

NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE CURRICULUM DESIGN OF ENGLISH INVOLVING GENERAL DUTY NURSING COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE CASE OF KINSHASA-DRC

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of English for specific purposes has been a real challenge for ESP practitioners for a long time. Among difficulties encountered by experts working on ESP studies, the lack of appropriate material has been one of the most worrying issues. Not having a suitable curriculum for teaching can surely make ESP courses inadequate. Therefore, curriculum design has become an interesting field of investigation drawing the attention of many researchers who focus their studies on English for specific purposes. Ignoring the learners' needs while designing a curriculum of English for specific purposes will obviously lead to a curriculum not satisfying learners and all people involved in the learning process.

This article aimed at assessing the needs for the curriculum design of English involving general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa. The question asked was to know what general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa really need to study in English. To that end, finding main topics to include in the English course program for general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa was the main concern of this study.

The research design was qualitative with triangulated data sources using individual unstructured interviews. Due to the size of the sample and the kinds of data collected technology through ATLAS.ti software was used to analysis recordings' transcripts effectively. The respondents included in the study were 104: 47 third-year general duty nursing college students, 31 nurses having some workplace English language experience, 21 experienced nursing content teachers, and 5 stakeholders.

The result has revealed that the course content to teach to general duty nursing college students from Kinshasa should include the main topics emerged from the analysis of the raw data. Those topics are related to the real nursing professional and

academic contexts. They range from specific linguistic tasks on nursing real-life activities to providing specific English knowledge needed to read professional documents, including books and articles, and to participate in professional trainings and conferences held in English effectively. Referring to those themes, an appropriate curriculum can be designed.

It has been proved that to design an English course program meeting the real needs and expectations of students, teachers of English and all people associated with the program should work together in the path of needs analysis study leading to curriculum design. Underestimating students' needs and stakeholders' expectations will result in a course curriculum irrelevant to the learners' goals for learning and to the expectations of all the people involved in the learning process.

Keywords: Needs analysis, curriculum design, general duty nursing

RESUME

L'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité constitue depuis longtemps un véritable défi pour les experts en ESP. Parmi les difficultés rencontrées par les chercheurs travaillant dans le domaine de l'anglais de spécialité, le manque du contenu approprié est l'une des questions les plus préoccupantes. L'absence d'un programme d'enseignement approprié peut certainement rendre le cours d'anglais de spécialité inadéquat. C'est pourquoi la conception des programmes d'enseignement est devenue un domaine d'investigation intéressant qui attire l'attention de nombreux chercheurs qui concentrent leurs études sur l'anglais de spécialité. Ignorer les besoins des apprenants lors de la conception d'un programme d'anglais de spécialité conduira certainement à un programme qui ne satisfera pas les apprenants et toutes les personnes impliquées dans le processus d'apprentissage.

Cette étude s'est donc concentrée sur l'analyse des besoins pour la conception d'un programme d'anglais approprié pour les étudiants en soins infirmiers généraux de Kinshasa. La question posée était de savoir ce que les étudiants en soins infirmiers généraux de Kinshasa ont réellement besoin d'étudier en anglais. Pour ce faire, la recherche des principaux sujets à inclure dans le programme de cours d'anglais pour les étudiants en soins infirmiers généraux de Kinshasa a été la principale préoccupation de cette étude.

La conception de la recherche était qualitative avec des sources de données triangulées utilisant des entretiens individuels non structurés. Vu la taille de l'échantillon et les types de données collectées, le logiciel ATLAS.ti a été utilisé pour analyser efficacement les transcriptions des enregistrements. Les personnes interviewées dans le cadre de cette étude étaient au nombre de 104: 47 étudiants de troisième année en soins infirmiers généraux, 31 infirmiers ayant une certaine expérience de l'anglais sur le lieu de travail, 21 enseignants expérimentés dans le domaine des soins infirmiers et 5 parties prenantes.

Le résultat a révélé que le contenu du cours à enseigner aux étudiants en soins infirmiers généraux de Kinshasa devrait inclure les principaux thèmes ressortis de l'analyse des données brutes. Ces thèmes sont liés aux contextes professionnels et académiques réels des soins infirmiers généraux. Ils vont des tâches linguistiques spécifiques sur les activités réelles des infirmiers à des connaissances spécifiques en anglais nécessaires pour lire des documents professionnels, y compris des livres et articles, et pour participer efficacement à des formations professionnelles et à des conférences tenues en anglais. En se référant à ces thèmes, un programme adéquat peut être conçu.

