

სწავლების მეთოდოლოგია Methodic of Teaching

Curriculum Development for Teaching Georgian Language to International Medical Students in Georgia: Needs, Challenges, and Educational Strategies

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As Georgia emerges as a hub for international medical education, the need for effective Georgian language instruction tailored to international medical students has become increasingly urgent. This study explores the unique linguistic, academic, and professional challenges faced by foreign students enrolled in Georgian medical universities. While many institutions provide basic language courses, these often fail to address the specific communicative needs required in clinical and academic settings, such as doctor-patient interactions, comprehension of medical terminology, and participation in practical internships.

*This research also responds to the requirements of **Clause 11 of Section 4 (Teaching, Learning, and Assessment) of the Sectoral Characteristics**, which mandates that foreign-language medical education programs must include **Georgian language instruction for effective communication with patients and medical staff, totaling no less than 12 ECTS credits**.*

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys of international medical students with interviews of Georgian language instructors and medical faculty. It investigates students' experiences with current language instruction, identifies key obstacles in acquiring Georgian within a medical context, and evaluates the adequacy of existing curricula. The study also draws from best practices in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and models of curriculum development from comparable multilingual educational environments.

Findings highlight a pressing need for targeted language instruction that goes beyond everyday communication to include professional and culturally sensitive language use in healthcare settings. The paper proposes a flexible, tiered curriculum structure that integrates medical vocabulary, clinical communication skills, and contextual learning opportunities such as hospital shadowing and role-plays.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the advancement of language education policy in Georgia and supports the academic and professional success of international medical students through evidence-based curriculum design.

Keywords: approaches; methods; language; teaching; learning; curriculum development; Georgian as a foreign language; medical education; international students; language for specific purposes (LSP)

Introduction

In recent years, Georgia has become a prominent destination for international students pursuing medical degrees. With English-language programs offered at multiple universities, the country attracts thousands of students, particularly from India, the Middle East, and Africa. However, despite receiving instruction in English, international students must still navigate everyday life and clinical practice in Georgian—a language unfamiliar to most upon arrival.

This linguistic gap becomes especially critical in clinical environments, where students are expected to communicate with patients, understand medical records, and collaborate with healthcare staff. These interactions demand not only a basic understanding of the Georgian language but also fluency in medical terminology and culturally appropriate communication. Georgian medical universities do include language instruction in their curricula, yet feedback from students and instructors suggests that current syllabuses often lack alignment with real-life medical communication needs.

In response to this concern, Clause 11 of Section 4 (Teaching, Learning, and Assessment) of the *Sectoral Characteristics for Higher Medical Education Programs in Georgia* mandates that all foreign-language medical education programs provide a minimum of 12 ECTS credits in Georgian language instruction. This instruction must be specifically aimed at enabling effective communication with patients and medical staff. Despite this regulatory framework, practical implementation varies significantly across institutions, and many students complete several semesters without acquiring sufficient communicative competence in Georgian. Sectoral Benchmark Statement of Higher Education in Medicine (2022).

This research investigates the effectiveness of current Georgian language courses offered to international medical students, with a focus on curriculum relevance, teaching strategies, and student outcomes. The study adopts a **mixed-methods approach**, using surveys, interviews with language instructors, and analysis of existing syllabuses. It draws upon theories of **Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)** and curriculum development, as well as international best practices in teaching host-country languages within medical education.

By identifying gaps in current programs and highlighting best practices, this paper aims to inform the development of a more targeted and flexible Georgian language curriculum. Such a curriculum should balance foundational linguistic skills with clinical communication needs, and prepare students not only for academic success but also for ethical and effective patient care.

Methodology and Results

1. Curriculum-Student Alignment: Timing and Content Gaps

A key challenge identified in the teaching of Georgian to international medical students is the temporal and functional misalignment between language instruction and clinical practice. Georgian language courses are typically delivered during the first three semesters of the medical

curriculum. These semesters coincide with the pre-clinical phase of training, during which students have limited or no direct patient contact. However, clinical engagement and communication become essential in subsequent semesters, particularly in the clinical and internship phases.

Despite having completed two or three semesters of language study, most students rate their Georgian proficiency as beginner or pre-intermediate. Few students report confidence in using Georgian effectively during hospital rotations. This gap highlights the lack of longitudinal language support extending into the clinical years, where practical communication—such as symptom explanation, diagnosis discussion, and patient instructions—becomes essential. The curriculum structure thus limits students’ ability to apply learned language skills in professional contexts.

Attachment 1.1



2. Instructional Challenges and Methodologies

Data from instructors and students indicate a shortage of medical-specific Georgian teaching resources. While instructors adopt varied methods—including grammar-translation, communicative approaches, and task-based learning—they largely rely on generic textbooks and self-developed materials. There is a lack of standardized content focused on clinical dialogue, symptom descriptions, and medical vocabulary.

