Bulgarian language for foreigners (Textbook for medics)

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Running title: Bulgare medical language for foreign students

Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to present a textbook of Bulgarian language for foreigners studying in English medicine in Bulgaria. A great deal of thought and work, compliant with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, has been put into the principles and practice of language learning and teaching by the authors. Their incitement is to improve the quality of communication among future doctors and their clients with a different mother language and cultural backgrounds. The applied modern methods of learning and teaching aim to help the medical students to build up the attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to become more independent in thought and action, and also more responsible and cooperative in relation to the patients. The paper explains the teachers’ goal and what they wish to help learners to achieve, and how they attempt to do so, based on their work on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners. Information about the vocabulary, the grammar and the structure of the textbook as well as a PowerPoint Presentation are provided in order to clear and explicit for the benefit of those who use the product.

Practical applications
The textbook is used in the preparation of foreign students, studying medicine in English, to communicate in Bulgarian language environment with patients and medical staff that do not speak English.

Key words: bulgarian language, foreign students, medicine in English, communicative habits and skills, specific communicative situations
Bulgarian language for foreigners, a specialized textbook for medical doctors, is a basic element of one, different from the traditional methods in foreign language teaching, which presents a new vision in the teaching of specialized Bulgarian language as foreign one, in accordance to the way, in which the teaching process is structured. This method combines elements of the traditional and of the communicative methods of teaching used in foreign language instruction. It is provoked by the need to fill in gaps in the preparation of foreign students, studying medicine in English, to communicate in Bulgarian language environment with patients and medical staff that do not speak English. The main goal is in acquiring communicative habits and skills, leading to spontaneous initiation in speaking in a specialized environment. The requirements are to transform the scientific style of teaching in English to an informal style on a medical subject matter in Bulgarian and before the students reach a competent level in the foreign language to introduce a specialized language. Judging from this necessity, in the first stage of our work, we have researched the needs of the educational system. We have directed our attention to specific communicative situations, in which the students take part at a later stage. We have taken their specific needs into consideration, as well as aims, requirements, content and depth of the curriculum. At the second stage, we have analyzed different approved traditional and contemporary methods in foreign language teaching and none of them have satisfied the requirements of the concrete situation entirely. “Foreign language teaching for specific needs contradicts first of all with the necessity to create an appropriate work methodology, consistent with the specific needs of the audience, and after this with its practical application.” As a result, we have concluded that it is essential to create a new system, which combines elements from proven methods in which the communicative approach is basic. “The focus of this method is to enable the learner to communicate effectively and appropriately in the various situations she would be likely to find herself in. The content of CLT courses are functional such as inviting, suggesting, complaining or notions such as the expression of time, quantity, location.” We have defined the main principals and approaches of the new system:

- teaching in a real educational environment with a teacher;
- using of computers and digital resources consequently dismantling traditional styles of teaching; inclusion of students as active participants in the teaching and learning process; activation of the perception and recalling processes through influencing different perceptions: auditory and visual, as well as, relying on emotional intonation models and on the role of the color perception;
- using of the English language as a mediator in teaching new vocabulary which is taught using specialized language without prioritizing the basic language. Central is the need of a language mediator, when using terminology, even if limited in content. Students must learn this before initiating of clinical disciplines in their major;
- focusing on the practical learning of the grammar, but not on its theoretical explanation;
- emphasizing on the active use of the language and on achieving of successful communication despite the insufficient level of a language competency;
- breaking up of the traditional styles of teaching through a set of different possibilities for structuring, presenting and using of visual aids in teaching;
- making of presentations and explanations of the new vocabulary easier for the teacher, as well as making its learning easier for the students – through included illustrations and translations;
- affording more opportunities for the students for self-preparation;

The method is built on the basis of three main principles – automated, rich in content (meaningful) and communicative. In the first, the students automatically repeat definite structures –
phrases and sentences, in order to become used to them and apply them in a definite communicative situation, for example, *it hurts me, I feel sick, I have a fever, I feel like throwing up, I have no strength, I lose consciousness*. The second suggests a meaningful choice, for example, from given characteristic structures for description of a clinic, simultaneity of symptoms and a treatment the students must choose the appropriate ones for a use in the concrete expression. The third one refers to using of the language in real communication, for example, construction of dialogues between a doctor and a patient. In it the first two principles are combined in the necessary order and thoroughness in extracting of some information, as here yet the students have an opportunity to use the acquired knowledge and their life experience. They are given a task to share what they know about the symptoms, treatment, prohibitions and recommendations in pointed by us diseases, i.e. producing of an expression, which is not prepared in advance.

