

English language and Peruvian medical programs

El inglés en la medicina académica peruana

José Vásquez-Villalobos¹, Ricardo Vergara-Polo¹, Marioli Farro-Maldonado¹, Glenda Gutiérrez-Pérez¹, Adriana Herrera-Guzmán¹, Fernando Miguel Runzer-Colmenares¹

¹ Universidad Científica del Sur - Faculty of Health Sciences - Human Medicine Program - Lima - Peru.

Corresponding author: Fernando Miguel Runzer-Colmenares. Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Científica del Sur. Panamericana Sur Km 19, Villa II, Human Medicine Coordinators Office. Telephone number: + 51 942190471, ext.: 6231. Lima. Peru. Email: frunzer@cientifica.edu.pe.

Dear Editor:

After reading the article entitled "*English proficiency level in Colombian undergraduate students of medical programs*,"¹ published in your prestigious journal and with whose conclusions we agree, we would like to delve into the subject and highlight some aspects mentioned in that editorial.

The study by Alonso *et al.*¹ is the first in Colombia to report that only about 20% of graduates from different medical schools have an intermediate or high level of English. This figure must improve not only in Colombia but also in other Latin American countries such as Peru, since mastery of the English language would optimize access to useful tools related to technological development and research for medical students, even though Spanish is the official language in most countries of the region.²

Therefore, medical graduates should be better prepared in English, paying special attention to technical language, communication skills, and critical reading for facilitating their entry into an increasingly competitive national and international labor market.³ A common disadvantage of the lack of English proficiency is the poor access to new bibliographic references, which exposes the students to not having relevant information for their training and has clinical repercussions that are already evident in some graduates.⁴

Although many medical journals published in Spanish are currently making their transition to English, Peruvian journals have not yet entirely made such transition.⁵ This is described in the Mayta-Tristan study *et al.*⁶ published by a Peruvian journal of medicine and public health, which reports that scientific production regarding cancer in Peru increased significantly between 2000 and 2011 and that about 25 articles, of which 82.1% were in English, were published every year during this period. However, in most of these publications, the corresponding author was a foreigner, and the Peruvian researchers were co-authors.⁶ For this reason, and considering that a large number of indexed biomedical journals accept material in English only, we consider that educational institutions must encourage the learning of that language, particularly reading and writing skills.⁷

In summary, it is necessary to make a call to prioritize the incorporation of the English language in the learning process of medical students as part of their academic programs in Latin America taking Colombia as an example, as it reached the goal set for 2014 regarding the proficiency level in this language. Concerning Peru, we have the challenge of exceeding the expectations of the "English: Doors to the World" plan, a proposal that set goals exclusively for schoolchildren for the year 2021. According to this plan, young people must graduate from high school having already an intermediate English level. If this goal is achieved, it will serve as an incentive to develop similar strategies for university students.⁸

Conflicts of interest

None stated by the authors.

Funding

None stated by the authors.

Acknowledgements

To Universidad Científica del Sur for providing us with comprehensive scientific training.

References

1. Alonso JC, Díaz DM, Estrada D, Mueces BV. English proficiency level in Colombian undergraduate students of medical programs. *Rev. Fac. Med.* 2018;66(4):215-22. <http://doi.org/c8hn>.
2. Niño-Puello M. El inglés y su importancia en la investigación científica: algunas reflexiones. *Rev. Colombiana Cienc. Anim.* 2013 [cited 2018 Sep 13];5(1):243-54. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2nqWkgI>.
3. Puig-Espinosa JS, Reyes-Figueroa MA. Una experiencia pedagógica en la enseñanza del inglés con fines específicos en la Educación Médica Posgraduada. *Educ Med Super.* 2001 [cited 2018 Sep 13];15(3):268-72. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2oizPKL>.

4. Sierra-Galan LM. El idioma «inglés» en la medicina. Arch. Cardiol. Mex. 2016 [cited 2018 Sep 13];86(1):97-8. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2p3bDMM>.
5. Pamo-Reyna OG. Estado actual de las publicaciones periódicas científicas médicas del Perú. Rev Med Hered. 2005 [cited 2018 Sep 13];16(1):65-73. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2ogCQeA>.
6. Mayta-Tristán P, Huamaní C, Montenegro-Idrogo JJ, Samanez-Figari C, González-Alcaide G. Producción científica y redes de colaboración en cáncer en el Perú 2000-2011: un estudio bibliométrico en Scopus y Science Citation Index. Rev. perú. med. exp. salud publica. 2013 [cited 2018 Sep 14];30(1):31-6. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2nrNkb8>.
7. Remes-Troche JM. El inglés: la quinta era del lenguaje de la medicina. Revista de Gastroenterología de México. 2012;77(3):103-5. <http://doi.org/f2jpb>.
8. Perú. Ministerio de Educación. Inglés Puertas al Mundo. Lima: Minedu; 2018 [cited 2018 Sep 13]. Available from: <http://bit.ly/2olzHdm>.