

Exploring Esp Needs of Undergraduate Nursing Students in A University In Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the English for specific Purposes (ESP) needs of nursing students in a university in Semarang, Indonesia. This study employed a descriptive qualitative design and involved a total of 116 undergraduate students recruited using purposive sampling. A self-administered questionnaire adopted from Chia, Johnson, Chia, & Olive (1999) was utilized. To meet the purpose of the study, some necessary adjustments were made to the questionnaire. This questionnaire was particularly aimed at gathering the students' views on (1) the importance of English language in students' studies and future careers, (2) basic skills needed in nursing English course and students' problems in English learning, and (3) suggestions for the development of English language curriculum. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with 10 students were also carried out to gather their perspectives related to the study. The collected data were descriptively analyzed and presented in the form of frequency and procentage. The results revealed that English was perceived as very important for students both in their academic studies and future careers. The students wanted basic English language skills to be included and emphasized in the course for a number of reasons, naming speaking as the most important skill to master. Limited vocabulary and poor grammar were two most highly rated problems the students perceived in their study. The students desired to have a combination of general English and specific nursing English throughout the study.

Keywords: ESP needs, English for nursing, needs analysis, nursing students

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the demand for non-native speakers of English who want to learn English in their particular domains is growing increasingly [1]. This happens worldwide including in Indonesia. As the first foreign language, English is thought to be the compulsory subjects at school curriculum [2]. At the university levels, English also receives a growing concern. It is not only taught for students of English department but also students across disciplines. English is deemed to be a crucial skill that should be mastered by students and staffs [3].

As an attempt to achieve more optimal outcomes, in the practice of English language teaching, the needs of students in different fields or disciplines have been increasingly investigated. Some studies revealed the high importance of English in related disciplines. However, some studies also indicated that the English courses at universities were not able to fulfill the students' expectations, such as in Aliakbari and Boghayeri [4], Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive [5], and Mazdayasna and Tahririan [6]. These findings lead to a further discussion and

development for the practice of English teaching to meet the needs of the students in specific areas of study.

The practice of teaching English to different fields of science is known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It is defined as an applied English language teaching as the content and aims of the course are determined by the needs of a specific group of learners. ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners, makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the specialism it serves, and focuses not only on the language (grammar, lexis, register) but also the skills, discourses, and genres appropriate to those activities [7]. Hutchinson and Waters [8] point out that ESP is “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to contents and methods are based on the learner’s reason for learning.” In ESP, learner’s needs are often described in terms of performance that is in terms of what the learners will be able to do with the language at the end of a course study [9]. ESP differs from general English as it broadens one’s knowledge about the specific subject matter by offering intensively specialized vocabulary, for example, that in turn prepares learners to use the language in their future professions [10].

English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) is one of the sub-branches of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ENP targets audiences who are non-English speaking student nurses who need career-specific language, i.e., the language which is useful for their work-related duties. It depicts skills and competency level beyond that of general English [11]. English for nursing focusses on the specific ways in which nurses use English both in the clinical setting as well as in nursing education [12].

The teaching of English for nursing students has been practiced for years. Meeting the students’ specific needs using underlying methodologies and activities of the discipline and focusing on the language appropriate to these activities should be the main concerns of this teaching practice [4]. However, there can be a mismatch between what the students need and what the course offers. Mazdayasna and Tahririan [6] analyzed the English needs of undergraduate medical science students studying in the faculties of nursing and midwifery using questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that ESP courses provided were not as effective as it was supposed to be and did not meet the learners’ needs. They concluded that most of the ESP courses in Iran were conducted without consultation with specialists and without assessing the learners’ needs. Liu, Chang, Yang, and Sun [13] also reported discrepancies between students’ perceptions of needs and the actual courses they took. Similarly, Aliakbari and Boghayeri [4] also found some dissatisfaction of the learners towards the English course given, particularly with the textbooks, the pertinent topics, and length of the courses. They argued that there has been no empirical investigation of the communicative needs of health professionals in the workplace in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, teaching English for medical purposes is far from satisfactory in terms of customizing ESP courses by using the language situation at the workplace as the input to feed ESP courses. Based on the results of the study, they concluded that some revisions of the current programs seemed to be necessary to offer more effective ESP courses for the students [4].

In the practice of ESP teaching, in order to determine learners’ needs as a basis for developing ESP programs, a need analysis is then required. Brown [14] identifies the term ‘needs analysis’ (also called needs assessment) as the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum which meets the learning needs of a particular group of students. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) in Alharby [15] defines needs analysis as a systematic set of procedures undertaken to set priorities and making decisions about programs or organizational improvement and allocation of resources. According to this

definition, needs analysis should fill the “gap” of needs between the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs [15]. Moreover, Basturkmen [16] mentions that needs analysis is the identification of language and skills are used in determining and refining the contents of a course, such as English for a specific course.

