

Laura Ioana LEON
Associate Professor, PhD
„Grigore T. Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy
Iasi, Romania

Creative Industries: Preparing for University and a Future Medical Career

Abstract: Nowadays it is extremely important for prospective students at Medical schools, but also for young doctors to be able to „sell themselves”. Basically we refer to those important moments in one’s career when somebody has to know exactly how to put his / her skills to good use. On the one hand we speak about the whole process of getting admitted in a university (application forms, CVs, personal statements) and then about the later stage when a young doctor is confronted with the challenges of finding a job and surviving in the medical system. In the latter stage young doctors will need to know how to write a letter of application and how approach a job interview. When it comes to surviving in the business, doctors need to be able to perform scientific research and, consequently, to have academic writing skills. Social media is not a domain that should be left out when we talk about careers nowadays. On the contrary, it has a lot to do with the idea of being successful. All these ideas will be discussed from the perspective of the foreign language courses that Romanian medical students take in the first two years of study at the „Grigore T. Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi. The aim of the paper is to show the ways in which students can learn to effectively use their writing and communication skills in order to achieve their goals in their medical careers.

Keywords: ESP, medical students, medicine, academic writing skills, social media

The Internet and the technological development have dramatically changed many aspects of our lives. We do not refer strictly to the idea of using these tools in our life, but rather to the whole way in which our lives have evolved since the beginning of the Internet. Friendships and relationships, commerce, work, education have all come to be looked at from different perspectives. This paper tries to discuss the ways in which, in relation to the latest opportunities offered by the online medium, the English language courses at the „Grigore T. Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi, have been oriented towards meeting the specific needs of the medical students in the context of the new world. Medical students, once they graduate, are faced with the challenges of the competitive world that has become more digitalized. The ideas of selling oneself, advertisement, e-commerce and e-health have become very important and, in order to survive in the business, one has to understand the concepts and how they work in the system. This the creative industries have become important in all domains, medicine therefore is not an exception: “The creative industries have become increasingly important to economic well-being, proponents suggesting that ‘human creativity’ is the ultimate economic resource, and that the industries of the 21st century will depend increasingly on the generation of knowledge through creativity and innovation” (*Creative Industries*).

We believe that all these ideas are valid and it is important for our students to learn about these things that prepare them for their future careers. Thus, all the references in our paper will be made in the context of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to the medical students at the „Grigore T. Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi. Our students have to attend, as part of their academic curricula, in the first two years of their medical school, the foreign language classes, studying a foreign language of their own choice (English, French or German). In this whole new context, we believe that even the role of the ESP teacher has dramatically changed over the last two decades or so. In order to be able to face themselves the challenges of the new world, and having to keep the students’ interest in their classes, the ESP teacher has to perceive his / her role in a completely new manner, trying to transcend the traditional shape of the foreign language classes. However, we should not give up all the traditional methodologies, we still have to focus on them, but we definitely have to introduce new elements in our classes that would update the content of the topics we teach. Nowadays even the purpose for which somebody

learns a foreign language may differ very much. Since English is the lingua franca of the Internet and, in many instances, the English language is used as a medium of communication requiring some basic skills from the participants in the communication process, it is obvious that in the context of studying English for academic purposes, things have to be more complex.

More than 30 years ago, linguists and methodologists realized the importance of teaching and learning a language in the context in which it is produced. In other words, they thought nobody could become a proficient user of a foreign language, unless they understood the language in its cultural context. Back then it became obvious that language and culture were interrelated. Undoubtedly this idea is still valid today, and we still focus on the element of culture in our foreign language classes. As we have already mentioned, traditional methods are still preserved, i.e. we still have to focus on the four skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing), but we have to explore them now at a deeper level, taking the element of culture into account. Likewise, we also have to take into account some aspects of our modern life and therefore understand the concepts of language and culture in the new economy of things: globalization, diverse population and the development of technology.