**The third stage** of our work includes a selection of the texts, a creation of tasks and exercises, choice of grammatical units and structuring of the themes. Collected and used materials are authentic and their factual reliability was confirmed by our medical consultants. Some of the texts had to be adopted in conformity with the acquired language competencies of the students.

**The next stage** imposed a test of some of our ideas that confirmed the bigger part of our approaches and rejected some of them.

At the last stage of the work, we built up an orderly system for evaluation, in which the achievements in each of the four obligatory competencies – reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing and speaking, as well as, the acquired knowledge in every one of the themes are considered. The right pronunciation and the learning of the new words, phrases, thoughtful structures, logical linking of questions and responses is a satisfactory achievement of the student. Including them in short dialogues, the short description of a health condition, symptoms, treatment, instructions, as well as, extracting of basic information in listening of a dialogue and in reading of an unknown text is evaluated as good. The independent forming of a dialogue on a given situation, the possibility to answer questions to a spoken dialogue or to a read text, as well as, the orientation in the theme, the main content, the logical order in the dialogical and narrative speech – as very good. The excellent mark requires in addition to these skills and ability for the student to describe a trauma, disease, condition, or to make and present a presentation.

As a result of our work in building of the new method, a new textbook was created. It is intended for English speaking foreigners, who study medicine in English at the medical universities in Bulgaria. The students must have passed a course in Bulgarian language and their preparation, in accordance with pan-European language standards in foreign language teaching, must respond to a level B1 – B2.

**The aim** is building up and enrichment of the skills for a participation of full value in verbal communication in the Bulgarian language environment and developing of competency for successful conversations with patients and medical staff whom do not speak English.

**The task** is introducing of the students into the basic medical vocabulary and grammar of the Bulgarian language, necessary to realize a dialogue in order to establish the patient’s condition and their complaints, to carry out a medical examination, i.e. a communication that aims to take history and to diagnose, as well as, to give instructions for treatment, recommendations on a way of life, etc.. It helps future doctors in the preparation to practice their profession in entering of the clinical disciplines in their academic program.

**The teaching content** is presented in two forms: textbook and digital format. The first one includes a major part – dialogues and narrative texts, illustrative material, oral and written exercises, and an appendix – grammar, texts for listening and the keys with questions on them, a dictionary, synonyms and antonyms. The other one represents a disk that contains multimedia presentations to each theme and records of dialogues for listening. The disk includes presentations of new vocabulary by illustrations and translations in English, the grammatical summaries and parts of the oral exercises. Both forms may be used in close relation and complete each other.

The teaching material is distributed into six thematical units, in which the presentation of the new vocabulary, of the grammar units and of the characteristic medical language structures are introduced gradually. Our choice of a unifying element in the separate themes is the concentration on
semantic nuclei, set apart according to the affected organs and systems, the common symptomatic or the specific clinic, the reasons for presenting complaint, the character of the illness or the obligatory behavior stereotypes of the doctor and the patient. The texts, the grammar and the exercises are presented in the rubrics – speaking, reading, listening, writing: they are structured according to the requirements for building of the obligatory competencies, the aim of which is for knowledge to expand gradually and fluently, passing from learning by heart to active learning and a spontaneous use. The varied dialogues and texts for listening and reading comprehension develop linguistic skills, expand the language knowledge and realize a fluent transition from everyday use to the medical language. The dialogues are models of colloquial Bulgarian language and a good model for communication between a doctor and a patient. The adapted medical texts have only the function to introduce students to the necessary terminological minimum.

In presenting of the grammatical units, the principal of the communicative teaching is leading, i.e. closeness of the grammatical competency to the ability to communicate freely. A part of the included units in the textbook are already known and to significant extent learned at the previous stages of education – impersonal constructions with accusative and dative forms of the personal pronouns, imperative forms and others. To this stage unreviewed are phonetic changes, some productive models of the word-formation with an accent on the formation of the verbal nouns and formation of verbs from adjectives and adverbs, passive present participle, the invariable parts of speech – adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, some peculiarities in using of the articles.

