

“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETTERS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY STUDIES

**THE LANGUAGES OF MEDICINE.
MULTILINGUALISM AT “IULIU HAȚIEGANU” UNIVERSITY
OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY, CLUJ-NAPOCA**

– SUMMARY –

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Keywords: language policies, medical language policies, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), qualitative research

This doctoral thesis stems from my interest in the field of teaching foreign languages, which developed as I became increasingly concerned with establishing the purpose of teaching English. Gradually, I have also developed an interest in language policy making and its implications for students, language instructors and society as a whole. As a member of the teaching staff at the Department of Modern Languages of “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, I have also become aware of the implications of foreign languages in the medical field and, henceforth, my research interest focused on how medicine, in all its aspects, makes use of foreign languages.

The accelerated process of globalisation has increased the market value of foreign languages. Decades ago, English as a foreign language was taught and used moderately throughout the world. More recently, its popularity has increased exponentially, making it a requirement for many people in various countries due to the current extent of internationalisation and transnational communication. However, this doctoral thesis also considers other foreign languages in the attempt to avoid focusing on only one language. Nonetheless, social and linguistic realities do make the English language the pivotal point of some chapters of the thesis.

The purpose of this research is to study the language management decisions taken by “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy and their effects within the medical profession. The doctoral thesis takes the form of a case study, the research strategy best suited

for the analysis of the various facets of the chosen topic. Moreover, this thesis aims to provide new information in the field of medical language policies.

The first chapter outlined the area of language policy research in order to establish the main theoretical framework used throughout the doctoral research. It started from general notions and moved towards more particular concepts, which were used to conduct the analyses included in the next chapters. The influence of language policy making was remarked by scholars in all aspects of human life due, among other reasons, to the fact that policy-making is a process that interconnects a multitude of disciplines, although its most notable influences stand in the political and educational fields. Furthermore, it is generally very difficult to separate one particular area in which language policies produce effects from other areas. For instance, policies applied to educational systems will unavoidably influence students throughout their adult lives even after they graduate, thus producing social and economic effects. The disadvantage of the field, compared to other areas of research, is that the effects of language policies are not immediate. Humanity's need for *now* is clearly highlighted by the concept of globalisation. This, in turn, has accelerated the development of research on language policies. The commodification of languages has been an important aspect of globalisation. The fact that language has become a commodity which can be traded and therefore is quantifiable in currency is one of the reasons behind the imperious need for continuous and extensive study in the field.

The study of the relation between language policies and economics revealed its bi-directional character and the need to analyse the political aspect of policy making, as both these facets of society were demonstrated to either promote or hinder the policy making process. The final part of the first chapter analysed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages from the perspective of policy makers and policy beneficiaries rather than from the perspective of teaching methodology.

The second chapter has two main parts, an overview of the theoretical aspects that guide policy making in the medical field and offers practical considerations on the applicability of language policies. The latter was constructed around the higher education institution selected as the focal point of this thesis. The theoretical part focused on establishing the purpose of foreign languages in the medical field, with an emphasis on communication as the basis of any medical encounter between a healthcare professional and a conscious, alert patient. Then, the notion of language interpreting in the medical environment was discussed before providing an outline of

language management strategies in healthcare institutions. Next, the discussion focused on the role of foreign languages in medical tourism.

The first practical analysis of the thesis was conducted on the role of “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy as a policy maker. The University was observed to have high linguistic standards for both components of its academic community, i.e. students and staff. Its language policies are implicit in the sense that the institution does not have a coherent and cohesive set of regulations in this respect, as does “Babeş-Bolyai” University for instance. However, the importance of foreign language skills for the academic community was remarked in the University Charter and all accompanying regulations.

The third chapter discussed the role and applicability of a Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) educational settings in the medical field, as a promoter and instrument of language policies. Moreover, it tackled the distinction between the CLIL framework and that of English Medium Instruction in terms of suitability for and adaptability to medical education. The direction taken by the University was analysed and the institutional provisions were compared to the perception of students enrolled in the undergraduate programme of General Medicine in English. The University was found to integrate language learning objectives in only four courses.

