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Philological Readings

FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CONCEPT MEDICINE IN THE ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

People have been constantly appealing to medicine since the ancient times. Moreover, today human life is also becoming increasingly dependent on medicine. That is why concept MEDICINE is widely discussed in modern English mass media - television, newspapers and magazines. The Internet is also one of the most powerful channels for translating the slippery issues related to this concept. Due to its significance, this concept continues to be studied in details in professional medical high schools and in other educational institutions of the similar professional profile. Constant improvement and development of medicine is contributing to the discovery of new, previously unknown diseases and renewed methods of treatment facilitating the invention of modern equipment and medicaments. On account of the innovations in the medical sphere, there arises a necessity to give appropriate names to new facts, phenomena, and objects related to medical area. New medical terms are frequently occurring in English newspapers and magazines, moreover, they are regularly fixed in dictionaries and reference books and usually mentioned and explained in the textbooks for doctors and health assistants. It is due to the relevance of the above mentioned issues the detailed study of concept MEDICINE is of vital importance nowadays.

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1. Introduction

The human appeal to medicine contributes to the utmost importance of concept MEDICINE in the life of modern society. Due to its significance, this concept is not only widely discussed throughout the mass media and around the Web, but the concept is also occupying a considerable space among other research projects worked out within the high school establishments and other educational institutions both in Russia and in English speaking countries. Consequently, various ways and means of concept MEDICINE verbalization within the English educational discourse are considered in the present paper. Due to a great importance of English educational discourse in improving modern communication schemes, the present study focuses on discursive parameters characteristic for a certain type of English educational space represented by concept MEDICINE. Constant improvement and development of medicine is contributing to the discovery of new, previously unknown diseases and to the improvement of renewed methodologies aimed at innovating treatment procedures facilitating the invention of modern equipment and medicaments. In view of the innovations in the field of medicine, there arises a vital necessity to nominate appropriately the new facts, phenomena, and objects related to medical sphere. Traditionally new medical terms are usually mentioned, explained or deciphered in the textbooks for doctors and health assistants. It is due to the relevance of the above mentioned issues the detailed study of concept MEDICINE is of vital importance nowadays. Regular updating of knowledge within the boundaries of modern medical paradigm, on the one hand, and the necessity of ordering the information about the medical achievements in modern educational institutions on the other hand are stimulating the present research. The description of functional parameters of the English educational discourse may contribute to a valid representation of concept MEDICINE in modern English worldview. The results of the study can be applied for creating educational materials for people studying professional English at different levels (from elementary to advanced), as well as for translation practice and compiling terminological glossaries.

2. Problem Statement

In view of concept MEDICINE various ways of verbalization in diversified types of discourse that are supported by a great number of the similar topical publications in English which is universally acknowledged as a language of international communication, there is an objective requirement for systematizing the corresponding data dealing with various aspects of the above concept functioning within the English linguistic space. Since the English educational discourse is aimed at producing influence upon communication and improving communicative schemes a lot the current paper focuses on discursive parameters of the above concept within a type of educational space under consideration. Consequently constant enrichment of knowledge within the boundaries of modern English medical paradigm, on the one hand, and the importance of systematizing and ordering the information about the medical achievements in modern educational institutions on the other hand are stimulating the present research project.

3. Research Questions

The present study is aimed at answering the following research questions:

- What is the role of discourse in the context of university and school educational analysis?
- Which medical linguistic markers are actualized within the process of verbalization of concept MEDICINE within the English educational discourse?
- What are the functional characteristics of concept MEDICINE in modern English educational discourse?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study the ways and means of concept MEDICINE verbalisation in the English educational discourse.

5. Research Methods

The following general scientific methods of research are used in the present paper: descriptive method, method of observation, quantification and classification methods accompanied by such special methods as systematic approach to linguistic and semantic analysis, and elements of discourse analysis.

6. Findings

Theoretical background of the study is based upon the research projects realized by key native and foreign scholars in the field of Linguistics whose scientific interests are concentrating upon the study of general issues of discourse organization and specific functional aspects of the English educational discourse (Aleksandrova, Mendzheritskaya, & Kharkovskaya, 2008; Bogutskaya, 2010; Karasik, 2002; Kharkovskaya & Dyumina, 2016; Shevchenko, 2008).

