



Modern Methods of Learning Medical Terms

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Abstract

The teachers cannot convey easily the ideas hidden in ambiguous lexemes which are derived from foreign languages other than English (i.e. Greek and Latin). In turn, the learners are frightened of long and complicated terms and they find it very difficult to pronounce, spell and understand unfamiliar forms. The article investigates the difficulties encounter the learners of medicine in understanding medical terminology. It provides some strategies for the learners such as breaking down strategy, identifying the word – parts, removing affixation (pre-and post) and memorisation of eponyms (terms named after persons). The most appropriate and efficient approaches which may help in the teaching process of medical terminology are suggested such as diagnostic approach, a generative model for acquisition of medical vocabularies, using L1 in teaching L2 and other collective methods.

Keywords: Medical Terminology, Loans, Strategies, Approaches, Breaking down.

Introduction

Every profession or field has its own jargon, for example a registered or a specialised language that allows for quick and efficient communication smoothly between members of the same discipline .Practitioners of medicine and health sciences have their own jargon or particular language for medicine .Medical terminology is a specialised language used by learners, specialists and experts of medicine and health sciences. It is regarded as one of the most difficult language among all the other specialised languages in different fields. Medical language includes very complicated long terms which seem difficult to sound, spell, remember and even understand e.g. **amonasehydrocharideoymphaeoid, encephalomyeoneuropathy , dermatomucosomyositis,** etc. Kenneth and Chuntana Methold (1975:6) argue "medical writing relies very heavily on a specialised vocabulary . most of these words cannot be usefully translated or even defined .Medical writing is often so difficult to understand , it is necessary to approach it from a variety of angles if one is to understand the ideas hidden in long words and even longer and complex terms ." Further, medical language provides unfamiliar and strange words, for example some words contain triple (o) together as in hysterosaplingoophorectomy and others start in double (o) as in oophorectomy . Furthermore , the grammatical patterns in medical context are different , for instance the plural is formed by another way different from that one in an ordinary English , many nouns do not add "-s" or "-es" in the plural , but change in vowels or the last part of the words e.g. amoeba / amoebae , bacterium / bacteria , phenomenon / phenomena , protozoon / protozoa, fungus / fungi, curriculum / curricula.



Techniques and Approaches for Understanding Medical terminology As preliminary for this section, it is important to explain what is meant by medical terminology. The word "medical" is an adjective which means areas / contexts / settings of medicine. Terminology is divided into three parts: term- = word, -in- = inside (-o-, linker) and -logy = a branch of study. Therefore, it can be deduced that the two terms mean a branch of science which is concerned with the study or understanding what is hidden inside the medical words. There are different techniques or strategies and methods or approaches which can be used to understand the meanings of the medical terms and comprehending the ideas beyond such complicated lexemes .In the next discussion, the focus will be on the most important strategies and approaches which may help in learning and teaching medical terms.

As it has been pointed out earlier that it seems not easy to learn the different source language or even Greek and Latin which offer the largest chunk of medical lexicon. A short cut to the necessary information is inevitable and, therefore, certain fundamentals of vocabulary acquisition and linguistic procedure of word formation and word analysis have to be learnt and fruitfully utilised (Khan, 1986 : 149) . New strategies have to be formed and past techniques have to be reviewed in the interest of medical terminology and in the interest of effective teaching / learning process. One of the most effective strategies in learning / teaching medical terminology is breaking down each term into small meaningful units.

It is commonly known that breaking down indicates destruction or collapse which means harmful effects e.g. breaking down a building, piece of furniture, white blood cells, antibody protection, etc. But there is an exception in the case of breaking down the loan items into parts to explain what each element of a word refer to, when collecting such segments of the small parts leading to comprehend what notion is hidden inside such items. The ESP learners of medicine and health sciences will be exposed to handle long and apparently difficult scientific terms like those mentioned in (2). In the beginning , it may seem impossible to learn how to pronounce, spell and memorise these complicated terms and their meanings . The learners of medical discipline need to know the techniques for understanding the meanings of the confused forms. One of the useful strategies which can be applied is breaking down the loan into meaningful constituents, the meaning of each element listed separately and combing the meanings of all the units leading to comprehend the definition or the meaning of the whole terms. Once these elements have been mastered, there is no difficulty in discovering the meaning of the compounded medical terms , no matter how long it may be , for these elements over and over again in all kinds of the words used in the field of the study (i.e. medicine). Below are some examples for applying the breaking down strategy :

a) The term **Hemangioendotheliosarcoma** can be broken down in this way:

Hem - = blood

-angi(o) - = vessel

-endotheli (o) = pertaining to endothelium

-sarcoma = a tumour , often malignant from this we can deduce that Hemangioendotheliosarcoma is a medical condition of a malignant tumour of the blood vessel with masses of endothelial.

b) The term **Electroencephalography** can be broken down like this :

Electr(o) - = electricity



-en - = in -cephal(o) - = head (together en + cephalo means brain)

-graphy = writing or recording .

