

English for Nursing: An Exploration of Taiwanese EFL Learners' Needs

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Abstract

This research investigates nurses' use of the English language in Taiwanese hospitals and their need for English language learning. A sample of 73 nurses enrolled in a two-year bachelor's nursing program at two Taiwanese universities participated in this study. A questionnaire was administered to obtain information about these nurses' perceptions of workplace English use and their experiences with, need for, and expectations of English language learning. The majority of the participants strongly agreed that medical universities and hospitals should offer English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for nurses to build their workplace English skills. The participants rated the most important language skill area for their workplace English usage as "speaking," followed by "listening," "writing," "medical terminology," and "reading." This sequence was the same as the sequence of the commonly mentioned skill areas that the participants wanted to improve. The specific occasions of English use for all language skill areas (i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing) and their frequency of use in the participants' workplaces were identified. The survey also asked the participants for their opinions about allowing students to obtain more opportunities to practice English and more exposure to English by integrating English language learning into academic subjects of the curriculum.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), Nursing English, nursing practitioners, needs analysis

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1. Introduction

In the current healthcare environment, teamwork among doctors, nurses and pharmacists is necessary to effectively deliver health care and advance medical research. Globalization has affected the health care industry and has contributed to the importance of English language ability for occupational purposes. English language proficiency is crucial for health care employees to work effectively and productively.

In recent decades, many patients have traveled abroad seeking health care. The increased numbers of international patients, in addition to the growing numbers of new inhabitants, has revealed the need for medical professionals to have the capacity to communicate effectively using English. Such global changes in the health care industry have made the ability to use English more important than ever before. With the increasing demands of the use of English in the health care industry in Taiwan, it is imperative to equip Taiwanese health care professionals with adequate English language abilities that allow them to meet workplace expectations. In Taiwan, the unsatisfactory level of English ability of nursing students (M. Yang, 2011), combined with the urgent demand for workplace English skills by nursing professionals (C. Yang, 2011) have raised concern about how to provide English language courses that meet the specific needs of nursing professionals.

2. Literature Review

According to Nunan (1988), needs analysis is the process of gathering information to be used for designing syllabi. The term was elaborated by Graves (1996) as the process of identifying what learners know and can do and what they need to learn. The vital role of need analysis in designing courses has been acknowledged by many researchers (e.g., Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Hutchinson and Waters, 1997), and it is generally agreed that conducting needs analysis is necessary and should be the first step of any language course. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) indicated, an assessment of practical linguistic needs within an appropriate context should be completed prior to teaching.

The concept of needs analysis in language teaching was introduced in 1926 by Michael West, who sought to establish why and how learners should learn English. Little attention was given to needs analysis until the 1970s; the issue regained researchers' attention when the Council of Europe (1982) sought to establish a model for needs analysis for language teaching with an attempt to promote the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Europe. The "common core" established by the Council of Europe was one of the early bases that provided guidelines for needs analysis for general English learning. Using these guidelines, the language requirements of the target situation could be identified. More approaches subsequently emerged, including those that addressed general language as well as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (e.g., Chambers, 1980; Munby, 1978; Nunan, 1988; Stuart and Lee, 1972/1985; Wilkins, 1976).

ESP falls under the large umbrella of general English. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw rapid growth of research on ESP in reaction to the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics, and a focus on the learner (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). According to Hutchinson and Waters, ESP is different from general English mainly in that ESP is related to a specific discipline and should meet that discipline's specific needs. In a similar manner, Robinson (1989) described ESP as a type of ELT (English Language Teaching) and further stressed its particular relevance for non-native English speakers based on the perspective that English is used for very specific and clearly defined practical purposes. The same viewpoint was shared by Carver (1983). In discussing the features of ESP courses, Carver identified three characteristics common to ESP courses: the use of authentic materials, purpose-related orientation, and self-directed learning. Earlier needs analysis frameworks were mainly concerned with assessing learners' linguistic needs. With the rise of ESP courses and growing emphasis on communicative competence, however, the target situation has taken a central position when researchers propose needs analysis models (e.g., Chambers, 1980; Munby, 1978). Considering that specific needs, language skills and disciplines are involved in ESP courses for learners with specific academic or professional purposes, conducting needs analysis is particularly crucial. The outcomes of these analyses allow valid objectives to be identified and enable learners to acquire knowledge and skills related to real-life situations.

English for medical purposes, including English for doctors and English for nurses, is a subset of ESP that emerged in response to the demand for the use of English in academic settings or in workplace contexts. The use of the English language in hospitals and medical centers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings has prevailed for centuries. As Maher (1992) observed, non-English-speaking doctors have needed to use English in various situations, such as communicating with patients using English medical terms, reading research papers and medical reports, presenting in meetings, and writing emails in English. In Taiwanese healthcare facilities, the job duties of healthcare professionals, doctors and nurses also involve the above-mentioned English-use occasions. It is thus vital to assist these professionals in achieving the English proficiency level necessary for work-related use by providing courses that meet their specific needs, which may include providing clinical care, performing administrative tasks, and conducting medical research. The specific learning objectives of the courses need to be identified at the outset after thoroughly investigating actual professional practice and the English language tasks these duties involve.