All these aspects have come to influence the way in which we learn the English language today and, consequently, the way in which we have to teach English. In order to update our topics of discussions during our ESP classes, we have started to focus on some new things that are the consequences of the changes of the new world. Studying notions on Academic Writing today is not a new thing. This large chapter has always been part of the academic curricula of the ESP courses. Nonetheless, we look at these things from a new perspective, that of understanding any piece of writing from a cultural perspective. It may seem easy, but in reality there are many challenges for a Romanian student who would have to fill in his / her application forms (CV, letter of application and a personal statement) for some Western institutions or universities. At the same time, research is an important part of academic life today. Research is a significant part of a doctor's career, therefore knowing how to deal with academic writing has become mandatory. Getting a master's degree or a PhD, getting a higher academic promotion, all these require researches to produce academic texts (articles, essays, reviews, dissertations etc.) and, in order to be visible today, it is very likely that they are expected to write all these in the English language. It is true that in scientific writing methodologies do

not differ essentially, therefore our discussions are again targeted towards understanding the idea of writing in the context of cultural differences. English is also used in the online medium. It is probable here where we can best understand the idea of creative industries and developing a brand. It is not our job, though, as ESP teachers, to discuss things that overpass the boundaries of the basic topic. This is an interdisciplinary topic, where humanities, behavioral sciences, ethics and public health all meet. Thus it is important to emphasize that these ideas are discussed from the perspective of using the English language as a tool, the ESP teacher acting as a mere facilitator who tries to help students to cope with their future profession in a more effective way, being more prepared to face the challenges of the new world.

Today it is important to hold to this interdisciplinary perspective as our students need to enlarge their perspective. Medical students also take courses in the history of medicine, computer science, sociology, economics, so they have the potential to understand an interdisciplinary perspective. After all, creating a brand, involves all these fields today: “The creative economy straddles economic, political, social, cultural and technological issues and it is at crossroads of the arts, business and technology. It is unique in that it relies on an unlimited global resource: human creativity” (*Key role of cultural and creative industries in the economy* 1). We can also see thus how the role of culture becomes essential:

In the 20th century, these ancient traditions of cultural work-designing, making, decorating and performing – began to be woven together with a range of modern economic activities such as advertising, design, fashion and moving image media to create new forms of commercial culture. In the first decade of this new century these developments have been highly amplified by the power and reach of digital technology. (*Mapping the Creative Industries: A Toolkit* 11)

Creative industries themselves have their roots in understanding cultural traditions: “Indeed, for many creative business people the cultural value of their work is at least as important as its economic value. In a globalized connected world many places are wrestling with the question of how to maintain their cultural identity without becoming living museums” (*Ibid.* 13).

Our students need to be able to understand from a very early stage that becoming familiar with what happens on the market at this moment will help them to anticipate how things will be by the time they graduate. At the

moment probably the best example to look at is the American one. It is the best developed medium in terms of e-health, telemedicine and electronic communication by and large. Doctors need to understand that patients nowadays could be perceived as clients or customers, especially if we refer to the online medium. In an interesting study entitled *Cultural Times. The first global map of cultural and creative industries*, and published by UNESCO (December 2015), a film director, Daniel Burman from Argentina says that:

Technology is no longer “nice to have” but has become part of the content it displays. Creators must stop seeing technology as a challenge. We have to start incorporating technology in our creative process. Technology needs to stop being a mere platform or a means to an end. Technology is not a result, but a process. (97)

Though Burman speaks about artists in general, we believe that these ideas prove themselves to be valid for almost any field today. So doctors should not be afraid to use all these opportunities offered today by the online medium.

We are going to see further how studying notions related to academic writing (application forms and research) and social media in health care settings will help our students in better understanding and dealing with the challenges of the new world that requires you to create a brand, to have an online presence. Thus we are going to see first how application forms, as part of Academic Writing, can situate themselves in the area of selling oneself in the business market. In order to apply for a scholarship, for a training course, an internship, or, later on, for a job, it is vital to know how to “sell yourself”, especially when it comes to different cultural backgrounds where things may not always function the same way as in your native country. When dealing with a Curriculum Vitae (CV), one may say that things are not that difficult. In the European context, most of the times applicants will need to fill in the European format of the CV that they can download from the Europass website. This is true, but there are some barriers that the Romanian applicant may still encounter. Terminology related to degrees may be very different and not that easy to find on the Internet. Therefore we have to teach such vocabulary to our students. It is also about writing the right amount of text. Most of the times application forms have standard lengths and since English is more concise than the Romanian language, our students may find it hard to observe these restrictions. Therefore students should practice to avoid using overcomplicated sentences, all these application forms stressing upon the idea of expressing yourself short and

