

How to Design an ESP Course

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Summary:

The Knowledge Societies demand basic tools for the use of the information and communication in this globalized world. The health's professional requires continuous education training in a local and international context. The current work has the intention to show the need of the design of an English course with specific purposes for the health care professional that helps them communicate competently in order to interact in this multicultural and globalized world, participating in it.

Introduction

The main goal of the current article is to show the development of a technical English course for physicians in Tijuana, México. It was started by itemizing the factors involved in medical practice and medical education; and through a needs analysis of the target clients. We revised the importance of the use of the English language in the field of medicine and in the globalized world. The research was based on a methodology to design an English course according to the specific needs. The elements present in medical practice in relation with the English language were also analyzed. We identified the factors that limit the development of linguistic and communicative skills in the English language of the physicians in Tijuana, México. Lastly, we proceeded to the development of the actual syllabus.

The role of the English language in the Global World and the Societies of Knowledge.

The transmission and diffusion of knowledge in the society of knowledge is utterly important for the availability of information. The use of a standard language is required to gain access to this field of information and to facilitate communication. English has been considered a means to facilitate the access to knowledge in this global world in the scientific, political, and cultural field.

The role of the English language in the development of the professional health care provider living in a highly bilingual region.

The English language has a very important role in the professional development in a highly bilingual region as it is the city of Tijuana. To the north we find one of the most important cities of the United States, San Diego. It has a very important business activity and migration flow. Considering this marked diversity, the English language is the linguistic bridge which connects both cultures for communication purposes.

52.53% of a population of 446,339 working inhabitants of the city of Tijuana represents the activity branch doing business, tourism activities and providers of services. In this last branch lies the medical area.

English is considered as a standard language for the intellectual cosmopolitan, and the hidden epistemology in the computer that prevails to all the languages (Ianni, 1999). This is the reason for the health care professional, in his continuous medical training, that the English language is the tool to acquire this knowledge.

The Communicative Approach in the Health Care Setting for Continuous Training.

The Communicative Approach in the language teaching-learning praxis is based on a theory where the language is considered a system for the expression of meanings and primary functions such as interaction and communication (Brown, 2001).

This learning theory is based on a communicative approach that includes the use of meaningful activities that promote communication. Another important element is the principle of meaningful learning. In this situation, the student is exposed to pieces of language that express ideas and get him/her involved with authentic and useful language.

English for Specific Purposes

The courses of English for Specific Purposes are English language courses aimed to the development of linguistic skills in certain areas of knowledge such as Medicine, Engineering among others. These courses can be partitioned in units easy to handle. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1999).

The organization of these programs can be structured:

- By topics.
- By grammar structures
- By functions, and,
- By notions, to mention some.

In the programs by topics, different topics can be used to develop each unit. They allow the development of specific vocabulary, as well as grammatical and conversational development in the specified area.

The units, in the functional or notional programs, are composed by functional situations of interaction such as apologizing, asking permission, and describing.

The functional programs based on tasks let the student further interact with the language skills asking for information, making a reservation, interacting with other people, keeping a conversation, apologizing (pp. 85-88).

The programs based on language skills work on reading, writing, speaking and listening. Basic academic skills of the professional activity are carried on; e.g. writing an essay, making a report, taking notes, etc.

The development of a course based on a Systems Approach: Graves (2000)

This approach is formed by a group of processes and products interconnected in a continuous flow in a system, where each component affects every part in a reciprocal and representative manner. "The components of this process include defining the context, articulating the beliefs (approach towards a language teaching and learning), determining contents, goals outline, needs analysis, course organization, materials design, and students and program evaluation" (Graves, 2000).

Field research: needs analysis.

The items present in the medical practice such as diagnosis making and nosological entity integration were analyzed. It is by means of this knowledge and skills that the health care professional seeks for the different solutions to the new pathologies. The English language is a key factor in the written and spoken communication in a globalized world that helps carry on the continuous medical training. The scientific advances of new problems are produced fast and supported with the information and communication technologies.

37 general and family physicians were surveyed for the needs analysis. The data collected was captured and coded in an Excel program for statistical and category purposes in a period of 3 weeks. Professional Windows Office 2007 was used for the management of data.

It was found that they all live in the city of Tijuana. The majority, 31 physicians, has been living in the city for the last 10 years, and only 6 of them had been living in the city at least 5 years. The results show how important and relevant is the English language in every day practice.

Their learning styles, 24 physicians out of 37 said that they liked to work in teams and 17 physicians could work with computers. 17 physicians had studied English for more than 10 years, showing experience in learning this language.

The area where they want more practice is in speaking, interviewing a patient, and reading scientific texts. They consider English very important to

acquire updated medical knowledge, to study, and speak because they live at the border with the United States. 18 physicians reported that they could write and 21 that they could read in this language.

The analysis of the results shows the need to develop a functional and communicative course that includes speaking and writing. The use of the language should promote the use of the medical vocabulary, technically in order to fill out a past medical history (PMH). After doing this analysis the program was developed.

Conclusion

It is important to have updated knowledge in a society that profits from it for its continuity. The development of Language Courses is very important because it helps to maintain the construction of knowledge widening the constructs of it with the help of using another language as a standard one when their mother tongues are different.

The professionalization of teaching practice requires a proper use of updated teaching theories in the construction of new knowledge and it is more effective when all the participants involved, society, the political system, and the institutions of high education, are taken into account.

The implementation of these educational theories helps to elaborate educational programs ad hoc to the needs present in individuals of the new millennium, in a society with new challenges to resolve, to maintain unity and to develop useful activities.

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