A number of studies have been conducted in Taiwan to identify the specific needs of individuals with medical or health-related backgrounds learning English in an effort to provide guidelines for designing curricula for related ESP courses (e.g., Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive, 1999; Fang, 1987; Hwang and Huang, 2010; Hwang and Lin, 2010; Lee, 1998; Su, 2013; Tsai, 2001). In general, these studies have shown that individuals pursuing careers in the healthcare and medical fields perceive English to be important (Chia et al., 1999; Fang, 1987; Hwang and Huang, 2010; Hwang and Lin, 2010) and see the need to enhance their English proficiency for the fulfillment of their academic (Chia et al., 1999; Hwang and Lin, 2010) or career (Chia et al., 1999; Hwang and Lin, 2010; Lee, 1998) pursuits. Because the targeted participants of these studies differed somewhat in terms of their academic backgrounds and career goals, the language skill area(s) that were considered exceptionally important or identified as particularly necessary varied. Nevertheless, communicative competence (Fang, 1987; Lee, 1998; Tsai, 2001) and reading ability (Chia et al., 1999; Hwang and Lin, 2010) have been found to be among the aspects most frequently mentioned as necessary or desirable. For example, in Tsai's (2001) and Lee's (1998) data, nurses expressed a strong desire to enhance their communication skills. In Fang's (1987) study, students

working on medical or health-related undergraduate majors reported the listening aspect as most important, followed by reading, speaking and writing. Chia (1999) reported that medical students and faculty members from medical departments rated reading as the most important skill area for medical students' academic and career success. Hwang and Lin's (2010) data yielded the same results: medical students perceived reading as the most important skill area.

With regard to whether there is a need for prospective healthcare providers to take ESP courses, there is no consensus among researchers. In Fang's (1987) study, approximately one-third of the participants (composed of mixed majors) agreed that there was a need for universities to offer ESP courses to those who study in the medical or healthcare related fields. Lee (1998) surveyed two groups of nursing students from same university regarding their perceptions of the need to take English for nursing courses. Different opinions were obtained from the two groups. Approximately three-fourths of full-time nursing undergraduates felt the need to take English courses for nursing purposes, whereas only approximately one-half of in-service students (working nurses) perceived this need. The different opinions that have been reported by researchers may have resulted from the differences in academic backgrounds, career objectives, and/or learning or working experiences among different sets of participants.

The past decade has seen rapid changes in the working environment of the healthcare industry in Taiwan and the need to continuously evaluate practical and authentic English language use in the workplace of medical professionals. Although several attempts have been made to identify EFL learners' need to learn English for medical purposes in the context of Taiwan, the majority of these attempts have involved English language for the academic needs/linguistic needs of medical students (e.g., Chia et al., 1999; Hwang and Huang, 2010; Hwang and Lin, 2010) or students from mixed majors (e.g., Fang, 1987). Thus far, few studies have investigated English language needs for clinical practice in the context of Taiwan. An area that has not yet received adequate attention but is quite important to promote healthcare excellence is the investigation of the use of English in nursing practice and the assessment of practical English language needs based on working nurses' perspectives. To address this gap in the literature, the current study was undertaken to investigate authentic English language use in Taiwanese medical centers and hospitals among nursing professionals

and to analyze the English language skills required for their career readiness and success. Furthermore, to obtain a general overview of Taiwanese nurses' English language learning backgrounds and to gain a better understanding of the possible influences of English language proficiency on workplace readiness for Taiwanese nurses, descriptions of the nurses' English language learning experiences and their perceptions of workplace English were provided.

3. Method

(1) Research Questions

1. What are the participants' experiences in English language learning?
2. What are the participants' perceptions of the importance of the English language in the workplace?
3. What are the participants' needs for and actual use of the English language in the workplace?
4. What are the participants' opinions and suggestions with regard to the best means to accommodate nursing students and nursing professionals in developing their English proficiency, including general English and English for nursing?

(2) Participants

Participants were recruited from a 2-year bachelor's nursing degree program designated for nursing professionals at two universities in Taiwan. To be eligible for admission to the degree study in the nursing programs, individuals were required to hold a 5-year junior college degree in nursing and have working experience in healthcare facilities. To meet the needs of those who worked full time, which was usually the case for students enrolled in 2-year bachelor's nursing degree programs in Taiwan, the courses of these nursing programs were usually offered either in the evenings or on two whole days each week.

This study intended to explore the genuine need to use the English language in different health care facilities and to elicit opinions from nurses with heterogeneous backgrounds to develop multiple perspectives. Because the primary criterion for

selecting subjects was that the participants varied in age, the length of time working, their healthcare facility, and the nature of their jobs, students from these two nursing programs were recruited.

One class from each of the two nursing programs was invited to participate in this study, for a total of 93 students. Because the eligibility criteria required that the participants worked at medical centers or hospitals, those who worked in physician clinics and dental clinics were excluded from the study. Discarding the incomplete survey questionnaires, an analysis was conducted on the remaining 73 participants. These 73 female registered nurses included eight nurse managers (including leaders, head nurses, nursing supervisors, and chiefs of nursing) and 65 nurses from five academic medical centers and “would-be” academic medical centers ($N = 27$), 24 metropolitan hospitals ($N = 33$), 11 local community hospitals ($N = 12$), and one mental hospital ($N = 1$) across different regions in Taiwan. Of these 41 health facilities involved in the study, eight were located in the northern parts, 31 in the central parts, and two in the eastern parts of Taiwan. The participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 48 years of age (see Figure 1), with an average of 8.09 years of work experience as nurses ($SD = 4.00$).

