

ASSESSING SPECIFIC LANGUAGE NEEDS OF NURSING STUDENTS: LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication is essential for safe and compassionate nursing care, yet language proficiency remains a persistent challenge for many nursing students. As healthcare settings grow increasingly complex and interdisciplinary, the ability to navigate both academic and clinical discourse becomes essential. This study explores the specific language needs of nursing students through interviews with English nursing lecturers. The research finding highlights three key areas of language proficiency: communication skills in clinical settings, academic language skills, and terminology proficiency. Lecturers emphasized the necessity for nursing students to master medical vocabulary to enhance patient interactions and interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, the ability to critically engage with academic literature is essential for evidence-based practice, a cornerstone of modern nursing. The study also reveals the importance of practical applications of language skills, particularly through simulation exercises and role-playing, which foster confidence and fluency in clinical communication. By identifying these specific language needs, the research aims to inform curriculum development and instructional strategies, primarily enhancing the preparation of nursing students for their professional roles in a complex healthcare environment. This study underscores the need for targeted language learning to equip future nurses with the skills necessary to provide high-quality patient care.

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Lecturers' Perspective, Need Analysis,

INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency is crucial in nursing practice, as effective communication has a direct impact on patient care, safety, and satisfaction (Ali & Johnson, 2017). Nurses are often the first contact for patients, making their ability to communicate clearly and accurately essential for successful healthcare delivery. Research indicates that by providing students with resources and support to improve their language proficiency, nursing programs can help bridge the gap between healthcare providers and patients who speak different languages, ultimately improving the quality of care and patient outcomes (Ali & Watson, 2018). Furthermore, as healthcare settings become increasingly diverse, the demand for

nurses who can navigate multilingual environments is more pressing than ever (Kwame & Petrucka, 2020).

English has become the predominant language of instruction in nursing programs worldwide, necessitating that students develop proficiency in medical terminology and patient communication. Studies have shown that nursing students who are not proficient in English may struggle with understanding complex medical concepts and effectively interacting with patients (Hull, 2016). This linguistic challenge can hinder their academic performance and clinical practice, underscoring the importance of integrating language education into nursing curricula to ensure that all students can meet the demands of their future roles.

Nursing students often face significant challenges related to language proficiency, particularly in clinical settings where effective communication is crucial. Research has documented that students who speak English as a second language (ESL) frequently encounter difficulties in understanding medical terms and engaging with patients, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Giang, 2025). These emotional and psychological impacts can further exacerbate the challenges of language acquisition, making it essential for nursing programs to provide targeted support and resources to help students overcome these barriers (Ali & Watson, 2018).

While there is a growing body of literature addressing language needs in nursing education, significant gaps remain, particularly regarding the perspectives of nursing students and lecturers themselves. Most existing studies have focused on the experiences of healthcare providers or patients, leaving a void in understanding how nursing students perceive their language needs and the challenges they face (Starkey, 2015). This lack of student-centered research limits the ability of nursing programs to develop effective language training that addresses the specific needs of their students, highlighting the necessity for further investigation in this area (Yudha & Mahardika, 2014).

Adopting a student-centered approach to identifying language needs is crucial for developing effective nursing curricula. By incorporating the voices of nursing students and lecturers, educators can gain valuable insights into the specific language skills required for success in clinical practice (Calma et al., 2019).

Research has shown that when students are actively involved in the curriculum development process, they are more likely to engage with the material and feel empowered in their learning, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes (Repsha et al., 2020).

Identifying language needs in nursing programs has significant implications for curriculum design. Developing language instruction to meet the specific needs of nursing students can enhance their communication skills and better prepare them for real-world clinical situations (Huang et al., 2022). Studies suggest that integrating language training with clinical education not only improves students' language proficiency but also fosters their confidence and competence in providing patient care (Fox et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this research addresses a critical gap in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) literature by focusing on the underexplored perspectives of nursing lecturers in Indonesia, particularly within the context of STIKes YARSI Pontianak. While many existing studies emphasize student perceptions or generic language needs, few delve into the pedagogical insights of subject-matter experts who directly shape and assess students' communicative competence. The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative, lecturer-centered approach to English needs analysis, which captures expectations for both academic and clinical language use. By foregrounding the voices of nursing educators, this research offers a more holistic and context-sensitive foundation for curriculum design. Its findings are especially timely and important, as they inform the development of targeted, locally relevant English course materials that align with the linguistic demands of evidence-based practice, interdisciplinary collaboration, and patient-centered care in Indonesia's evolving healthcare landscape. Therefore, a comprehensive English needs analysis interview of lecturers at the Nursing Study Program at STIKes YARSI Pontianak is crucial to developing suitable course materials designed to their specific academic and professional requirements.

