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**İMANOVA KƏMALƏ XALİD QIZI**

Baş müəllim

Xarici dillər kafedrası

Azərbaycan Tibb Universiteti, Mərdanov

qardaşları 58

[imanova.kamala@outlook.com](mailto:imanova.kamala@outlook.com)

## **THE ROLE OF ENGLISH AS THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE OF MEDICINE SUMMARY**

Medicine has historically relied on languages like Latin and Greek, which shaped anatomical and clinical terminology. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, national languages such as German, French, and Russian influenced medical language, but many terms still had Latin or Greek roots.

After World War II, English became dominant in medicine due to the migration of scientists to the US and UK, the political and scientific influence of English-speaking countries, and the global need for a single language for research and communication. Major medical journals, global health organizations like WHO, and international conferences use English, making it the bridge for worldwide collaboration.

English enables access to the latest research, medical education, training programs, and resources across the globe. Standardized English terminology reduces errors in clinical practice, especially in multilingual settings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, English facilitated rapid sharing of data, vaccine information, and treatment guidelines worldwide.

However, reliance on English poses challenges. Non-native speakers may struggle with writing, publishing, and professional communication, and patients who do not speak English may face barriers in healthcare settings. Cultural and ethical sensitivity still remains essential in patient care, so local languages must be prioritized here.

In conclusion, English unifies the global medical community, enhances access to knowledge, and supports international collaboration. At the same time, local languages should be prioritized in patient care to ensure empathy, clarity, and cultural sensitivity.

**Key words: English, medical, healthcare, communication**

### *Historical roots of medical language*

There's not a thing like medical linguistics, but perhaps there should be. When we speak of medicine, and its languages, first names that come to mind are Latin, German and English. Languages like Greek and Latin have had a tremendous impact on all aspects of sciences throughout history. Medicine wasn't an exception. Even today, medical students, anatomy professors, and doctors all over the globe communicate using this language. Anatomical nomenclature, clinical and pharmacological terminology are the areas where Latin is traditionally preserved most.

19<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the national terminology era of medical languages where French, German and Russian contributed to the existing medical language. Especially before World War 2. We can feel that now as well. Students from abroad learn German with the ultimate goal being studying residency in Germany, as Germany is still a top choice for students from various countries for its relatively cheaper and still high quality medical education.

The national medical languages had much in common since most of the medical terms were derived from medical Latin, but there were systematic differences that still persist. One of the interesting facts is that during this stage, some medical words were created that we still use today actually have Greek roots rather than Latin. Greek language offers more flexibility in some cases, for example, the word *hyper-* is Greek rooted, but the word *super-* is Latin. In today's terminology we use the word *hypertension*, not *supertension* as *hyper-* is more productive.

### *Rise of English as the medical language*

Moving forward to our modern world, our medical language is mostly English right now. How and why did English become the dominant language in medicine? After World War 2, many scientists fled Europe to US and UK, which made English a top scientific language. US became a political superpower, a world leading country, heavily funding medical research, universities, and institutions, which increased the English influence even more. Leading medical journals like *Nature Medicine*, *The Lancet* publish in English. World's biggest organizations like WHO, UN use English as the global communication language. In summary, English took the medical language spot because of political dominance of English-speaking countries, the scientific advancements in those countries, and the global need for a single medical language.

English has not only become the language of medicine, but also social media, global organizations, even AI which is changing our world mostly uses English. English has effectively become the global language. Most countries teach students English as foreign languages at school. Millions of people publish papers in English, post videos in English, watch films in English. A professor in Colombia, a student in India, a doctor in Australia, a lawyer in the US all might have one thing in common-

English. That shows how magnificent the impact and power of English is in our modern world.