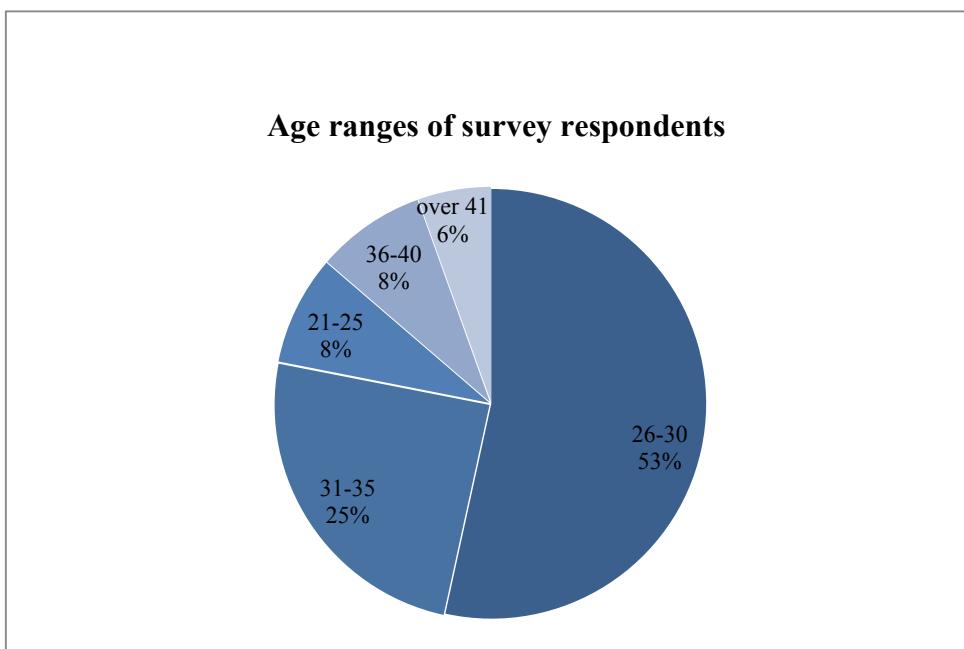


Figure 1: Age Ranges of Survey Respondents.

(3) Materials

A survey was conducted to gather information on the participants' workplace English use and identify their needs with regard to learning English. A preliminary draft of the survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher. Revisions were made to this draft questionnaire based on feedback from five registered nurses studying at the same institution and three colleagues who also worked in the field of English language teaching. The revised questionnaire was then pilot tested using a group of 10 students from the target population. Based on the feedback obtained from the pilot participants, some minor changes were made to the wording of several survey questions to enhance question clarity.

The questionnaire used in this study was in Mandarin Chinese, the participants' native language. In addition to eliciting demographic information, the questions focused on respondents' personal experiences with and opinions of English language learning and the use of the English language in the workplace. In addition to the closed-ended items, which were mostly multiple-choice questions, several open-ended questions were used to elicit free responses or to obtain more details to address the questions. The multiple-choice questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

(4) Procedure

Based on a pre-arrangement, the researcher recruited the participants during recess from class at the two universities. After obtaining written informed consent from the students, the questionnaires were distributed. The participants answered the questions anonymously in this voluntary survey. The administration of the in-class survey, lasting approximately 20 minutes, produced a high response rate of 87.10%.

4. Results

(1) Research Question 1: Participants' Past Experiences Learning English

The first section of the questionnaire probed the participant's English language learning background and their self-rated language proficiency. According to the survey responses, 75.34% ($N= 55$) of the respondents took nursing English course(s) when they

were studying in junior colleges in nursing, and the majority regarded nursing English courses as relevant (87.27%) and useful (83.64%) to their jobs. Students in both of the bachelor's nursing programs took a general English language course as a requirement, but they were not required to take nursing-related English courses.

With regard to the courses in the nursing core curriculum, the participants indicated that they generally had more opportunities for exposure to the English language when they were in the bachelor's nursing programs compared with their time in junior college. In both nursing programs, more than half of the respondents reported that the English language was used by their instructors in the classroom; fewer than 10% of the participants reported that their instructors "never" or "seldom" used textbooks and supplementary materials in English.

When self-rating their English language proficiency, the respondents were not confident in their overall abilities, with 49.32% of the respondents choosing "poor" and "very poor" as their responses. None of the respondents rated their English ability as "very good," and only four respondents rated their ability as "fair." The participants were further asked about the language skill area(s) in which they were not proficient and that needed to be strengthened. The most frequently chosen response option to this multiple-response question, selected by 79.45% of the participants, was "speaking"; this was followed by "listening" (67.12%), "writing" (60.27%), and "reading" (45.21%). In another multiple-response question, the respondents were asked which areas they would like to improve with regard to workplace English use. The most commonly selected response was "speaking" (82.19%), followed by "listening" (73.97%), "writing" (50.68%), "medical terminology" (38.36%), and "reading" (34.25%). The survey asked the participants if they spent time learning English, either by attending classes or through self-study, and asked them to select and/or list the way(s) that they had strengthened their English language ability. Approximately half of the participants responded positively, with 29.73% of the respondents reporting taking formal English language classes, 43.24% reporting self-study, 21.62% reporting free reading, 54.05% reporting watching TV programs and movies and/or listening to English songs or radio programs, and 29.73% reporting actively seeking opportunities to learn and practice English.