So far, there have been many studies on the use of needs analysis in ESP contexts, such as in medical science [5], chemistry [17], engineering [18], transportation science [1], architects [4], business and public administration [10], maritime science [19], and nursing and midwifery [20], [6], [21], [2], [22], [23]. These studies urge the practice of needs analysis to identify student needs in different disciplines where the ESP course is given since many revealed unmet findings between the needs and the courses given.

In Indonesia, the demand for English language teaching has been increasing both in private sectors and informal institutions. However, this situation has not invoked sufficient research in ESP [4]. Furthermore, the studies focusing on the English needs of nursing students are also still limited. Referencing to Hutchinson and Waters [8] that learners’ needs and interests have a powerful relationship in regard to motivation in learning English, it is then necessary to conduct a study to investigate the needs of ESP courses, especially English for Nursing Purposes; therefore, the English course developed can be more relevant to the students’ demands and goals. This study aimed to investigate the ESP needs of undergraduate nursing students in a public university in Indonesia. In particular, the study aimed to find out the students’ perceptions on (1) the importance of English language in students’ studies and future careers, (2) basic English skills needed in the nursing English course and their problems, and (3) suggestions for the development of an English language curriculum.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to describe the ESP needs of nursing students. A total of 116 undergraduate nursing students recruited by purposive sampling technique participated in the study. A self-administered questionnaire adopted from Chia, Johnson, Chia, & Olive [5] was utilized. The questionnaire was modified to meet the purpose of the study. The newly modified questionnaire was reviewed, back-to-back translated, piloted and revised for this study. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section described the demographic profile of the participants; the second described the participants’ perceptions of English in college and professional careers, and the third described the perceived language skill needs and problems; the fourth explored the opinions of students concerning their language demands, attitudes towards language instruction, length of the course as well as the content, syllabus, and methodology of the specialized English course. The questionnaire was then distributed to the students to have their responses. In addition to the data from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with randomly selected students (n=10) were also conducted to gain their views on ESP needs. The collected data from the questionnaire were descriptively analyzed and presented in the form of frequency and percentage. Meanwhile, the results of interviews were also described to support the findings.

This study was approved by the school where the study took place. The participants were informed and gave consent for their voluntary participation. Their identities were kept confidential. They had the freedom to withdraw from the study anytime without any negative consequences.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Students

The majority of students in this study ($n = 102$) were female (87.9%). Most of them were of age 22-24 years old (72.4%), and the rest were between 19-21 years old (27.59%). All students (100%) had experiences of learning English language previously either started in elementary school or junior high school.

Importance of English for students' studies and future careers

Question (Q) 1-2 described the importance of English for students' studies and future careers. Of the total number of respondents, the majority ($n=95$; 81.90%) mentioned that English was very important. The remaining 19 (16.38%) and 2 (1.72%) mentioned that English was important and quite important, respectively. In terms of the perceptions of English for future careers, 91 (78.45%) and 24 (20.69%) of respondents stated that English was very important and important, respectively. Only 1 respondent (0.86%) mentioned that English was quite important for his future career.

Perceived English language skills for nursing students and their problems

Questions 3-10 in this study captured the students' perceptions about which of the skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing, was the most important skill for study and future careers, and the problems that the students faced in learning English. It was revealed that the majority of respondents (49.14%) perceived speaking as the most important skill for study and career. Next, the students viewed writing (22.14%), listening (16.38%), and reading (12.07%) as the other important skills after speaking.

Regarding the teaching of English skills within the course, the students reported that listening should be included in the language program for the reasons of understanding daily conversation (87.07%), understanding lectures (6.03%), understanding radio and TV programs (3.45%), and others (3.45%). Meanwhile, reading should be included for the reasons of understanding professional journals (81.03%), reading textbooks (9.48%), reading English newspapers and magazines (5.17%), and others (4.31%). As for speaking, students perceived that carrying out daily conversations (79.31%) and presenting reports in front of the class were the most dominant reasons for including speaking in the course. In terms of writing, the students perceived that they needed to learn writing in order to write correct sentences (37.93), to write various texts (31.03%), to write research reports (18.97%) and to write for practical purposes (12.07%).

In their future career, the majority of students perceived that understanding English textbooks and journals (40.52%), understanding lectures in class (19.83%), presenting reports (15.52%), carrying out daily conversations (16.38%), as well as writing research reports (7.76%) were the most dominant English skills the students needed to gain success in their future careers in nursing.