#### *Benefits of English in Medicine*

So how does this apply to medicine? Whether it's through research publications, training sessions, or cross-functional meetings, English becomes the bridge that connects healthcare professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders who are working tirelessly to improve public health outcomes worldwide. The real-life example of that happened during the coronavirus pandemic. All science centres, laboratories were trying to understand the virus, its new variants and invent vaccines which would help and protect non-infected people to some degree. World Health Organization was the centre which summoned the data presented, analysed statistics from countries all over the globe and of course, approved vaccines for their usage. That approval meant the vaccines met international standards for safety, efficacy, and quality, and it allowed countries (especially those without strong national regulatory authorities) to start using them. All of this data was presented to the world primarily in English. Laboratories shared their advancements in English. People across the planet had the latest news on vaccines and their outcome, drugs which helped with the virus, and ways to prevent the deadly infection through English. So basically, English made global communication easier by acting as a bridge language that connected the world during pandemic, especially in science, medicine and media.

The scientific community uses English as the primary language for international communication. Most advancements in scientific fields, as well as medicine, happen in English speaking countries and most prestigious journals publish in English and conferences are held in English-speaking countries. It enables scientists, clinicians to collaborate on research projects, share findings and contribute to a unified global scientific discourse.

Journals such as *The Lancet*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, and *The British Medical Journal (BMJ)* set the global standard for the dissemination of medical knowledge. Physicians and researchers across the world turn to these sources for the latest developments in clinical practice, public health, and biomedical science.

The dominance of English in medical publishing is not limited to elite journals. It is estimated that between **70 and 80 percent of all scientific articles in medicine and the health sciences are written in English**, regardless of the country of origin of the authors. This creates a unifying effect: research conducted in Japan, Brazil, Türkiye, or Nigeria can be understood and critically evaluated by scholars in Europe or North America, and vice versa. In this way, English acts as a bridge, ensuring that discoveries are not limited by national or linguistic borders.

#### *Challenges and drawbacks*

However, this dominance is not without its challenges. For many non-native speakers, publishing in English represents a barrier. Writing complex scientific arguments in a second or third language requires additional time, effort, and resources. As a result, talented researchers may struggle to communicate their findings with the same precision and clarity as native speakers. Furthermore, the requirement to publish in English often forces scientists to rely on translation or editing services, which can add financial burdens.

Despite these challenges, the use of English as the common language of medical research ensures a level of standardization and accessibility that would be impossible if every country published exclusively in its own language.

#### *Beyond research and publications*

The importance of English extends beyond research and publications to encompass training and capacity-building initiatives within global health organizations. Many training programs, workshops, and educational materials are developed and delivered in English, particularly in countries where the local healthcare workforce needs to be updated on the latest medical practices, technologies, and protocols. English serves as the medium for imparting essential skills and knowledge to professionals from various linguistic backgrounds, thereby enhancing their competencies and improving the quality of healthcare services.

For instance, international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) often conduct training sessions in English, either in-person or through online platforms. These trainings cover a wide range of topics, from emergency response and disease prevention to public health administration and clinical best practices. By using English as the instructional language, these programs can reach a broader audience and ensure that the training content is universally understood and applied.

While the use of English in training programs offers numerous benefits, it can also pose challenges for participants who are not proficient in the language. To bridge this gap, many organizations provide language support services, such as bilingual instructors, translated materials, and language proficiency courses, to help non-native English speakers fully engage with the training content. Additionally, fostering a multilingual environment within training settings can encourage greater participation and collaboration among diverse groups, ultimately strengthening the overall impact of capacity-building efforts in the global health sector.

#### *Access to resources*

Medicine and healthcare are areas which are changing very rapidly. Diseases change, antibiotics that used to work become useless as bacteria develop resistance, new viruses emerge, pathologies which were very rare become common. This increases the need for accessing resources from all over the globe.