The survey also asked the participants' opinions and attitudes on ESP courses for

nursing professionals. The majority (89.04%) of the respondents agreed that medical universities, medical centers, and/or hospitals should offer nursing ESP courses for licensed nurses to build their workplace English skills, and none of the respondents was opposed to the idea. When the participants were further asked whether they would be interested in taking nursing ESP courses offered by medical universities, medical centers, or hospitals, the percentages of respondents who indicated “highly interested” and “interested” were 28.77% and 36.99%, respectively.

(2) Research Question 2: Participants’ Perceptions and Opinions of the Importance of English Language Ability

Overall, the participants agreed that possessing good English language skills was imperative, and the vast majority of them (98.63%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that being proficient in English could be beneficial or helpful in their school studies, in seeking a higher level of education after graduation, and in applying for jobs. For each of these three questions, one person gave a neutral response, and no participants gave a negative response. When asked if having good English ability could be helpful or beneficial in getting promoted in their workplace, the percentages of participants who chose “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree” and “strongly disagree” were 38.36%, 43.84%, 13.70%, and 4.11%, and 0%, respectively.

In response to the question regarding the importance of workplace English skills in the field of nursing, 36.99% strongly agreed, 53.42% agreed, six persons were neutral, and one disagreed that having good workplace English skills would be important for their nursing careers. For the multiple-response question to which the participants were asked to indicate the important language skill area(s) for their workplace English usage, their answers, from the most frequently to least frequently chosen, were listening (80.82%), speaking (82.19%), medical terminology (69.86%), writing (54.79%), and reading (52.05%). In response to the item, “Good workplace English proficiency enables nurses to do their job better, but this language ability is not a necessary prerequisite for job involvement in nursing in Taiwanese hospitals and/or medical centers,” more than half of the respondents disagreed, only 5.58% of the participants responded “strongly agree,” and 24.66% responded “agree.” For the item, “Even though having good workplace English can improve my job performance, I am unwilling to

learn English," approximately 25.55% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed.

(3) Research Question 3: English Used in the Workplace

The third section of the questionnaire required the participants to give information on their current workplace English use. As shown in Table 1, in general, the job duties the participants performed involved the use of the English language, with 42.47% of the participants reporting "high" frequency and 34.25% reporting "moderate" frequency. Among the four skill areas, written English was relatively less frequently used compared with the other three language aspects.

Table 1: Workplace English Use

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Rare or (Almost) None
Use of English (including all skill areas)	9.59%	42.47%	34.25%	13.70%	0%
Listening aspect	6.85%	32.88%	39.73%	19.19%	1.37%
Speaking aspect	4.10%	35.62%	36.99%	23.29%	0%
Reading aspect	5.48%	39.73%	36.99%	16.44%	1.37%
Writing aspect	2.74%	28.77%	35.62%	21.72%	12.33%

Note: Please note that the use of English, as defined in the questionnaire, does not necessarily refer to the use of complete sentences, although the use of only a single word or phrase does not meet the scope. Taiwan is a non-English-speaking country, and the "use of English only" is not a norm for social healthcare facilities in Taiwan.

The participants were further asked to specify the occasions and the corresponding frequency of the use of the English language while performing their job responsibilities. Figures 2, 3, and 4 present the occasions and the corresponding frequency of the participants' workplace English language use. As shown in Figure 2, for both speaking and listening aspects, the most frequently indicated occasions were "brief medical reports," "trainings/lectures/meetings," and "dialogues between colleagues." Among the possible occasions on which they might need to read in English, as listed in Figure 3, the most frequently chosen options were "reports of treatments," followed by "medical articles," "searching online information," "manuals," "emails/letters," "forms," and "documents." Regarding their job duties involving writing in English, as presented in

Figure 4, the most frequently chosen option was “medical reports,” and the least chosen one was “documents.”

