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COMMON CHALLENGES FACED BY EAP STUDENTS AT A MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Анотація. *У статті проаналізовано найпоширеніші труднощі, які постають перед здобувачами наукового ступеня доктора філософії в процесі вивчення англійської мови наукового спілкування у медичному ЗВО. Запропоновано способи мінімізації й уникнення помилок в усному та писемному мовленні здобувачів наукового ступеня доктора філософії.*

Ключові слова: *мовні помилки, інтерференція, здобувачі наукового ступеня доктора філософії, англійська мова наукового спілкування.*

Summary. *The article analyzes the most common challenges faced by PhD students in the process of learning English for Academic Purposes at a medical university. The paper suggests several methods of minimizing and avoiding errors in the spoken and written discourse of PhD students.*

Keywords: *language errors, interference, students, English for Academic Purposes.*

As higher education increasingly integrates, there is a key focus on equipping PhD students with foreign language proficiency. English language proficiency is of paramount importance for students pursuing medical studies in international academic settings. This proficiency enhances graduates' capabilities, broadens their avenues for professional communication, fosters conducive conditions for international academic mobility, and increases the competitiveness of modern medical specialists. Despite this, non-native English speakers often encounter linguistic obstacles that hinder effective communication and academic achievement. Therefore, substantial attention has been dedicated to exploring language errors [1; 2; 3; 5; 10], and our prior research extensively investigates methods to improve learning outcomes and address these errors [4; 6; 7; 8; 9].

This paper researches several recurrent language errors frequently observed among English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students enrolled in medical PhD programs. We identified several areas of linguistic challenges encountered by PhD students, including the excessive use of passive voice, ambiguous sentence structures, errors in verb + preposition collocations influenced by their native language interference, discrepancies between UK and US spelling, and the misuse of translator's false friends. The significance of this study stems from the inherent nature of errors as a common occurrence during the foreign language learning. Consequently, timely error correction stands as an essential and pivotal factor for the successful mastery of a foreign language [1; 2].

One of the prominent issues identified among EAP students is the overuse of the passive voice. In Ukrainian academic writing, the passive voice prevails due to its perceived impersonal nature, which is associated with objectivity [9]. However, the use of passive voice can introduce imprecision and confusion, potentially slowing down the reader and diverting the focus of the sentence. Hence, in English academic writing, a well-balanced utilization of both passive and active forms is essential, depending on contextual factors: passive voice serves to delineate processes, study outcomes, or similar objective material, while active voice is utilized for depicting actions. [9]. Achieving clarity in conveying meaning holds paramount importance, especially in medical research, where any potential ambiguity must be avoided [9]. Therefore, we suggest providing structured guidance and practice exercises to help students understand when and how to use the passive voice appropriately. Activities and exercises may include contextual usage (real-world excerpts of discourse where passive voice is appropriate: students should discern when its use is justified and discuss why passive voice is suitable in such contexts). Another effective technique is rewriting sentences in the active voice, for example, transforming "The study ***is based*** on an integrative approach" into "The study ***relies*** on an integrative approach".

Furthermore, EAP students often struggle with constructing excessively long sentences that lack clarity and coherence. Therefore, our aim is to develop strategies for constructing clear and concise sentences through practice and analysis. Activities and exercises may include sentence analysis, for example: Provide several lengthy sentences from academic texts. Ask students to identify the main idea and break down the complex sentence into smaller, comprehensible segments while retaining its original meaning.

An additional point is that native language interference frequently leads to errors in verb + preposition collocations. Hence, one needs to offer exercises focusing on this challenge, addressing common mistakes influenced by students' native languages, e.g., "Fill-in-the-Blanks" task: "The effectiveness of treatment depends __ the patient's adherence to the therapeutic regimen" (on / of / at).

Moreover, the variance between UK and US spelling often confuses EAP students. Therefore, it is essential to highlight spelling differences through comparative exercises and consistent exposure to both conventions. Activities and exercises may include spelling quizzes and proofreading tasks (i.e., providing texts with mixed UK and US spellings. Students identify and correct the spelling inconsistencies).

In addition, the presence of false friends, i.e., words that appear similar in different languages but possess different meanings, poses comprehension obstacles for EAP students. In this context, activities and exercises may include false friend matching, i.e., presenting pairs of words from different languages that look similar but have distinct meanings. One more technique is contextual differentiation: provide sentences with potential false friends. Students discern the correct meaning based on the context.

Thus, addressing the highlighted language errors among EAP students at a medical university is crucial for fostering effective communication and academic success. Remedial strategies such as targeted practice, awareness-building, and guidance tailored to specific linguistic challenges are essential in enhancing language proficiency among PhD students.

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