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Appears in:

ICERI2015 Proceedings
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Pages:

7993-7993(abstract only)

Publication year:

2015

ISBN: 978-84-608-2657-6

ISSN: 2340-1095

Conference name:

8th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation

Dates: 18-20 November, 2015

Location: Seville, Spain

Citation download:

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EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

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Currently, the knowledge of a foreign language in medicine is considered essential to get access to different kind of information, to communicate knowledge or diagnosis to foreign patients or to pursue an academic or scientific career. Nowadays, there are several ways to acquire foreign language skills, for instance by following a language course (private or incorporated in the university curricula) or by performing a stay in a foreign country. However, unfortunately, the acquisition of scientific terms is inadequate or incomplete due to a lack of teachers having an adequate scientific background and the lack of specific language courses focused on scientific terminology. For this reason, the aim of the present study was to develop a teaching strategy for the passive acquisition of histological terms in English and French for undergraduate Spanish medical students. In addition, we evaluated gender differences, the student perception for this type of activity and the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of the students for learning English and French as foreign languages.

This study was performed with voluntary medical students enrolled in human histology (first year) at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Granada (Spain). We developed histological tests with moderate to high difficulty in English (n=231), French (n=202) and Spanish (n=252). Furthermore, the students' perception and the type of motivation were determined through a voluntary survey as previously described.

In this study, medical students showed higher scores in the histological test in Spanish as compared to English and especially to French. Additionally, these differences were only significant when Spanish and English were compared to French. In this respect, the poor scores in French could be related to limited contact with this foreign language and a lack of knowledge of it, although Spanish and French have a Latin origin. Student perception results showed that a high percentage of students (71% English, 52% French) are in favour of performing this type of activity during their studies, which could improve their scientific knowledge and vocabulary in foreign languages. The motivational analysis showed that both genders are intrinsically motivated to learn both foreign languages, particularly in relation to leisure and travel. Both genders also showed a lower extrinsic motivation related to professional projects. The analysis of extrinsic motivation in both genders showed great motivation for learning both foreign languages and specially in order to obtain an official certification.

Finally, this study demonstrates that these medical students in both genders have a good English knowledge as compared to French. Additionally, due to the high intrinsic motivation of medical students, we hypothesize that the progressive use of this type of test in foreign languages could favour the passive acquisition of histological terminology with a positive impact on the knowledge of the subject matter. However, more studies are still needed in order to conclude the impact of this strategy.

keywords: language learning innovation, human histology, scientific terms acquisition, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, student perception.