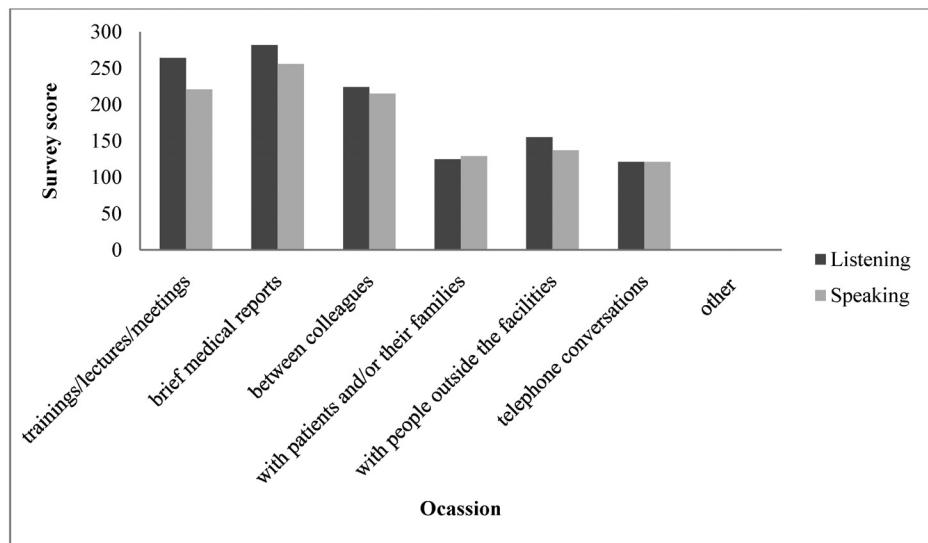


Figure 2: Occasions of English use for Listening and Speaking. The Surveys Used a 5-Point Likert Scale from 1 = never to 5 = almost always.

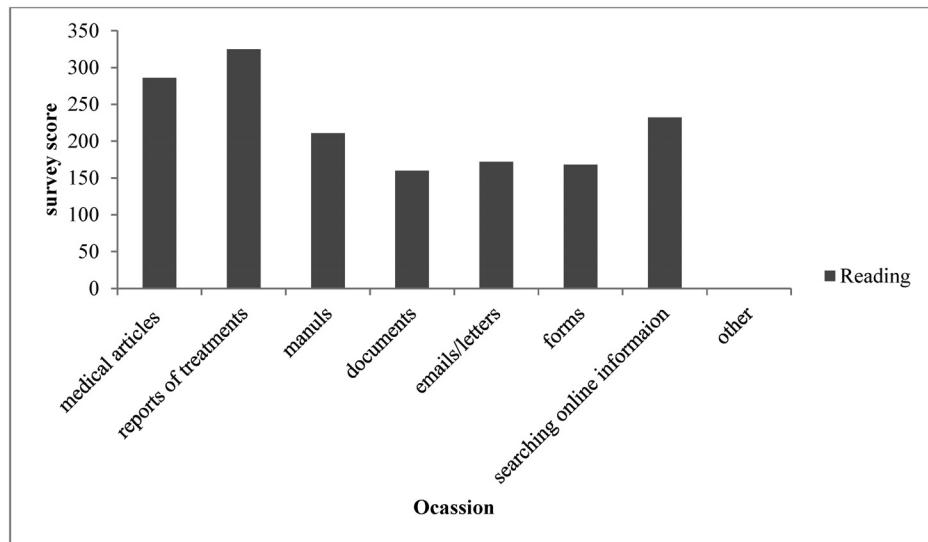


Figure 3: Occasions of Reading in English. The Surveys Used a 5-Point Likert Scale from 1 = never to 5 = almost always.

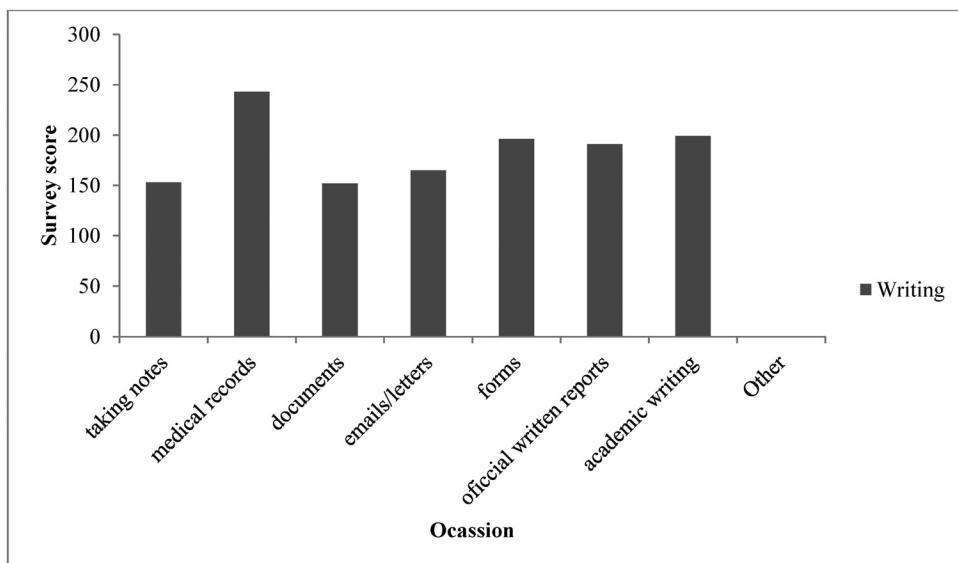


Figure 4: Occasions of Using Writing. The Surveys Used a 5-Point Likert Scale from 1 = never to 5 = almost always.

(4) Research Question 4: Participants' Perceptions and Opinions of Integrating Language Learning in Content Courses

The fourth section of the questionnaire, which consisted of 14 items, was designed to explore the participants' opinions and needs with regard to developing nursing undergraduate students' English ability. As shown in Table 2, the findings revealed that the participants as a whole considered both general English courses and nursing English courses necessary. For general English language courses, participants considered listening and speaking skills more important than other language skills. With regard to nursing English, learning medical terms and abbreviations was considered more important than communication skills and writing ability.

