

English Language Learning Needs and Perceptions among Nursing Students

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Abstract

Objective: English is increasingly used in the global nursing field, requiring nurses to possess strong English proficiency. The shift from general English instruction to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in nursing, emphasizes the need for language skills tailored to clinical settings. Despite efforts by the Indonesian government to support nurse migration abroad, only 5% of nursing graduates work internationally (BNP2TKI, 2019). One major barrier is limited foreign language proficiency. This study aims to explore the English learning needs and perceptions of nursing students to better align language education with professional requirements.

Method: A descriptive quantitative cross-sectional design was used, involving 114 nursing students. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire assessing needs in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Univariate analysis was conducted to describe frequencies and averages.

Results: Participants' average age was 20.21 years (SD \pm 1.05), with most under 20 (74.5%) and in their second year of study (69.3%). The majority were enrolled in the bachelor's nursing program (67.5%) and had graduated from senior high school (69.3%). Among the four skills, reading showed the highest learning need (mean = 31.71, SD \pm 3.79), while listening had the lowest (mean = 17.22, SD \pm 2.46). There was no significant relationship between demographic variables (age, grade, major, high school background) and total English learning needs.

Conclusion: Nursing students require focused English support, particularly in listening skills. Curriculum development should prioritize these needs, as demographic factors do not significantly influence language skill gaps.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Nursing Students, Language Needs, Listening Skills, Nursing Education

INTRODUCTION

The foreign language proficiency of nurses is a major issue today in facing globalization and the 5.0 Industrial Revolution. English in the field of nursing contains terms that are more complex compared to general English because it is related to medical language, which is not widely understood by the general public. Additionally, the variation and meaning of English terms in the nursing field are very complex and general,

requiring special understanding because they are related to practical applications in the workplace (Ayu, 2018).

Several issues that often arise in exploring international cooperation include language, recognition, competence, and certification. The foreign language proficiency of nurses is a major issue. English in the field of nursing contains terms that are more complex than general

English because it is related to medical language, which is not widely understood by the general public. Additionally, the variation and meaning of English terms in the nursing field are very complex and general, requiring special understanding as they relate to practical applications in the workplace. Therefore, efforts are needed by nursing education institutions to improve the foreign language competence, especially English, among nurses.

In general, the availability of nurses in Indonesia is already sufficient to meet the population's needs, with a ratio above the national target, reaching 2.46 per 1,000 population. The number of nurses registered and holding STR (Surat Tanda Registrasi) by the end of 2020 was 985,889. Based on projected nursing workforce needs, it is estimated that by 2025, Indonesia will experience a surplus of 695,217 nurses. Data from BNP2TKI (National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers) in 2019 indicated that only 5 percent of nursing graduates work abroad, while 60 percent work domestically, out of a total of 15,431 nursing graduates. The Ministry of Health has undertaken strategic efforts to utilize healthcare workers for both domestic and international markets. The government has made various efforts to address this by facilitating the migration of Indonesian nurses abroad. During the period from 2015-2020, 6,393 nurses were placed abroad, either as nurses or as nurse assistants or careworkers in elderly care institutions (Kurniati et al., 2020).

To design learning that helps nursing students understand medical jargon related to English and information on medical lists, there is a need to analyze the needs and perceptions of nursing students about how to use and learn this language for education and work-related tasks. Learning that employs a student-centered approach (Student Centered Learning or SCL) aims to meet the language learning needs of specific learner groups (Nurrochim et al., 2022). The learning media that is currently widely used and in line with technological advancements is the use of electronic-based modules. These are learning media that aim to combine ICT aspects and the use of international languages in one

platform, which allows for the development of learning processes based on Student-Centered Learning (SCL). However, there is currently no definitive study that identifies the English learning needs of health students. Based on the analysis above, a study is needed to describe the learning needs and perceptions of nursing students regarding the learning of English.

Needs Analysis is one of the approaches that can be used to measure learning based on needs. In this study, needs analysis plays a crucial role in collecting and describing the needs that nursing students expect for their English language learning.

Needs analysis (Need Analysis) refers to the steps or procedures taken to gather data about students' needs in learning. The needs analysis in this study measures the English language needs in the Nursing Department. The English course taught to students in other programs obviously has different specific objectives. These objectives are what distinguish English language learning for English majors and those in other programs.

English learning for English majors focuses on general language and linguistic theories in constructing correct sentences. However, English for the Nursing program, which has a specific purpose, is more focused on particular goals, commonly known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP emphasizes learning concepts for specific goals. The perception of nursing students needs to be explored regarding the relevance of the English course they take before they learn English with a focus on nursing knowledge. This also reflects their perception of their language proficiency needs and perceptions.

