

Motivation as an integral factor in English language learning for medical students

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Dear Editor,

Nowadays, there is a growing trend among university students to learn English as a medium to improve their educational and career prospects. Moreover, medical students are naturally enthusiastic to become physicians from the very beginning of their studies. Their academic pursuit as medical doctors accentuates their tendency toward learning English for several reasons. First and foremost, as a part of their academic studies, students are undeniably required to read English textbooks, references and articles from medical journals. Second, the desire to immigrate and study abroad, as well as perhaps become a faculty member, requires some medical students to take international English proficiency tests, such as the IELTS, TOEFL, and GRE.¹ Last but not least, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for medical students is highly dependent on their command of English as a medium to gain a mastery over up-to-date, field-related technical and theoretical knowledge. Based on what has been discussed so far and the importance of learning English, what factors can affect the language learning process of medical students to achieve the desired outcomes?

Evidence highlights some factors affecting the language learning process, including age, aptitude, attitude, learning style, personality, and motivation.² In studying medicine, a high degree of motivation is imperative in the pursuit of medical education, as it is a crucial factor in achieving academic success, maintaining the intention to continue medical education, and fostering the development of a professional identity.³ Although there are different definitions for the term “motivation”, Motivation in language acquisition is the combination of effort, desire, and positive attitudes toward learning the language.⁴ There are four types of motivation in language learning, namely: instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, intrinsic

motivation, and extrinsic motivation. While Instrumental motivation refers to learning a language for practical reasons, such as achieving a career or educational goal, integrative motivation involves learning a language to become part of a new culture or community. Furthermore, Intrinsic motivation is the desire to learn a language for personal fulfillment, enjoyment, or challenge. Finally, Extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors, such as rewards or pressures, including grades, praise, or avoiding negative consequences.⁵

Medicine is a crucial field of study that focuses on treating patients. To do so effectively, medical students must acquire essential related knowledge and skills, including history taking, physical examination, professionalism, communication, and clinical reasoning.⁶ These skills can be attained if medical students, as adult learners, are motivated by their internal drive to become competent doctors. In addition, medical students are responsible for their own education and ongoing learning. On the other hand, it appears that external factors such as the desire for recognition, financial gain, and status have also become motivations for current medical students, to the best of our understanding.⁷ As a result, medical schools should pay particular attention to students with an inherent interest in medicine over those who are primarily motivated by external factors. Medical schools can also develop specific programs or workshops to enhance motivation among medical students. These programs can focus on building intrinsic motivation by emphasizing personal fulfillment, enjoyment, and the challenge of learning English. They can also highlight the long-term benefits of language proficiency for career advancement and patient care.

In conclusion, learning English is crucial for medical students to achieve academic and career success. Various factors, including motivation, play an indispensable role

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in the language-learning process for medical students. In fact, medical students must be motivated by their internal drive to become competent doctors; however, external factors such as acknowledgment, monetary factors, and status also play a role. Medical schools should prioritize students with an inherent interest in medicine over those motivated primarily by external factors. By doing so, they can ensure that their graduates are well-equipped to provide the best possible care to their patients.

Authors' Contribution

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