Regarding the English language problems as perceived by the students, limited vocabulary (39.66%), poor grammar (32.76%), limited skill of speaking (18.96%), poor listening comprehension (6.89%) and poor writing skill (5.17) were rated highest as the problems the students faced in their study.

English language curriculum, course contents and materials

Most students (81.03%), in response to Q11, believed that the materials they learn in English course should be relevant to their study. Regarding the amount of the materials (Q12), 48.28% of stated that 70-89% of the English materials should be relevant to their discipline, while

30.17% believed that the relevancy should be 50-69%. The remaining 12.07% and 9.48% mentioned that the relevancy should be 90-100% and 30-49%, respectively.

Furthermore, when asked about the curriculum design (Q13), the most suitable design perceived by the students (44.83%) was general English in the first semester, and English for nursing in semester two to eight. Another alternative was general English in the first semester, and English for nursing in semester two and three, as indicated by 27.58% of respondents.

Table 1. Perceived Language Curriculum Design

Type of course design	<i>f</i>	%
General English in 1 st and 2 nd semester, no English for nursing.	2	1.72
General English in 1 st semester and English for nursing in 2 nd semester	22	18.97
English for nursing in 1 st and 2 nd semester with no general English.	8	6.89
General English in 1 st semester and English for nursing in 2 nd and 3 rd semester	32	27.59
General English in 1 st semester and English for nursing in 2 nd to 8 th semester	52	44.84

RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

Ten students were randomly selected for interviews after they completed the questionnaires and expressed availability for interviews. This number was chosen considering the time constraints in the data collection. Three questions, i.e., the importance of English for nursing students, the most important English language skill for nursing students, and the problems that most nursing students encountered in learning English were given to the students. These questions were quite similar to those stated in the questionnaire. However, it was expected that more detailed information was gained from the students.

In response, all respondents (100%) perceived English as very important for both study and future career. It was one of the reasons why the students had more motivation to learn English in their school. For them, mastering English is crucial to help achieving better future and career. Two students also mentioned that they wanted to work abroad as nurses where English served as the medium of communication. To achieve the dream, they had to learn and master English so that they would not any problems in terms of communication.

Similar to the results of questionnaire, most students (83.33%) perceived speaking as the most important skill for nursing students. It was for a reason that nurse students had to communicate a lot with the patients in performing their duty in delivering care. The nurses should do some assessment to the patients and carrying out interventions as a part of nursing process. These duties required nurses to have excellent communication skills, and speaking played a vital role in this context.

The third question in the interview elicited students' problems in learning English. The majority of students (83.33%) found poor grammar and limited vocabulary as the two main problems in their learning. The rest (16.67%) experienced a difficulty in speaking as the main problem.

DISCUSSION

This study describes a needs analysis conducted to investigate the ESP needs of undergraduate nursing students in a public university in Indonesia. The learners' needs were assessed through questionnaires and interviews. A total of 116 students participated in the study; ten of

whom were randomly selected for interviews. The demographic data revealed that the majority of students were females and aged of 22-24 years old.

Importance of English for nursing students

The first part of this study addressed the views and perceptions of students regarding the ESP needs. The findings revealed that the majority of students (81.90%) considered English as very important, whereas the remaining viewed English as important and quite important (16.38% and 1.72%). Results of interviews also indicated that English is considered very important for nursing students. These results are congruent with the findings by Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive [5], Pongsapan, Wello, and Jabu [2], and Rostami and Zafarghandi [17] which emphasizes the importance of nursing English. Mastering English for nursing students is important since using English, students can do and access many things more easily such as reading books, browsing internets to learn nursing topics and materials, and practicing competence-based tests as required for registered-nurse testing, where English is utilized.

Along with the era of globalization nowadays, the demand for non-native speakers of English who want to learn English in their particular domains is growing increasingly [1], and this also occurs in the nursing context. Thus, it is no wonder that English has been the compulsory subjects at school curriculum [5]. Similarly, at the university levels, English also receives a growing concern since it is not only taught for students of English department but also students across disciplines. English is deemed to be a crucial skill that should be mastered by students and staffs [3].

Perceived English language skills for nursing students and their problems

The second part of the study captured the students' perceptions of the most important skill for study and future careers and the students' problems in learning English. It was found out that the majority of respondents (49.14%) perceived speaking as the most important skill for study and career. Interestingly, a similar finding is also indicated in the interview results where 83.33% of students perceived speaking as the most important skill. The fact that nurses have to communicate a lot with the patients in performing their duty in delivering care is associated with this finding. Similarly, studies by Gass [20], Pongsapan, Wello, and Jabu [2], and Saragih [22] also revealed that speaking is the most important skill for nursing students. However, this finding is in contrast with a study by Chia, Johnson, Chia, & Olive [5] which found the reading was the most important skill for students of medical studies.

