

Professional article

Medical English Genres - Indispensable Tool for Effective Academic and Professional Communication

Nataša Milosavljević, Zorica Antić

University of Niš, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Pharmacy, The English Language Department, Serbia

SUMMARY

The English language is undoubtedly *lingua franca* of contemporary globalised world. Besides its widespread use in official communication among different countries, it has also huge impact within the borders of one country as well. Taking into account the fact that nowadays it represents the basic communicative tool in the field of medical science it has acquired both scientific and educational value. The concept of genre is a key term in medical communication and includes the written and spoken genres. 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 spoken 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.

Key words: communicative tool, medical science, international use of English, written and spoken genres

Corresponding author:

Nataša Milosavljević

phone: +381184226644

e-mail: natasaselmicmilosavljevic@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The English language is undoubtedly lingua franca of contemporary globalised world. Besides its widespread use in official communication among different countries, it has also huge impact within the borders of one country as well. Taking into account the fact that nowadays it represents the basic communicative tool in the field of medical science it has acquired both scientific and educational value. In such a way, effective communication in formal and informal settings and implementation of academic, personal, social and professional goals is facilitated and achieved (1).

Traditionally, medical language has been considered to be the language used by medical experts in their professional communication. Basically, it is characterized by wide use of specialised vocabulary called medical jargon. Here are a few examples: anoxia-lack of deficiency of oxygen; abduction - the process of drawing a part, such as the arm or leg away from the midline of the body; baroreceptor - nerve receptor sensitive to changes in blood pressure; calcaneus-heel bone; caries - the decay and degeneration of the bone (2).

In addition, medical language has its own specific features present on lexical, syntactic and semantic level and is based on frequent use of : 1) nominalized forms enabling precision in professional communication; 2) passive and impersonal style focusing on objective, measurable phenomena; 3) false pairs with the different meaning depending on the context in which they are used and 4) compound words, phrases and complex sentences (3).

THE CONCEPT OF GENRE ANALYSIS

The term genre was initially used by Swales (4) who defined it as a standardized communicative event in a functional environment aiming at communication among individuals who share the same ideas. Some authors equate the term genre with the term text types, whereby the genre analysis represents linguistic operation within the complete text (5). According to Salager-Meyer (6), the language for specific purposes may be considered as genre with its specific subgenres or text types. They report that, for example, the language for medical purposes

represents the specific genre with its own subgenres including editorials, research papers, case reports and the like. Thus, these authors see specific discipline or domain as a primary factor in making difference between texts. Generally accepted view is that the genre analysis represents the area of linguistic study that may provide important insight into the nature of professional and academic discourse and to assist in the acquisition of discourse skills at a higher level. In order to achieve their goals all genre types use different forms, structures and organizations (7). Genre-based approach to language teaching investigates the discourse of certain speech community. The analysis of academic and professional genres introduced by Swales and elaborated by Dudley-Evans (8) and Bhatia (9) is a multidisciplinary activity the result of which is recognizable description of communicative events that are characterized by a set of communicative goals identified and perceived by the members of professional or academic community.

ACADEMIC GENRES IN MEDICINE

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.

As Bhatia (10) states: The ultimate aim of genre theory is to offer a more dynamic explanation of the way expert users of language manipulate generic conventions to achieve a variety of goals. The concept of genre is a key term in medical communication and includes the written and spoken genres.

WRITTEN GENRE – RESEARCH ARTICLES

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.

Although appearing at the beginning of the published paper, Abstract is generally the last section to be written, when the study findings are completely understood. It represents summary of the paper

contents and conveys the main points. In addition, it should be interesting, clearly and concisely written. The length of the abstract is not strictly defined, but it usually contains between 100 and 250 words (11)

Introduction to scientific research is direct and precise. It is necessary to explain the significance of the work and state its major contents. The introduction should explain the reason for the research, and what research aims to find out. The hypothesis and exact research objectives are established in this part. The hypothesis summarizes what the research is trying to prove and directs the structure of the experiment. The introduction states the general facts that are important for understanding of the given topic, as well as relevant literature and studies dealing with the same subject (11).

Materials and methods is a part that describes the material, equipment and methods used in the study. The researcher states all the specificities of work. Every detail should be included. All variables are important and should be presented in detail. The use of passive forms is preferable in this section (11).

The Results section represents essential part of research containing accurate information and research findings. The data are usually represented in tables, graphs, diagrams and photographs. They should be accompanied by text that emphasizes and interprets the relevant facts. Generalization is performed on the basis of these results and possible conclusions are derived in order to justify the results with respect to the results of other similar studies. The use of tenses is particularly important in this section. In fact, the Present Simple Tense is used to describe firmly established facts and documents, while the Past Simple Tense is used when the statement focuses on the completed study, on what was done and found (11).

Discussion is the part where the author writes his own interpretation and evaluation of research findings. The success or failure of various research methods and ways of conducting studies in order to investigate the problem are also present in this part. Generalization of the results, implications and possible applications are also present (11).