METHOD

Research Design

The use of a qualitative descriptive research approach was essential for capturing context-specific language needs of nursing students as perceived by their lecturers. This method allows for rich, detailed insights that quantitative tools alone may overlook, particularly when exploring complex educational phenomena such as language proficiency in clinical and academic settings. In-depth interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method because they enable participants to articulate their experiences, expectations, and pedagogical concerns in their own words. This aligns with the initial phase of the Dick, Carey & Carey (2005) Instructional Development Model, which emphasizes the importance of thorough needs analysis to inform instructional design. By engaging nursing lecturers directly, the study ensures that curriculum development is grounded in authentic, practice-informed perspectives, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of future English language instruction for nursing students.

Research Participants

The number of participants in this study was three lecturers within the Nursing Study Program at STIKes YARSI Pontianak, during the academic year 2024/2025.

Data Collection

This study aims to explore the language requirements for academic purposes by conducting interviews with participants. The interview sheets have been carefully designed to focus on specific topics that are crucial for understanding academic English language needs. Through a structured methodology, researchers analyzed and interpreted the data collected during these interviews, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Data Analysis

The methodology employed in this study utilized qualitative analysis techniques to examine the collected data descriptively. The selection of these methods was guided by the research objectives, which aimed to categorize the aspects of interview items about assessment preferences. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions at hand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed three essential domains of English language proficiency required by nursing students, as identified through in-depth interviews with nursing lecturers: communication skills in clinical settings, academic language skills, and terminology proficiency. Lecturers emphasized that effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is critical for patient safety, interdisciplinary collaboration, and culturally competent care. These skills are best cultivated through simulation, role-play, and real-world practice. Academic language proficiency was also highlighted as vital, enabling students to engage with research literature, produce scholarly work, and participate meaningfully in academic discourse. This competency supports evidence-based practice and professional development. Additionally, terminology proficiency emerged as a foundational skill, with lecturers noting that mastery of medical vocabulary enhances clarity in patient interactions and teamwork among healthcare professionals. The integration of technology, such as interactive glossaries and digital platforms, was identified as a valuable tool for reinforcing these competencies. Collectively, these results respond directly to the research questions by identifying the specific linguistic demands nursing students face and the pedagogical strategies that can effectively support their development. The study provides a basis for designing targeted English language instruction aligned with the realities of nursing education and clinical practice.

Communication Skills in Clinical Settings

Lecturers highlighted the vital role of effective communication in clinical environments, emphasizing its critical role in ensuring patient safety and delivering high-quality care. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies effective communication as a cornerstone of patient safety and quality care. In high-pressure situations, such as emergency rooms, where every second counts, the ability to convey information clearly and empathetically can make all the difference in patient outcomes (Oliveira, 2024). Effective communication also encompasses not only verbal exchanges but also non-verbal cues, active listening, and the ability to interpret patients' needs and emotions. Research by Shin et al. (2025) indicates that

patient satisfaction increases when healthcare providers exhibit strong communication skills. Patients who feel heard and understood are more likely to participate actively in their care, follow treatment plans, and report a better overall experience. This connection underscores the need for nursing students to cultivate these essential skills.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is another key aspect of effective communication that emerged from the interviews. Lecturers noted that clear and respectful communication among healthcare professionals can reduce medical errors and improves patient outcomes. Studies, including those by Albaharna et al. (2024) reveal that when healthcare providers communicate effectively, patient outcomes improve, and medical errors decrease. For example, during shift changes, clear communication between nurses and doctors ensures that everyone is on the same page, preventing potentially dangerous misunderstandings. Moreover, fostering a culture of collaboration among healthcare professionals is vital (Osman, 2025). When team members communicate openly and respectfully, it not only enhances patient care but also creates a supportive work environment. This is especially important in complex cases that require input from various specialties, where teamwork can lead to innovative solutions and better patient outcomes.

Finally, the interviews underscored the necessity of cultural competence in communication. As healthcare becomes increasingly diverse, training nursing students to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is essential. Misunderstandings due to cultural differences can negatively impact patient-provider relationships, leading to suboptimal care (Ho & Oh, 2022). Incorporating cultural competence training into nursing curricula can help future nurses navigate these challenges, ensuring that they can connect with patients from all backgrounds (Rahimi et al., 2023). In summary, the importance of powerful communication skills in nursing education cannot be overstated. Developing these skills not only enhances patient interactions but also cultivates a collaborative environment among healthcare teams. As healthcare becomes increasingly complex, equipping nursing students with the tools for effective communication will be crucial for improving patient outcomes and ensuring safety in clinical practice.

Academic Language Skills

The importance of academic language skills for nursing students came through loud and clear in discussions with lecturers. It's not just about having a good grasp of medical jargon; it's about being able to understand and produce research papers, case studies, and reports that are crucial for success in both academia and the nursing profession. As Jefferies et al. (2018) point out, strong academic skills are essential for participating in discussions and presentation activities that are integral to nursing education. When students can express their ideas clearly, they become more engaged learners and can collaborate effectively with their peers. Moreover, being able to critically analyze academic literature is essential for practicing evidence-based nursing, which is a key component of modern healthcare (Garone & Van de Craen, 2017). This skill allows nurses to sift through research, understand what it means for their practice, and apply it to improve patient care. In a field that is constantly evolving, staying updated with the latest evidence is crucial for providing the best possible care.