The notion of discourse within the context of university education is characterized by a number of specific features producing an impact upon the verification of modern educational schemes aimed at improving ways and means of professional training, medical training including. The English educational discourse is a peculiar form of the cognitive knowledge paradigm aimed at forming and developing human communicative skills, patterns of cultural behaviour, and the culture of speech (Bogutskaya, 2010).

The spread of English on the global scale can't but produce a powerful influence upon the development of professional discourse, professional medical discourse in particular. With reference to this situation, a well-known expert Milrud (2012) used to write that within the boundaries of this type of discourse "appropriation" criterion, which indicates linguistic conformity, relevant and appropriate language use in social environment, is of paramount importance (p. 118). In relation to English as a foreign language "appropriation" criterion means the opportunity of the language to adapt to local conditions, aims, and problems of communication, as well as training and upbringing goals. Taking into the account the results of the above mentioned research projects some specific English language professional educational schemes based on different socio-cultural patterns are also developing according

to their ability for adaptation and social acceptability. Thus, the development of English educational projects within the boundaries of spiritually and theoretically oriented cultures is certainly correlating with literary, philological, and worldview traditions. Comprehension, digestion of scholastic texts and their presentation is usually given priority in the teaching and learning process in a foreign language. That means that a text has a function of canonic knowledge transfer in Russian pedagogical tradition (Milrud, 2012). In the meantime, it is worth pointing out that constant modernization of educational technology these days is customary not only for Russian educational system, but also for near and far-abroad countries. Consequently, the function of business communication in modern educational discourse becomes quite significant (Kharkovskaya, 2015; Kharkovskaya, 2013). Over the last years, all the resources intended for English language acquisition to support business and professional communication are enriching the British educational system (Kharkovskaya, 2012; Kharkovskaya, 2016).

Today it is an evident fact that modern training of students studying the English language professionally is oriented on more comprehensive skill sets comprising those skills that serve to aspire the feeling of confidence while communicating on various thematically akin subjects. That is why regular replenishment or systematic enrichment of thematic vocabulary in textbooks with specific terms is of utmost importance (Kharkovskaya & Cherkunova, 2007). It is the linguistic scholars' opinion that the work with scholastic texts contributes to the appropriate arrangement linguistic skillset necessary for an effective cross-cultural communication (Kharkovskaya & Dyumina, 2013). According to the abovementioned factors, there is a requirement of educational process organization which might lead to efficient acquisition of appropriate thematic vocabulary. Within this context, it is worth noting that the vocabulary from the sphere of medicine represents quite a popular lexical block arranged within the corresponding topical boundaries. Interestingly, many modern English textbooks offer this thematically or topically-arranged block of medical terms for learning since concept MEDICINE is presented in educational discourse as well as in other types of discourse – mass-media, advertizing, popular-science fiction, etc. From Sankov's (2015) speculations about the American well-known achievements in the sphere of advanced diagnostic medicine that are influencing strongly upon the right choice while deciding whether to place a child in a regular or special school it logically follows that the terms related to medical diagnoses are of high frequency in the educational texts today.

It is on the ground of the above theoretical issues the research materials including different English textbooks intended for Intermediate level students (see Source list of factual materials) have been selected for the present project. A group of 460 English nouns from the sphere of medicine has been registered as a result of our observations. Such language units and educational topics as “*Hard news, soft news; Relax; Adrenalin; Travel; What happened?; In the news; Food for thought; Food and diet; Accidents; Emergency; Breaking the law; Your health*” are demonstrating the mostly evident trends and trends in the linguistic establishment of concept MEDICINE within the educational discourse under consideration. Sample analysis revealed that these medical lexical items might be subdivided into different semantic groups; four of them are characterized by high frequency of use in the educational texts. The first lexical set labelled as “medical condition” accounts for 42% of lexical units actualizing the predominant sense “medical condition/disease/illness”. This group is expressed by the following linguistic markers: *hysteria* – a medical condition that upsets someone's emotions and makes them suddenly feel very nervous;