SPOKEN GENRE – ORAL PRESENTATIONS AND CONFERENCE LANGUAGE

Representing public speech, the oral presentation is much more than a simple transfer of ideas and its successfulness depends largely on the assessment of the specific situations and ability to appropriately respond to them. When preparing a presentation, a speaker should think about it as a dialogue which includes much more than just verbal communication. The first necessary step in preparing the speech is an accurate analysis of the audience. Different audience requires different amount and level of information. The success of the presentation depends on the knowledge of these criteria in advance.

First of all, the speaker should clearly and accurately explain what he wants to achieve with his speech. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the subject of the presentation in one sentence that explains the importance of the topic to the audience. Moreover, it is necessary to determine the type and amount of information that needs to be transferred to the audience, as well as the most important arguments and questions that need to provide a response in the presentation.

An interesting introduction that draws and holds the attention of the whole presentation becomes a frame. The best way is to make introduction after completion of the entire speech. Efficient conclusion represents a logical result of the structure and content of the material previously discussed. Particular attention should be drawn to the time available for giving presentation and requires selection of substantive issues (12).

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. Giving speech has the features of written texts such as impartiality, accuracy and specialized terminology.

However, the conference language is different from the written language due to the presence of the audience (13).

Conference abstract represents a condensed version of the paper. It is submitted before the conference and highlights the state of the art and interesting points of the paper. The introduction includes reference to the course of the previous research, defines the problem and aim and establishes hypotheses. Most of the time is devoted to the specific details related to the exposed problem or research. The presence of the audience makes the speaker use narrative elements, informal language, occasional anecdotes, and point to the difficulties encountered during the survey. Such decisions are made on the spot and are not present in written articles. Also, the claims are stated firmly and explicitly, usually using the present tense, which reflects actuality of the topic.

The presentation of new facts is one of the basic features of the conference, so the choice of language in the title and conference abstract is very important (14).

CONCLUSION

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.

References

1. Milosavljević, N. Interrelationship between learning English language and students medical education. *Srpski arhiv za celokupno lekarstvo*; 2008; 1366 (7-8):441-444.
2. Davies, J. *A Quick Reference to Medical Terminology*. Delmar Learning, Canada, 2002: 4-39.
3. Antić, Z. Podučavanje i učenje engleskog jezika za potrebe medicine. *Medicinski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu; Galaksija, Niš*, 2010.
4. Swales, J. *Genre analysis. English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981: 10-11.
5. Robinson, P. *ESP Today. A Practitioner's Guide*. Hemel Hempstead. Prentice Hall, 1991:25.
6. Salager-Meyer, F. Principal component analysis and medical English discourse: an investigation into genre analysis. *System*; 1989;17(1):21-34. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X\(89\)90057-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(89)90057-2)
7. Hyland, K. Genre Analysis: Just another fact? *Forum* 1992;30(2):14-17.
8. Dudley, E. Research in English for Specific Purposes in Rosemary Khoo (ed.), *LSP PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS*. Anthology Series 33, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore, 1994: 319-331.
9. Bhatia, V. *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. London, Longman; 1993.
10. Bhatia, V. Methodological issues in Genre Analysis. *Hermes, Journal of Linguistics* 1996; 16: 39-59.
11. Cargill, M. O'Connor Patrick. *Writing scientific research articles*. Blackwell Publishing, UK, 2009:20-58.
12. D'Arcy, J. *Technically speaking: a guide for communicating complex information*. Columbus, Battelle Press, 1998; 160.
13. Dubois, B. Genre and structure of biomedical speeches. *Forum Linguisticum* 5, 1980: 140-169.
14. Ventola, E, et al. The language of conferencing. Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2002. Chow CK. Vitamin E and oxidative stress. *Free Radic Biol Med* 1991;11:215-232. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0891-5849\(91\)90174-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0891-5849(91)90174-2)

Žanrovi u engleskom jeziku za potrebe medicine: neophodno sredstvo za efikasnu akademsku i profesionalnu komunikaciju

Nataša Milosavljević, Zorica Antić

Univerzitet u Nišu, Medicinski fakultet, Katedra za engleski jezik, Srbija

SAŽETAK

Engleski jezik je nesumnjivo lingua franca u savremenom globalnom svetu. Pored široke upotrebe u zvaničnoj komunikaciji među različitim zemljama, engleski jezik ima veliki uticaj i unutar granica jedne zemlje. Uzimajući u obzir činjenicu da danas predstavlja osnovno sredstvo komunikacije u oblasti medicinske nauke, engleski jezik dobija naučnu i obrazovnu vrednost. Koncept žanra jeste ključni termin u medicinskoj komunikaciji i uključuje pisani i usmeni žanr. Međunarodna upotreba engleskog jezika u oblasti medicinske nauke obuhvata ne samo prenošenje novih informacija i ideja već i usvajanje opšte poznatih osobina pisanog i usmenog žanra. Međutim, treba naglasiti da su ovi žanrovi istovremeno dinamični i skloni promenama u širem kontekstu ove discipline.

Ključne reči: sredstvo komunikacije, medicinska nauka, međunarodna upotreba engleskog jezika, pisani i usmeni žanrovi