

Chapter 22

Nursing as a Global Career: Meeting the Challenges of the Profession from a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In today's global environment, the nursing profession is regarded as a noble, challenging and competitive profession. Malaysian trained nurses are highly in demand due to their training and on-going efforts are made to ensure that the standards are well-maintained. This paper describes a part of a larger study. It reports the findings of a study pertaining to the needs of English language communication skills for nurses in a private hospital in Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia. The study focused on the needs of English language communication skills at the workplace. These skills were written and spoken English communication, reading, listening, and interpersonal communication. By identifying these communicative competency needs, the study has given insights into helping the nurses to increase their work performance, meet their work demands and help the employability of the nurses globally.

INTRODUCTION

English language communication skills are core nursing skills for nurses in today's globalized society in Malaysia. Building a traditional trusting relationship with patients is based on good communication skills, which include both verbal and nonverbal skills, such as respect, care, and concern (Jones, 2012; Chapman, O'Connor, & Francis, 2007). Effective communication skills help nurses alleviate symptoms,

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restore health, and reduce the risk of medical incidents in patients while improving their own job satisfaction (Rosenweig et al., 2007). They also provide a foundation for the development of the nursing profession and contribute to facilitating multidisciplinary collaboration with other members of the health care team (Zick et al., 2007). Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a course that is designed to meet the learning needs of a particular group of learners. Its central framework lies in the learners' purposes of acquiring the language skills and thus, needs analysis is an essential first step in designing the course. Freihat and Al-Makhzoomi (2012) report a need analysis conducted on twenty first-year undergraduates of a degree nursing program in Jordan. They proposed an English communication program that incorporates the learning needs of the undergraduates. On the other hand, needs analysis should also be conducted for the in-service nurses in order to find out which communicative skills that they are still lacking which needs to be improved. This is summarized nicely by Woloshin et al. (1997, as cited in Yeo, 2004, p.59) who claimed that language is the vehicle through which patients access information about health services, and also about their health situations and make decision accordingly. Moreover, Kale and Kumar (2012) emphasize that misunderstandings and difficulties can occur as a result of poor communication of the nurses. These include: 1) problems with giving preventive health information and in getting informed consent; 2) difficulties with involving patients in their treatment and decision making; 3) inadequate comprehension of diagnosis and treatment; 4) increased risk of misdiagnosis; and 5) inappropriate treatment or lack of treatment, among others. This paper reviews the needs of English language communication skills of nurses in a private hospital in Johor Bahru, Malaysia and describes the work expectation particularly the communicative needs of these nurses to meet the challenging global demand of the profession.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs analysis is fundamental in designing any ESP course. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) claim that, the foundation of ESP is to address the language needed by learners and the learning context. There are a few main models that are commonly used as the basis for needs analysis (Al Harby, 2005; Waidarp, 2011). They are: 1) Target Situation Analysis (TSA); 2) Present Situation Analysis (PSA); 3) Learning-Centred approach; 4) Strategy Analysis approach, and 5) the Means Analysis. The Strategy Analysis approach and the Means Analysis are seen as transformations of Target-Situation Analysis and Present-Situation Analysis (Jordan, 1994 as cited in Al Harby, 2005). Apart from these, there are also several others including Lack Analysis, Linguistic Analysis, Subjective Need Analysis Pedagogic Need Analysis, Constraint Need Analysis (Lowe, 2009; Miyake & Tremarco, 2005).

This literature will discuss the first two models only as they serve the theoretical base of the study. The first model (the TSA Model) was developed by Munby which focuses on communicative competence (Al Harby, 2005). Communicative activities and relationship to the communicative events for the intended situation are reflective of the authentic use of language in the real world (West, 1994 as cited in Al Harby, 2005, p. 16). This model has become the main reference in ESP despite some criticisms of its limitations.

The second important model is PSA. It was proposed by Richterich and Chancerel (1983). In this model, the information is gathered from a variety of sources namely, the students, the teaching establishment, and the place of work to describe the needs (Jordan, 1994 as cited in Al Harby, 2005, p. 18). Due to its multiple data sources, it is able to provide detailed guidelines about information to be included.

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