Il a été prouvé que pour concevoir un programme de cours d'anglais répondant aux besoins et attentes réels des étudiants, les enseignants d'anglais et toutes les personnes associées au programme doivent travailler ensemble dans le cadre d'une étude d'analyse des besoins menant à la conception du programme d'enseignement. La sous-estimation des besoins des étudiants et des attentes des parties prenantes aboutira à un programme de cours sans rapport avec les objectifs d'apprentissage et les attentes de toutes les personnes impliquées dans le processus d'apprentissage.

Mots-clés: *Analyse de Besoins, Conception du Programme, Soins Infirmiers Généraux*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English for specific purposes has been challenging ESP practitioners for a long time. Among difficulties encountered by experts working on ESP studies we can mention: negative attitude of some learners toward not only the English language but also teachers of English, the lack of appropriate material and of teaching equipment, the choice of appropriate teaching methods and techniques, lack of prior training and regular effective in-service teacher training in the field, and so on. All these facts can, for sure, make ESP course design inadequate. Therefore, English for specific purposes design has become an interesting field of investigation drawing the attention of many researchers who focus their studies on applied linguistics. One of the most challenging issues is related to the course contents for an effective English course for specific purposes. Some researchers in the field claim that the curriculum designed for students regarding English for specific purposes does not meet the real learners' needs. Ignoring the learners' needs while designing a curriculum of English for specific purposes will surely lead to a curriculum not satisfying learners and all people involved in the learning process.

Actually, after many years of teaching English to nursing students from some colleges in Kinshasa, I have noticed that one of the most challenging stages in the process of an ESP design is the selection of course content. This crucial step to having a suitable curriculum is really challenging because we

have to deal with particular groups of learners with specific expectations, usually straightly related to their professional real-life context. For instance at ISTM Kinshasa where majors are organized into many sections, it is not an easy task for a teacher designer to set curriculum guidelines for an English course that can be adequate for the learners from each of the majors. So very often the curriculum designed for nursing college students is not context-responsive since it does not meet their real needs. And most teachers teach the content of the field instead of teaching the language developed and the content of that field.

As discussed earlier, implementing a syllabus that does not meet the real common needs of students makes the instructional process as well as the instructor boring. It is important to remember that students' learning potential can increase when their attitudes towards the target language are positive and motivation runs high. We cannot ignore the connection between positive attitudes and successfully learning a second or foreign language. Materials to be taught is one of the things that can increase or decrease motivation of learners. So teachers cannot expect learners to be interested in a course which is not appropriate to the language learning context, which is among complex social and psychological aspects of human behaviour. Knowing that the most important stage to design a proficiency-oriented suitable program is to conduct a reliable needs analysis, going through a facts finding research before designing a syllabus becomes inescapable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many authors have been working on needs assessment before designing courses of English for specific purposes for a long time. It has already been revealed that resorting to needs analysis before designing an English course for specific purposes is inescapable. As stated by Smoak, a needs analysis should be an underpinning of the English course design, simply because an ESP course has to be based on actual learners' needs (Smoak, 2003: 23). When the course is not based on the real needs for learning, the instruction as well as the instructor will be boring for the learners. To that end, it is highly recommended to ESP designers to conduct a trustworthy needs analysis study, and then exploit or reflect on the outcomes to design a curriculum that can respond to the real-life situation requirements.

In fact, a needs analysis is a systematic process allowing a researcher to get an accurate picture of students' actual needs for learning, based on both learning and target situations, or on how they will be using the language in their real-life situations (Smoak, 2003:25). In addition, a needs analysis is considered as a basic principle of ESP design. It helps researchers have a clear view of not only the target and learning situation needs, but also the

expectations of the stakeholders involved in the process. Furthermore, a needs analysis can also help people determine whether a program should be implemented or not; or it can help in improving various components of an existing program and making these components more oriented to the needs of the learners.