to the point, but also about being able to provide information about you in a very effective way. However, in the Western system, it may not always be the case to require from the applicants the European format of the CV. Thus applicants may be required to fill in CVs that no longer include details related to gender, marital status or date of birth, this showing that the above-mentioned criteria are no longer part of the selection process. For some applicants coming from Eastern Europe this might be hard to understand in the very beginning. Students need to be prepared, therefore, to know what expectations to have from the perspective of a Romanian applicant to a Western institution. Besides the cultural challenges it may bring about, the CV should also be understood from the perspective of creating a personal brand. The candidate should understand that it is vital to sell himself / herself in the most effective way. The CV is not only about listing some details about your education and work experience, it is about using the right amount of text in the English language (grammar and spelling are always very important!). Speaking about international candidates, our students may need to know some other tips as well: "You don't need to provide a photograph or details of your nationality. However, if you want to work in a country other than your own, you may wish to include your nationality and explain your eligibility to work there" (*Future Learn*). It is always important to make our students understand these apparently minor details that, nonetheless, make the difference when we speak about competitions. With regard to work experience, our students will need to know that this section may include aspects that seem to be overlooked in our system: full time, part time, temporary or voluntary, paid or unpaid: "Don't undersell your experience. Describe your duties and especially your achievements, plus relevant skills. It is important to use key words that match the skills and experience that the job requires" (*Future Learn*). The applicant writing his / her CV should always have in view the position he / she is applying for as, no matter how vast an experience he / she might have, it is important to highlight only those skills and experience that are relevant for that specific position.

The letter of application (or cover letter) comes to give further details on things that could not have been developed in the CV, therefore it always joins the CV. For the Romanian students who are familiar with the letter of application as a document (application form), it may still be difficult to deal with it because it is obvious that this document does not weigh that much in an application file in our system (in our system recruiters are

likely not to even read the cover letter). Therefore our candidates may not treat it with the utmost care required by the Western system. That would be one of the biggest challenges for a Romanian applicant. In the Western system the letter of application manages to reveal many things about the candidate, if it is written well. If its purpose is mainly to clarify some of the information in the CV, it is obvious that the applicant should focus again on the relevant examples of his / her education and work experience, that can now be developed more. Though, it is also important to teach students that letters of application cannot be longer than one page, which is known as its standard length. In a letter of application candidates should speak about their objectives, their experiences and skills, competencies and knowledge. The best way to do this is to provide examples that prove your skills. Candidates should also know they should avoid general characterizations, showing, by and large, they have creativity, flexibility and the ability to change.

With the personal statement, things are by far more complex. This is probably the biggest challenge for our students, when they apply for a Western university, as our admission process differs very much from that. The Romanian equivalent for the “personal statement” as such is very misleading (“scrisoare de intentie”), alluding to the idea of a “letter” and not to that of an essay. The personal statement is an essay that candidates write about themselves, describing their motivation to choose a specific university:

A personal statement is a document submitted as part of a graduate school application, that describes your abilities and accomplishments as evidence of your aspirations for pursuing a graduate education and, beyond that, a career in research. This is a chance to stand out from all other applicants. (*Sell Yourself: Guidance for Developing Your Personal Statement for Graduate School Application*)