anorexia – a mental *illness* that makes someone stop eating; *leukaemia* – a type of cancer (a very serious *disease* in which cells in one part of the body start to grow) of the blood, that causes weakness and sometimes death; *disorder* – a mental or physical *illness* which prevents part of your body from working properly; *catalepsy*, *paraplegia*, *insomnia*, *sleepwalking*, *mixoedema*. The next lexical set – “human body” – includes 16% of linguistic markers with the seme “body” functioning as the key element of the corresponding semantic structures of the words and word combinations related to the concept MEDICINE. The following terms functioning as medical linguistic markers are registered within this group: *head* - the top part of your *body* that has your face at the front and is supported by your neck; *brain*, *hemispheres*, *lobe*, *throat*, *stomach*, *eye*, *teeth*, *bone*, *heart*, *kidneys*, *liver*, *lungs*, *muscle*, *skin*, *ear* and others. The lexical group “healthy lifestyle” (12% of lexical items) is supported by such medical linguistic markers as *diet* – a way of eating in which you only eat certain foods, in order to lose weight or to improve your *health*; *nutrition* – a process of giving or getting the right type of food for good *health* and growth; *vitamin* – a chemical substance in food that is necessary for good *health*; *supplements*, *balance*, *beta-carotene*, *nutrients*, which are united by the seme “health”. All the nouns forming the group “treatment” are characterized by the following medical terms with predominant seme “treatment/cure”: *prescription* – a particular *medicine or treatment* ordered by a doctor for a sick person; *examination*, *X-ray*, *treatment*, *cure*, *diagnosis*, *operation*, *(genetic) enhancement* (Mayor, 2009).

Our observation indicated that such problems as mental health, proper nutrition and daily regimen, destructive to health factors, as well as benefits of laughter are heavily involved in modern English medical academic space.

Considerations on **mental health problems** based on the fragments of English publications included into schoolbooks are aimed at proving the fact of verbalizing the concept under analysis through medical linguistic markers defining various diseases: *hysteria*, *catalepsy*, *myxoedema*, *paraplegia*, *anorexia nervosa*. The text of newspaper article titled “Workers face more stress” (Harding & Taylor, 2005) centres around the problems of employees suffering from mental illnesses, work stress, clinical depression and the linguistic description of these medical items is provided by the following nouns and word-combinations: *stress*, *mental illness*, *suffering(n)*, *clinical depression*. One more article is written within the framework of the similar topic. The title of the article is “Sally sees herself as she really is” (Kay & Jones, 2007) and the situation of a girl’s permanent falling under stress is described here. The problem is that Sally is not able to rehabilitate and recover her poise, what leads to regular headaches. To demonstrate the consequences of the above situation the author of this article is applying the following lexical units: *feeling of stress*, *balance*, *headaches*. The publication under the title “Bedtime, Sleep Survey Report” (Kay & Jones, 2007) informs that a sound sleep helps to do away with mental health problems. *Mentally alert people*, a snore caused by problems with *mental health*, *sleepwalking* and *insomnia* are the medical linguistic markers indicating the illnesses typical for the people ignoring good sleep instructions.

It is discovered that active lifestyle is also quite essential for mental health. A number of medical research projects show convincingly that human *brain* rests when the body is active. A part of publication “The mystery of a child who lived on fresh air and manipulation” (Sharman, Dean, Sikorzynska, & Sokolova, 2006, p. 43) is dwelling on the problems of *psychological disorder* and *hysteria*. A boy, the

main character of the story, fell under the sway of hypnosis. The child's *condition* was worsening day after day: he had a pain in the stomach and felt hysteric at the sight of food. Thus, the doctor diagnosed anorexia caused by *catalepsy* and *psychological disorder*. It is of interest to note that the name of Victorian doctor Sir William Gull is mentioned in this text, he is famous for a number of significant contributions to medical science, including the advanced interpretations of *myxoedema*, *Bright's disease*, *paraplegia* and *anorexia nervosa*.

Becoming aware of mental health issues pupils studying the English language professionally are invited to reflect upon possible methods of treatment for mental health illnesses. It is noted in educational texts that the focus from current health depressants (pills, vitamins, sound sleep and relaxation) is shifting to pets that help to cure souls' ailments: "*In the future if you go to the doctor with high blood pressure, he or she might prescribe not medicine but a cat or a dog. Australian scientists have found that owning a pet brings lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol*" (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 83).

