

A STUDY ON STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH LITERACY AMONG MEDICAL ENGLISH TEACHERS: IMPACT ON TEACHING QUALITY IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the pivotal role of English literacy improvement strategies among Medical English teachers and their consequent impact on teaching quality within the context of higher vocational colleges in China. In an era where the global integration of medical practices demands proficient English communication skills, the proficiency of teachers in English, particularly in Medical English, becomes crucial. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative interviews, the study examines various aspects of English literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, and pronunciation, among teachers in these specialized institutions.

Data collected from 428 participants across several higher vocational colleges reveal that targeted improvements in English literacy can significantly enhance the overall quality of Medical English teaching. Areas identified for potential enhancement include fluency in speaking, accuracy in pronunciation, and proficiency in reading and writing medical contexts. The study employs statistical analyses, such as ANOVA, to substantiate the positive impact of enhanced English literacy on teaching effectiveness, supported by qualitative insights from educators and experts in the field.

The findings underscore the importance of comprehensive professional development programs that focus on English literacy among Medical English teachers. Such initiatives not only promise to elevate the quality of teaching but also aim to better prepare students for the linguistic demands of the global medical workforce. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on teacher development and intercultural education, advocating for strategic interventions to bolster English literacy as a means to improve educational outcomes in higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: English Literacy, Medical English Teaching, Higher Vocational Colleges, Teaching Quality Improvement.

Introduction

The role of English as a medium of communication is changing predominantly in the case of language exchange between Pakistan and China (Haidar & Fang, 2019). Therefore, it is suggested by some researchers to integrate the home culture and outside culture into English curriculum and practice (Fang, 2017; Liu & Fang, 2017; Mei et al., 2018; Xue & Lingling, 2018). Touching the background of English literacy in China, we came across the different studies stating that English reached across the globe and established its foundations in nearly every field, both professional and academic domains (Cumming et al., 2018; He, 2017). Many scholars have found that English communication is crucial in every field of education: medicine, engineering, information technologies, or molecular biology (Chen, 2021; Mei et al., 2018; Zhang, 2018). As English reached the global status as a language, it built multilayered ideologies and identities (De Costa, 2016; Norton, 2013; Pennycook & Candlin, 2017).

The necessity to learn the English language cannot be understated in higher vocational medical colleges as it can strengthen the establishment of a decent hospital environment. By improving medical teaching and medical literacy in English, the environment will be automatically improved alongside the quality of medical treatment and the relationships between patient and doctor. (Wei, 2021; Fries, 1945; Wang, 2018). As per formerly conducted studies, currently, there are a few problems observed in medical English teaching (MET). Firstly, it is the negligence of humanistic connotation in teaching. According to Wei (2021), the primary issue is the low level of integration and assimilation of English education with quality education. The solution is to provide teacher training to change their traditional way of teaching to instantly attract students (Kaya et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2019), enhance their desire to study English culture (Cheung, 2001), strengthen the impression on them that they may consciously and actively devote to English learning. Secondly, the issue faced by MET is the poor medical literacy in English teaching (Choi, 2021; Sanip & Zulkifli, 2011). The problem is two folds; either the teacher is unable to deliver correctly in the English language, or the

students have poor proficiency in English, making it difficult for them to learn and remember English medical terms. Wei (2021) provided some suggestions about training and developing teachers and crafting them to learn the English language, which can be achieved by changing the current teaching concept.

Interculturalism is related to coexisting in one society having different cultures, attitudes, demographics and, most importantly, a non-uniform medium of communication (Zhu et al., 2021). The current study revolves around the fact that Chinese medical teaching institutes need to improve their secondary medium of language, i.e., English. The need for research was identified by formerly conducted studies as well. Chen et al., Yang and Zhaogang & Junqing, in 2018, 2019 and 2014, identified the significance of intercultural education predominantly in China, highlighting the problems faced by higher vocational institutes in the increasingly multicultural society.