Students express the need for Georgian-English medical dictionaries, digital tools, bilingual instructional materials, and opportunities for authentic clinical language practice. Instructors also report that instructional tools do not adequately reflect real-life hospital communication and that the absence of structured medical language content hinders effective teaching.

Interviews with clinical instructors further confirm that international students frequently struggle to communicate with patients due to limited Georgian proficiency. These difficulties, observed in clinical teaching settings, impede students' ability to take patient histories, respond appropriately to clinical scenarios, and participate in diagnostic processes.

3. Key Obstacles in Language Acquisition

Analysis of survey responses identifies several recurrent challenges in acquiring Georgian:

- Complexity of grammar structures
- Pronunciation difficulties
- Rapid pace of native speech in clinical environments
- Inadequate focus on medical terminology in coursework
- Limited access to practical language-use scenarios

These challenges are compounded by academic demands from concurrent core medical subjects. The limited integration of language learning with clinical content contributes to reduced motivation and performance.

Students indicate a preference for interactive and contextualized learning methods over passive or rote approaches. Simulations, collaborative tasks, and real-life scenarios are viewed as more effective for preparing students to engage in clinical communication.

4. Curriculum Gaps and Strategic Recommendations

The current Georgian Language syllabuses provides foundational linguistic skills but lacks sufficient emphasis on medical language acquisition. Medical vocabulary and clinical communication are generally introduced only in the final semester of instruction, with minimal reinforcement thereafter. This structure fails to equip students with the language proficiency required during their clinical training.

To address these deficiencies, several recommendations can be proposed:

- Introduce a distinct course in “Georgian for Medical Professionals” beginning in the first semester, integrating medical vocabulary and communication scenarios progressively.
- Extend Georgian language instruction into the clinical phase of medical education to support patient interaction during internships.

- Develop standardized, bilingual teaching materials, including vocabulary lists, medical case templates, and structured dialogues.
- Strengthen collaboration between language and clinical faculty for joint curriculum planning and content delivery.
 - Include structured clinical communication practice through simulations, hospital shadowing, and case-based role-plays.

Implementing these strategies would not only enhance student readiness for clinical interaction but also support compliance with national academic standards, including the requirement for at least 12 ECTS credits in Georgian language instruction for foreign-language medical programs.

5. Teaching Methods and Innovative Approaches in Language Instruction

The integration of contemporary foreign language pedagogy is essential for improving Georgian language education for medical students. Traditional methods, with a focus on grammar memorization and translation, offer limited support for the practical demands of clinical communication.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes real-world interaction and functional language use. In medical education, CLT can be applied through structured role-plays, patient simulations, and clinical dialogue activities to build students' communication fluency. The study demonstrated that students preferred interactive and practical approaches to English learning (Rahmatillah, 2019).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) involves the use of real-life tasks as the basis for language learning. In a medical context, relevant tasks include writing case summaries, conducting mock patient interviews, and translating clinical instructions. According to Murad (2024), "TBLT encourages learners to take ownership of their learning process and make decisions about how to approach and complete the writing tasks".

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) enables students to acquire language skills through content relevant to their discipline. For medical students, this may include reading simplified case studies, interpreting lab results, or discussing symptoms and diagnoses in Georgian. The goal of CLIL can be different. „The reasons for CLIL implementation include diversifying methods and forms of classroom practice; building intercultural knowledge and understanding; enabling students to access international certification. giving added value to the learning of content; preparing for future studies and working life; and, enhancing school and region profiles “(Marsh, Frigols, 2012, p. 5). In CLIL, students' motivation to learn a language grows alongside their interest in the subject matter.

Technological Integration further enhances language acquisition. Tools such as customized mobile apps, audiovisual materials, pronunciation software, and interactive learning platforms (e.g., Quizlet, Kahoot, Padlet) offer supplementary support beyond the classroom and promote independent learning.

Collaborative Learning methodologies—including pair work, peer feedback, and small-group projects—foster interaction and encourage students to practice language in a structured yet low-anxiety environment.

Formative Assessment approaches, such as weekly speaking tasks, clinical role-plays, and reflective language journals, provide continuous feedback and promote sustained engagement with the language. These assessment strategies align with communicative learning outcomes and reinforce the professional application of Georgian language skills.

Conclusion

This study has examined the current state of Georgian language instruction for international medical students in Georgia, highlighting structural, pedagogical, and curricular challenges that impede effective communication in clinical contexts. The findings indicate a clear disjunction between the timing of language instruction and the periods during which students are expected to interact with patients, resulting in underdeveloped communicative competence at critical stages of medical training.

Feedbacks underscore the need for more targeted, professionally oriented language instruction. The absence of standardized materials for teaching medical Georgian—such as bilingual glossaries, patient dialogue models, and diagnostic scenarios—further exacerbates the difficulty of achieving functional proficiency. Moreover, clinical instructors report that language limitations directly hinder students' performance and learning during hospital practice.

