

The Creative and Challenging Experience of Textbook Writing

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Context

Varna Medical University

English for Specific Purposes Module – 60 contact hours

There are no suitable course books available on the market: usually aimed at 90 contact hours and above

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English *for* Medicine

by

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Student Group Profile

Target groups: A1, A2 to C1 level
Predominantly B1 & B2

Multicultural groups with diverse educational
backgrounds
7-20 in number

Bulgarians including those who have already
studied abroad

Turkish with Bulgarian educational background
Turkish, Greek, Macedonian and other nationalities

Needs Analysis

A textbook is necessary with at least 12 units

A balanced approach of language focused work and skills

Texts for listening and reading should be topical, directly related to issues in medicine, interesting and motivating for students

Sources for the developed tasks:

a textbook from 1982; books, journals, dictionaries, the Internet, encyclopedias, brochures, etc.

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Main Unit Structure

Texts for developing the receptive skills

Vocabulary focus

awareness raising of Latin English transfer

Grammar focus

typical of scientific discourse

Productive skills

integration of skills in the portfolio

Types of Activities for Listening

Listening comprehension with MC questions or T/F

Listening and note taking
usually to mini lectures e.g. *Lactation and Birth Spacing*

Listening for specific information and gap-filling
e.g. a doctor-patient dialogue or details in case reports

Listening and error correction

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Types of Activities for Reading

Reading for gist

Reading for specific information

Reading and multiple matching

Reading and sequencing events: e.g. *resuscitating a victim*

Reading and drawing a comparison: e.g. *anaemia/leukemia*

Reading and prioritizing: e.g. *stress symptoms*

Reading of texts with different register: e.g. *literary texts, case reports, dialogues, lectures, summaries, etc.*

Types of Activities for Writing

Model writing *e.g. definitions, writing a paragraph, describing a process, describing an event focusing on cause and effect*

Information transfer *e.g. form-filling, describing diagrams*

Medical documentation *e.g. a letter of referral, a case report*

Writing a summary

Writing an argumentative essay

Writing a portfolio at the end of each unit

Types of Activities for Speaking

Expressing personal opinion: *e.g. discussion on male/female professions*

Discussing similarities and differences

Making predictions and talking about a sequence of events

Enquiring about a problem and developing professional communication strategies *e.g. doctor-patient interaction, raising awareness of how to talk with children, explaining to and reassuring patients*

Mini talks with focus on switching register according to context

Role-plays and simulations

Oral summary

Oral presentations

Focus on Grammar in Context

Grammar typical for scientific discourse:

Irregular plurals, prepositions and adverbs
describing location

Passive voice

Reported questions

Cohesive devices

Relative clauses

Emphasis on functions:

Describing cause and effect

Sequencing of events

Asking special questions to elicit info

Expressing probability and certainty

Focus on Vocabulary

Word formation

Medical terms and common names

Synonyms and antonyms

Compound nouns

Collocations

Paraphrasing typical expressions and fixed phrases

Inferring meaning from context

Common verbs for description

Semantic webs to help memorising

The Appendix

Structure:

Supplementary Activities

Translation Time

Guidelines for Productive Skills

Common Medical Abbreviations

Metric Conversions

Sample Test

Function:

to provide supplementary material at various levels of proficiency for optional activities

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Why is Textbook Writing a Creative Process

Decisions on which text to choose

The type of activity it lends itself to: language or skills focus

The type of exercises suitable for the particular focus of the text: *e.g. MC or T/F reading, etc.*

Establishing a logical sequence of activities within a unit and units within the book

Choice of layout of a page and a whole unit

Visualisation: *e.g. pictures, diagrams, tables, etc.*

Piloting gives feedback from students to improve the final version

Why is Textbook Writing Challenging

A complex process that involves:

matching the curriculum, syllabus and students' needs

balancing content and language awareness

balancing grammar vocabulary focused tasks

developing integrated skills

ensuring progression of tasks within a unit

throughout the textbook

meeting the needs of students that come from diverse

educational, social and cultural background

meeting students' needs as future doctors

Positive Outcomes

A long-term commitment but rewarding in a number of ways
improves structure and organization of the teaching process
students can do autonomous work in case they are absent or
they need further preparation

the textbook helps both advanced and lower level students in
different ways

creates more opportunities for teacher and learner interaction
a good starting point for organizing and carrying out useful,
helpful and stimulating seminars

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