The role of teachers' intercultural competency and quality education needs to be taken more seriously (Romijn et al., 2021; Wang, 2018). The current study is focused explicitly on medical teaching institutes. Therefore, we intend to conduct the study based on different aspects incorporating the role of teachers, medium of communication and intercultural learning environment in higher vocational medical colleges.

Data Analysis

Research question (1): How does the teachers' intercultural competence impact Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China?

Table 1 revealed an F-value of 14.570, significant at (0.000) alpha level 0.05. The significance means there is a positive impact of teachers' intercultural competence on Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China.

Research Question (2): What areas of improvement in English literacy among teachers can positively impact Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China?

From the result obtained in Table 2, it was deduced that any statement that scored a mean above the criterion mean of 3.00 was agreed to be the area of improvement in English literacy among teachers in higher vocational colleges in China. All the statements scored a mean above the criterion mean of 3.00. Hence, they agreed to be the area of improvement in English literacy among teachers in higher vocational colleges in China. The means of statements are rated as follows: Teacher is keen to teach in English (4.07); Teacher can read the context in fluent English (4.28); Teacher can write in English fluently (4.38). The teacher can pronounce the Medical English terms easily and correctly (4.35). The Teacher can use phonics to teach new words (4.15); the Teacher can teach the context and summarise (4.62), and the Teacher can speak in fluent English in the classroom (4.62).

Table 1: One-Way ANOVA on the Significant Impact of the Teachers' Intercultural Competence in Medical English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges in China

MET

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	354.489	18	19.694	14.570	.000
Within Groups	552.826	409	1.352		
Total	907.315	427			

Table 2: Areas of Improvement in English Literacy Among Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges in China

S.No.	Question item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
		5	4	3	2	1			
1.	The Teacher is keen to teach in English.	148	164	116	0	0	428	4.07	Agreed

2.	The Teacher can read the context in fluent English.	224	101	103	0	0	428	4.28	Agreed
3.	The Teacher can write in English fluently.	228	135	65	0	0	428	4.38	Agreed
4.	The Teacher can pronounce the Medical English terms easily and correctly.	262	56	110	0	0	428	4.35	Agreed
5.	The Teacher can use phonics to teach new words.	85	325	18	0	0	428	4.15	Agreed
6	The Teacher can teach the context and summarise	310	75	43	0	0	428	4.62	Agreed
7	The Teacher can speak fluent English in the classroom.	160	150	118	0	0	428	4.62	Agreed

Result And Discussion

The investigation into the impact of teachers' intercultural competence on Medical English teaching and the identification of areas for improvement in English literacy among teachers in higher vocational colleges in China reveals significant findings that enrich our understanding of these aspects. These insights are crucial for developing strategies to enhance the effectiveness of Medical English education.

Research Question 1: Impact of Teachers' Intercultural Competence

Table 1 demonstrates a significant impact of teachers' intercultural competence on Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China, with an F-value of 14.570 significant at the alpha level of 0.05 (Sig. = 0.000). This significant result indicates that teachers' intercultural competence positively influences the quality and effectiveness of Medical English teaching, highlighting the crucial role of intercultural competence in educational settings where the goal is to prepare students for the globalized context of medical practice.

Research Question 2: Improvement in English Literacy Among Teachers

The analysis from Table 2 identifies several areas of improvement in English literacy that can positively impact Medical English teaching. All listed areas of improvement received mean scores above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating a consensus on their importance. The areas highlighted for improvement, ranked by their mean scores, include the ability to teach the context and summarize in English (4.62), speak fluent English in the classroom (4.62), write in English fluently (4.38), pronounce

Medical English terms easily and correctly (4.35), read the context in fluent English (4.28), use phonics to teach new words (4.15), and the enthusiasm to teach in English (4.07). These results underscore the multifaceted nature of English literacy, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, pronunciation, and teaching strategies as critical areas for development among teachers.