Actually, it is very important to mention that needs analysis can also be focused on gathering some specific information not only about the attitudes, beliefs and opinions of the learners or all people involved, but also about all linguistic and contextual factors that can be related to the field and real-life world of the learners (Mandina, 2022:427). For example, for student nurses it can be assumed that the needs are going to be linked to the everyday hospital language and concepts they need to know for research and professional communication purposes. So, even before resorting to a formal scientific study in order to find out their needs for learning, we can assume some of the more relevant needs a student nurse can have in learning the English language through the analysis of their duties, activities, interactions, and professional setting. But this assumption needs to be confirmed or rejected after having the result from a formal needs analysis.

Another important thing to mention is that a needs analysis should be conducted in order to help establish not only the content but also the methodology of a course. According to Lynne Flowerdew (2013:325), the first stage in ESP course development is to start with a needs analysis, followed by curriculum design, materials selection, methodology, and assessment. Methods expected in ESP courses should make the instruction effective; thus, they need to be strategic, purposeful, and context specific. Therefore, any method or methods that can help the instruction be successful in terms of reaching objectives assigned can be used.

As the current study is mainly focused on English for nursing purposes, it is important to state that English for nursing purposes design cannot be an exception of what we have been discussing. It is just one of the branches of ESP. So, all of the requirements of an English for specific purposes design discussed in the preceding paragraphs do apply to the overall instructional process of English for nursing purposes.

For that reason, many issues have been raised by researchers in the field of English for nursing purposes. For instance, Crawford and Candlin (2013) conducted a study on needs of nursing students in Australia. The findings of their study revealed that the most important challenge of the student nurses in Australia was the use of technical English required by higher education and healthcare settings. The authors suggested teachers of English for nursing purposes as well as curriculum designers to focus more on genres and skills necessary for learners to do well in present and target situation.

Other studies on English course for nursing students were carried out by Saragih (2014) and Gass (2012) focusing on designing ESP materials for nursing students from respectively Indonesia and Thailand. It is important to specify that both studies were based on needs analysis. The findings from the two studies stated that the predominant needs of learners were on speaking and listening skills, as well as vocabulary related to the real-life professional setting. In addition, the results revealed that there were important topics to be addressed, such as: question formation used to collect patients' information, signs and symptoms, explanations about medications and their interactions, explanation about procedures, making appointments, using expressions of time, accents and communication on the phone, basic English structures, giving instructions and advice, and checking understanding.

Evans and Salcido (2011) and Boshier (2008) respectively from the United Kingdom and the US, wrote books on English for Nursing. Their books contain career-based vocabulary and contexts into lessons that build professionals' workplace English skills. They addressed topics including: hospital departments, basic equipment, specific illnesses, nursing duties, and career options. We have to mention that a variety of real-world reading passages and career-specific dialogues were also included. These books provide ideal series to help professionals and students develop the language skills they need to succeed in any professional work situation where English is the medium of communication.

Focusing on the preceding lines, we can obviously see that the issue of designing a suitable English course program for nursing purposes has really drawn the attention of English for specific purposes researchers, even if there are still few books published in the field. Issues raised are still ongoing. Teaching English for nursing purposes is still a real challenge in many countries, especially to help people with no background of English basic knowledge get used to both, academic and professional nursing English skills. Even if there are more challenges in the context where English is taught as a foreign language, almost all issues raised by authors who conducted studies in the context where English is taught as a second language should be considered. In fact, student nurses learning English in the context in which there is not much exposure to the target language will surely need more support.

Referring to the statements above, teachers and course designers for nursing purposes should identify areas of language where learners need more support depending on the context they are in. One of the good ways to do that is through a formal needs analysis study. Reflecting on the preceding discussion, we can obviously notice that The Democratic Republic of Congo is not an exception; it has been remarked that the intuitions of the course designers dealing with ESP courses do not coincide with the real common expectations

of the learners in the same learning context. After having a look at the literature review on ESP studies in DRC, it has been noticed that there are few studies conducted and published in this area. Referring to English for nursing purposes, almost nothing has been done so far. Very few studies have targeted English for nursing field in DRC. To my best understanding, there is no published research dissertation or article devoted to the curriculum design of nursing students in DRC so far. Thus, I decided to entitle this article "Needs Analysis for the Curriculum Design of English Involving General Duty Nursing: The Case of Kinshasa-DRC."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To reach findings from multiple sources of data and real-life settings, a qualitative approach with the use of triangulated data sources was used for this study (Golafshani, 2003). In addition, selecting many kinds of data sources provided different viewpoints and a variety of perspectives relevant to draw acceptable conclusions. Furthermore, the resulting combination of data sources ensured complementary strengths. In fact, four sources of data were selected as target population for the study: general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa, current nurses having some workplace English language experience, experienced nursing content teachers or domain teachers, and stakeholders or policy makers.