When the participants were asked about the type of English courses that should be included in an undergraduate nursing program, 75.35% of the participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that a general English course should be listed as a required course, 79.46% "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that an English for nursing course should be listed as a required course, and 69.87% "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that both of these courses should be required for nursing students.

Table 2: Participants' Opinions Regarding English Courses Offered and the Importance of Different Aspects of Language Skills

No.	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
	<u>General English</u>					
1	Enhancing student listening skills is important	45.21	50.68	4.11	0	0
2	Enhancing student speaking skills is important	50.68	46.58	2.74	0	0
3	Enhancing student reading skills is important	39.73	52.05	8.22	0	0
4	Enhancing student writing skills is important	19.17	39.73	38.36	2.74	0
5	Enhancing student lexical competence is important	39.73	49.32	10.95	0	0
6	Improving student grammar is important	24.65	47.95	26.03	1.37	0
7	Improving student pronunciation is important	30.14	56.16	12.33	1.37	0
	<u>Nursing English</u>					
8	Developing students' workplace oral communication skills for nurses is important	39.73	54.79	5.48	0	0
9	Preparing students with the specific vocabulary of nursing (i.e., medical terms and abbreviations) is important	34.25	63.01	2.74	0	0
10	Preparing students with workplace writing skills for nurses is important	30.13	39.73	30.14	0	0
11	Developing student reading skills through the use of learning materials related to healthcare topic is important	31.50	45.21	23.29	0	0
	<u>Courses offered</u>					
12	It is necessary for nursing students to take a general English course	42.47	32.88	16.44	6.85	1.37
13	It is necessary for nursing students to take a nursing English course	38.36	41.10	16.44	2.74	1.37
14	It is necessary that both general English and nursing English are taken by nursing students as required courses	38.36	31.51	20.55	8.22	1.37

Note: SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree

Item 15 asked the participants' preferences regarding the nationality of their English teachers (i.e., native English speakers or local teachers). The data revealed that

most participants had no preference (63.01%), 19.18% indicated that they preferred to be taught by local teachers, and 17.81% indicated that they preferred native English speakers to teach them.

The questions listed in Table 3 elicited the participants' opinions regarding the use of English as a medium to learn nursing subject content. The analysis of the given responses showed that, overall, the participants were positive about receiving more opportunities to practice English and allowing more exposure to English by integrating the use of the English language into core academic subjects.

Table 3: Students Opinions Regarding English Language Use in Nursing Program Core Courses

No.	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
16	Using textbooks and handouts written in English can enhance students' English ability	8.22	61.64	23.29	5.48	1.37
17	Instructors teaching course content using English as the medium of instruction can enhance students' English ability	16.44	54.79	16.44	10.96	1.37
18	Requiring students to use English in the classroom, including classroom interactions, written assignments, and oral reports, can enhance their English skills	10.96	47.95	28.77	10.96	1.37

Note: SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree

To further explore the participants' opinions on the approaches to integrating English language and content instruction, in Item 19, the participants were asked to indicate a teaching approach that best suited their learning preferences with regard to learning core academic subjects. Table 4 presents the six response options of this survey item and their corresponding percentages of respondents. As shown in the table, "lectures delivered in both English and Mandarin Chinese and using textbooks written in Chinese" was the most chosen approach, with approximately three-fifths of the participants selecting this answer. Combining the findings gathered from participants' responses for items 18 to 21 revealed that, in general, students agreed that professors

presenting subject matter knowledge in English and using Chinese when necessary best met their expectations.

Table 4: Approach of Teaching Core Academic Subjects

Approach	Medium of Instruction	Textbook	%
1.	English only	English	10.96
2.	English only	Chinese	8.22
3.	Both English and Chinese (Mandarin Chinese is used to illustrate difficult concepts or introduce medical terminologies)	English	60.27
4.	Both English and Chinese (Mandarin Chinese is used to illustrate difficult concepts or introduce medical terminologies)	Chinese	16.44
5.	Chinese only	English	4.11
6.	Chinese only	Chinese	0

The last item of the survey was open-ended, asking respondents to offer suggestions with regard to important components, such as teaching focuses, topics, and classroom activities, that should be included in an ESP for nursing course. Approximately two-thirds of those who responded to this question indicated the need to enhance learners' communication ability, with more than one-third indicating the need to provide students with opportunities to practice spoken English in the classroom. The following are some of the suggestions given by the participants.

“Special emphasis should be placed on improving students' oral communication competence.”

“It is important that students are given opportunities to practice speaking in the classroom.”

“Teaching should focus on enhancing students' skills and confidence in speaking English.”

“An area that should receive special attention is listening to monologues. Sometimes nurses are required to attend seminars or join conferences in which English language is used.”

“Students should be trained to effectively express their thoughts and understand others in English. It is one of the major weaknesses for many nurses.”

“Speaking and listening aspects should be emphasized, and learning tasks should be based on real-life situations.”

More than half of the participants who answered this item suggested that instructors should choose materials, topics, and/or learning tasks that are relevant to students' work. The following comments from participants were representative.

“Content and language tasks in the course should simulate the tasks that nursing professionals will need to undertake in Taiwanese hospitals.”