These may be very new to the Romanian candidate who, most of the times, chooses his / her university based on the idea of proximity. In front of a personal statement, a candidate would have to find completely different reasons for this choice: reputation of the University, mode of study, specific professors or academics he / she would be interested to work with. In a personal statement the candidate will have to convince the admission tutor (officer) that he / she has thought things through, that he / she has done some research beforehand (showing, thus, commitment and familiarity with the future field of study). Some of the elements that should be included

in a personal statement may be hard to be obtained, before attending the University, in the Romanian system. Even for a career in medicine, the Western system expects the candidate to have gathered some experience with the field of study, maybe even some work shadowing in the health care system. These things are hard to experience in the Romanian system so gathering enough experience to look good in a personal statement may be a challenge for our candidates. Nonetheless, a personal statement is also about describing academic and career goals and our students should practice in order to learn how to do that in the most realistic way. Because, basically a personal statement is about being yourself, in an attempt to demonstrate your commitment and motivation to succeed. Like the CV and the letter of application, the personal statement also requires skills to “sell yourself” in a limited amount of space. Structure is also important (specialists recommend to start your personal statement strong, trying to catch the attention of the reader), along with the originality.

Throughout their medical careers, doctors will also be involved in a great deal of research. There are various research activities doctors may be likely to perform. Therefore, since it is part of the ESP curricula, besides teaching our students how to write their application forms, they should also learn about scientific writing. Knowing how to write an article or make a book review, designing an effective presentation or simply writing a dissertation are all part of the obligatory curricula belonging to the complex chapter of Academic Writing. First and foremost, students have to understand the basic principles lying at the foundation of the writing process. Writing as a skill comes last in a foreign language, being a productive skill. Writing in English for academic purposes requires a very good of the language. Like oral communication, writing implies the same convention between the author (sender of the message) and the reader (receiver of the message). Moreover, today we have several media in which we can communicate (write). The important thing for our students is to understand that the Internet has brought many changes in the way we write. This is probably best seen when we analyze the impact social media has had upon health care settings. Thus a written text has to be sensitive to the context in which it is produced. Along with a solid vocabulary, grammar has to be impeccably mastered. Once students understand the importance of all these details, they may go further in trying to equally understand the impact of the element of culture (cultural awareness) upon the writing process. In the context of studying ESP, it is obvious we refer

to some non-native users of the English language. Our students have to be aware of the fact that the way in which they will use the English language in their writing, will be influenced by the pattern of the Romanian language. Likewise written communication by and large is influenced by the author's cultural and educational background. One might think that things should not be that complex in scientific writing as language has to be simple and concise (clarity is required). Nonetheless, there are enough cultural issues that demand a lot of attention. Schools may teach students various ways of using technologies and sometimes even terminology may differ (this is how we explain the fact that a lot of scientific writing uses the glossaries to explain various denominations in the end). Clarity will always be the key in scientific writing. The advantage of the written text is that it can be revised up to the moment the author is satisfied with his/ her work. When the author is a non-native speaker, he / she may always ask for the support of a native speaker to proofread his / her piece of writing. Another good tip for non-native speakers is to try to write their texts directly in the English language. Writing in their native first language, and then translating the text would definitely lead to an overcomplicated style and consequently misunderstanding.

Though ESP teachers are no social media analysts, it is important to find the time, during English classes, to talk about this subject. Students are very receptive when it comes to using Internet, all of them are present on social media. There are enough things that have to do with the idea of learning ESP and, in order to keep our courses updated, ESP teachers should introduce topics related to these. At the "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi, Romania, we discuss about electronic communication in health care settings, e-health and telemedicine. All of them in relation to the use of the English language (English language being the lingua franca of the Internet). Though reluctant to the idea of using the Internet in health care settings, health care professionals eventually realized the benefits it can add to the field. Today health care professionals are present even on social media because they have understood that social media may educate but also promote business at the same time:

Social media have become powerful and important tools for health education, promotion, and communication activities as they have dramatically grown in popularity. Social media sites also offer many features that can be used for professional development and advancement. When used wisely and prudently, social media sites and platforms offer great potential

for professional development by building and cultivating professional networks, as well as sharing information to increase one's recognition and improve one's reputation. They also provide a medium for increasing one's knowledge and awareness of timely news and trends by following important organizations, opinion leaders and influential professionals. (*A Social media primer for professionals: dos and don'ts 1*)

Thus social media have become a powerful today and our students may find it important to learn some basic principles about that in the context of studying English for specific purposes. As we have already mentioned, students learn about communication in healthcare settings. The online medium offers several ways by means of which we can communicate today: written texts, audio messages, video messages or videos. Knowing the elements that take part in the communication process, students can now learn how to make the transfer to the online medium. The sender, the receiver, the message, the channel, the symbol, the feedback and the whole context in which online communication is produced may undergo some slight changes that have to be understood in order to be able to communicate effectively. These are some of the things we may discuss during our courses and seminars. After all being successful in the virtual world also implies understanding how this world functions in the absence of the nonverbal component, when conversations are protected by screens, or when the feedback takes the form of likes or dislikes, number of shares or followers. Being online means being able to adapt yourself to this new context, being able to send the right message to the appropriate platform that you are using.

