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Online tools for individual study of medical vocabulary – selected challenges

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The acquisition of lexis is an important part of language learning. It is also a vital component of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) education, as the knowledge of specialised vocabulary is considered integral to success in occupation-specific communicative activities. Expanding professional lexis is essential to help EMP learners understand the language and concepts of their academic or professional discipline and achieve specific communication goals. Apart from delivering patient care, creating trust-centred relationships, disseminating medical information in a variety of work-based scenarios, health care professionals frequently need to communicate successfully in a number of medical contexts outside work. Collaborating, networking, and decision-making with other professionals are frequently essential for individuals engaging in practices associated with medical research. Developing medical vocabulary is therefore an integral component of EMP training, as it gives specialised language learners a solid foundation from which to develop communicative competence in order to be able to convey professional information and perform job-related tasks. However, the acquisition of technical vocabulary poses a significant challenge to many EMP learners, as professional lexis includes low-frequency words and is commonly considered more complex than general vocabulary. This talk aims to discuss selected challenges of using online tools to develop specialised lexis. An outline of difficulties in professional vocabulary learning and a review of the main characteristics of teaching EMP will also be included.

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