METHODS

Study Design

This study uses a descriptive quantitative cross-sectional research method. The researcher aims to investigate English language needs and perceptions among nursing students. This study conducted in one of nursing college in Indonesia

Instruments

The instrument used is the *Nursing Students Proficiency Level in the Four Language Skills*,

adapted from a previous study (Takele et al., 2022), to assess the language needs of nursing students and their perceptions of their language proficiency in relation to the relevance of the courses they are taking. The first part of the questionnaire was developed to assess the participants' proficiency levels (1 = not efficient at all to 5 = very efficient) in the four English language skills (speaking, reading, listening, and writing). The second part of the questionnaire was designed to gain insights from the participants about the relevance and appropriateness of their current language courses to their profession. This section consists of 10 general questions, asking participants to rate the usefulness of the English course they are taking in relation to their language learning needs (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

In the third part, participants were asked to describe their needs for various English language skills and sub-skills. This section contains 26 items (7 items on reading, 6 items on writing, 5 items on listening, and 8 items on speaking). They were asked to rate each item (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important). (7 items on reading, 6 items on writing, 5 items on listening, and 8 items on speaking). Higher score indicate higher need of English language

Data Analysis

To describe the English language needs and perceptions of nursing students author use descriptive statistic with total and percentage.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics students among english language needs (n=114)

Variable	Mean \pm SD / Frequency (n)	Min – Max / Percentage (%)
Age (years)	20.21 \pm 1.05	18 – 26
< 20 years	85	74.5%
\geq 20 years	29	25.5%
Grade Level		
Grade 1	30	26.3%
Grade 2	79	69.3%
Grade 3	4	3.5%
Grade 4	1	0.9%
Nursing Major		
Diploma in Nursing	37	32.5%
Bachelor in Nursing	77	67.5%
High School Background		
Senior High School	79	69.3%
Vocational HS (Health)	11	9.6%
Vocational HS (Non-Health)	24	21.1%

Table 2. Description of English Language Needs among nursing students (n=114)

Variables	Mean \pm SD	Min-Max
Total Reading	31.71 \pm 3.79	18 – 35
Total Writing	30.02 \pm 4.31	20 – 35
Total Listening	17.22 \pm 2.46	11 – 20
Total Speaking	21.05 \pm 3.33	5 – 25
Total English Language Needs	100 \pm 12.28	55 – 115

Table 3. Analysis of English Language Needs among nursing students(n=114)

Variables	F/t-test	95%CI	p-value
Age Student	0.09	97.7 – 102.3	0.81

Grade Student	0.38	-17.88 – 9.19	0.67
Nursing Major	-0.59	-6.32 – 3.44	0.56
High School History	0.28	97.72 – 102.28	0.76

Based on Table 1, the total number of students who participated in this study is 114. The average age of the nursing students is 20.21 years (SD \pm 1.05), with the youngest being 18 and the oldest 26 years old. The majority of students are under 20 years old, totaling 85 (74.5%). Most students in this study are in Grade 2, with a total of 79 (69.3%), while 77 students (67.5%) are enrolled in the bachelor's nursing program, and 79 students (69.3%) graduated from senior high school. From Table 2, we can see that the highest mean score is in reading, with an average of 31.71 (SD \pm 3.79), and the lowest mean score is in listening, with an average of 17.22 (SD \pm 2.46). Furthermore, Table 3 presents the results of the subgroup analysis, showing no statistically significant differences in age, grade, major, or high school background regarding total English language needs.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the demographic characteristics and English language needs of nursing students. The average age of participants in this study was 20.21 years, with the majority (74.5%) being under 20 years old. This suggests a relatively young cohort of nursing students, which is consistent with trends observed in other educational settings where younger students are increasingly entering nursing programs (Hass, 2021). The age range, spanning from 18 to 26 years, indicates some diversity in student age, which may have implications for learning styles and the academic experience. Research has shown that younger students in nursing programs may face different challenges compared to older students, such as greater adjustment to the academic environment and balancing personal responsibilities (Robinson et al, 2018). These findings point to the need for targeted support strategies for younger nursing students to enhance their academic success.

The study also revealed that the majority of participants were in Grade 2 (69.3%), with a similar proportion enrolled in the bachelor's nursing program (67.5%) and having graduated from senior high school (69.3%). This demographic information suggests that a significant portion of nursing students are still in the early stages of their academic careers. A study by McLoughlin et al. (2020) suggests that students in the early years of nursing programs often experience greater academic stress as they adjust to university-level coursework and develop more specialized clinical skills. This highlights the importance of providing academic and emotional support in the early stages of nursing education, especially for students who may struggle with the demands of both theoretical and clinical learning.

In terms of English language proficiency, Table 2 revealed that the highest mean score was in reading (31.71), whereas listening had the lowest mean score (17.22). This finding suggests that nursing students in this study may be more comfortable with reading in English, a skill that is essential for engaging with academic texts, research articles, and medical literature. However, the lower score in listening indicates a potential area of concern, as effective communication is a critical component of nursing practice. Previous research has shown that strong listening skills are crucial for successful nurse-patient interactions, particularly in understanding patient needs, providing clear instructions, and responding appropriately to patients' concerns [8]. Therefore, the findings suggest a need for enhanced instruction and training in listening skills, specifically in the context of clinical communication.

The absence of statistically significant differences in English language needs based on age, grade level, major, or high school background, as shown in Table 3, suggests that demographic factors alone may not be the primary determinants of English language

proficiency in nursing students. This is consistent with studies that emphasize the importance of prior language exposure and specific language training rather than demographic factors in shaping students' language skills. For instance, a study by Smith et al. (2019) found that nursing students' language proficiency is more strongly influenced by the quality of English language instruction they received in previous educational settings than by age or prior academic background. This underscores the need for targeted English language programs in nursing curricula, especially for students who may not have received sufficient language training in their prior education.

Further research is needed to explore additional factors that might influence nursing students' English language proficiency. For example, factors such as the intensity of English language exposure, the use of English in clinical practice, and students' individual learning strategies may provide more nuanced insights into their language needs (Benneth et al., 2022). Moreover, improving the English language proficiency of nursing students is crucial not only for academic success but also for their ability to provide high-quality care in a diverse, multilingual healthcare environment.

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