Nowadays in the digital world everyone can create a personal brand. Our students are already familiar with these things. Sometimes we can find students who are bloggers or vloggers, and in our seminars, during our conversational classes, they may share some their experiences in this respect. They are all present on social media. Of course, in the beginning it is not about using these platforms for professional purposes, but it is a good way to start learning how to do that. Young people are very satisfied with the idea of owning such a virtual home, a sort of landing page where other people can come to learn more about who you are and what to do. You need to make sure that the content of the page delivers value to the others. The page has to have a purpose, to educate or to entertain, to inspire or to offer people something in exchange. Students already know these things and this works in their advantage because later on, all these principles may

be transferred to the medical virtual world. Once they are doctors, they will want to attract new patients and they will have to find ways to do that. Even though this aspect of the medical field is not very well represented in our country, students may access all sorts of platforms (most of the times they belong to the American system that, so far, seems to be the best example for using the online opportunities for the health care system) that facilitate the dialogue between patients and health care providers. They can thus also learn about the limitations and disadvantages of the online medium. By looking at these examples, students may anticipate how things are expected to change in our system and, by the time they graduate, they are going to be able to perfect some of the present-day shortcomings.

Finding the appropriate online audience is also going to be a challenge when trying to promote business online. Cultural awareness may be again an issue here as probably the age of the American constant Internet users may be very different from what we have here. Nonetheless, it is already a proven fact that friending customers online brings benefits to the practice. So our future doctors won't have to hesitate too much before deciding to have an online presence. At the same time, the online presence will require more involvement in the business activity (sometimes after office hours) because if you are not there for your followers, they will immediately lose interest in you:

Healthcare providers have to maintain a very stellar reputation, as well as project a competent professional appearance. In this day and age, a well-designed website is very much part of that appearance. The tired old joke may be <<never go to a doctor whose office plants have died>>, but <<never go to a doctor you can't Google"> is the 21st century version. Any business without an online presence is going to be invisible to a large portion of their potential customers, and a business without a website may lose customers brought in by other forms of advertising when those customers can't look up a website to get more information. Our health is the most valuable asset and few if any patients are willing to risk theirs with a doctor they can't look up online. (*The Importance of Online Marketing for Healthcare Professionals*)

Soon our students will also learn that social media is not only about personal branding, but also about promoting whole medical centers or hospitals: "Studies have shown that the use of social media can greatly enhance the image and visibility of medical center and hospital /.../. In one study, 57% of consumers said that a hospital's social media presence would

strongly influence their choice regarding where to go for services” (*Social Media and Healthcare Professionals: Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices*).

Eventually it is worth mentioning the fact that the American system has evolved so well in this direction not because doctors are in charge with their social media presence. If we think about this problem, it is obvious that would require too much time for the doctor who, after his office hours, would have to devote so much time and energy to manage his / her online presence. The American system has perfected itself with social media analysts who, for almost any field of activity, can offer assistance and help any professional to build up a professional online image. This requires a lot of financial means that may not be available for Romanian doctors. American social media analysts come with very good tips on how to use various platforms. They focus on specific fields of activities, therefore you will find social media analysts who are specialized in working with doctors and it has been proven that this is probably the most effective method to build an online image.

There are many advantages in discussing all these things with our students today. It is true that we do not have so many classes in which we can discuss things in greater detail, but it is worth bringing all these new topics to them as they can learn a lot of things that they can use in their future career. They should never forget that at the center of all their activities there will always be the patient who, ultimately, has to be the beneficiary of all the outcomes brought up by the development of the new technology.

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