context of the career, rather than vice-versa. Chou [1] approves in his discussion the importance of socio-effective approaches to assist the learning process. As there has been much debate over the use of computers in Foreign Language Teaching over the past few years. The technique offers a huge chance as "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad very early

understood this development and offers ICT applications and an internet-platform. ICT has infiltrated the teaching of foreign languages at "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad and computers are an essential tool in the learning process. This is generally referred to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), where the computer as a medium is used to facilitate people in learning language. Lately, the numbers of English professors using CALL has amplified significantly. Besides, a lot of articles have been published on the role of English learning via ICT. Even though the potential of the ICT for scholastic usage has not been fully explored yet, it is recognisable that we have moved on where the links between ICT and EFL have been well-known, but need to be stretched out.

6. References

[1] Y. L. Chou. 'Promoting Learners' Speaking Ability by Socioaffective Strategies. The Internet TESL Journal Vol. 10, no. 9, 2004

[2] G. A. Hull, and M. Katz. 'Crafting an agentive self: Case studies of digital storytelling.' Research in the Teaching of English, vol.41 no.1, 2006, pp. 43-81.

[3] J. Kimball. 'Task-based medical English: elements for internet-assisted language training.' Computer Assisted Language Learning vol. 11, no.4, 1998, pp. 411-417.

[4] M. Rosswurm, and J. Larrabee. 'A Model for change to evidence-based practice. Image:' Journal of Nursing Scholarship vol. 31 no. 4, 1993, pp. 317-22.