Multimodal Pedagogy in Iranian Medical School:

Visual Literacy as an EMI Innovation in a General English Course for Medical Students

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1 BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Medical English courses are expected to build language proficiency while staying connected to students' emerging professional identities. A multimodal approach extends learning beyond written and spoken input through images, films, visual narratives, and discussion.

2 AIM

To explore how integrating **visual literacy** and multimodal materials into General English can support English-mediated learning, interpretation, discussion, and meaning-making.

3 EDUCATIONAL DESIGN / METHODS

- **Context:** General English course, Medical school
- **Participants: 120** Medical students
- **Duration:** 16 instructional sessions
- **Focus:** Visual literacy in an EMI-oriented English-learning environment
- **Resources:** Still images, photographs, visual prompts, documentary/film excerpts, discussion activities
- **Sequence:** Visual observation → verbal description → interpretation/inference → discussion → language development
- **Analysis:** Classroom-based qualitative evidence; thematic analysis

4 THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

Visual input
↓
What do you see?
↓
What do you see that makes you say that?
↓
What can't you see?
↓
Interpretation & inference
↓
English language production
↓
Medical / professional connection

Added question: "What can't you see but is related?" moves students from description toward inference and contextual reasoning.

5 KEY FINDINGS: FROM SEEING TO MEANING-MAKING

Visually modified medical materials *create* **Accessible entry points for English interaction** *students progress through*

- **Visual description** *uses* → Multimodal materials as prompts for discussion
- **Visual description** *produces* → More student-generated English
- **Interpretation & inference** *shown by* → Movement from observation to interpretation and inference
- **Meaning-making in English** *links to* → Language linked to medical / professional meaning
- **Meaning-making in English** *positions* → Language as a medium for thinking and meaning-making

6 DISCUSSION

Visual literacy can function not only as a supplementary technique but as a **bridge** between language learning and medical ways of observing, interpreting, and communicating. Visual prompts create meaningful communicative space without requiring highly technical medical terminology.

7 CONCLUSION

Integrating visual literacy into General English offers a **feasible multimodal pathway** linking English learning to students' developing professional perspectives. Students become observers, interpreters, and communicators rather than passive recipients of language input.

8 IMPLICATIONS

- Use structured visual prompts in medical English courses
- Use images and short film/documentary clips as catalysts for English discussion
- Progress from observation to evidence-based interpretation
- Connect visual meaning to clinical/professional contexts
- Treat English as a medium for thinking and communication

KEYWORDS: Medical English | EMI | Multimodal Pedagogy | Visual Literacy | Medical Education | General English

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