Discussion

The findings from these analyses underscore the intertwined relationship between teachers' intercultural competence and their English literacy skills in the context of Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China. The significant positive impact of intercultural competence on teaching effectiveness highlights the importance of equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to navigate and integrate intercultural dimensions into their teaching practices. This competence enables teachers to create an inclusive and effective learning environment that respects and leverages cultural diversity, enhancing students' preparedness for the international medical field.

Furthermore, the identification of specific areas for improvement in English literacy points to actionable pathways for enhancing teaching effectiveness. The emphasis on both linguistic skills (such as reading, writing, speaking, and pronunciation) and pedagogical strategies (such as using phonics and teaching contextually) suggests a comprehensive approach to teacher development. Improving these areas is likely to not only enhance the overall quality of Medical English education but also foster a more engaging and supportive learning environment for students.

The implications of these findings are significant for educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers. There is a clear indication that professional development programs for teachers should include components aimed at enhancing both intercultural competence and English literacy, particularly in the specific areas identified. Such programs can contribute to the development of a more competent, confident, and effective teaching workforce capable of preparing students to meet the demands of the global medical community.

The positive impact of teachers' intercultural competence on Medical English teaching and the identified areas for improvement in English literacy among teachers highlight the need for targeted teacher development initiatives. By focusing on these aspects, higher vocational colleges in China can further enhance the quality and relevance of their Medical English programs, ultimately contributing to the cultivation of well-prepared healthcare professionals.

Significance

The analysis of the impact of teachers' intercultural competence and areas for improvement in English literacy within the context of Medical English teaching in higher vocational colleges in China holds significant implications for the educational landscape, particularly in the realm of preparing students for the global medical workforce. The findings underscore the crucial role that educators play in shaping the learning environment and the importance of their skills and competencies in delivering effective education. Specifically, the research highlights:

1. **The Critical Role of Intercultural Competence:** The positive correlation between teachers' intercultural competence and the quality of Medical English teaching emphasizes the importance of such competence in today's increasingly interconnected world. It underscores the need for educators to possess not only the ability to teach English effectively but also to navigate and integrate intercultural dimensions into their teaching practices.
2. **Areas for Improvement in English Literacy:** Identifying specific areas for improvement in English literacy among teachers provides a clear direction for teacher development programs. It brings to light the multifaceted nature of English literacy, encompassing not just linguistic abilities but also pedagogical skills that can enhance the teaching and learning of Medical English.
3. **Enhancement of Educational Quality:** By addressing these areas, educational institutions can enhance the quality of their Medical English programs, making them more effective in preparing

students for the challenges and opportunities of the global medical field.

Conclusion

This research sheds light on the significant impact of teachers' intercultural competence on Medical English teaching and identifies crucial areas for improvement in English literacy among teachers in higher vocational colleges in China. The findings suggest that enhancing teachers' intercultural competence and English literacy skills can lead to more effective Medical English teaching, thereby better preparing students for the globalized healthcare environment.

To achieve these outcomes, it is recommended that higher vocational colleges in China:

1. **Implement Comprehensive Teacher Development Programs:** Such programs should focus on both enhancing intercultural competence and addressing the identified areas of improvement in English literacy. Tailored training sessions, workshops, and continuous professional development opportunities can equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge.
2. **Foster an Intercultural Learning Environment:** Encourage practices and curricula that promote intercultural understanding and communication among both teachers and students. This approach can enhance the learning experience and prepare students for diverse cultural interactions in their future medical careers.
3. **Monitor and Evaluate Progress:** Establish mechanisms for regular assessment of teachers' intercultural competence and English literacy, and evaluate the impact of professional development programs. This can help ensure that the initiatives are effective and adjust them as needed to meet evolving educational goals.

By prioritizing the development of teachers' intercultural competence and English literacy, higher vocational colleges in China can significantly enhance the effectiveness of Medical English teaching. This, in turn, contributes to the preparation of medical professionals who are not only linguistically proficient but also culturally competent, ready to engage with the global medical community effectively.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the authors in this manuscript.

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