Medical linguistic markers generally describing nutrient materials – *vitamins, vitamin supplements, carbohydrates, beta-carotene, glucose, chemicals, nutrients, fats* – unfold the theme of **proper nutrition and daily regimen** in educational discourse. The problems of healthy nutrition and correct daily routine will never outlive their usefulness since both children and adults can benefit from the discussion of these issues. It is of fundamental importance to pay attention to the consumption of food and various drinks, that is why the authors of the articles in many textbooks are advising to eat healthy food, keep regular meals and avoid drinking alcohol. The majority of student's books even include special units dedicated to topic "FOOD". The article "Eating and drinking habits" (Collie & Martin, 2004) suggests its readers to take care of their health and proper nutrition, reduce fats consumption and the consumption of alcohol. Actually, many teenagers and even adults are constantly eating food containing generous amount of fats, which can be caused by addiction to fats, lack of time to make home-cooked meals, closely located KFC and McDonald's restaurants. The text "Burger Kings March on UK Stomachs" (Collie & Martin, 2004) informs people that McDonald's and Burger Kings restaurant chains will be expanding, as these days people are eating much more than ever before. These public catering networks are regularly opening in Great Britain despite serious objections from many experts in the field of food policy: "*I would be congratulating the companies if they were moving into selling fruit and vegetables, but selling more burgers is hardly the sort of advance that the British diet needs*" (as cited in Collie & Martin, 2004, p. 36), Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy says in relation to the question of healthy eating, the title of the text "Eat as much as you like and stay healthy" (as cited in Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2003, p. 28) draws attention to problematic aspects of nutrition organization. The main idea of the content of this educational text is that people should eat good quality carbohydrates and fats rather than reduce the amount of food. This healthy diet approach was discovered by a French diet developer Michel Montignac. He created the "Montignac diet" to help himself lose weight. The diet which distinguishes between good and bad carbohydrates became the basis for best-selling books and a chain of restaurants and stores promoting his diet regimen. This article teaches children and students to eat right and serves as an educational platform for memorizing such medical terms as *carbohydrates, fats, diet, blood glucose, stress, nervousness, headaches, addiction, overweight*.

The establishment of a proper daily regimen helping to lead a healthy life-style is strongly emphasized in the English textbooks. According to chronobiology – an interdisciplinary branch of the biological and medical sciences which is concerned with the study of biological rhythms and cyclic processes in living organisms – there must be time for everything. So the text “A time for everything” (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2003) offers a lot of useful pieces of advice concerning a correct order of the day period; the authors’ recommendations are supported by the medical issues dealing with the state of a human body: in the morning the back and neck muscles are strongest and less susceptible to injury, that is why it is also the best time of day to take vitamins and go to the gym. From this perspective, many text editions are full of illustrating materials including the following medical linguistic markers – *blood, brain, liver, skin, illness, muscle, toothache, medicine, vitamins, injection, pills, metabolism, indigestion, back, neck, injury, heart attacks* – so as students could master the vocabulary from the sphere of medicine.

Verbalization of concept MEDICINE in the sphere of **destructive to health factors** happens on account of the use of medical terms nominating drugs, diseases, body parts and healthcare centers. Medical lexical markers denoting illnesses and the parts of the body predominate in educational texts on medical topics: *illness, lung cancer, colds, flu, sore throats, attacks of bronchitis, skin diseases, heart disease, heart attack, burn, bleeding, injuries, body, wrist, finger, legs, arm, nose, jaw*.

The first serious factor interfering with human health is the problem of smoking. Nowadays volunteers and enthusiasts of the healthy lifestyle try to focus on this problem in details and undertake measures against smoking: distribution of leaflets about the dangers of nicotine, prohibition of cigarette advertising, giving special lectures on the negative effects of smoking at schools. Moreover, the majority of modern textbooks include special units titled “Your health” where students can find articles dedicated to the negative effects of smoking. Currently, many sources of information including mass media are emphasizing the danger of smoking: the article under the title “Last gasp for smokers” (Hutchinson, 2004) dwells upon banning smoking in public places because of the nicotine which was classified as a drug equal to cocaine, cannabis, and heroin. Apart from publication fragments, textbooks hold many medical terms connected with the problem of smoking and different exercises for training medical vocabulary. Schoolchildren can get acquainted with such terms as *drug, cannabis, cocaine, heroin*; and the following word-combinations with medical nouns: *pay for the treatment, illness like lung cancer; the cost of treating illness caused by smoking* is rising are also enriching their vocabulary today due to their regular occurrence in the English educational discourse.