Therefore , electroencephalography can be defined as the process of recording the electrical activity of the brain.

c) The term **Hysteroaplingoophorectomy** can be analysed as under : hyster(o) - = pertaining to the uterus .

-saplingo- = uterin tube -oophor(o) = ovary

-ectomy = excision.

Of course, the above examples are selected randomly to explain how to use the strategy of breaking down in learning / teaching the loans , the list of the medical terminology is endless and such technique is not the only one, but there are other methods and tools which can be used to facilitate the procedure of understanding the medical terms , identifying the parts of the words as roots and affixation is important for the ESP learners of medical discipline .

Word – parts Any word can be divided into two main parts :

a) Root and

b) Affixation

Root is the most important part of the word, it can be described as the head or nucleus of a lexeme in which the divisions and sub-divisions of the affixations can be formed. In an ordinary English, most of the words have just one root e.g. incurable, "cure " is the root. Unfortunately, the learners of medical discipline encounter an acute problem with the poly-root of one term (i.e. more than one root in one term). For example , the term analysed in the previous section " otorhinolaryngology " has three roots viz . a) oto - = ear b) –rhino- = nose and c) – laryngo- = larynx. Therefore, it is very crucial for the medical learners to understand which elements of a lexeme are roots and which are other word parts (i.e. affixations). Once, the students discriminate between the different elements of the same vocabulary, this will be resulted in understanding easily the assumed meaning of the whole term.

Affixation. Another word part is an affixation, by affixation it is generally meant additions to the word- form either initially or finally. It is sub-divided into two main parts: a) prefix and b) suffixes. some grammarians add a third category i.e. infix, it will be explained something later.

Prefix is a Latin loan consisting of two parts pre- means " before " and –fix means "fasten " .The combining of the two forms means that part of the word which is fasten or added at the beginning of the word e.g. polyneuritis , the first part poly- is a prefix , it is added to the neuritis to mean "many " .

Suffix consists of two parts " suf-" and "-fix" . the former means " after " behind or beneath " and the later means " fasten". They mean that part of the word which can be added to the end of the lexeme, for instance in the above example "polyneuritis " , the first part "poly-" is a prefix, the second part " neur-" is the root (i.e. nucleus) means nerves and the last part " –itis 'is the suffix mean inflammation. The combination of the three elements means a medical condition in which there is inflammation of many nerves. It is worthy to point that the prefixes and suffixes can modify the meaning of the word root i.e. they can add, change or even give an antonym e.g. useful and useless , " use—" is the root and –ful /-less is the suffix , the two terms can mean the opposite of each other .



Derivation. In the medical studies, the former two types of affixation (pre and suffix) play a very important role in forming a lot of medical words emerged from one root by the assistance of derivation. By derivation , it is meant that the process by which new words are formed through the mechanics of affixation to a root – form already in existence . Khan (1986 : 199) points " most of the scientific terms employed by medical course are derivatives and compounds. One of the obvious feature of these terms is the frequency with which several elements are used over and over again ". In medical English, the prefixes and suffixes can be expressed by pre-derivatives and postderivatives respectively. In the next few discussion , we will shed light to differentiate between the two forms and explain how each one can form a lot of medical terms emerged from just one root.

Post – derivatives The prefix " post " means "after " , by the compound – word post – derivative , we mean that term which is formulated by adding a suffix to the base or root. There is a huge lexemes in the medical vocabulary which are members of the post-derivative family. If we move ahead to the most important organ in the human body " cardi- " (i.e. heart) we can discover a great number of post derivatives as follows :

Cardia	cardiac	cardialgia
Cardiopathy	cardiotherapy	cardiotomy
Cardiovascular	cardiovalvular	cardiomegalay
Cardiomyopathy	cardiocele	cardiodynia
Cardioplegia	cardiography	carditis
Cardiometer	cardiogram	cardiorrhexis
Cardi opneumatic	cardiosclerosis	cardioid

It is worthwhile to explain that all the above terms are descended from one base " cardi", but they represent different classes of grammar such as verbs, adjectives and even different forms of nouns (i.e .nouns of process , nouns of medical conditions, etc). Further , the list includes different meanings i.e. synonyms and antonyms, therefore, the learners of medical studies are exposed frequently with such derivatives in different professional and academic settings. Hence, they should familiarise themselves with formulation of terms declined from particular source or root. Of course, this kind of learning strategy can be found in unlimited areas of study and in different reference books and subjects of medical discipline. For example if we take another lexeme as the terms of the nervous system, we can deduce the following huge list :

Neur-, neuro-	Neurad	Neuradynamia	Neuragmia
Neural	Neuralgie	Neuralgiform	Neuramebimeter
Neuranagenesis	Neurangiosis	Neurapophysis	Neurapraxia
Neurarchy	Neurasthenia	Neurastheniac	Neurasthenic
Neurataxia	Neuratrophia	Neuratrophic	Neuraxial
Neuraxis	Neuraxitis	Neuraxon	Neure
Neurectasia	Neurectomy	Neurectopia	Neurenergen
Neurenteric	Neurepithelium	Neurergic	Neurexeresis



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