Lecturers also emphasized the importance of applying language skills in real-world settings. They pointed out that simulation exercises, which mimic actual clinical scenarios, are invaluable for practicing language use in context. Research by Albaharna et al. (2024) backs this up, showing that simulation-based learning helps students build confidence and fluency in clinical communication. Imagine a nursing student practicing how to explain a treatment plan to a patient in a simulated environment-these experiences bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life practice. Role-playing and peer interactions further enhance this learning process (Ishak & Abdul Aziz, 2022; MacLean et al., 2017). By engaging in these activities, students can practice different communication styles relevant to nursing, whether it's delivering patient education or working collaboratively with a healthcare team. This creates a supportive environment where students can receive helpful feedback and refine their skills.

Incorporating technology into language training also offers exciting opportunities mentioned by lecturers. Online platforms that facilitate collaborative writing, peer reviews, and discussion forums can provide additional opportunities for nursing students to practice their academic language in a digital environment

(Massey et al., 2019; Munangatire & Indjamba, 2023). This not only prepares them for the writing demands they'll face in their careers but also equips them with the communication skills necessary for a tech-savvy healthcare environment. In summary, developing strong academic language skills is crucial for nursing students as they prepare for their future roles. By focusing on writing proficiency, critical analysis of research, and practical application through simulations and role-playing, nursing education can empower students to succeed academically and professionally. This investment in language skills ultimately leads to better patient care and a more effective nursing workforce in an increasingly complex healthcare environment.

Terminology Proficiency

Based on the interview results, several key points emerged regarding the academic language needs of nursing students. Lecturers emphasized that academic language proficiency goes beyond understanding medical terminology. It involves the ability to read, interpret, and produce scholarly texts such as research papers, case studies, and clinical reports. Mastering this specialized vocabulary is not just about passing exams; it's about ensuring that nurses can provide safe and effective patient care. As noted in a study by Kwame & Petrucka (2021) many nursing students struggle with the complex language related to anatomy, pharmacology, and clinical procedures. These difficulties can create barriers in real-life clinical settings, where clear communication is crucial. Moreover, proficiency in medical terminology enhances both written and verbal communication, thereby facilitating better interactions with patients and colleagues (Hull, 2016). For instance, when nurses use appropriate medical language, they can explain diagnoses and treatment options more clearly to patients, fostering understanding and compliance. Furthermore, effective communication among healthcare professionals is crucial for teamwork and coordinated care. Misunderstandings stemming from unclear terminology can lead to errors, negatively impacting patient safety (Fox et al., 2020).

Lecturers also stressed the importance of contextualizing academic language through practical application. Simulation exercises, role-playing, and peer interactions were identified as effective strategies for helping students practice and

refine their communication in realistic scenarios. These activities not only build fluency and confidence but also bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and clinical practice. Research shows that familiarity with medical language is closely linked to better clinical performance. According to Starkey (2015) Nursing students who are comfortable using medical terminology tend to engage more confidently in critical thinking and decision-making processes. They can read and interpret medical literature, participate in discussions, and contribute effectively to patient care plans. This proficiency not only boosts their self-confidence but also builds their reputation among peers and mentors (Sartain et al., 2021). This could also involve immersive learning experiences like case studies, where students can practice using medical terms in real-life scenarios (Maghsoodi et al., 2025).

Using technology can enhance this learning process. Interactive glossaries and mobile apps can make it easier and more enjoyable for students to familiarize themselves with medical terms (O'Connor & Andrews, 2018). Visual aids and mnemonics can also help students remember complex vocabulary, making it more accessible when they need to recall it in clinical situations (Armour et al., 2025). By emphasizing this training within Nursing English programs, educational institutions can better prepare nursing students for the realities of clinical practice. This preparation leads to improved patient outcomes and a more compassionate healthcare experience for everyone involved. Therefore, the integration of technology was seen as a valuable tool for enhancing academic language development. Online platforms that support collaborative writing, peer feedback, and discussion forums were noted as beneficial for preparing students to meet the communication demands of modern, digitally integrated healthcare environments. Overall, the interviews underscored that strong academic language skills are foundational to both academic success and professional competence in nursing.

CONCLUSION

The insights gained from the lecturers' interviews reveal critical areas for focusing Nursing English programs. By addressing the specific language needs of nursing students, educational institutions can significantly enhance the preparedness of future nursing professionals. This, in turn, can lead to improved patient care and outcomes in the healthcare sector, reinforcing the vital role of

effective communication and language proficiency in nursing practice. Fundamentally, the study provides a strong foundation for designing targeted English language instruction that aligns with the real-world demands of nursing education and practice. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its focus on a single institution and the exclusive use of lecturer interviews, which may not capture the full range of student experiences. Future research could expand to multiple sites, include student perspectives, and explore the impact of designed language instruction on clinical performance and academic success.

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