The aims give priority to oral speech instead of the written and it defines the correlation in the amount of the oral and written exercises to be in favor of the first one, too. The exercises for speaking are various – the pronunciation of words, phrases and sentences for the purpose of their learning, after that their reinforcing, for example, by asking and answering questions, and their right use in a definite situation, for instance, in short dialogues. Here included also are tasks, combining word-formation, linking of the new-formed words in phrases and their use in sentences. The exercises for reading aims to develop the ability for orientation in an unknown text and a comprehension of its major content on the base of learned yet material with no explanation of the new vocabulary. The exercises for listening are of the same kind which helps students who train and improve their technique for learning, comprehension and extracting of information in this way. In the column ‘writing’ the accent is on the new vocabulary and grammar, examined in the thematic unit. The written exercises to a great extent repeat the oral ones as a content and kind. They give an opportunity for self-independent work, a control of the knowledge and strengthening of the received knowledge.

The summary of the included new grammar, the texts for listening and the answers of the questions to them, the dictionary, the synonyms and antonyms are included in an appendix at the end of the textbook which gives the possibility to check for references and helps students in their self-preparation. They are facilitated in its using by references which direct them to the grammatical categories.

The lexical and grammatical material is described after each theme in the rubric “What did we learn?”. It has an organizing effect because it informs about the amount and the essence of the learned material and provokes the ability for awareness of the students.

During the summer semester of the academic 2017/2018 year, last in study of the Bulgarian language, all second year students had been trained by the “Bulgarian language for foreigners, a specialized textbook for doctors”. The supervisions and the results of the work improved that the approached to the specialized language, the selection of the semantic nuclei, the included grammatical minimum are the right authors’ decision. A significant element in the suggested language system is the multimedia disk which except for records of the dialogues and exercises for listening contains one or more presentations to each module. The presentations are structured in a different way according to the given purposes and tasks. Their main function is to present the new vocabulary through illustrations and a translation and the grammatical units through tables and schemes. Very useful here is the interference of the language mediator which combines itself in an appropriate way with clearly visual presentation of the lexical units. In the presentations are included oral exercises too; they are different from the suggested ones in the paper body. The pedagogical practice shows that the using of visual aids of the lexical and grammatical material through a great amount of illustrations, schemes, photographs and animations intrigues students and increase their interest to the
teaching process and the pleasure of studying. The presentations make learning more interesting, more dynamic and more effective. They may be used as an instrument for motivation and raise of the interest of the students, for raising of their concentration and are a prerequisite for learning of full value of the basic components of the oral speech. One more advantage of the presentations is that they give a possibility to control the rate of teaching of new material in compliance with specific teaching aims and the individual peculiarities of the students, it allows them to take part actively in the learning process, to have a pause and to repeat. They may find their place at all stages of the lesson – in the initial presentation of the new material, in its meaning and strengthening, in building of competences for its practical use in examples and tasks, as well as, in the concluding of the level of knowledge. Their systemic presence is an essential part of the method and defines its innovatory character.

Using of visual aids, as well as, the systemic translation of the lexical units, facilitate students in the comprehension and learning of new material. They also help teachers of Bulgarian language who are not expected to know and use English as a language mediator. At the same time the absence of a literal translation of texts, instructions, explanations of the grammatical rules defend the requirements for communication in the Bulgarian language in classes.

A very important feature of the textbook is that it is appropriate as for the very motivated students, advanced in learning Bulgarian at the initial stage of the education, as well as for student, having more difficulty adapting to the language, with unsatisfactory achievements in learning of the basic lexical and grammatical minimum. Those, with better base for learning and motivation, completely satisfied the requirements for retaining of communicative skills, necessary in interaction between a doctor and a patient. For others the aid with additions to it gives a possibility for a repetition of the already learned material and self-independent work at a next stage of the study, when the necessity of this knowledge gets inevitable. Interesting is the fact that students of Bulgarian origin, living abroad, who can talk free in everyday themes, shared that the textbook and Bulgarian classes at this stage are of great benefit for them in learning of the specialized colloquial language.

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