Learning Needs of Nursing Students to Study English for Nursing Purposes (ENP)

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ABSTRACT
Although various needs analyses on English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) have been conducted in previous scholarly work, they simply focused on the target needs and neglected the other type of need, which is equally important: the learning needs. This study sought to examine the learning needs of nursing students at Health Polytechnic Kendari. Thirty-seven nursing students in their second year of study were voluntarily recruited to participate in this study. Using a descriptive research design, this study described the learning needs of ENP students regarding their learning methods, modes of receiving material, and preferences for classroom activities and ways of learning. It was revealed that the students voiced their desire to learn in groups, either large groups or small groups. These students wanted to learn the content by listening, listening and speaking, reading, and problem-solving. In addition, they favor such classroom activities as role play, discussion, memorizing conversations, and translating English-written nursing materials. These findings suggest a serious need for the students to engage in cooperative and active learning. The implications of this study for pedagogical practices are shown.

Keywords: learning needs, needs analysis, English for nursing, ENP

1. Introduction
At present, the demand for nursing professionals who are skilled at communicating in various cross-cultural settings where English is required as a lingua franca is growing (Corrizzato & Goracci, 2013; Koy, 2015; San Miguel et al., 2006). In the context of ASEAN, for instance, under the ASEAN Economic Community Mutual Recognition Arrangement (AEC-MRA), nurses are among the seven professions that are allowed to freely move among the member countries to meet the shortage of this healthcare provider in the region (Gunawan & Aungsuroch, 2015). In fact, in today’s globalized world, even if nurses simply choose to work in their own country, a situation where they might encounter foreign patients with different first languages remains, and thus, preparing nursing students to be able to deal with the situation as such is paramount.

In response, many colleges offering nursing programs have required their students to learn English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) and made it a compulsory
course in their curricula. According to Bosher (2012, p.263) ENP “focuses on the specific ways in which a nurse use English both in the clinical setting as well as in nursing education”. It is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the teaching of English in specialized disciplines (Paltridge & Starfield, 2012). In the ESP approach, the specific needs of learners (e.g., pre-service nurses) play an instrumental role in determining the content and method of an English course. Water and Hutchinson (1987) made a basic distinction between “what the learners need to do in the target situation,” which is referred to as target needs, and “what the learners need to do in order to learn,” or the so-called learning needs.

With regard to students’ needs in the area of ENP, various needs analyses have unraveled the typical and actual needs of learners as well as the perceptions of stakeholders of the perceived needs. Some needs analysis studies have identified particular language skills preferred, specific nursing topics to present the language and skills, as well as target situations where English is to be used in the future in an occupational setting (e.g. Saragih, 2014; Gass, 2012). Other studies’ needs analyses have resulted in the development of nursing-specific vocabulary (e.g., Temardi et al., 2022; Muller, 2011). The results of these analyses may have benefited ENP course instructors with useful information primarily on what to teach: course content (language items, skills, and subject knowledge).

While these results have described in depth the nursing students’ needs in order to function effectively in the target situation or the what, no information has been provided as to how the students want to learn the identified needs: language features, skills and subject matter. In other words, the other type of need, the so-called learning needs, remain underexplored while they are critical in ESP. Since the entire process of ESP has to do with learning instead of knowing or doing, it is unwise to set up the course plan just based on target needs (Water and Hutchinson, 1987). Therefore, learning needs must be treated fairly and in the same way as target needs, or even more so, in needs analysis (Tahir, 2011). The present study sought to fill this gap by merely focusing on the learning needs, such as learning potential, constraints, motivation, and other related needs, of the students studying ENP in the nursing program of a health polytechnic institute. Revealing these learning needs may provide some crucial information on ways in which students should (or want to) learn the language items, skills, and subject matter at their best and anticipate the potential barriers that may impede their learning. With this in mind, ENP instructors may well design learning activities within the classroom context that suit the typicality of the students’ characteristics and their best ways of learning, thus increasing the attainment of the set learning goals.

2. Methods

Using a descriptive research design, the present study involved 37 nursing students (all of whom are female) at Health Polytechnic Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The student respondents, who represented one of two existing classes, were selected because they were ready to participate in this study and were at the start of taking English as a compulsory course. Oral consent was obtained from the students, and permission was sought from both the teacher and the institution.
A set of printed questionnaires was adapted from Afgani (2011), aiming to elicit the student respondents’ responses. Written questionnaires are useful for exploring what is expected of learners in foreign and second language classrooms (Long, 2005). The questionnaires were aimed at eliciting respondent’s responses, including but not limited to their learning preferences, preferred ways of learning, and classroom learning activities. The questionnaires were constructed in Indonesian and administered to the respondents directly within the classroom.

The responses from the questionnaires were collected, sorted, and calculated before finally being converted into figures and tables to allow analysis. As an analytical method, the percentage systems were employed to indicate the tendency and preference of the participants for every single item of learning need being asked in the questionnaire.

3. Results

Learning needs analysis provides information on "how are we going to get from our starting point to the destination? (Hutchinson & Water, 1987, p. 60). Put simply, it concerns the how aspect of learning. The results of the questionnaire completed by the students that have been sorted and computed are presented in figures and tables. To begin with, the questionnaires obtained information concerning the students’ reasons for attending the nursing program. As can be seen in Figure 1, the vast majority of students chose the nursing program as their main choice. This may indicate the participants have high motivation to learn nursing subject matter, which is favorable for ENP learning.

Figure 1. The Participants’ Reasons for Studying Nursing

The questionnaires also sought information concerning methodological preferences. Figure 2 indicates that most participants wanted their ENP teachers to facilitate their learning in groups; learning in small groups was a bit higher (over one
third) as opposed to learning in large groups. Some participants preferred to learn in pairs or individually.