I selected purposeful sampling choosing particular participants or respondents intentionally or on purpose for important information they could provide about the needs in nursing. The selected respondents from the target populations mentioned in the preceding paragraph are described in the following paragraphs.

Due to the number of students in general duty nursing from colleges in Kinshasa and the kinds of data, only the third-year general duty nursing college students were interviewed. Because they have already gone through the first two years in this three-year nursing program, they have the characteristics necessary to answer questions included in the interview script/guide without any problem. It is important to specify that four colleges, from Kinshasa, were selected as data zones; and they were selected randomly basing on the respect of the amount of heterogeneity in the population.

To have detailed information about thoughts and expectations making a complete picture on the curriculum of English for general duty nursing, an in-depth interview was conducted with current nurses having some workplace English language experience and with experienced nursing content teachers or domain teachers. For the same purpose, another similar interview was conducted with the stakeholders.

Data collected from all sources indicated here above were analyzed using the inductive content analysis approach, which is a widely used qualitative research technique. This technique helped the researcher identify all the main concepts that arose in interviews. Data were categorized, then the categories were labeled or named, after that identified patterns were grouped for the final categorization that allowed a better interpretation of the results. Finally, the main topics from super-categories were identified and listed for the findings presenting the needs we need to design a suitable curriculum for general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa. Due to the number of respondents and the kinds of data involved in this study, the ATLAS.ti software was used as a technological tool of the data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The inductive content analysis applied has led to the identification of super-categories, categories, and verbatim excerpts from the qualitative data generated by interviews conducted with respondents from the four data sources indicated earlier in this article. It is important to clarify that here super-categories are parents categories because under them we can have many categories or subcategories sharing the same features. And verbatim excerpts are from the sentences in the raw data; they are actual responses of informants categorized or grouped according to common features they share. This way of presenting the results has helped the researcher to organize findings logically in order to reflect the needs, expectations, and challenges of the respondents included in the study.

In fact, the triangulation of the results from students, nurses, teachers, and stakeholders reveals both similarities and differences in their perspectives on the needs and expectations for an effective English course teaching for nursing purposes. The following paragraphs describe the similarities and the differences of the results including the conclusion.

Similarities across Groups

Importance of English in Nursing

Professional Communication

All groups agree that English is essential for nurses to communicate effectively with English-speaking patients, colleagues, and other healthcare professionals.

Understanding Professional Documentation

All groups emphasize the need for English to read and interpret professional documents, such as: drug leaflets, medical prescriptions, books on health sciences, and patient files.

Global Relevance

All groups recognize the importance of English for participating in international conferences, training, and professional opportunities.

Skills to Develop

All Skills

All groups agree that nurses need to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, with a particular emphasis on reading and speaking for professional purposes.

Real-life Focus

All groups stress the importance of applying English skills in real-life nursing contexts, such as patient interactions, writing reports, and understanding professional texts.

Relevant Vocabulary and Topics

Professional Vocabulary

All groups agree on the need for nursing-specific vocabulary, including terms related to diseases, hospital equipment, nursing care plans, and prescriptions.

Topics for the English Program

All groups highlight the importance of including topics such as nursing care procedures, patient-nurse interactions, functions of the human body systems, and medical diagnostics in the curriculum.

Preferred Teaching Methods

Interactive Approaches

All groups emphasize the need for practical, skill-based teaching methods, including role-playing, simulations, and real-life scenarios.

Use of Visual Aids and Technology

All groups suggest incorporating visual aids, videos, and modern technology to enhance learning.

Differences across Groups

Challenges in English Learning

Lack of interest

Students and nurses highlight the lack of interest in English in nursing education, while teachers and stakeholders focus more on the discrepancy between course content and real-life needs.

Teacher Knowledge and skills

Teachers and stakeholders emphasize the need for better-prepared instructors with knowledge of nursing-specific content, while students and nurses do not explicitly mention this issue.

Feedback and Suggestions

Encouragement

Stakeholders and nurses provide positive feedback and encouragement for research to improve English teaching programs, while students and teachers focus more on practical suggestions for course improvement.