The next stage of the research concerned the beneficiaries of the study programme and was designed as a questionnaire intended to discover whether the students benefit linguistically from attending an English programme. The results provided by the analysis of the 65 questionnaires have demonstrated that the students’ language skills have improved over their first years of medical training. A clear prevalence was observed in the increase of the students’ receptive skills, while their productive skills were reported as having decreased after their enrolment at university. The seventh item in the questionnaire revealed instances in which English language notions are explained to students by their content instructors however, 63.5% of the respondents claimed that this was not the case. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire have shown a clear preference for EMI because of the students’ lack of interest in EMP classes. Two reasons for this have been identified: the prerequisite for enrolment that stipulates the minimum level of language proficiency and the students’ already demanding schedules which does not allow for more classes aimed to improve their language skills.

Therefore, the third chapter of this thesis has proven that the General Medicine undergraduate programme offered in English at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy is concordant with the stipulations of an EMI environment and provides only partial and implicit linguistic benefits for the students.

The final chapter reported a comparative study on the importance of foreign languages as perceived by medical students and practicing professionals. The first part of the chapter set the research strategy adopted in order to perform the analysis and establishes the need to conduct qualitative research. The design of the research was then discussed, alongside the ethical implications which need to be considered. The manner in which data reliability and validity are achieved in qualitative research is detailed together with the strategy used for data analysis. The methods used for this study are established and the participants in the study are described.

Each case (students and healthcare professionals) was treated separately in terms of questionnaire design and results. The questionnaires were designed according to the target respondents and the results were analysed accordingly. The questionnaires were designed to be mirror images of each other. The one for students aimed to acquire information on the predictions regarding their future need for foreign languages, while the one addressed to professionals is intended as an efficient tool that can offer concrete evidence of the actual role of foreign languages in the career of medical practitioners. The results of the two sets of questionnaires were then compared in order to draw research conclusions.

The analysis of the questionnaires proved to be laborious due to the total number of respondents: 124 students and 50 practicing medical professionals. The analysis of students' perception questionnaires revealed three distinct subgroups: medicine students, dentistry students and pharmacy students. The questionnaires obtained from professionals were also divided into three subgroups: doctors who graduated from “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, dentists who graduated from UMF and medical professionals (doctors, chemists, biologists and researchers) who graduated from various universities.

The importance of foreign languages for the medical profession was equally emphasised by students and professionals. The main differences referred to the perception of the utility of undergraduate LSP courses: 27% more students considered them useful and very useful for their future careers compared to the professionals. Nonetheless, over 54% of healthcare professionals regarded their undergraduate language courses useful. Alternatively, most respondents in both

surveys found foreign languages essential for the medical profession, although a slight increase was observed in the case of professionals compared to students. Continuous learning and information sharing were the most prevalent situations in which foreign language knowledge proved its usefulness.

The similarities between the results of the two categories of respondents continued in their perception of the status of foreign languages needed by medical professionals. The dominance of English was emphasised by 97.5% of the students and by 98% of the professionals, thus confirming that English is the language of research and scientific progress. Developing oral communication skills and specialised vocabulary were noted by both categories as the most useful learning outcomes of their LSP classes. Some professionals felt that reading and writing skills were not sufficiently honed during their undergraduate training. Furthermore, most students and employees stated that undergraduate training programmes should include at least four semesters of language courses for specific purposes.

The results of these two studies confirm that the LSP courses offered by the Department of Modern Languages at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy meet the future professional needs of the students. However, the study revealed the need for continuous cooperation between language instructors and medical professionals in order to constantly correlate learning outcomes with the needs of medical professionals.

The originality of this doctoral thesis lies in the topic it covers, given the absence of research on “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy and its language policies in the medical field. Furthermore, since research concerning medical language policies is scarce, the thesis fills a gap in the field.