Next, the questionnaire gathered information concerning the preferred mode of learning by which language skills and subject knowledge were acquired. Instead of choosing any one of the four options as they did in the previous questionnaire items, the participants had to rate whether each type was desirable or likeable. Despite no dominant mode, learning by listening, by listening and speaking, and by reading are relatively likeable to the same extent. Meanwhile, only one third liked learning by problem solving, which is still quite significant and thus cannot be negligible. It is worth noting, however, that not all of the participating students gave their responses for every option of mode. As a result, the total number of responses for each option is not equal. This could be caused by the absence of any other modes that this item of the questionnaire did not provide. Another possible cause was that they did not rate the option when they disliked it (only rated the yes answer).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Do you like learning by?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last but by no means least, the questionnaire asked the participants whether they perceived the usefulness of class activities. This item of the
questionnaire went the same way as the previous item, where students rated every type of class activity on whether it was useful or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Very Useful (%)</th>
<th>Useful (%)</th>
<th>Not Very Useful (%)</th>
<th>Not Useful (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>51.35</td>
<td>48.65</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language game</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>43.24</td>
<td>27.03</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>27.03</td>
<td>13.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>45.95</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorizing conv.</td>
<td>37.84</td>
<td>45.95</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating materials</td>
<td>32.43</td>
<td>43.24</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 2, all types of class activities were generally perceived as useful by the participants. However, role play, discussion, and memorizing conversation are the top three class activities perceived as most useful, as opposed to translating, gaming, and listening to songs.

4. Discussion

The present study has revealed students learning needs. First of all, the students voiced their needs for learning in either large groups or small groups. The students also want to learn and receive the content from teachers—language items, skills, and subject knowledge—primarily by listening, listening and speaking, reading, and to some extent, by solving a problem. It is worth noting, however, that the students want to experience them equally, particularly the first three modes. Furthermore, the students deemed such classroom activities as role play, discussion, memorizing conversation, and translating material useful for them. Apart from this, it was found that the students in this study attended the nursing program for two reasons: to become nurses and to easily get a job. This information is essential as it may indicate their intrinsic motivation, which is fundamental for their learning.

The finding of this study concerning the students’ needs for learning in groups implies that the course instructors need to facilitate the students with cooperative learning. As cooperative learning has been shown to be quite effective in ESP classes (e.g., Aghajani & Adloo, 2018), this finding could be meaningful. However, it does not necessarily mean that the teacher will rule out having the students learn in pairs or individually. Some students still deem these two as necessary and thus cannot be neglected. To some extent, some learning activities continue to require students to do reading and writing activities, and thus this result should be adopted with some caveats.

Learning by listening, listening and speaking, reading, and problem solving have been the top modes preferred by the students, with the first three being relatively higher than the last one. Here, learning modes are defined as classroom activities through which the content (language features, skills, and subject matter) is learned and acquired. However, it is noticeable that none of these modes is dominant. This suggests that although they are deemed necessary, their predominant use in the classroom is not desirable to the students. This finding also indicates that the students
want to engage in an active learning process (i.e., by speaking). In addition, their desire to learn through problem-solving indicates a need for project-based learning. Course instructors and syllabus writers need to be aware of this valuable information to help their students experience engaging and meaningful learning.

This study further reveals the specific classroom activities that the participants perceived as useful to them. Surprisingly, all the participants perceived role play as a useful classroom activity. In their study, Shinde and Shinde (2022) found that engineering students who received ESP instruction using role-play techniques demonstrated more accurate use of specialized terminology when communicating and a notable improvement in their comprehension. It is also quite similar to discussion, which is perceived to be useful by the vast majority, once again suggesting the dire need for active learning. While memorizing materials seems to be chosen by students as it has a link to their high preference for role play, translating material can be associated with their need to read specialized nursing materials or textbooks, most of which are presented in English.

Overall, the findings of the current study are conclusive because one finding is affirmed by another and vice versa. To sum up, this study has shown that the participants indeed have various needs pertaining to how they want to study ENP. Obviously, these students want to be facilitated in their learning in groups. For the acquisition of ENP content, they prefer to do so by listening, listening and speaking and reading, as well as by solving a problem. In addition, they like role play and discussion, as they already perceive their benefits. These findings may have pedagogical implications by supplying ENP course instructors and syllabus writers with necessary information on both how to design classroom learning activities and what method to use when teaching.

5. Conclusion

The present study aims to find out what nursing students need for their ENP learning. From the data in the questionnaires, it was unexpectedly revealed that the students, by principle, express their needs for cooperative and active learning. To be exact, the students need to be provided with opportunities to experience the learning process in which they learn in groups by listening, listening and speaking, reading, and solving a problem. In addition, they desire classroom activities that require them to actively engage with the material and interact with their classmates while learning ENP. While the needs analyses of the previous studies in ENP have identified target needs (language items, skills, and subject knowledge), they have not shown in what ways they can be learned effectively by students. Therefore, the findings of this study make a contribution by complementing their finding of target needs with learning needs. This study has some limitations. To begin with, the data collection relied simply on a questionnaire, and thus the information gathered was confined and superficial. Future studies on needs analysis can replicate this by adding interview and document analysis in order to obtain more in-depth information on ESP students’ learning needs in different settings. Additionally, the respondents in this study were limited to students. Future work may involve respondents other than students, primarily teachers, to allow a broader perspective of analysis. This study, however, has, to some extent, advanced our knowledge on how nursing students wish to learn ENP.
desirably and enjoyably. The results of this study may help ENP course and syllabus writers create a more learning-needs-aware ENP course.

References