Access to resources in healthcare refers to the availability and utilization of information, tools, and materials that support healthcare professionals in delivering quality care, making informed decisions, and staying updated with the latest advancements in the field. In the context of intercultural medical communication, access to resources encompasses a wide array of elements crucial for healthcare providers working across diverse linguistic backgrounds and healthcare systems. One fundamental resource is access to medical literature, research articles, textbooks, and educational materials. These resources, often available in English, serve as a vast repository of knowledge, allowing healthcare professionals to stay informed about new treatments, protocols, and best practices. Moreover, access to online databases, medical journals, and digital platforms provides a platform for continuous learning, professional development, and collaboration among healthcare professionals globally. Online resources also facilitate access to clinical guidelines, evidence-based practices, and diagnostic tools, empowering healthcare providers to make well-informed decisions in patient care. Language proficiency, especially in English, becomes pivotal in accessing and utilizing these resources. Healthcare providers proficient in English have a broader scope for accessing information, participating in international conferences, and contributing to global discussions and research collaborations. In addition to written resources, access to interpreter services or multilingual staff is another critical aspect. This resource supports effective communication between healthcare providers and patients with limited proficiency in the dominant language, ensuring that patients fully comprehend their diagnosis, treatment plans, and healthcare instructions. Overall, access to diverse resources, primarily facilitated by proficiency in languages such as English, is essential for healthcare providers to stay informed, continually learn, and deliver quality care within multicultural healthcare settings. It promotes a culture of learning, innovation, and collaboration, ultimately contributing to improved healthcare outcomes for patients worldwide.

Medical education is mostly English as well. Best medical universities like Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, Cambridge, Johns Hopkins University use English as the primary educating language. Universities of non-English speaking countries also teach their students this language as its significance rises day by day. Knowing English opens a lot of doors for future doctors and medical professionals. Medical exams like USMLE require knowledge of English.

We talked about medical terminology which had Greek or Latin roots. Modern terminology mostly uses English. This type of standardization of terminology may be the greatest benefit of English in healthcare. By using internationally recognized English medical terms, healthcare professionals can minimize confusion and reduce the risk of medical errors, especially in contexts where teams are multilingual. This consistency is particularly important in areas such as surgery, pharmacology, and

emergency medicine, where even a small misunderstanding can have serious consequences.

However, there are also drawbacks. The widespread reliance on English may disadvantage patients who do not speak the language. In hospitals where English dominates, local languages can sometimes be overlooked, creating barriers to effective doctor–patient communication. This may lead to misunderstandings about symptoms, treatment options, or informed consent. Furthermore, the pressure on non-native English-speaking physicians to constantly operate in a second language may create stress and even contribute to professional burnout.

#### *Cultural sensitivity*

Scientists write in English, doctors reshape their understanding of diseases using English, social media is run by English speaking doctor-influencers. English is everywhere in healthcare nowadays. As we talked about it, standartized English terminology, global connection using one language, bridge for doctors around the world, common language for research, these are the primary benefits of English in medicine. Its widespread use facilitates international collaboration, enhances access to knowledge, and supports the dissemination of health information to diverse audiences. The main challenge and drawback of the dominance of English is with non-native speakers who might be not fully fluent in English. The other challenge which doctors face is the difficulty in engaging with patients from other cultures than their own. English can act as a bridge which connects doctors and patients overseas, but it also means a greater cultural and ethical differences which will coexist in the doctor-patient environment. This means that understanding cultural sensitivity is essential.

#### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, English has connected healthcare professionals and patients all over the globe, has eased access to developments in medical sciences. Therefore, it should continue being the language of medicine. However, individual patient care should prioritize the use of local languages especially for those who are not fluent or don't English well to strengthen empathy, cultural sensitivity. If we manage to do that, medicine will benefit from the unifying role of English and individual patient needs mostly cultural and ethical will also be preserved.

**Иманова Кямаля Халид кызы**

**Роль английского языка как глобального языка медицины**

**Резюме**

Исторически медицина опиралась на такие языки, как латинский и греческий, которые сформировали анатомическую и клиническую терминологию. В XIX и начале XX века национальные языки, такие как

немецкий, французский и русский, оказали влияние на медицинский язык, однако многие термины всё ещё имели латинские или греческие корни.