“Use of real situations is important.”

“Topics chosen should match workplace use.”

“Textbooks used should be customized for Taiwanese learners.”

“Various kinds of reading materials should be included, including forms, charts, medical reports, and journal articles.”

Another area frequently mentioned as important was related to reading. Approximately 30% of the participants suggested the need to enhance their reading ability, with the majority (83.64%) of them mentioning the importance of the ability to comprehend long, academic reading texts. The following are some comments given by the participants.

“Enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge and reading ability should be emphasized.”

“Instructors should select course textbooks or provide other materials that contain articles about health, healthcare, and medicine.”

“Reading of medical journal papers is difficult and should receive extra attention.”

Other less-frequently mentioned suggestions included spending time reviewing grammar rules, increasing students' vocabulary size, paying particular attention to

students' pronunciation, balancing all four language skill areas, and enhancing students' writing skills.

As illustrated above, the participants generally considered communication competence and reading ability to be more important and expressed their desire to be offered authentic learning materials and to learn authentic workplace English use.

5. Discussion

This study was undertaken to investigate nursing professionals' workplace English language needs. The results of the investigation showed that day-to-day nursing activities in Taiwanese medical centers and hospitals involved the use of the English language and that the nurses who participated in this study considering strong English language skills, general English or nursing English to be important because they believed these skills would enable them to be more competitive in their careers. The majority of previous studies have also indicated the importance of strong language proficiency for individuals who are working or intend to work in the healthcare industry (e.g., Chia et al, 1999; Hwang and Lin, 2010; Tsai, 2001).

The study's findings showed that the participants' self-rated English language proficiency levels were unsatisfactory overall and that many respondents sought ways to improve their English in their spare time and wanted ESP courses in nursing after they joined the workforce. Unlike the nurses in Lee's (1998) study, who generally perceived the importance and usefulness of nursing English courses as moderately important, this group of nurses highly affirmed the relevance and usefulness of nursing English courses for their work. The results may be explained in part by the fact that the healthcare environment in Taiwan has changed during the 17 years studied. Globalization may have led to more demands and more opportunities for healthcare professionals to use English.

One interesting finding that emerged was that in many medical centers and hospitals, even those located in the central and eastern parts of Taiwan, nurses' work often involves the use of English on various occasions in addition to communicating with their patients and colleagues. Other frequently encountered occasions, as reported by the study participants, include attending seminars and medical meetings and reading

and writing medical reports and papers.

With regard to nurses' need for workplace English, the study findings revealed that among the four language skill areas, speaking, listening and reading were more frequently used than writing. The participants indicated that speaking and listening aspects were more frequently used when engaging in their daily work duties and were thus more important. However, for most of them, these two areas represented their greatest weaknesses and thus needed improvement. This finding corroborates the findings of Munby (1978), who highlighted the importance of addressing communication needs and developing the communicative competence of learners in ESP courses. The finding that listening and speaking skills were perceived by the participants to be more important than other skill areas is also in accordance with findings reported in earlier studies on Taiwanese EFL learners majoring in medical fields (e.g., Fang, 1987; Tsai, 2001). The finding that "medical terminology" was ranked third among the areas that the participants wanted to enhance reveals that this group of nurses had attained a satisfactory level of proficiency in their specialist vocabulary. Therefore, courses provided by Taiwanese undergraduate nursing programs, English language courses or nursing academic courses, in general, may be sufficient to equip students with the ability to use medical terminology appropriately to accomplish work duties in hospitals. This finding also suggests that improving working nurses' communicative competence and listening skills is urgent and should be prioritized.

Surprisingly, reading in English was also reported as necessary when this group of nurses performed their job duties. The study's results showed that these participants' job responsibilities could involve reading English materials of various genres. In addition to the expected day-to-day tasks of reading charts, forms, emails, letters, and short clinical reports in English, there were many occasions on which the participants had read academic papers and/or long medical reports, which were conventionally associated with doctors' work. Previous studies conducted in Taiwan have shown the importance of reading ability for doctors and medical students (Chia, 1999; Hwang and Lin, 2010). However, this skill area has been reported as less important or less necessary by researchers investigating other populations, such as nurses and nursing students (Tsai, 2001) and students with mixed majors (Fang, 1987). A possible reason why the participants in the current study perceived a higher level of need and importance in

reading ability may be explained by the fact that they worked in medical centers or teaching hospitals, where clinical research activities constantly take place. The finding that nurses in the current study were required to read academic English texts reveals the changing role of nurses currently working in medical centers or hospitals, who might be required to perform even wider and challenging duties, such as providing assistance in support of medical research. If reading academic articles is also intensively required in nurses' work-related activities, nursing students and nurses should be well equipped with this ability. To comprehend academic papers and clinical reports, which are often longer and more complex than other written material that nurses must read, solid background knowledge of medical subject matters, sufficient vocabulary, and good reading strategies are required. This means that courses that cover the elements of both English for Academic Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes are appropriate for this population's learning needs.

