

Solutions to the challenges in teaching English language to medical students

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The intensive course and the on-going course in English at the Faculty of Medicine, Ragama are designed to enable the students to gain proficiency in English. Teaching English to the medical students is a major challenge for the English lecturers because these students had been studying in vernacular languages for more than thirteen years and thus find it difficult to adopt themselves to the medium-switch¹ in their medical curriculum. Apart from the aforementioned challenge, building a rapport between general English and medical English, varying attitudes of medical students towards learning English as a compulsory subject, the less proficiency of English of most of the students in relation to phonology, morphology, syntax, etc are some major challenges the lecturers had to address during the intensive course. This paper intends to analyze the difficulties the English language lecturers faced and the steps taken by them to overcome those difficulties. Preparing a new course book to balance general English and medical English, reinforcing vocabulary and the language knowledge of the students using creative methods and initiating interactive discussions can be mentioned as a few steps that had been taken to fulfill the objectives. These remedial actions have been taken after observing the errors done by the students in their end of course examination papers and analyzing the lecturer/lesson evaluations submitted by the students. In order to gather this information, questionnaires, interviews and observation methods were used.

Key words: Medium-switch, Teaching English language, Medical students, Medical English, Varying attitudes

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