После Второй мировой войны английский язык стал доминировать в медицине благодаря миграции учёных в США и Великобританию, политическому и научному влиянию англоязычных стран, а также глобальной необходимости единого языка для исследований и коммуникации. Основные медицинские журналы, международные организации здравоохранения, такие как ВОЗ, и международные конференции используют английский язык, делая его мостом для мирового сотрудничества.

Английский обеспечивает доступ к новейшим исследованиям, медицинскому образованию, программам подготовки и ресурсам по всему миру. Стандартизированная английская терминология снижает количество ошибок в клинической практике, особенно в многоязычной среде. Во время пандемии COVID-19 английский язык способствовал быстрому обмену данными, информацией о вакцинах и руководствами по лечению во всём мире.

Однако зависимость от английского языка несёт и трудности. Носители других языков могут сталкиваться с проблемами при написании, публикации и профессиональном общении, а пациенты, не владеющие английским, — с барьерами в медицинской помощи. Учет культурных и этических особенностей по-прежнему имеет важное значение при оказании помощи пациентам, поэтому приоритет здесь должен отдаваться местным языкам.

В заключение, английский язык объединяет мировое медицинское сообщество, расширяет доступ к знаниям и поддерживает международное сотрудничество. В то же время при уходе за пациентами приоритет следует отдавать местным языкам, чтобы обеспечить эмпатию, ясность и культурную чувствительность.

**Ключевые слова:** английский, медицина, здравоохранение, коммуникация

## **İmanova Kəmalə Xəlid qızı** **Qlobal tibb dili kimi ingilis dilinin rolu** **Xülasə**

Tibb tarixən anatomik və klinik terminologiyanı formalaşdıran latın və yunan kimi dillərə etibar etmişdir. 19-cu əsrdə və 20-ci əsrin əvvəllərində alman, fransız və rus kimi milli dillər tibbi dilə təsir etdi, lakin bir çox terminlər hələ də latın və ya yunan köklərinə malik idi.

İkinci Dünya Müharibəsindən sonra alimlərin ABŞ və Böyük Britaniyaya miqrasiyası, ingilisdilli ölkələrin siyasi və elmi təsiri, tədqiqat və ünsiyyət üçün vahid dilə qlobal ehtiyac səbəbindən ingilis dili tibbdə üstünlük təşkil etdi. Böyük tibb

jurnalları, ÜST kimi qlobal səhiyyə təşkilatları və beynəlxalq konfranslar ingilis dilindən istifadə edərək onu dünya miqyasında əməkdaşlıq üçün körpüyə çevirir.

İngilis dili bütün dünyada ən son tədqiqatlara, tibbi təhsilə, təlim proqramlarına və resurslara çıxış imkanı verir. Standartlaşdırılmış ingilis terminologiyası klinik praktikada, xüsusən də çoxdilli şəraitdə səhvləri azaldır. COVID-19 pandemiyası zamanı ingilis dili bütün dünyada məlumatların, peyvəndlər haqqında ən son yeniliklərin və müalicə təlimatlarının sürətlə paylaşılmasını asanlaşdırdı.

Bununla belə, ingilis dilindən asılılıq çətinliklər yaradır. Ana dili ingilis olmayanlar yazı, nəşriyyat və peşəkar ünsiyyətdə çətinliklər yaşaya bilər və ingilis dilini bilməyən xəstələr səhiyyə müəssisələrində maneələrlə üzləşə bilərlər. Həkim və pasiyent kontaktında mədəni və etik həssaslıq vacib bir amil olaraq qalır, buna görə də burada yerli dillərə üstünlük verilməlidir.

Nəticə olaraq, ingilis dili qlobal tibb ictimaiyyətini birləşdirir, biliyə çıxışı artırır və beynəlxalq əməkdaşlığı dəstəkləyir. Eyni zamanda, empatiya, aydınlıq və mədəni həssaslığı təmin etmək üçün xəstələrlə təmas zamanı yerli dillərə üstünlük verilməlidir.

**Açar sözlər: İngilis dili, tibb, səhiyyə, ünsiyyət**

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**Rəyçi prof. Məmmədova Z.Ş.**