English-speaking countries are becoming more desirable places for health professionals to immigrate to (O’Neill, 2011). For Chinese nurses, socioeconomic factors and the underdevelopment of the profession in China are pushing practitioners to immigrate (Ma, Quin Griffin, Capilu, & Fitzpatrick, 2003). Ma et al (2005) note that China-trained nurses are the fastest growing group of immigrant workers in the US and will soon replace Filipinos as the most common International Medical Graduate (IMG) group. However, gaining registration is not easy (Rumsey, Thiessen & John, 2015), and even after becoming registered, there are linguistic and cultural challenges to be faced.

Currently, there are two main kinds of English tuition related to the field of medicine in Mainland China. One is via the compulsory College English system, in which in years 3 and 4 of a medical student’s degree content moves from general English tuition to more of a focus on medical-related terminology (Zhao, 2012). The other is the training of medical translators, who are not medically-trained and graduate as Arts students (Zhang, 2015). Within the field of nursing, the majority of teaching still takes place in Chinese (He, Xu, & Zhu, 2011). A bilingual approach to nursing and medicine as firstly they overlap in terms of language and communication skills, and also it is in these disciplines where the bulk of literature can be found. Depending on the learner and educational context, EMP can be a ‘pure’ form of ESP or a kind of EOP (English for Occupational Purposes).

Types of Learners
1. Nursing / Medical students studying at an English as a Medium of Instruction university in China (ESP)
2. Nursing / Medical students studying their major in English, at a Chinese university (ESP)
3. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) interested in working in English-speaking countries (EOP)
4. Local medical graduates (LMGs) working with English-speaking foreigners in China (as a form of workplace training or professional development / continuing medical education) (EOP)

WHAT IS EMP?
Definition
EMP as an ESP has quite a wide definition and includes English for a variety of medical and allied health professions. Any search will turn up an extensive amount of research papers, albeit the majority of those written in English relate to nursing. This probably reflects the greater global need for, and mobility of, this profession, as noted in the literature (e.g. Oulton, 2006 as cited in He, Xu & Zhu, 2011).

In contrast, although literature on EMP for mainland Chinese doctors is abundant, it is rare that it is written in English. Yet, where possible, in this article, links to the situation in Mainland China are made, often via literature from Taiwan or Hong Kong.

For this article, the discussion of EMP will focus on the fields of nursing and medicine as firstly they overlap in terms of language and communication skills, and also it is in these disciplines where the bulk of literature can be found. Depending on the learner and educational context, EMP can be a ‘pure’ form of ESP or a kind of EOP (English for Occupational Purposes).

Understanding EMP

EMP style is depersonalized and objective with strong use of the passive form (Milosavljevic & Antic, 2015). It includes various receptive and productive genre such as form filling (for example insurance forms, admittance / discharge forms) and the writing and reading of: patient files (and use of internationally and locally-accepted medical abbreviations), referral letters and prescriptions (Cross & Smallbridge, 2011). Reading academic journals and scientific writing for publication are also important for higher level students. Research has found that without a good command of English it is difficult for IMGs and IMGs to make progress in their professional life, as English is the language of publication and international

Key Concepts is a regular feature which aims at providing a concise overview / introduction to an area relevant to English teaching in China. The inaugural piece, in Issue 8, examined a key element of Second Language Acquisition theory using examples from Chinese; in this issue, English for Medical Purposes and the situation in China is the focus. If you are interested in submitting a Key Concepts article, the list of possible topics is almost endless, but please bear in mind that you should show China relevance. You are advised to contact the Editors in the first instance to confirm the suitability of topic.
Gee’s belief that students need to decontextualized. She supports context, as most teaching and especially in an international also not taught how to function (Popa, 2013). In particular, students need to be made aware of register and tone (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1992 as cited in Luo & Garmer, 2017, Antic, 2015). What may be less obvious, patients, to teach practical skills. Due to the nature of the discipline, teachers, and teaching resources. Although it could be argued that an ESP teacher does not need a background in the content material they teach, familiarity with the basic knowledge of their students’ subject both in linguistics terms and discipline specific skills is important if it is to provide learning opportunities related to the workplace/field of practice (Kenny & Bolitho, 1992 as cited in Luo & Garner, 2017, Antic, 2015).

TEACHING CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO THE CHINA CONTEXT

Challenges to implementing EMP in China are numerous. Although Medical English courses and are compulsory for medical undergraduates (Huul, 2015; Zhang & Wang, 2015), they tend to focus on translation and understanding of medical terminology, which as Huul (2015) states is not the same as learning Medical English. In addition, these courses are relatively new additions to the field of medical education in China, therefore practitioners who are not recent graduates may be lacking in general and Medical English skills (Chen, Liao, & Chen, 2012). In many cases, doctors in regular Chinese hospitals a translator may be available, which they can be exposed to different hospital organisational systems, so the use of foreign texts is equally important. The second significant barrier is the lack of nurse educators with second language skills adequate enough to teach their students in English. This could be reflective of Yang’s finding that “nearly 90% of nurses in Mainland China read, speak or write in English and they had difficulty understanding foreign patient’s requests” (p 61, as cited in Tang et al, 2005). In conclusion, the teaching of EMP is much-needed globally, but even more so in China as its population is choosing more and more to live in China and speak foreigner are choosing to join the Chinese business world. This trend, including bilingual medical courses aim at not only meeting the need to treat increasing numbers of English-speaking patients in China, and addressing the global shortage of health professionals (by making the Chinese work force more mobile), but also allowing Chinese practitioners to access to western medical knowledge and the ability to disseminate their own knowledge and experience via participation in international conferences and publishing in English journals. However, EMP as a field and the English language ability of Chinese health professionals both need a significant amount of development before those needs can be met.

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Speaking and listening: functional language and pragmatics

Obvious functional skills related to listening and speaking are: getting a history from a patient, diagnosing conditions, advising and assigning treatments, presenting cases, receiving and making referral phone calls (Antic, 2015). What may be less obvious, are the pragmatics associated with these tasks. For example, the use of small talk (Zhou, Windsor, Theobald, & Coyer, 2011). The teaching of language skills needed to use IMCs and LMCS to work in multi-disciplinary teams, in a different cultural context, and make appropriate small talk with peers at conferences or in the workplace, is therefore of great importance as weaknesses in these areas can cause stress and misunderstanding (Ma et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2011; Boster & Stocker, 2015).


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