



What do nurses say about their English language needs for patient care and their ESP coursework: The case of Taiwanese nurses

Yi-Ling Lu

Department of Applied Foreign Languages, National United University, 1 Lienda, Miaoli, 36003, Taiwan



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 25 February 2018

Keywords:

English language needs
Nursing professionals
Shadowing observations
Interviews
Foreign patients
Nursing English courses

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the delivery of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to improve the English proficiency of nursing professionals in Taiwan. To support this effort, the aims of this research paper are twofold: to develop an understanding of nurses' English needs and challenges related to clinical nursing practice and to explore nurses' perspectives on ESP courses provided to them, with a focus on whether the courses reflect their actual English needs and challenges. This research adopts a qualitative approach, using data from two groups of participants: a group of nine nurses who participated in interviews and a group of 10 nurses who were observed in the workplace. All of these nurses worked in a large-scale hospital with an international care center in Taiwan. The findings revealed that the participants needed effective communication skills in English to build trusting nurse–patient relationships and provide quality nursing care. However, they experienced English communication difficulties in the areas of vocabulary, pronunciation, and accent, and developed negative strategies to cope with these challenges. The nurses considered their ESP courses ineffective, although somewhat useful, because the content failed to meet their language needs and challenges.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In accordance with global trends, English is becoming increasingly important in Taiwan's hospitals for two reasons. The first relates to a change in the population structure of the labor market. In 1989, due to a shortage of workers, the government opened Taiwan's labor market to foreigners, and the number of foreigners working in Taiwan has gradually increased ever since (Pai, Guo, Hu, Wang, & Chen, 2004). According to statistics from the Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training (2015), the four largest foreign ethnic groups in Taiwan are Indonesians, Vietnamese, Filipinos and Thais. In 2015, the number of foreign residents or immigrants in Taiwan reached 518,544, the highest ever recorded. As a result of these growing numbers, Taiwanese nursing professionals may be required to care for foreign hospital patients (Chen & Chou, 2014). Second, the English language is connected with the Taiwanese government's policies to promote medical tourism and make Taiwan a primary choice for international medical services (IMS). Compared to Western countries and some nearby Asian countries, such as Japan and Singapore, Taiwan's medical care is less expensive, but of high quality (Yang, 2011). This reality has created opportunities for Taiwan to enhance its international image as a healthcare destination. Many large-scale hospitals have taken part in IMS, establishing international wards or centers to attract people from foreign countries to come to Taiwan for medical

E-mail addresses: yilinglu@nuu.edu.tw, vivian2708@yahoo.com.tw.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2017.12.004>

0889-4906/© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

care. Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, the largest medical system in Taiwan, is an example of such a center. Approximately 2,700 patients—141 from foreign countries—are admitted to the hospital's outpatient department each day. Most of these patients use English as their main mode of communication with hospital staff (Lu, Wu, Lee, & Yu, 2009).

With the ever-increasing numbers of foreigners working in Taiwan and of Westerners visiting Taiwan, English-language medical services, according to Chen and Chou (2014), are growing along with globalization. Depending on their length of residency, foreign residents and immigrants, compared to visiting Westerners, tend to have a greater facility with Taiwan's dominant languages (Mandarin, Hokkien Chinese and Hakka); however, English remains the most important communication tool in hospital settings (Lu et al., 2009; Stocker & Reddad, 2013; Yang, 2011). Given the demanding linguistic realities that nurses face, nursing colleges and universities have instituted major initiatives to improve the English language abilities of Taiwanese nurses. According to their official websites, in response to these growing English language requirements, most nursing colleges (21 of 23) and science and technology universities (all 11) have developed ESP courses for their students. To inform these efforts the present study was undertaken. The aims of this paper are twofold: (1) to investigate the English language needs and challenges faced by Taiwanese nurses and (2) to explore nurses' opinions of ESP courses offered at colleges and universities, with a focus on whether such courses reflect nurses' actual English language needs.

2. Literature review

2.1. Cross-cultural communication in hospital settings

Culturally appropriate communication involves both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic language aspects (Dahm & Yates, 2013; Thomas, 1983). The former refers to “the cultural values and expectations underlying and driving interactions in particular cultural contexts ...,” and the latter refers to “a speaker's ability to understand and appropriately deploy the linguistic means available in a language” (Dahm & Yates, 2013, p. 23). These two are intertwined; sociopragmatic norms held within a particular culture exert influences on pragmalinguistic devices that are used to realize them. Language, in this case, is used in a culturally meaningful way, and deviance from accepted norms within a particular culture can likely result in misunderstandings (O'Neill, 2011). In Taiwan, particular approaches to nursing care, such as patient-centered consultation and intersubjective nurse–patient relationships (Lin, 2008; Lu, 2016), influence pragmalinguistic skills that healthcare professionals use when communicating with and caring for patients.

When healthcare professionals and patients have different cultural and language backgrounds, culturally appropriate communication presents a challenge. In hospital settings, it is not unusual for healthcare professionals who have different language backgrounds and who do not understand local sociopragmatic values to fail to employ particular pragmalinguistic devices in interactions and communication with their patients (Dahm & Yates, 2013). Particular challenges for international medical and nursing graduates include making small talk, understanding instructions, providing tailored explanations, clarifying patients' health problems, and responding to patients with empathy (Dahm, 2011; Jirwe, Gerrish, & Emami, 2010; San Miguel, Rogan, Kilstoff, & Brown, 2006; Wang, Singh, Bird, & Ives, 2008). The influences of such challenges are profound. For example, patients may feel dissatisfied with the care they received (Lu et al., 2009), or healthcare professionals may appear impersonal in the eyes of their patients (Dahm, 2011).

2.2. English needs and challenges for Taiwanese nurses

In Taiwan, some purely quantitative studies have explored nurses' English language needs and difficulties in relation to nursing practice. These studies have shown that, despite the increase in diversity in Taiwan and the government's policies to promote medical tourism, nurses remain ill prepared for the demanding linguistic and cultural realities awaiting them. For example, Chen (2010) conducted a survey to identify English language problems among nurses and found that approximately two-thirds of just over 1,000 nurses working with the Tzu-Chi Medical Foundation (a large-scale medical system in Taiwan consisting of six Tzu-Chi hospitals located in various areas) have cared for patients from other countries. Nearly 84% expressed a willingness to care for foreign patients, but were concerned about language difficulties. Yang and Su (2003) surveyed the English needs of two groups in metropolises and small cities in northern, central and southern Taiwan: 283 nursing students studying at three nursing colleges and 312 nursing professionals working in different hospitals. Approximately 85% of nursing students and 75% of nursing professionals ranked English speaking and listening skills as the most important to them, and they reported having the greatest deficiencies in these two areas. Of the six learning topics of greatest interest, “communication with foreign patients and their families” was the top preference of both groups. To date, one study has explored foreign patients' views on nursing care offered by Taiwanese nursing professionals. During April 2006 Chang Gung Memorial Hospital interviewed 50 foreign outpatients about their opinions of nursing services. Only 32% reported being satisfied with the services provided, citing the poor English communication skills of the nursing staff as the main reason for their dissatisfaction (Lu et al., 2009).

2.3. The results of previous clinical training courses on healthcare

Given the increasing cultural diversity of nurses and nursing students working and pursuing nursing degrees in English-speaking countries, there has been a stronger emphasis on ESP courses for healthcare professionals so that they can develop

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841030>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841030>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)