To bridge these gaps, the study recommends a restructured curriculum that integrates Georgian language learning throughout the academic program, extending into clinical semesters. It advocates for the adoption of modern, interactive, and task-based teaching methodologies, alongside the development of specialized resources tailored to medical settings. Strengthening collaboration between language and medical faculty is also essential to ensure that language instruction reflects real-life communicative demands in healthcare environments.

By aligning language education with the professional needs of international students and the expectations of the Georgian healthcare system, educational institutions can enhance the quality of medical training, improve patient care outcomes, and fulfill national regulatory standards. Ultimately, a well-designed, context-specific Georgian language curriculum serves as a vital component in the academic and professional integration of international medical students in Georgia.

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ქართული ენის სწავლების კურიკულუმის შემუშავება საერთაშორისო სამედიცინო სტუდენტებისთვის საქართველოში: საჭიროებები, გამოწვევები და საგანმანათლებლო სტრატეგიები

რეზიუმე

ქართული ენის ეფექტური სწავლების აუცილებლობა, რომელიც მორგებული იქნება საერთაშორისო სამედიცინო სტუდენტებზე, სულ უფრო მწვავე ხდება, გამომდინარე იქედან, რომ საქართველო იქცა საერთაშორისო სამედიცინო განათლების მიზიდულობის ცენტრად. ეს კვლევა შეისწავლის ენობრივ, აკადემიურ და პროფესიულ გამოწვევებს, რომლებსაც აწყდებიან უცხოელი სტუდენტები ქართულ სამედიცინო უნივერსიტეტებში. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ბევრი უმაღლესი საგანმანათლებლო დაწესებულება უზრუნველყოფს ენის ძირითად კურსებს, ეს ხშირად ვერ პასუხობს სპეციფიკურ კომუნიკაციურ საჭიროებებს, რომლებიც აუცილებელია კლინიკურ და აკადემიურ გარემოში, როგორცაა ექიმისა და პაციენტის ურთიერთობა, სამედიცინო ტერმინოლოგიების გაგება და პრაქტიკულ საქმიანობაში მონაწილეობა.

ეს კვლევა ასევე პასუხობს **დარგობრივი მახასიათებლების მე-4 ნაწილის 11-ე პუნქტის (სწავლება, სწავლა და შეფასება) მოთხოვნებს**, რომელიც ავალდებულებს, რომ უცხოენოვანი სამედიცინო განათლების პროგრამები უნდა შეიცავდეს ქართული ენის სწავლებას პაციენტებთან და სამედიცინო პერსონალთან ეფექტური კომუნიკაციისთვის, სულ მცირე 12 ECTS კრედიტის ოდენობით.

კვლევაში გამოყენებულია კვლევის შერეული მეთოდები, რომელიც აერთიანებს საერთაშორისო სამედიცინო სტუდენტების გამოკითხვას ქართული ენის ინსტრუქტორებისა და სამედიცინო ფაკულტეტის წარმომადგენლებთან ჩაღრმავებულ ინტერვიუებს. იგი იკვლევს სტუდენტების გამოცდილებას მიმდინარე ენობრივ ინსტრუქციებთან დაკავშირებით, აღმოაჩენს ქართული ენის სამედიცინო კონტექსტში ათვისების მთავარ დაბრკოლებებს და აფასებს არსებული კურიკულუმების სათანადოობას. კვლევა ასევე ეყრდნობა სპეციფიკური დანიშნულების ენისა (LSP) და კურიკულუმის შემუშავების მოდელებს შესაფერისი მრავალენოვანი საგანმანათლებლო გარემოდან.

დასკვნები ხაზს უსვამს მიზნობრივი ენობრივი ინსტრუქციის გადაუდებელ საჭიროებას, რომელიც სცდება ყოველდღიური კომუნიკაციის ფარგლებს და მოიცავს პროფესიულ და კულტურულად მგრძნობიარე ენის გამოყენებას ჯანდაცვის დაწესებულებებში. ნაშრომი გვთავაზობს მოქნილ, სხვადასხვა დონეების მიხედვით განსაზღვრული კურიკულუმის სტრუქტურას, რომელიც აერთიანებს სამედიცინო ლექსიკონს, კლინიკური კომუნიკაციის უნარებს და კონტექსტურ სწავლის შესაძლებლობებს, როგორცაა საავადმყოფოში დაკვირვება და როლური თამაშები.

საბოლოო ჯამში, ეს კვლევა ხელს უწყობს საქართველოში ენობრივი განათლების მიდგომების განვითარებას და მხარს უჭერს საერთაშორისო სამედიცინო სტუდენტების აკადემიურ და პროფესიულ წარმატებას მტკიცებულებაზე დაფუძნებული კურიკულუმის შემუშავების მეშვეობით.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მიდგომები; მეთოდები; ენა; სწავლება; სწავლა; კურიკულუმის შემუშავება; ქართული, როგორც უცხო ენა; სამედიცინო განათლება; საერთაშორისო სტუდენტები; ენა სპეციფიკური დანიშნულებისთვის (LSP)

რეცენზენტი: პროფესორი ელენა ეკშებეევა