Discussion and Findings

The triangulation of the results reveals strong similarities across all groups regarding the importance of English for professional communication, understanding medical documentation, and participating in worldwide opportunities. All data sources agree on the need for practical, real-life focused English course including relevant medical vocabulary and teaching methods emphasizing interactions between students. However, differences of viewpoints emerge in the way to view challenges, with students and nurses focusing on the lack of interest in English, while teachers and stakeholders highlight the need for better-prepared instructors and clearer course objectives. These findings underscore the importance of corresponding course design with the real-life needs of nurses while addressing systemic challenges in English education.

Actually, observing the key findings from each category of the respondents involved in the study, we can clearly notice common meanings most responses share. Relating those topics and areas of language use, we can group them according to the principle of affinities in a meaningful way. Thus, the main themes including some specific task items (suggested by the researcher) based on nursing real-world duties and topics of interest to include in the English course content for general duty nursing are the following:

- Communication with patients, patients' relatives and friends, and other professionals speaking English: patients' identification, self-introduction and introducing other people, asking and reporting about health, giving instructions, offering and thanking, assessing patients, history of disease language, complaints and symptoms description, asking and reporting about health, taking and giving instruction in general and about drugs in particular, explaining treatment procedures, and asking and giving advice or recommendations including comforting patients;
- Medical terminology or key medical terms to communicate effectively in the real world context of use, such as: terms used in medicines leaflets,

expressions in medical prescriptions, names of the human body parts and organs, language used in nursing care plans and diagnoses, parts and organs of the human body, names of diseases, names of some medicines, and nursing care terms;

- Identification of departments, equipment, and health professionals in hospital;
- Appropriate language to participate in trainings, professional meetings, and conferences held in English effectively (discuss samples of presentations in nursing contexts);
- Skimming and scanning professional literature focused on nursing including medication leaflets and any others;
- Reading and writing nursing diagnoses;
- Writing or documenting nursing care reports and plans in English;
- Writing and reading medical reports of patients;
- Process and procedure in nursing care;
- Expressions to explain nursing care procedure or techniques to patients;
- Expressions used in Vital signs checking or assessment;
- Writing and reading files of patients;
- Clinical cases discussions; and
- Basic general English knowledge.

In fact, the topics and areas of language use listed above are those that respondents wanted the English course for nursing students to cover from the first up to the last year in the three-year nursing program. Even if it is not usually advised to generalize the results of a needs analysis study to other settings rather than the one under investigation, but relying on the curriculum developer's intuition about the similarity of needs between two or more different populations, it is still possible to find some common guidelines to be generalized or extrapolated to the same context settings or similar situations as mentioned by Golafshani (2003) and Schmidt (1981:200). So the result of this dissertation can be generalized to any setting related to general duty nursing in an EFL context.

As for the theoretical outcome of the study, the researcher encourages anyone willing to conduct a similar study, to resort to qualitative design with the triangulation of data sources from respondents able to provide relevant information, covering present and target situation needs and stakeholders' expectations. In addition, due to the kinds of variables required in a needs analysis study, the use of the qualitative inductive content analysis approach to analyze data is encouraged.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed at assessing the needs for the curriculum design of English involving general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa. After collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on the English learning needs of general duty nursing college students of Kinshasa, the findings provided is a relevant database for a suitable course program not only for nursing college students from Kinshasa, but also for any other setting where the generalization can be possible or where it can require some slight changes or adjustments.

The researcher stays convinced that the outcome of this dissertation will be a real guideline in order to develop a suitable textbook with authentic materials relevant to the learners' profession or field of study. Thus, the themes or topics provided are based on actual needs and expectations of all people involved in the course development process in a more productive way. In addition, the researcher suggests the production of a communicative course based on simulations from the real world nursing contexts. It is obvious that to relate the classroom to the real life world of nurses, it is important to design a Simulation-based syllabus; which is a syllabus based on different tasks nurses perform in health care settings and knowledge they need throughout their academic training. Somehow, it is like bringing the health settings into the classroom. Doing this, will enhance the motivation and the awareness of the learners since they will be experiencing what they actually do in their real academic and professional life during their learning. Thus, the classroom will be a proficiency-oriented one.

To conclude, the result of this work is a prototype or a model containing the fundamental pieces of knowledge of Nursing English for college Students. And then anyone designing a course for nursing students in our contexts can exploit the database from this study to comply with the requirements of designing a course for specific purposes.

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