One of the more significant but unanticipated findings to emerge from this study was that the concept of integrating English language learning into nursing academic content was generally affirmed by these nurses. According to the participants, when they were in junior college, the English language was seldom used in their academic classes. After starting their undergraduate studies, they had the opportunity to experience how incorporating the use of the English language into their nursing content courses by studying course materials in English and occasionally working on their written assignments in English could enhance both their English proficiency and nursing specialist knowledge simultaneously. Based on the participants' positive attitudes toward incorporating the use of the English language in nursing core academic subjects, it is safe to say that some of them believed in or perceived the benefits brought about by this learning approach and therefore welcomed the idea.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of equipping nursing students and nursing professionals with general English language skills and specialist English language knowledge that meet their career-related needs. As the study findings suggest, these endeavors should be undertaken both prior to and after nursing graduates enter the workforce. This could be achieved by offering nursing undergraduates ESP courses that introduce up-to-date authentic materials and learning tasks involved in Taiwanese healthcare facilities to help them be competitive and to pave the way for their careers.

and by offering non-credit ESP courses for working nurses to refine their language skills and advance their job performance.

6. Implications

Based on the findings obtained in this study, the following implications are suggested. First, for integrated skills courses, speaking and listening skill areas should be emphasized because these two aspects were reported to be more frequently used when engaging in nursing duties and were more frequently mentioned as the skill areas that the respondents wished to improve. Extra focus should be placed on enhancing learners' listening strategies and communication skills and practicing English by using authentic materials and simulating the involved duties. The suggested language tasks include receiving training, listening to lectures, attending meetings, giving medical reports, and communicating with patients and colleagues.

Second, as reported by the participants, nurses working in medical centers or hospitals are sometimes required to conduct research-related duties, such as reading medical articles written in English and writing reports using English. It is thus suggested that medical universities offer elective seminars in nursing aimed at enhancing students' understanding of medical subject matter knowledge and developing their reading strategies and critical thinking skills to prepare those who intend to work in research-oriented medical centers or hospitals that expect their staff to collaborate when doing research.

Third, given that the participants generally embraced the integration of learning English language with content knowledge of their core courses, it is strongly suggested that nursing programs encourage instructors who are capable of integrating such English language and subject matter to help their students improve their English abilities while they gain knowledge relevant for their future careers. To ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved, careful evaluation of the suitability of this learning approach should be completed beforehand, including considering instructors' as well as students' English language ability levels and course material selections. The most desirable approach, according to the participants, is the use of textbooks and course materials written in English, the instructor's use of both English and the students' first

language when giving lectures, and the requirement that students write assignments in English and give reports in English.

Lastly, because it has become commonplace for nurses to use English in Taiwanese medical centers and hospitals and because nurses in general indicate their desire and willingness to improve their English, it is imperative that Taiwanese healthcare facilities include ESP courses in their ongoing nurse training programs and that medical universities provide non-credit ESP courses to meet nurses' needs.

7. Conclusions

This study aims to develop a body of knowledge for English-language educators in Taiwan to enable them to enhance the workplace English-language proficiency of nursing students and registered nurses in Taiwan. It investigates the use of the English language in Taiwanese medical centers and hospitals by nursing professionals and analyzes the occasions of English language use and language skills necessary for nursing professionals based on the experiences and opinions of those who held dual roles as both nurses and students. This study can help researchers and language teachers better understand nurses' and nursing students' needs when learning English. The information gathered enables classroom teachers to evaluate whether discrepancies exist between what their students need and what they are given in the English course. Furthermore, the findings serve as a source of information for English teachers to plan curricula, develop teaching materials, and adapt their teaching approach to those pursuing a nursing career. The information could also be helpful for book publishers to develop new or modify existing nursing English textbooks to better accommodate Taiwanese nurses or nursing students' special needs.

This study, although based on a small sample, provides new information for the understanding of nursing professionals' job duties involving English language use in Taiwanese hospitals and medical centers and further identifies nurses' workplace English needs. Given that this study was conducted with a limited number of nursing professionals and was confined to healthcare facilities located mostly in central and northern Taiwan, the generalizability of the study findings may be limited. To develop a full picture of Taiwanese nursing professionals' workplace English use, additional

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studies with a larger sample size and in different geographic locations are needed. Another limitation of this study was that the data were collected using questionnaires containing mostly closed-ended questions. To obtain more in-depth and detailed information, it is recommended that future studies combine the use of questionnaires, interviews, and direct observations for data collection. Another area worth further investigation is the exploration of the effects of integrated learning of the English language in academic nursing courses on the development of students' English proficiency. In the current study, the participants were generally in favor of the concept of content-based language instruction.

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護理英文：臺灣英語學習者需求分析

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摘要

本研究旨在調查臺灣護理人員的職場英語使用及其英語學習需求。本研究以問卷調查了七十三位在職專班學生對職場英語使用之看法及其英語學習的經驗、偏好、需求和期望。調查顯示，參與者強烈贊同醫學院校和醫院應提供課程以提昇護理人員的英文能力。參與者普遍認為職場工作中最重要的英語技能為口說，其次依序為聽力、寫作、醫學術語及閱讀，此先後順序亦為參與者所希望改善的技能之排序。此調查呈現出護理人員於職場中，在英語的聽、說、讀、和寫所使用到的時機與場合，及其對於透過整合護理學科與英語學習以提供學生更多機會接觸英語的看法。

關鍵詞：專業英文、職場英文、護理英文、護理人員、需求評估

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