Another modern trend in English educational discourse is the focus on the negative effects of early awakening. The central idea of the text “Early risers bite the dust” (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2003) is that scientists have found a connection between early wakening and heart diseases. The possible risks of heart attack increase in the morning, which is evidently reflected in the title “Early risers bite the dust”. The idiom “bite the dust” represents ironical attitude of the author of the article towards the common idea that early awakening makes a positive contribution to a human body.

Various emergency situations also can be harmful to human health, consequently, many English textbooks contain such units as “Accidents and dramatic experience” (Tilbury, Clementson, Rea, & Hendra, 2011) or “Emergency” (Doff & Jones, 2001). These topics inform people about various accidents

and the first aid provided to the injured before the arrival of a doctor. Studying these units schoolchildren or students get useful advice on how to apply the first aid for wrist cut, burns, and heart attacks; for instance, when a person cuts a wrist it is necessary to call for a doctor and stop the bleeding applying bandages tightly. Students can benefit from studying the topics “Accidents and dramatic experience” and “Emergency” because they not only learn to give the first aid but also become aware of new medical terms: *accidents, injuries, wrist, finger, health advice line, ambulance, cuts and bruises, hospital, treatment.*

A great variety of educational texts devoted to the **benefits of laughter** stimulated the present research in the terms of laughter medical effects, on the one hand, and contributed a lot to the valid description of the concept MEDICINE verbalization in modern English educational discourse on the other hand. Laughter continues healing a person. Well-known proverb “Laughter is the best medicine” is still of current interest. What are the benefits of a smile? To begin with, laughter and smile are beneficial to human health: heart rate slows down, blood pressure goes down and body relaxes. Moreover, a smiling person is attractive: according to American dentists Melvin and Elanie Denholtz, an attractive smile shows most of the upper teeth, draws attention, and makes a good impression (“What’s in a smile” (Doff & Jones, 2001). The publication “Laughter: the best medicine” (Doff & Jones, 2001) describes the episode about Norman Cousins, an American political journalist and Professor of Medical Humanities, who had a serious problem with his back; his illness termed as ankylosing spondylitis was extremely painful, and, according to doctors, incurable. He recovered completely with the help of big doses of laughter brought on by videos of the television show “Candid Camera”, and by various comic films. Norman Cousins found that every time he laughed, the laughter served as an anaesthetic and gave him relief from pain. After his recovery some American hospitals have set up laughter rooms, where patients can watch videos and read joke books. Actually, doctor Cousins served as Adjunct Professor of Medical Humanities for the School of Medicine at the University of California, where he pursued research on the biochemistry of human emotions which, according to him, were the key factors in fighting disease. Consequently, laughter is an efficient treatment medication, which furnishes convincing proof by the use of medical linguistic markers characterizing illnesses and remedies: *medicine, ankylosing spondylitis, anaesthetic, illness.*

On the grounds of above mentioned issues which are currently important and frequent in educational discourse it may be concluded that modern English educational discourse is notable for its entertaining and scientific content. The objective of this type of discourse is to form competences providing the development of communicative strategies and tactics in different spheres of human life and activities on the highest professional level. These competences might be effectively built on the cognitive grounds of the thematic medical vocabulary and the corresponding professional cultural space. It is due to this the authors of many educational texts introduce the names of famous people: doctors, scientists, medical assistants (Sir William Gull, Paul Wilson, Norman Cousins) since they are usually used to indicate the ample didactic potential of modern English educational discourse.

7. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the present research:

- the major function of the concept MEDICINE in English textbooks (see Source list of factual material) is to order information about a person and his anthropocentric characteristics in terms of medical linguistic markers;

- the key features of the concept MEDICINE in the English educational discourse are characterized by coherent and logical actualization of linguistic markers explaining the fundamentals of medicine and drawing attention to the life of English-speaking society from the perspective of high-priority linguocultural tendencies specific to modern social aspects of medical educational discourse;

- medical terminological markers registered in English educational texts contribute to focusing attention upon the medical and social projects providing healthy young generation's upbringing, and creating optimal setting for healthy way of life for overall society members; these projects are also aimed at preventing aggressive medical policies and quackery which is important for the appropriate status of concept MEDICINE in English educational discourse.

The description of functional parameters of the English educational discourse in the present research paper accompanied by textual illustrative samples from English textbooks contribute to a fair presentation of concept MEDICINE in modern English worldview which is of vital importance for publishing authentic professional textbooks, for translating professional texts for specific purposes and for compiling terminological glossaries.

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