



## Verbal creativity as a doctor's competence and its formation in medical students

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### Authors note

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### **Abstract**

The article deals with the methods of teaching English for medical students aimed on the development of their professional ethic qualities and verbal creativity as an important component of their communicative competence. A doctor's verbal creativity is viewed as the ability to choose the proper communicative strategy in the process of communication with a patient. The authors describe business games used in the process of teaching medical students English. The stage of reflection follows these games for the development of the students' skills of self-evaluation. Creative methods of teaching are proved to be the most effective means for achieving this aim.

*Keywords:* doctor's professional communication; professional ethics; verbal creativity; reflective and creative approach.

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### **Zusammenfassung**

In diesem dem Artikel geht es um die Unterrichtsmethoden der englischen Sprache für die Medizinstudenten. Diese Methoden sind auf die Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten ihrer beruflichen Ethik und der verbalen Kreativität als der wichtige Komponent ihrer kommunikativen Kompetenz gezielt. Verbale Kreativität des Arztes wird als die Fähigkeit betrachtet, eine gehörige kommunikative Strategie im Prozess der Kommunikation mit dem Patienten zu wählen. Der Autoren beschreiben die in der Ausbildung der Medizinstudenten in der englischen Sprache benutzen Lernspiele. Diese Spiele haben eine Phase der Reflexion für die Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten der Selbsteinschätzung bei den Studierenden. Es ist bewiesen, dass kreative Unterrichtsmethoden die effektivsten für die Erreichung des gestellten Ziels sind.

*Schlüsselworte:* professionelle Kommunikation des Arztes, Ethik, verbale Kreativität, reflektierend und kreativ Ansatz

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One of the most important problems of teaching Russian medical students is working out the methods of modeling the certain aspects of the future professional activity. It is known that except intellectual potential a specialist in medicine should possess high moral qualities, which are displayed in attentive, careful and polite communication with a patient. The more a future doctor's communicative competence is developed, the more successful his professional activity will be.

Along with clinical and humanitarian academic subjects, foreign language can be one of the means of development the students' preparedness to creative self-realization in their future professional activity. Teaching English (in Russia this subject is compulsory) at a medical university is characterized by its context way, it means that in the process of studying English the students get to know the peculiar features of a doctor's activity. Complex interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and abilities are in the basis of forming the competence of solving professional and communicative tasks in conditions of communication in a foreign language.

Reflective and creative approach worked out by us is aimed on such competences as professional, social and cultural, research and creative ones. Professional competence includes the ability to use medical (professionally oriented) vocabulary in a conversation, to read the texts in medicine in English and to compose them. Social and cultural competence presupposes not only the knowledge of the culture of English speaking countries and other countries of the world, but also the culture and ethics of a doctor's communication with the patients and their relatives, nurses, colleagues, etc. Research competence is developed during the students' activity in the Students' Scientific Society at the Department of Foreign Languages. The students carry out the research work the issues of which are about the verbal and ethic aspects of a doctor's profession. Creative competence is formed during taking part in the innovative academic activity at the classes in English as well as during extracurricular activity (e.g. didactic dramas).

At the initial stage of studying English when professional medical vocabulary is introduced to the students reproductive methods are used. In order to start moral and ethic education at this stage a textbook 'English for Medical Students: Getting to Know Your Profession' is used at the classes. In this textbook medical students read not only the texts of scientific articles but also the extracts from the books describing a doctor's professional activity (including professional communication), for example, *Doctor in the House* by Richard Gordon, *Hotel* by Arthur Hailey, *Woman Surgeon* by Else La Roe (Razdorskaya, 2008). In order to develop the skills of auditing the first year medical students watch the movies about the doctors such as *Doctor T. & the Women*, *House M.D.* After watching them the teacher motivates the students to start the discussing the behavior and the manner of speech of the doctors shown in the movies.

We have worked out various imitation and business games aimed not only at the development of language skills but also ethic qualities including polite communication with a patient. A future doctor should take into account the fact that each patient suffering from a certain disease or the one who came for a prophylactic examination is not simply a 'case', moreover not a 'sick organ'; thus the doctor should be able to establish mutual understanding with each patient. Verbal creativity is also formed in the process of

taking part in these games. Being an important component of a communicative competence, verbal creativity presupposes not only the knowledge of professional vocabulary, but also the ability to use the proper words in a certain situation; in our case it means the right choice of words while a doctor's communication with different people (patients, colleagues, etc.).

For example, taking part in the game 'Problem Patient' a student performing the role of a physician communicates with a patient who is not sure in the doctor's competence, his methods of treatment and the choice of the medicines. According to the script, a patient speaks with the physician in a rude manner and a loud voice. The task of the student performing the role of the doctor is to avoid the conflict, to eliminate the patient's stress, to turn the conversation with the patient into a polite and friendly one.

A doctor's professional communication includes a doctor's dealing with his colleagues and the authorities of a hospital. That is why we have worked out the business game 'Conversation with the Unexpected Visitors'. The students taking part in this game choose the following roles:

- the chief doctor of a certain hospital;
- the doctor who would like to leave his working place because of a certain reason (such as an illness of his relative);
- the journalist from a medical journal;
- the doctor from abroad who has come to Russia as a tourist and would like to know about the activity of a hospital in Russia, healthcare system, etc.;
- a student who has come to have practice at this hospital;
- the Dean of the medical faculty who would like to invite the chief doctor to the medical university to tell the students of his work as it may serve as a good motivation for the students;
- the patient who is displeased with the manners of the doctor who has treated him and wants to complain of this doctor's unethical behavior.

According to the script, the chief doctor will have an important meeting in 30 minutes, the visitors above mentioned come to him unexpectedly. The task of the chief doctor is to listen to each visitor and to make managerial decision being time limited and taking into account ethic and deontological norms. The students performing the roles of the visitors get the short descriptions of their roles with the short vocabularies. They can display their verbal creativity while inventing certain manners of speech and behavior of the characters performed by them

The game is followed by the stage of reflection helping the students to evaluate themselves as the future specialists, to analyze the possible behavior in the situations connected with the future professional activity and to master the skills of a doctor's professional ethics. Medical students not only improve their foreign language and communicative competence, but also form the motivation to the adequate behavior in the real situations. The main advantage of the games and the other innovative forms of teaching English is their influence on the formation and development of the need in creative self-reflection and self-realization as it stimulates the ability to personal and professional reflection.

Finally, we would like to quote the interview of Alexander Martyntsov, a surgeon from Moscow: 'When a patient comes to the doctor for help and hopes to get it, he waits not only for good attitude and

moral consolation, but also for active, highly qualified and professional treatment. That is why a real doctor should heal both a body and a soul together. In my opinion, professionalism includes all the aspects of a doctor's art: the ability to deal with the patients, to find mutual understanding with them, to calm them down and to cheer them up...' (Vinogradova, 2007). Thus, in conclusion we would like to stress the important role of all the academic subjects under study, including English for the many-sided formation of an ethic doctor's personality.

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