In this study, speaking is mostly needed since in their study and career, nursing students have to communicate a lot with the patients in performing their duty in the delivery of nursing care. The nurses should do some assessment to the patients and carrying out interventions as a part of nursing process. These duties require nurses to have excellent communication skills, and speaking plays a vital role in this context. Nurses also need to communicate so they can find out about the people in their care by taking a nursing history, give them information about their care and teach them about managing their illness [25]. Some informational skills such interviewing techniques, giving instructions, asking for cooperation, checking readiness, explaining medical information in language that is easy to understand, explaining procedures, asking for permission, giving feedback, understanding colloquial language, and teaching techniques are also required by the nurses and need excellent speaking skill [26].

With regard to the teaching of English skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) within the course, it was indicated that nursing students reported the need of all four language skills to be included in the language program for a number of reasons. Students learn and develop listening skill to understand daily conversation, lectures, and radio and TV programs. They also

learn reading to comprehend journals, read textbooks, and read English newspapers and magazines, and learn speaking skill to carry out daily conversations and present reports in front of the class. Furthermore, they learn writing to write correct sentences, write various texts, research reports and write for practical purposes. All these four skills are needed by the students to perform optimally in their study and future career. This is in line with the concept of ESP which is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners, makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the specialism it serves, and focuses not only on the language (grammar, lexis, register) but also the skills, discourses, and genres appropriate to those activities [7]. English for nursing targets audiences who need career-specific language, i.e., the language which is useful for their work-related duties [11].

The problems of nursing students in learning English are associated with limited vocabulary, poor grammar, limited skill of speaking, poor listening comprehension, and poor writing skill. These findings are relevant with studies by Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive [5], Gass [20], Susandi and Krishnawati [27], and Rostami and Zafarghandi [17]. Limited vocabulary and poor grammar are the most dominant problems of nursing students. Therefore, it is expected that the ESP nursing course should give more concern on these two issues. Having to use the vocabulary and structures taught in meaningful situations that relate to the students' discipline will reinforce what is learned and raises their motivation [10]. It is expected that these problems can be minimized to help students achieve more success in their study.

English language curriculum, course contents and materials

Most students (81.03%) believed that the materials they learn in English course should be relevant to their study. The material relevance with a range of 70-89% was mostly perceived by the majority of students (48.28%). It is expected that by learning materials which are relevant to the discipline, students can relate what they have got in nursing courses with that in the English course. As a result, the learning can be more meaningful since students learn what they have been exposed to. This concept of relevancy is an important aspect of ESP courses as proposed by Dudley-Evans [7]. ESP programs are meant to equip learners with the required information and skills in their target subjects; they are designed for tertiary level students who aim to learn English for particular purposes (Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012 as cited in Albassri [10]).

Regarding the curriculum design, most students (44.83%) perceived that general English in the first semester and English for nursing in semester two to eight was the most suitable. Another alternative was general English in the first semester, and English for nursing in semester two and three, as indicated by 27.58% of respondents. This finding implies that a combination of general English and discipline specific English is necessary for students as indicated in Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive [5].

ESP nursing courses differ from general English since they broaden someone's knowledge about the specific subject matter by offering intensively specialized vocabulary that in turn prepares learners to use the language in their future professions. The learners in an ESP course will frequently know more about the technical aspects of the subjects [10]. On the other hand, General English prepares students for the kind of English they will need in everyday situations. It emphasizes the development of communication skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are also taken into account [28]. The present finding indicates that a combination of general English and specific English for nursing students is necessary. It is expected that the curriculum designers could refer to this evidence for the improvement of nursing curricula.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed an evidence that English is highly important for nursing students for their current study and future careers. The students needed English for a number of purposes such as understanding journals, understanding lectures in class, presenting reports, carrying out daily conversations, writing research reports, and so on. They also wanted to learn basic English course and specific nursing English course in their study. A combination of English in the first semester and English for nursing in semester two to eight was mostly preferred by the students. Regarding the English language problems as perceived by the students, limited vocabulary, poor grammar, limited skill of speaking, poor listening comprehension, and poor writing skill were rated highest as the problems the students faced in their study. This study can be a reference for English teachers or subject-specific teachers to reconsider their teaching practice by taking into account the students' needs and expectations in their study.

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